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Hui et al.

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(54) **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR HIGH RESOLUTION MONITORING OF OPTICAL SIGNALS**

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* cited by examiner

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

The present invention provides a method and apparatus for monitoring optical signals with an expanded frequency resolution. The invention permits high-resolution measurements of optical signal spectrums while retaining wide bandwidth operation through appropriate control circuitry. An interferometer having a periodic frequency response formed of equally spaced narrow-band peaks is used to sweep the entire signal spectrum. The interferometer frequency response is incrementally tuned in cycles so that each of its frequency response peaks cyclically scans a particular spectral band of the signal spectrum. During each cycle, the interferometer isolates multiple spectrally resolved portions of the optical signal spectrum where each portion originates from a different spectral band. In this way, a high-resolution measurement of the entire signal spectrum can be obtained. The invention may be network protocol independent and can be incorporated into an optical spectrum analyzer or directly into any optical terminal. The invention can be used for signal spectrum monitoring applications including link quality monitoring (LQM) in optical communications networks to monitor various transmission parameters such as carrier wavelengths, optical signal-to-noise ratios (SNR), amplified spontaneous emissions (ASE), noise levels, optical non-linearities or other signal baseband information such as data rates and formats.

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 09/411,649, filed on Oct. 4, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,493,088.

(51) Int. Cl.⁷ **G01B 9/02**

(52) U.S. Cl. **356/477; 356/450**

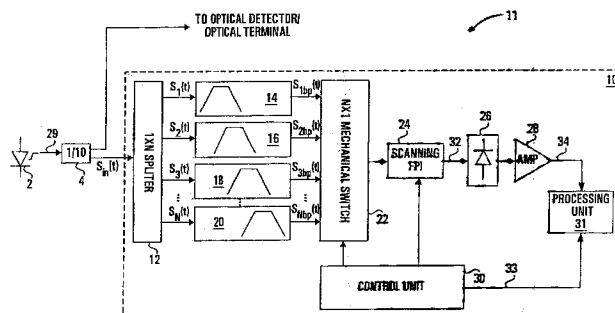
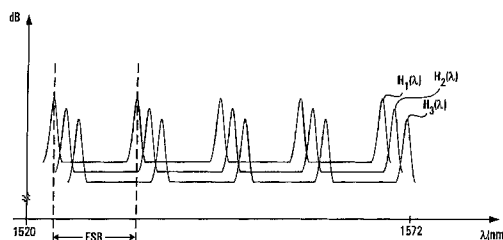
(58) Field of Search 356/477, 450,
 356/451, 480, 454

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15 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets



