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Dome Key Geometry and Layout

Abstract: Keys of a keypad are given different dome shapes and/or textures to distinguish individual keys and functional groups of keys.

This disclosure relates to the field of keyboards.

A technique is disclosed that uses a dome shape and a texture of keyboard keys to distinguish individual keys and functional groups for improved usability.

A number of electronic products, such as for example multifunction printers, include embedded keyboards. These keyboards typically include fewer keys than a standard typewriter-style keyboard, and the layout of the keys can be unfamiliar. In addition, all keys typically have the same shape, profile, and feel. As a result, it can be difficult for users to locate the desired key, which in turn can make key entry slower, error-prone, and frustrating.

According to the present disclosure, and as understood with reference to the Figure, keypad keys include a dome shape and texture. The dome shape and texture of the keys can be varied to distinguish keys of different functional groups. It provides both tactile and visual features to distinguish individual keys and functional groups for improved usability. Adding the dome shape and changing that shape based on functional groups improves usability and allows users to more quickly access the desired features.

The keys are injection-molded parts. Different dome geometries are assigned to keys of different functional groups.

In one example keypad 10, numeric entry keys, such as key 20, are assigned a first (in this case, lower) profile. Cursor keys 30 are assigned a second, intermediate profile. And an Enter key 40 is assigned a third, high profile.

The disclosed technique advantageously allows a user to distinguish functional groups and provides tactile and visual distinction while maintaining the overall form factor of a keypad layout.

Disclosed by Michael Evan Daniels, HP Inc.

