

defined fluid vessel 127. In other words, if the first and second set of conductors can distinguish between a first user input and a second user input that are at a minimum distance of X apart, a particular region 113 is preferably larger than X to distinguish a first user input at a first location relative to the particular region 113 and a second user input at a second location relative to the particular region 113. The user interface system 100 may also include a fluid outlet layer as described above between the top layer 501a and the bottom layer 503a. In this fourth preferred embodiment, the top layer 501a functions to define the surface 115 and cooperate with the spacers 505a and the bottom layer 503a to form the sheet 102 and to define the fluid vessel 127. The fluid vessel 127 is then filled with a fluid 112 and preferably expands (as shown by the dotted line representing the expanded particular region 113 in FIG. 18a) and retracts with manipulation of the volume of the fluid 112 similarly or identically to the fluid vessel 127 as described above. The first set of electrical conductors 511a preferably also expands along with the top layer 501a. Alternatively, the first electrical conductors 511a may be located on the fluid outlet layer that remains relatively stationary and may not expand along with the top layer 501a. However, any other suitable arrangement of the electrical conductors may be used.

[0045] The seal 502 is preferably formed using the spacers 505a. In the preferred embodiments, the spacers 505a are preferably bonded to the top layer 501a and/or the bottom layer 503a to form a substantially leak tight fluid vessel. As shown in FIG. 18, a portion of the fluid vessel 127 (such as the channel 138) may be substantially defined by the bottom layer 503a that is coupled to a channel 138 while the expanding portion of the fluid vessel 127 (such as the cavity 125) is cooperatively defined by the top layer 501a, bottom layer 503a, and the seal 502. Such bonded spacers 505a are hereafter referred to as "boundary-spacers." In the variation where the spacers 505a are composed of a top component and a bottom component which are then assembled to form the spacer 505a, the top component and the bottom component are preferably fused together to form a continuous spacer 505b that is substantially leak tight wall to the fluid vessel 127 to form the seal 502, as shown in FIGS. 18a, 18b, and 18c. Similar to the methods used to bond the sheet 102 to the top layer 501 discussed in the first preferred embodiment, spacers 505a (and the top and bottom components of the spacers 505b, where appropriate) may be bonded to the top layer 501a and the bottom 503a using heat welding, ultrasonic welding, or any other suitable process that creates a substantially leak tight seal. However, the seal 502 may alternatively be assembled into the space between the top and bottom layers 501a and 503a and may be separate from the spacers 505a. For example, the seal 502 may be a balloon that is assembled into the resistive touch sensitive layer 500a and the top and bottom layers 501a and 503a may function to shape the balloon into the fluid vessel 127. However, any other suitable seal may be used to define the fluid vessel 127.

[0046] As shown in FIG. 18a, a cavity 125 and/or the fluid vessel 127 may span the space in between two spacers 505. Alternatively, because the number and frequency of spacers 505a may be related to the desired flatness of the surface 115 and the optical quality of the sheet 102 (for example, the higher the number and the higher the frequency of spacers 505a, the flatter the surface 115, the flatter the surface 115, the higher the optical quality of the sheet 102), the spacers 505a may be located at such a close proximity to each other that the

corresponding particular region 113 to a cavity 125 and/or fluid vessel 127 that spanned between only two spacers 505a would most likely not be felt by the finger of a user. In this variation, the cavity 125 may span the space between three, four, or any other suitable number of spacers 505 to achieve a suitably sized cavity 125 and corresponding particular region 113, as shown in FIG. 18b. To achieve the larger span of the cavity 125, the spacers 505a that are in between the boundary-spacers 505b of the cavity 125 are preferably not bonded to the top and bottom layers 501a and 503a to form a leak tight seal, allowing the fluid 112 to communicate throughout the volume of the desired cavity 125 such that manipulation of the volume of fluid 112 within the fluid vessel 127 will expand the fluid vessel 127 and cause the particular region 113 to deform outward. The expansion of the fluid vessel 127 preferably causes the top layer 501a to separate from the spacer that does not define the wall of the fluid vessel 127. Alternatively, the spacer 505a may also stretch and elongate to follow the expansion of the fluid vessel 127. In this variation of the spacer 505a, the spacer 505a is preferably composed of a substantially pliable material, function to manipulate the shape of the deformation of the particular region 113 and/or preferably maintain refractive properties to decrease visibility as the material stretches. Yet alternatively, in the variation of the spacer 505a that is composed of a top component and a bottom component, the top component may expand with the top layer 501a, as shown by the dotted line representing the particular region 113 in FIG. 18b. However, any other suitable bonding and expansion arrangement between a non-boundary-spacer 505a and the top layer 501a may be used. Alternatively, as shown in FIG. 18c, the non-boundary-spacers 505a may be removed. An advantage provided by this variation is that a user input that inwardly deforms the particular region 113 will not be hindered by the presence of spacers within the cavity 125. Alternatively, to increase flexibility in the tactile guidance provided to the user, the cavity 125 and/or fluid vessel 127 may span the distance between two spacers 505a and a combination of the expansion of several cavities 125 in relative close proximity with each other and their corresponding particular surfaces 113 may be used to provide tactile guidance to the user. The user interface system may also include a combination of various sizes of cavities 125 (as shown in FIGS. 18b and 18c). However, any other suitable size of cavity 125 relative to the spacers 505 may be used.

[0047] As shown in FIGS. 18a, 18b, and 18c, the boundary-spacers 505b preferably function to at least partially define one the fluid vessel 127 in only a portion of the top and bottom layers 501a and 503a. In other words, there is at least a space in the resistive touch sensitive layer 500 in between two boundary-spacers 505b that does not contain a fluid vessel 127. To decrease the visible difference between portions of the user interface 125 that include the fluid vessel 127 and portions that do not include the fluid vessel 127, the portions that do not include a fluid vessel 127 may also be filled with the fluid 112 or a fluid with substantially similar optical properties to the fluid 112 to allow light to refract through the sheet 100 in a substantially uniform manner. The portions that do not include a fluid vessel 127 may alternatively be filled with a gas, another type of fluid, or any other suitable material that allows for substantially uniform refraction of light through the sheet 102.

[0048] The top layer 501a is preferably composed of a flexible material that allows the expansion and retraction of