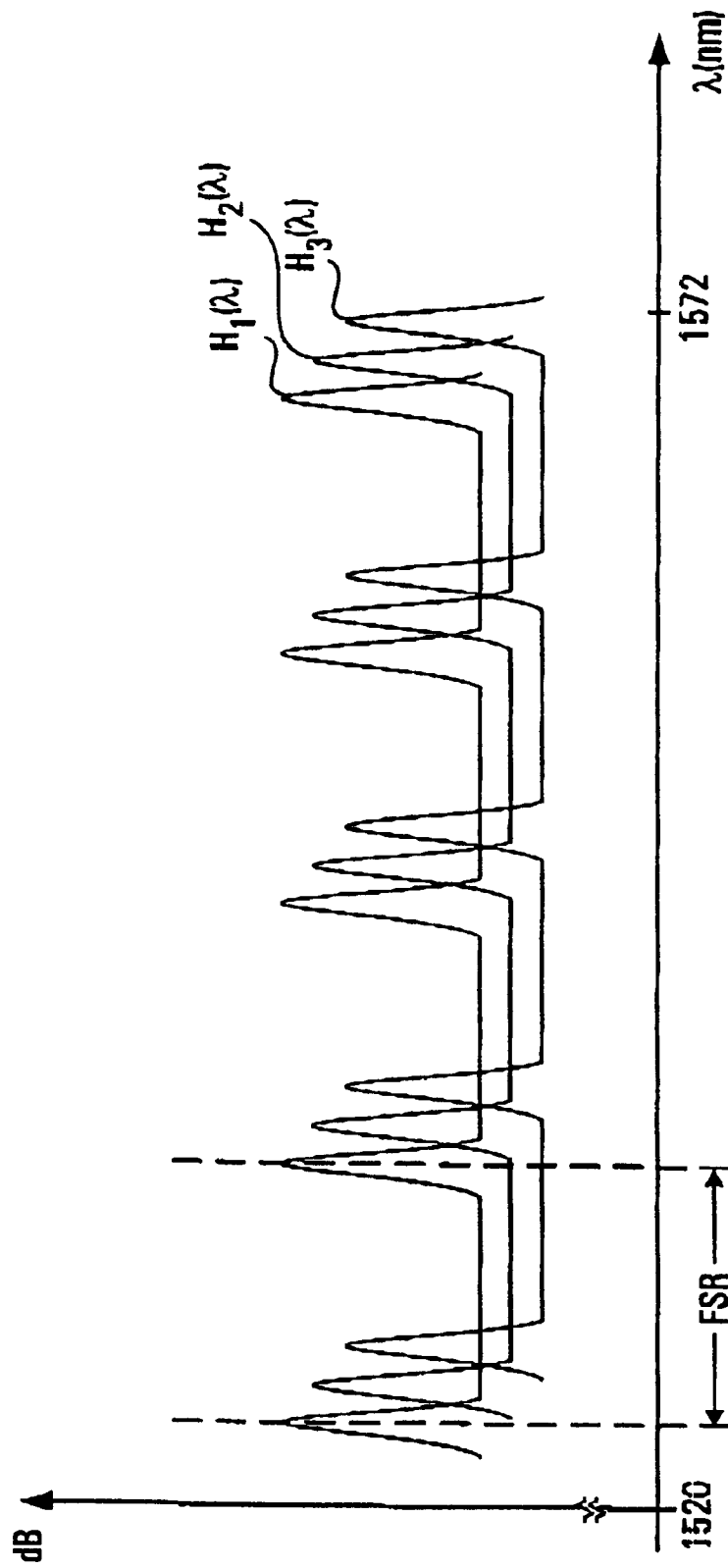


FIG. 1

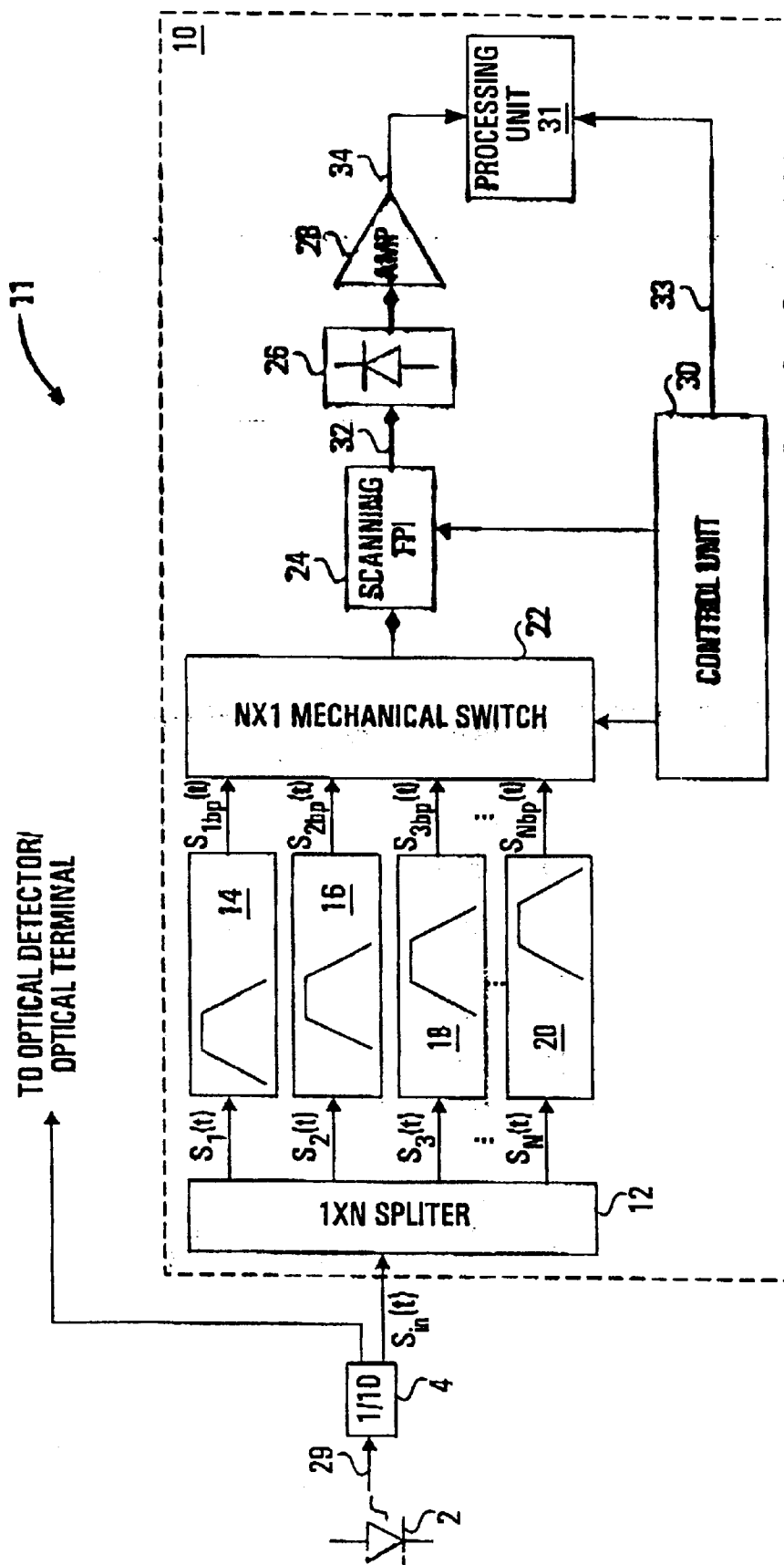


FIG. 2

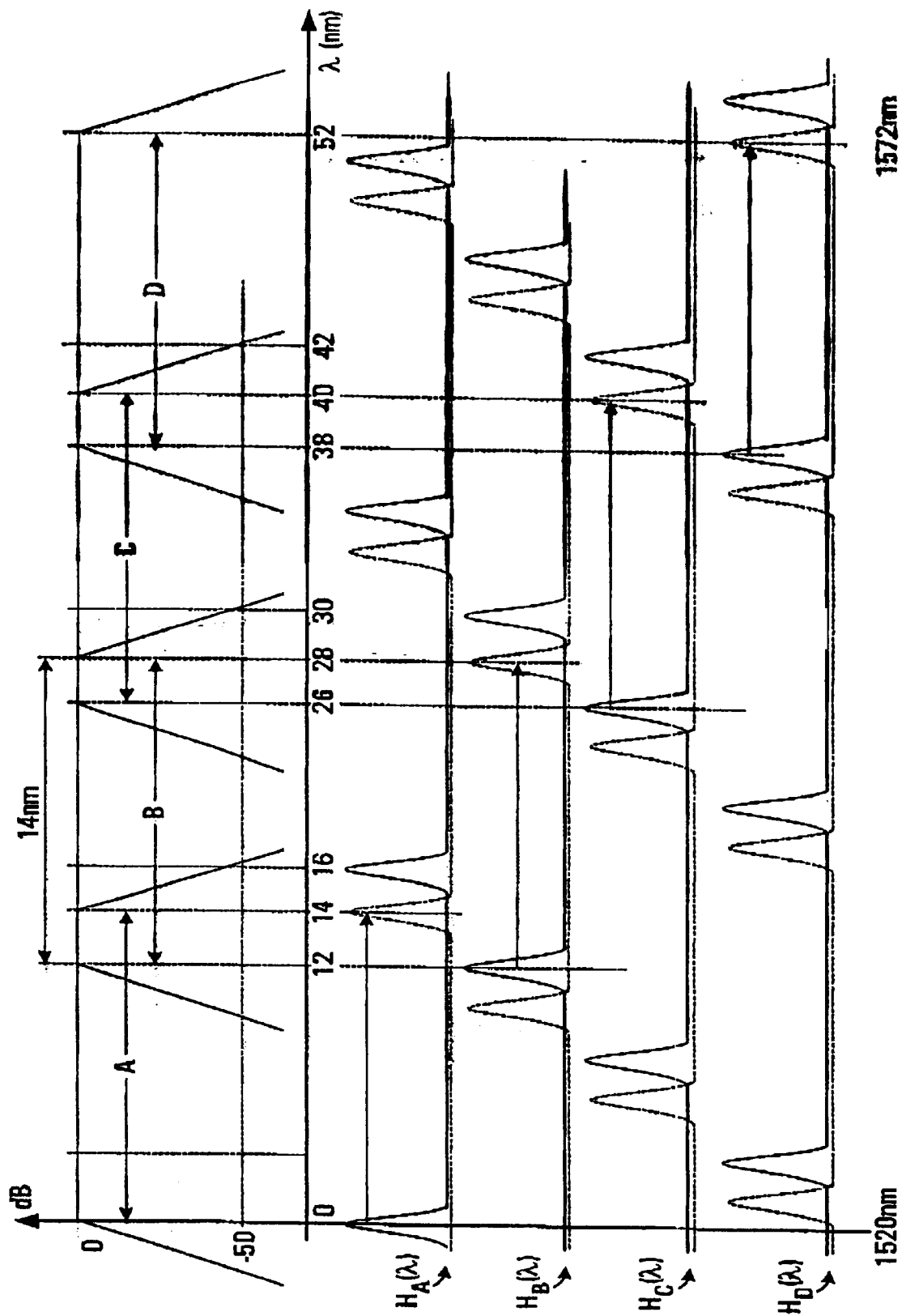


FIG. 3

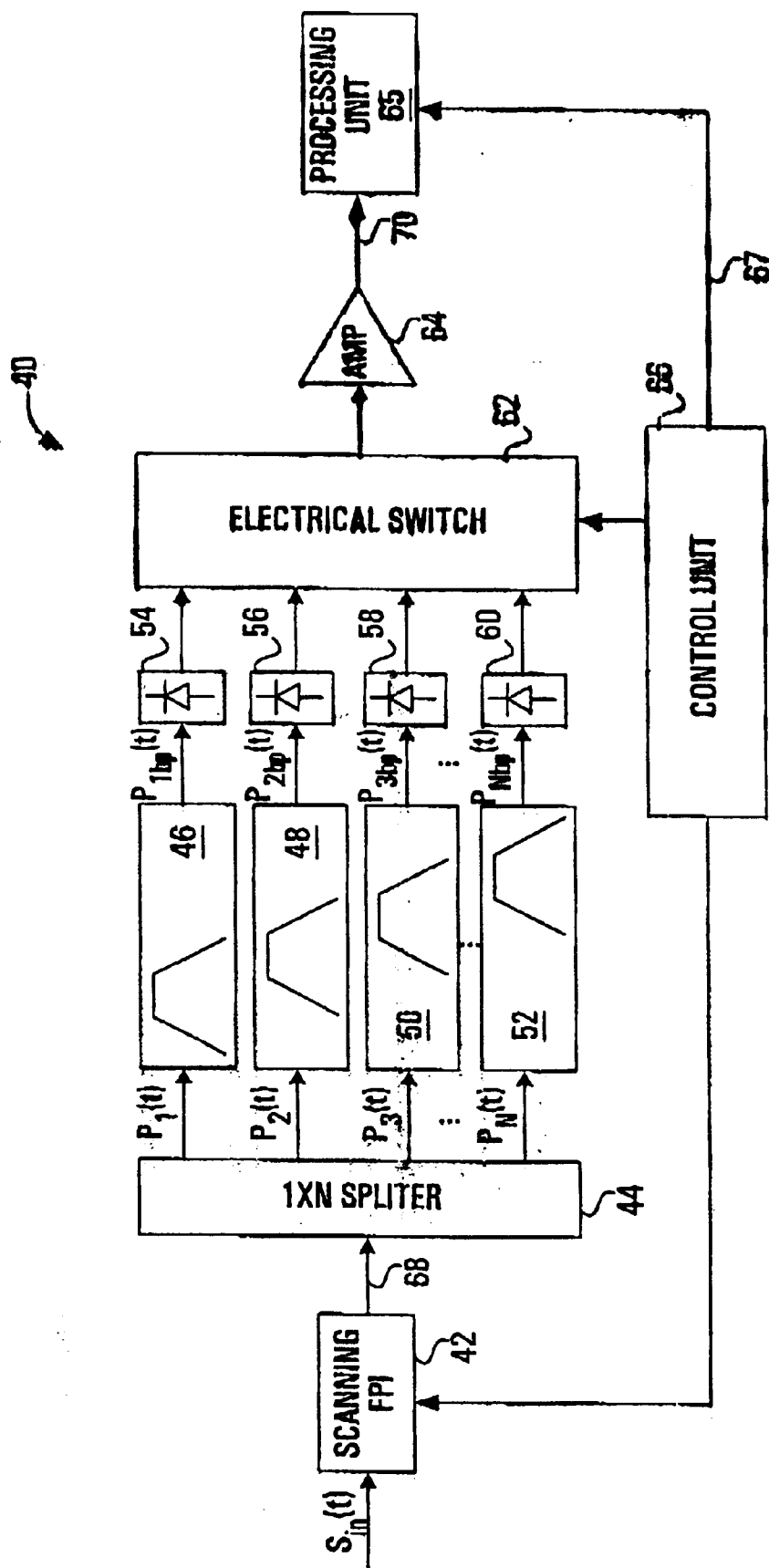


FIG. 4

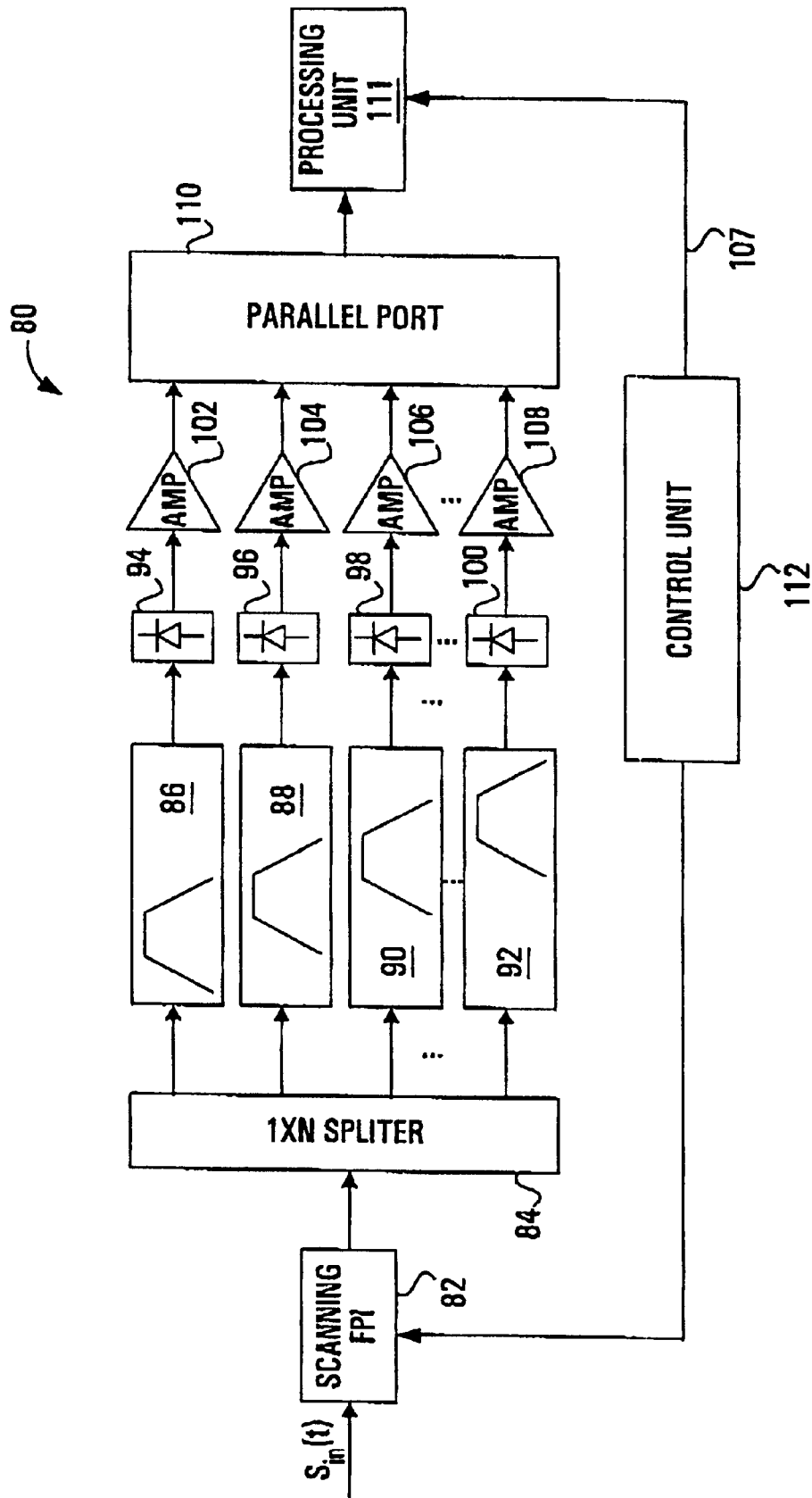


FIG. 5

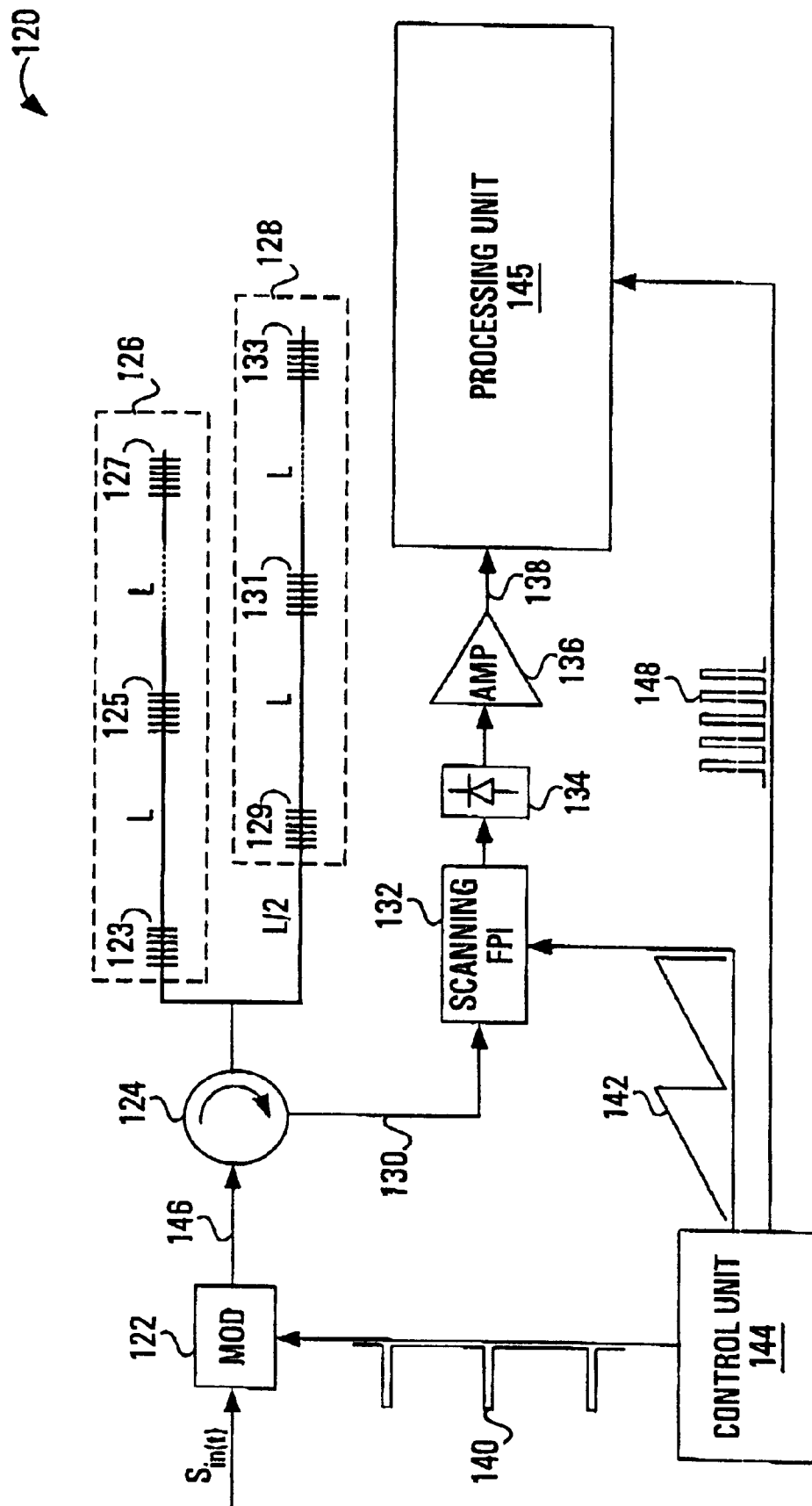
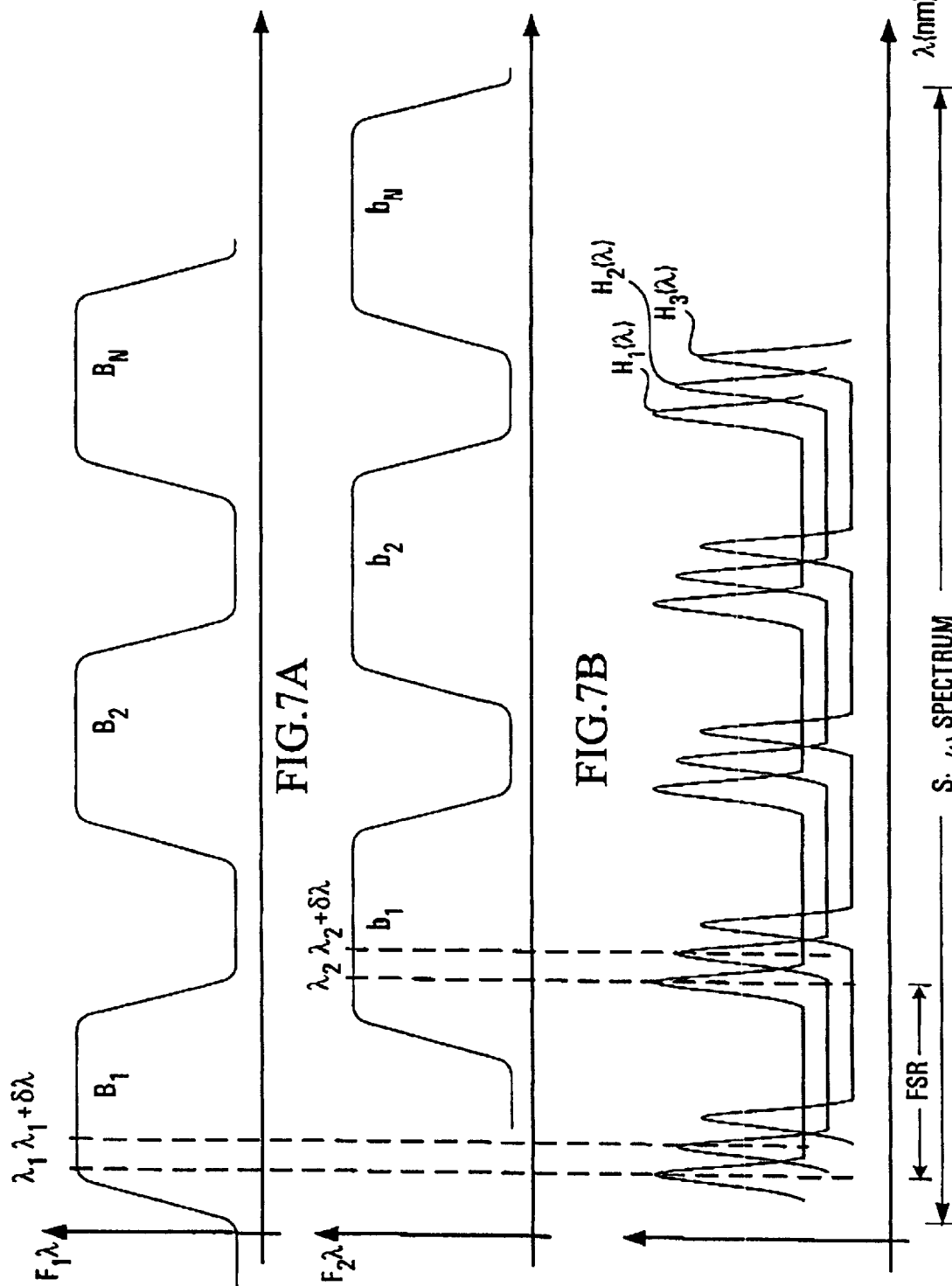


FIG. 6



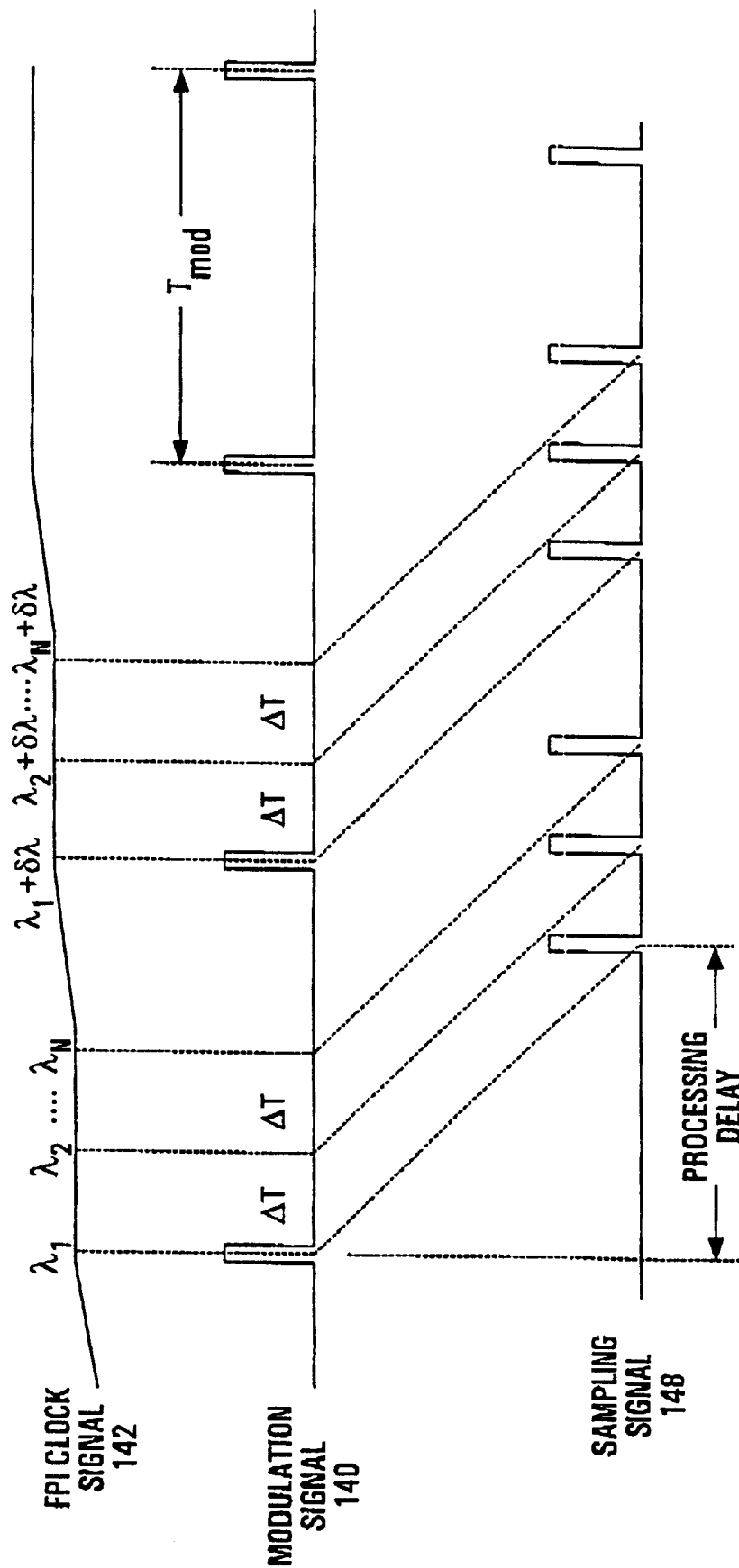


FIG. 8

MODULATION SIGNAL
140

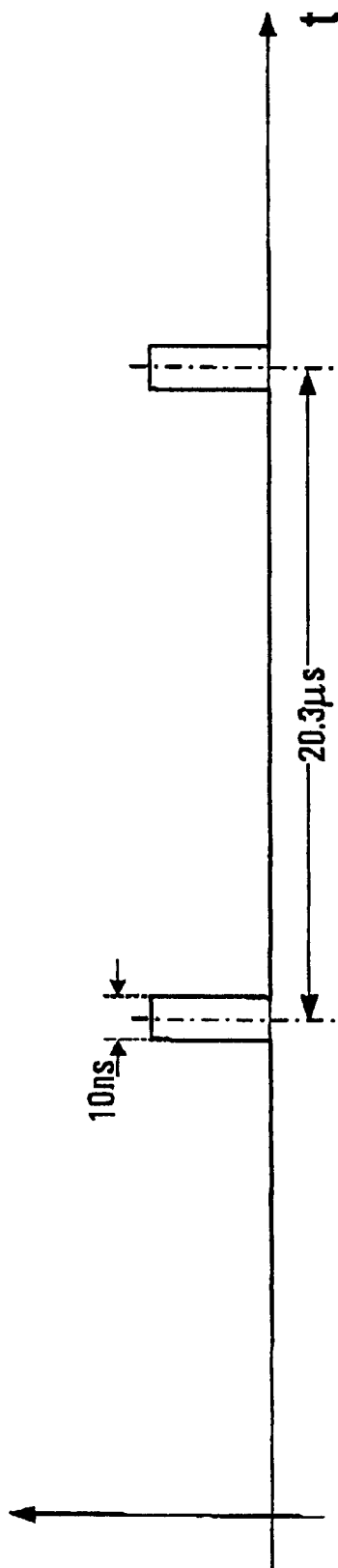


FIG.9A

FPI CLOCK
SIGNAL
142

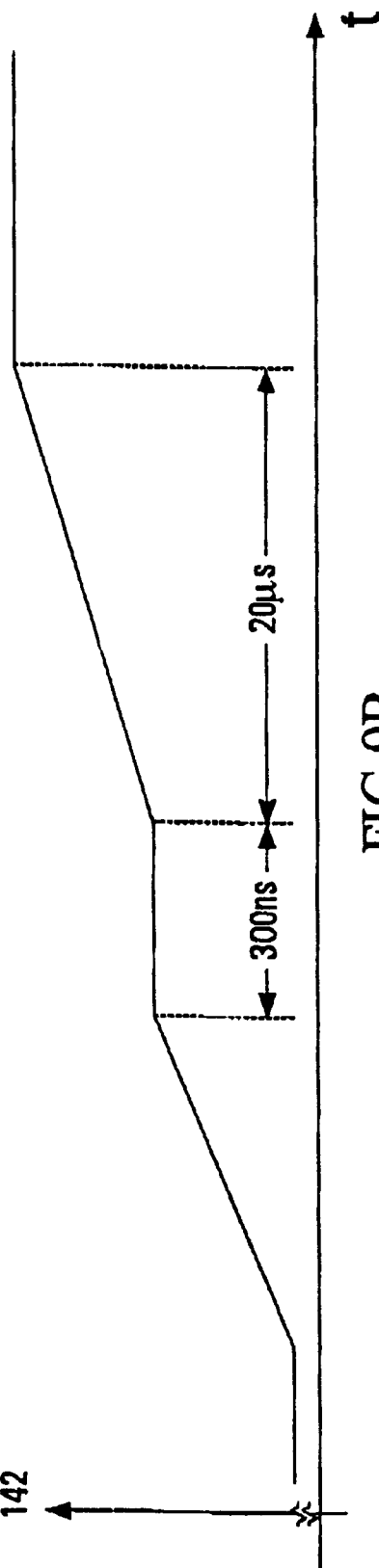


FIG.9B

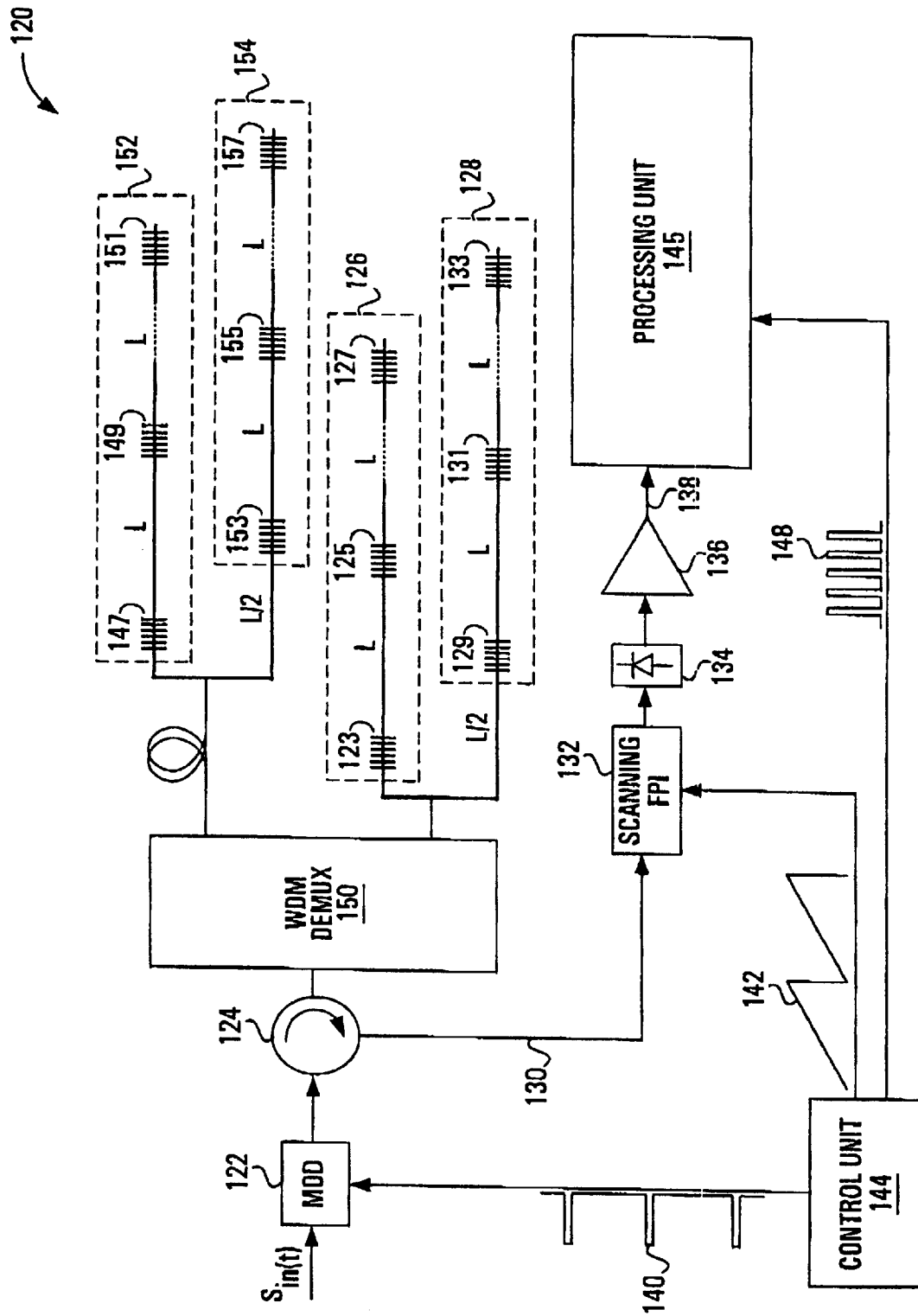


FIG. 10

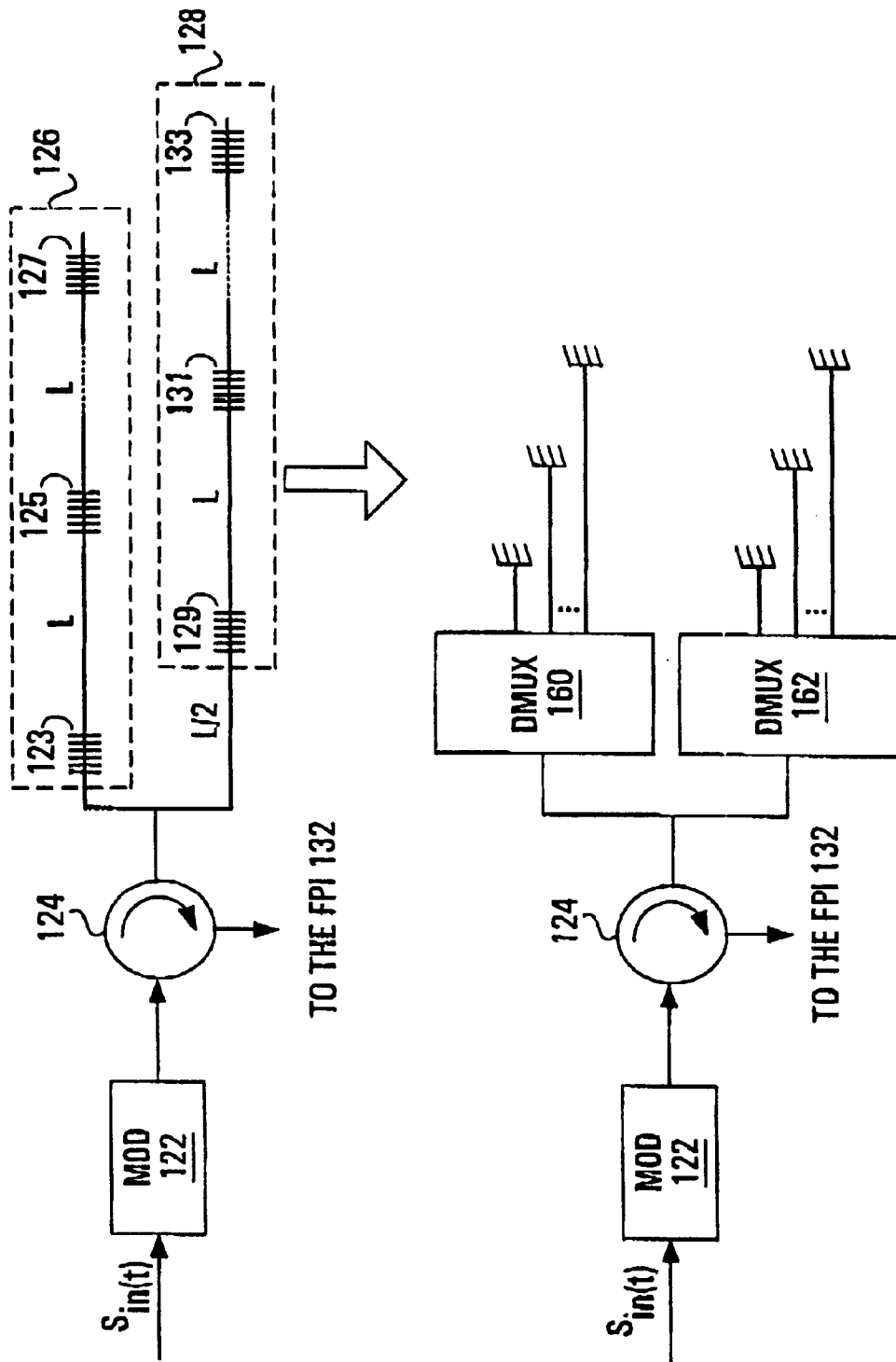


FIG. 11

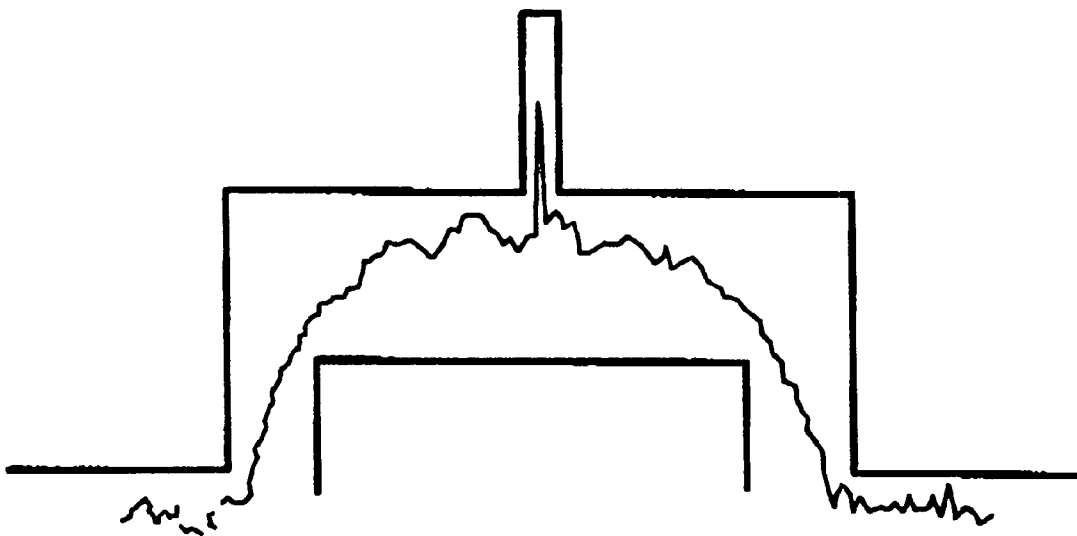


FIG. 12

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR HIGH RESOLUTION MONITORING OF OPTICAL SIGNALS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/411,649 filed Oct. 4, 1999, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,493,088.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to methods and apparatuses for monitoring optical signals, and more particularly to the monitoring of optical signals with an improved frequency resolution.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In a typical fiber optic transmission network such as, for example, a wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) network information is transported between optical terminals by optical fiber links characterized with optical channels operating at distinct wavelengths. The use of optical fibers to carry information substantially increases the distance separating optical network terminals. However, standard optical terminal interconnections are nevertheless limited by a number of factors including the optical power that can be launched into the interconnecting fibers, fiber loss, fiber dispersion and the sensitivity of optical receivers used in the optical terminals.

Where the distance between desired end points of an optical fiber transmission network exceeds the maximum distance between optical terminals over which information can be reliably transmitted, transit terminals such as optoelectronic repeaters and optical amplifiers are commonly used along the transmission path for signal amplification and regeneration. Typically, these transit terminals are placed between fiber spans that can each extend from 40 to 100 kilometers.

In most systems, the performance of this transit equipment must be monitored so that faults in operation of the optical transmission network can be isolated. This monitoring, typically referred to as link quality monitoring (LQM), helps determining whether a particular network is within specified performance requirements.

In order to effectively LQM an optical transmission network, it is well known to monitor and administrate the transmission of information in each fiber on a per-channel basis by using a small portion of the available channel bandwidth in the fiber to transmit a low frequency, low amplitude dither signal. According to this method, each channel signal is modulated before transmission with an amplitude dither signal. At a transit terminal receiver, the embedded dither signal is recovered by correlation with known dithering sequences.

As is well known, the recovered dither signal in each channel can assist in monitoring various transmission parameters downstream from the point of transmission. For example, the dither can provide a downstream estimation of the optical signal power received from a particular optical channel, assist in determining the optical signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of a particular channel signal or provide an indication as to whether a channel signal is present in a particular channel.

Presently, in order to retrieve the dither from an optical channel signal, the optical channel signal (or a portion thereof) must first be demodulated and converted into an electric form before any manipulation of the dither infor-

mation can be carried out. Unfortunately however, this would dramatically increase the cost of monitoring data transmission. As optical technology evolves toward all optical networking, there will be a need to monitor optical channel signals optically at various points without having to do a complete optical channel demodulation.

However, a high modulation depth for the dither reduces the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of the channel signal and results in a substantial degradation of the system's performance. Without a higher modulation depth, transmission monitoring over distances extending beyond 7 spans cannot be carried out with sufficient accuracy. With a higher modulation depth, the transmission of information over these long distances can be more effectively monitored but channel signal SNRs may as a result be detrimentally affected causing a significant degradation in performance. As the distance between desired end points in an optical fiber transmission network can generally exceed 7 spans, it would be desirable to increase the distances over which data transmissions can be reliably monitored without causing any penalty in performance.

These limitations have led to the development of all-optical monitoring techniques which are typically embodied into optical spectrum analyzers. With conventional optical spectrum analyzers, the transmission of information in a fiber can also be monitored on a per-channel basis. Typically, the optical channel signals travelling in the fiber are optically separated and their respective optical intensity is measured to determine the amount of light propagating in each channel. By measuring the optical intensity of each channel signal, several channel transmission parameters can be monitored including the optical channel signal power, the channel SNR and the amplified spontaneous emissions (ASE) present in each channel. Contrary to dithering techniques, these channel parameters can be measured without requiring any signal demodulation and without relying on a pre-knowledge of dither information placed on each channel signal.

There are many types of optical spectrum analyzers which are known in the art. Conventional optical spectrum analyzers typically provide a wide spectrum range and often include a dispersive element such as a Bragg cell with an array of photo-detectors. A tunable dispersive element with a single photo-detector is also commonly used. With these key components, conventional optical spectrum analyzers can monitor many channel signals over a relatively large bandwidth by tuning the dispersive element to repeatedly sweep along the optical spectrum and measure the optical light as a function of wavelength.

However, the frequency resolution conventionally achieved is quite low. Apart from the large size and low sweeping speed which is limited by the mechanical tuning of the dispersive element, the maximum resolution bandwidth of known spectrum analyzers is typically in the order of 10 GHz. Unfortunately, this resolution is not adequate to monitor closely spaced channels or distinguish between different types of optical traffic.

Various attempts have been made to improve the existing resolution. However, most of these attempts have been very expensive or have created other problems in the signal processing operation. For example, in the past, it has been attempted to improve the frequency resolution of the system by increasing the length of the Bragg cell in order to extend the frequency resolution. However, this approach is not especially productive inasmuch as the extended length of the Bragg cell has the inherent effect of substantially attenuating

the optical fiber signal which is supplied thereto whereby distortion of the optical output frequency signal is produced. Also, in many systems, such elongated Bragg cells become very expensive, delicate to handle, and hard to package.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention addresses these issues and to this end provides a methodology and apparatus to mitigate the present limitations in this art.

The present invention provides a method and apparatus for monitoring optical signals with an expanded frequency resolution. The invention permits high-resolution measurement of optical signal spectrums while retaining wide bandwidth operation through appropriate electronic control circuitry.

In order to achieve high resolution in monitoring a particular optical signal, the invention uses an interferometer to sweep the entire signal spectrum. As is well known, the interferometer has a periodic transfer function which consists of equally spaced narrow-band peaks each tunable to a particular narrow-band wavelength range. According to the invention, the interferometer frequency response is incrementally tuned in cycles so that each of its frequency response peaks cyclically scans a particular spectral band. During each cycle, the interferometer isolates multiple spectrally resolved portions of the optical signal spectrum where each portion originates from a different spectral band. By operating the interferometer to scan each band completely, a high-resolution measurement of the entire signal spectrum can be obtained.

In order to adequately process the spectrally resolved portions and obtain a complete spectral measurement of the incoming optical signal, the spectrally resolved portions are separated in the space domain as a function of wavelength. According to the invention, different methods can be used to space domain separate the spectrally resolved portions of the signal spectrum. For example, this can be accomplished by first separating the incoming optical signal spectrum into the different wavelength regions or bands to be scanned with an array of optical filters and then sequentially applying the bands separated to a scanning interferometer. Alternatively, instead of separating the incoming signal spectrum into bands before any interferometry is applied, interferometry could be applied to the incoming signal first to produce spectrally resolved portions of the signal spectrum and then separating the portions obtained in the space domain with the array optical filters.

According to the invention, the spectrally resolved portions can also be separated in the time domain as a function of time. For example, this can be accomplished by coupling the optical signal to wavelength-dependent delay lines for time-delaying the signal spectrum in bands as a function of wavelength and sequentially passing the time-delayed bands into the interferometer to produce the spectrally resolved portions in sequence.

The invention can be advantageously incorporated into an optical spectrum analyzer or directly into any optical terminal and used for link quality monitoring (LQM) in optical communications networks.

In contrast to conventional dithering methods used for LQM, the invention advantageously enables the optical monitoring of an extended range of transmission parameters including carrier wavelengths, optical SNRs, ASE noise levels, optical non-linearities or other signal baseband information such as data rates and formats.

Another advantage of the invention over dithering is that the invention is

protocol and vendor independent which substantially reduces the complexity of the LQM signal processing required in each optical terminal.

Another advantage of the invention over dithering is that data transmissions can be reliably monitored over greater distances.

The invention also advantageously provides a much higher resolution than that provided by conventional optical spectrum analyzers. With this higher resolution, closely spaced channels and optical streams operating at different speeds can be more comprehensively monitored.

Another advantage of the invention over conventional optical spectrum analyzers is that the use of a scanning interferometer substantially improves the speed of acquisition.

Other aspects and features of the present invention will become apparent to those ordinarily skilled in the art upon review of the following description of specific embodiments of the invention in conjunction with the accompanying figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the attached drawings in which:

FIG. 1 shows three wavelength plots of a typical interferometer transfer function denoted by $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$ and $H_3(\lambda)$;

FIG. 2 shows an optical spectrum analyzer according to a preferred embodiment of the invention featuring a Fabry-Perot interferometer (FPI) and a mechanical switch for monitoring an optical signal;

FIG. 3 shows a wavelength diagram of a 52 nm optical signal spectrum extending from 1520 nm to 1572 nm and four wavelength plots $H_A(\lambda)$, $H_B(\lambda)$, $H_C(\lambda)$ and $H_D(\lambda)$ of the FPI frequency response of the FPI of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 shows an optical spectrum analyzer according to another preferred embodiment of the invention featuring a FPI and multiple photo-diodes;

FIG. 5 shows an optical spectrum analyzer according to yet another preferred embodiment of the invention featuring a FPI and a parallel port;

FIG. 6 shows an optical spectrum analyzer according to yet another preferred embodiment of the invention featuring a FPI and a pair of fiber Bragg Grating (FBG) branches;

FIG. 7A shows a wavelength plot $F_1(\lambda)$ of the transfer function for a first FBG branch shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 7B shows a wavelength plot $F_2(\lambda)$ of the transfer function for a second FBG branch shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 7C shows multiple wavelength plots of the FPI transfer function denoted by $H_4(\lambda)$, $H_5(\lambda)$ and $H_6(\lambda)$;

FIG. 8 shows three timing diagrams of a modulating signal, a FPI clock signal and a sampling signal produced by a control unit of the optical spectrum analyzer of FIG. 6;

FIG. 9A shows a magnified timing diagram of the modulation signal shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 9B shows a magnified timing diagram of the FPI clock signal shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 shows the optical spectrum analyzer of FIG. 6 according to yet another preferred embodiment of the invention featuring an additional pair of FBG branches;

FIG. 11 shows the optical spectrum analyzer of FIG. 6 where each FBG branch is replaced by a wavelength division multiplexed (WDW) demultiplexer; and

FIG. 12 shows a spectrum mask which can be used according to the invention to facilitate the monitoring of various signal transmission parameters.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention provides methods and apparatuses for monitoring optical signals with an expanded frequency resolution. The invention permits high-resolution measurements of optical signal spectrums while retaining wide bandwidth operation through appropriate electronic control circuitry.

In order to achieve high resolution in monitoring a particular optical signal, the invention uses a scanning interferometer to sweep the entire signal spectrum. As is well known, the interferometer has a periodic transfer function that consists of equally spaced narrow-band peaks each tunable to a particular narrow-band wavelength range. With this periodic frequency response, the interferometer can be used to isolate a series of equally spaced, spectrally resolved portions of the signal spectrum.

Referring to FIG. 1, there is illustrated three wavelength plots of a typical interferometer transfer function with a specified period of free spectral range (FSR) shown in reference to a 52 nanometer (nm) optical bandwidth extending from 1520 nm to 1572 nm. These plots are respectively denoted by $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$ and $H_3(\lambda)$. It can be observed from these plots $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$, $H_3(\lambda)$ that the interferometer transfer function consists of a series of N equally spaced narrow-band peaks (only 5 shown) each tunable to a particular narrow-band wavelength range. The plots $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$ and $H_3(\lambda)$ are collectively representative of how the interferometer transfer function can be tuned to isolate different series of spectrally resolved portions of an optical signal spectrum.

By operating the interferometer to isolate different series (such as shown in $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$ and $H_3(\lambda)$) of spectrally resolved portions of the optical signal spectrum, a high-resolution measurement of the entire signal spectrum can be obtained. In order to do this, the interferometer is cyclically tuned such that each interferometer frequency response peak continuously scans a particular range of wavelengths, preferably at least equal to the interferometer FSR. By combining the wavelength regions swept, a high-resolution measurement of the entire signal spectrum can be assembled.

In order to comprehensively measure the spectrum of an incoming optical signal, each spectrally resolved portion produced by the interferometer must be isolated. As noted above, when an incoming optical signal is applied to an interferometer, the interferometer produces an output signal which contains a series of spectrally resolved portions of the incoming signal spectrum where each portion originates from a different wavelength region. The spectrally resolved portions of the incoming signal spectrum contained in the interferometer output signal cannot be properly processed unless they are separated first.

There are many ways by which spectrally resolved portions of an incoming signal spectrum can be separated. For example, the spectrally resolved portions can be separated in the space domain as a function of wavelength or alternatively, in the time domain as a function of time. The following section will now describe a number of preferred embodiments and methods of the invention by which spectrally resolved portions of an incoming signal spectrum can be space-domain separated. This will be followed by a description of other preferred embodiments and methods by which spectrally resolved portions can be separated in the time domain.

According to the invention, there are many ways by which spectrally resolved portions of an incoming signal spectrum can be space-domain separated. For example, this can be accomplished by first separating the incoming optical signal spectrum into the different wavelength regions to be scanned (hereinafter also referred to as "bands") and then sequentially applying the bands separated to a scanning interferometer. As will be explained below in further detail, by separating the incoming signal spectrum into a number of bands first and sequentially applying the bands separated to the interferometer, only one spectrally resolved portion from a particular region of the signal spectrum is produced at a time and the spectrally resolved portions produced from each wavelength region can, as a result, be processed separately.

Referring now to FIG. 2, there is illustrated a preferred embodiment of the invention where the spectrum of an incoming optical signal 29 is first separated into bands before being applied to a scanning Fabry-Perot interferometer (FPI) 24. For the purpose of example, the preferred embodiment of the invention shown in this figure is incorporated into an optical spectrum analyzer generally indicated by 10 which is used in an optical terminal 11 for monitoring the transmission of the incoming optical signal 29.

The optical signal is typically generated in a remote optical transmitter illustrated in FIG. 2 as a light source 2, and transmitted to the optical terminal 11 via a fiber link 29. At the optical terminal 11, the optical spectrum analyzer 10 is coupled to the fiber link 29 via a fiber coupler 4 to tap a suitable amount of optical signal power. This could be, for example, 10% of the available optical power while the remainder portion (e.g. 90%) may be transmitted through to its intended destination which may be a neighboring detector (not shown) within the optical terminal 11 or alternatively another downstream optical terminal (not shown). For clarity, the optical signal power tapped in the coupler 4 is hereinafter defined as the optical signal received in the optical spectrum analyzer 10 and is denoted by $s_{in}(t)$.

In order to separate the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum into a number of spectral bands, the optical spectrum analyzer 10 has an array of N interference filters 14, 16, 18, 20 (only 4 shown) connected to receive the incoming optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ through a 1xN power splitter 12. The interference filters 14, 16, 18, 20 are optical band pass filters designed to a particular wavelength band of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. FIG. 2 illustrates an example where 4 interference filters (N=4) are used to cover the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. Although this figure only shows 4 filters 14, 16, 18, 20 each designed with a particular pass band, it is to be noted that any number of filters with different pass bands can be used provided their pass bands combined fully cover the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. As will be explained below in further detail, these filters 14, 16, 18, 20 are designed with partially overlapping wavelength pass bands to ensure a complete coverage of the entire optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum for continuous spectrum monitoring.

Instead of using separate filters such as the filters 14, 16, 18, 20, other types of optical filtering devices could also be used. For example, wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) demultiplexers could alternatively be used to separate the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. In this situation however, at least two WDM demultiplexers with complimentary pass bands would have to be used to ensure that the WDM filtering bands used for separating the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum fully cover the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. For example, in order to separate the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum into N bands, two 1:N/2 WDM demultiplexers designed with complimentary pass bands would have to

be used. It will become apparent that if WDM multiplexers are used instead of separate optical filters, a power splitter having a reduced number of outputs will have to be used. Accordingly, if two 1:N/2 WDM demultiplexers are used, the 1:N power splitter 12 would have to be replaced by a 1:2 power splitter.

According to the invention, the spectrum range provided by the optical spectrum analyzer 11 can be expanded in various ways. For example, the spectrum range can be expanded by increasing the number of filters 14, 16, 18, 20 used or increasing the pass band of each filter 14, 16, 18, 20 and the FSR period of the FPI 24. If WDM demultiplexers are used instead of separate optical filters, another way to extend the measurable spectrum range is to increase the number of WDM demultiplexers used or use different WDM demultiplexers featuring a higher number of outputs. For clarity, and simplicity, it is hereinafter assumed that only four filters 14, 16, 18, 20 are used to separate the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum and that these filters are separate optical band pass filters.

The filters 14, 16, 18, 20 are connected to the scanning FPI 24 through a N×1 mechanical switch 22. The FPI 24 and the N×1 switch 22 are controlled by an electrical control unit 30. The FPI 22 produces an optical signal denoted by 32 which is coupled to a photo-detector 26. The photo-detector 26 converts the FPI output signal 32 into an electrical form to produce after amplification in an amplifier 28 an electrical signal 34. This electrical signal 34 is fed into a processing unit 31. The processing unit 31 is coupled to receive a sampling signal 33 from the control unit 30 for sampling the electrical signal 31 and produce a high-resolution measurement of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

In operation, the optical signal power tapped in the coupler 4 and carried by $s_{in}(t)$ is received in the optical spectrum analyzer 10 in the 1×N splitter 12. The 1×N splitter 12 functions to divide the $s_{in}(t)$ optical signal power equally to form N optical signals, $s_1(t)$, $s_2(t)$, $s_3(t)$, $s_N(t)$ which are respectively coupled to the interference filters 14, 16, 18, 20. By operation of these filters 14, 16, 18, 20, each optical signal $s_1(t)$, $s_2(t)$, $s_3(t)$, $s_N(t)$ is band pass filtered at a particular pass band to produce a respective band pass filtered signal $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$. As a result of the filtering, the $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum is separated into N partially overlapping wavelength bands where each band is carried by a respective signal $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$.

Once the $s_{in}(t)$ signal has been split into N optical signals $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$ causing the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum to be separated into N spectral bands, the switch 22 operates to sequentially couple each signal $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$ to the scanning FPI 24 so that the spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum isolated by the FPI 24 are produced in sequence. It will be recalled that the scanning FPI 24 has a periodic transfer function that consists of a series of N equally spaced narrow-band peaks where each peak is tunable to a particular narrow-band wavelength range. According to the invention, the FPI 24 is designed with an appropriate FSR (further details below) such that each band only has one peak located therein. By sequentially coupling each signal $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$ to the FPI 24, only one band of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum is coupled thereto at a time and therefore only one spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum will be produced at a time by the FPI 24.

The switch 22 is operated by the control unit 30 to sequentially couple each signal $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$ to the FPI 24 which, as a result, sequentially produces in the

optical signal 32 a series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum where each portion produced is from a different spectral band.

By operation of the FPI 24, the optical signal 32 equentially contains the isolated series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. In order to dispose of a sufficient amount of data to construct a high-resolution measurement of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum, the FPI 24 is incrementally tuned by the control unit 30 to isolate enough series (such as shown in $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$ and $H_3(\lambda)$ of FIG. 1) of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum to completely cover each band and hence, the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum (further details below).

For each FPI tuning increment, the switch 22 is operated by the control unit 30 to sequentially couple each signal $s_{1bp}(t)$, $s_{2bp}(t)$, $s_{3bp}(t)$, $s_{Nbp}(t)$ to the FPI 24 which, as a result, sequentially produces in the optical signal 32 enough series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum to completely cover the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

According to the invention, the incremental tuning of the FPI 24 is repeated in cycles (hereinafter also referred to as "scan cycles) for scanning each band of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum cyclically and provide continuous monitoring of the entire spectrum. The manner in which the FPI frequency response is incrementally tuned in cycles is further described below in reference to FIGS. 6, 7A, 7B, 7C, 8, 9A and 9B.

During each scan cycle, the optical signal 32 carries spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum in sequence. The spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum carried by the optical signal 32 are then photo-detected by the photo-detector 26 and amplified in the amplifier 28 to produce the electrical signal 34. By operation of the sampling signal 33 provided by the control unit 30, the electrical signal 34 is sampled in the processing unit 31 to digitize, record and combine the spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum so that the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum can be constructed. The sampling signal 33 is further described below in reference to FIGS. 6, 7A, 7B, 7C, 8, 9A and 9B.

To further illustrate the space domain separation of the $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum by the optical filters 14, 16, 18, 20 and the cyclical scanning of its constituent bands by the FPI 24, reference is now made to FIG. 3 where there is shown as an example a wavelength diagram of a 52 nm $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum extending from 1520 nm to 1572 nm and separated into four 14 nm partially overlapping bands (N=4) respectively denoted in FIG. 3 as A, B, C and D. In this particular example, band A extends from 1520 nm to 1534 nm, band B extends from 1532 nm to 1548 nm, band C extends from 1546 nm to 1560 nm and band D extends from 1558 nm to 1572 nm. The overlap between adjacent bands can be used for calibration in the processing unit 31 (see FIG. 2) for combining the spectrally resolved portions produced by the FPI 24 together to ensure a complete coverage and accurate construction of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. In this particular example, the band overlap is shown set to 2 nm.

The space domain separation of the $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum into these 4 bands A, B, C, D is assumed to be performed by the optical filters 14, 16, 18, 20 of FIG. 2. For the purpose of example, the optical filters 14, 16, 18, 20 are assumed to be characterized by a 50 dB/2 nm stop band and a 14 nm pass band which respectively extend from 1520 nm to 1534 nm, 1532 nm to 1548 nm, 1546 nm to 1560 nm and 1558 nm to 1572 nm.

This figure also shows referenced to these bands A, B, C, D, four wavelength plots $H_A(\lambda)$, $H_B(\lambda)$, $H_C(\lambda)$ and $H_D(\lambda)$ of the FPI frequency response illustrating the wavelength tim-

ing of the FPI response for scanning of each band A, B, C, D to produce multiple spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. More specifically, each plot $H_A(\lambda)$, $H_B(\lambda)$, $H_C(\lambda)$ and $H_D(\lambda)$ illustrates the wavelength placement of the FPI frequency response along the $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum as the FPI 24 begins to scan (full line) and completes the scanning (dotted line) of a respective band A, B, C, D.

The separation of the incoming $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum into the bands A, B, C, D and sequential processing of the bands A, B, C, D by the FPI 24 illustrated in FIG. 3 is only a particular example showing how the spectrally resolved portions of the incoming $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum produced by the FPI 24 can be space domain separated. According to the invention, other methods for space domain separating the spectrally resolved portions produced by the FPI 24 may also be used.

For example, instead of separating the incoming $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum into bands before any interferometry is applied to the $s_{in}(t)$ signal (as shown in FIG. 2), interferometry could be applied to the incoming $s_{in}(t)$ signal first to produce spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum and these portions could then be subsequently separated in the space domain with an array of optical filters. This is what is illustrated in FIG. 4.

Referring now to FIG. 4, the incoming signal $s_{in}(t)$ is first applied to an FPI 42 to produce spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum which are then subsequently separated in the space domain with an array of N filters 54, 56, 58, 60 (only 4 shown). Similarly to the embodiment shown in FIG. 2, this particular embodiment of the invention is also incorporated into an optical spectrum analyzer generally indicated by 40.

The optical spectrum analyzer 40 is coupled to receive the incoming signal $s_{in}(t)$ into the FPI 42 controlled by a control unit 66 to produce an optical signal 68 whose spectrum consists of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ signal spectrum. The optical signal 68 produced by the FPI 42 is coupled to a $1 \times N$ power splitter 68 which equally divides the optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ power into N optical signals $p_1(t)$, $p_2(t)$, $p_3(t)$, $p_N(t)$. These signals $p_1(t)$, $p_2(t)$, $p_3(t)$, $p_N(t)$ are each coupled to an interference filters 46, 48, 50, 52 forming an array N (only 4 shown). Similarly to the filters 14, 16, 18, 20 shown in FIG. 2, the filters 46, 48, 50, 52 are also optical band pass filters designed to pass partially overlapping wavelength bands of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. The filters 46, 48, 50, 52 each produces a band pass filtered signal $p_{1bp}(t)$, $p_{2bp}(t)$, $p_{3bp}(t)$, $p_{Nbp}(t)$ and are each connected to a respective photo-detector 54, 56, 58, 60 forming an array of N photo-detectors (only 4 shown). The photo-detectors 54, 56, 58, 60 are connected to an electronic switch 62 controlled by the control unit 66 to produce after amplification in an amplifier 64 an electrical signal 70 which is coupled to a processing unit 65. The processing unit 65 is coupled to receive a sampling signal 67 for sampling the electrical signal 70 and produce a high-resolution measurement of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

Similarly to the electrical signal 34 of FIG. 2, the electrical signal 70 has a spectrum which also contains separated spectrally resolved portions of the incoming signal $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. However, the manner in which the spectrally resolved portions are separated is this particular embodiment is different.

Compared to the previous embodiment described above in relation to FIG. 2, the order in which the incoming signal $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum is processed in this particular embodiment is reversed. In this particular embodiment, the incoming signal

$s_{in}(t)$ is first applied to the FPI 42 to isolate multiple series of spectrally resolved portions from the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum and these series are then separated in the space domain with the filters 46, 48, 50, 52 so that the spectrally resolved portions isolated can be processed in sequence.

Similarly to the FPI 24 of FIG. 2, the FPI 42 is also designed with a sufficiently large FSR such that each partially overlapping filter bands defined only has one FPI frequency response peak located therein. Further, the FPI 42 is also incrementally tuned by the control unit 66 so that each FPI frequency response peak completely and continuously scans a particular band.

For each FPI tuning increment, the FPI 42 isolates a different series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum where each portion is from a different band. In order to cover the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum, the FPI frequency response is incrementally swept across the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum to produce enough series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum (such as shown in $H_1(\lambda)$, $H_2(\lambda)$ and $H_3(\lambda)$ of FIG. 1) to adequately cover each band and hence cover the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

The spectrally resolved portions produced in each series are then separated by the filters 46, 48, 50, 52 and respectively carried by the signals $p_{1bp}(t)$, $p_{2bp}(t)$, $p_{3bp}(t)$, $p_{Nbp}(t)$. In this particular embodiment, the signals $p_{1bp}(t)$, $p_{2bp}(t)$, $p_{3bp}(t)$, $p_{Nbp}(t)$ are optoelectrically converted by the photo-detectors 54, 56, 58, 60 before being sequentially coupled through by the electrical switch 62 to form the electrical signal 70. By appropriately sampling the electrical signal 70 in the processing unit 65, the spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum produced in each series can be further processed therein to produce a high-resolution measurement of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

Similarly to the embodiment of FIG. 2, the incremental tuning of the FPI 42 shown in this embodiment is also continuously repeated in scan cycles so that the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum can be continuously monitored. During each scan cycle, the switch 62 sequentially produces in the electrical signal 70 the spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum separated in the filters 46, 48, 50, 52. The switch 62 is also cyclically operated in synchronization with the scan cycles to form the electrical signal 70 which is then sampled in the processing unit 65 to obtain a high-resolution measurement of the $s_{in}(t)$ signal (further details below).

Referring now to FIG. 5, there is illustrated another preferred embodiment of the invention incorporated in an optical spectrum analyzer 80 where the incoming optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ is also applied first to a FPI 82 and where the different series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum produced by the FPI 82 are processed in parallel.

Similarly to the spectrum analyzer 40 of FIG. 4, this particular optical spectrum analyzer 80 also has the FPI 82, a $1 \times N$ power splitter 84, N interference filters 86, 88, 90, 92 (only 4 shown), N photo-detectors 94, 96, 98, 100 (only 4 shown), a control unit 112 and a processing unit 111 interconnected in the same manner the FPI 42, the $1 \times N$ power splitter 44, the interference filters 46, 48, 50, 52, the photo-detectors 54, 56, 58, 60, the control unit 66 and the processing unit 65 of the optical spectrum analyzer 40 are interconnected.

For parallel processing of each series of spectrally resolved portions produced by the FPI 42, the electrical switch 62 and connecting amplifier 64 shown in FIG. 4 are replaced with an array of N amplifiers 102, 104, 106, 108 (only 4 shown) connected to a parallel port 110. In the processing unit 111, the spectrally resolved portions of the

$s_{in}(t)$ spectrum of each series are digitized by operation of a sampling signal **107** provided by the control unit **112** so that the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum can be constructed. The sampling signal **107** is further described below in reference to FIGS. **6**, **7A**, **7B**, **7C**, **8**, **9A** and **9B**.

The preferred embodiments described above in relation to FIGS. **2**, **3**, **4** and **5** are illustrative of various methods which can be used to space-domain separate spectrally resolved portions of an incoming optical signal spectrum produced by an interferometer. As noted above, the spectrally resolved portions can also be separated in the time domain.

According to the invention, this can be accomplished by time-delaying the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum in bands as a function of wavelength and sequentially passing the time-delayed bands into an interferometer to produce a series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

There are many ways by which regions of the incoming $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum can be time-delayed as a function of wavelength. Referring now to FIG. **6**, there is illustrated another preferred embodiment of the invention where bands of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum are time-delayed with fiber gratings. In this embodiment, the invention is also implemented as an optical spectrum analyzer generally indicated by **120** which can be used for monitoring the spectrum of the incoming optical signal $s_{in}(t)$.

In order to time-delay regions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum, the optical spectrum analyzer **120** has a modulator **122** coupled through a directional coupler **124** to a pair of fiber Bragg gratings (FBG) branches generally indicated by **126** and **128**. The FBG branch **126** is formed of N cascaded FBGs **123**, **125**, **127** (only three shown) and the branch **128** is formed of N cascaded FBGs **129**, **131**, **133** (only three shown). On each branch **126**, **128**, a fiber length L separates adjacent FBGs. The branches **126**, **128** are connected to the directional coupler **124** with a fiber length differential of $L/2$ to distance interleave from the directional coupler **124** the FBGs **123**, **125**, **127** of branch **126** with the FBGs **129**, **131**, **133** of branch **128**. Each FBG **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133** is tuned to a different wavelength region or band of the incoming signal spectrum to reflect any incident light therein back to the directional coupler **124**.

The directional coupler **124** is also connected to produce an optical signal **130** to an FPI **132**. The FPI **132** is connected to a photo-detector **134** which, in turn, is coupled to an amplifier **136** to produce an electrical signal **138**. The electrical signal **138** is coupled to a processing unit **145** for monitoring the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

In the optical spectrum analyzer **120**, clock synchronization is provided by a control unit **144**. More specifically, the control unit **144** generates a sampling signal **148** for the processing unit **145** to sample the electrical signal **138** (further details below) and a clock signal **140**, **142** to each of the modulator **122** and the FPI **132**.

In operation, the signal $s_{in}(t)$ is modulated in the modulator **122** with the clock signal **140** (hereinafter referred to as the "modulation signal") generated in the control unit **144**. The modulator **122** produces an output signal **146** which can be viewed as a stream of light pulses each containing a sample of the incoming signal $s_{in}(t)$. This output signal **146** is then coupled into the FBG branches **126**, **128** by the directional coupler **124** where the light present in each pulse is reflected to the FPI **132** as a function of wavelength. It will be recalled that each FBG **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133** is tuned to reflect light propagating in a particular spectral range. As the FBGs **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133** on each branch **126**, **128** are cascaded, light propagating in different

spectral ranges is reflected to the FPI **132** at different times. The signal pulses coupled into the FBGs **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133** are therefore time-delayed as a function of wavelength. This has the effect of time-domain separating the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum into wavelength regions where each region being reflected by a particular FBG **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133** at a different time.

For each signal pulse coupled into the FBGs **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133**, the FPI **132** receives bands of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum through the directional coupler **124** in sequence as each band is reflected at a different time by a particular FBG **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133**. More specifically, for each signal pulse fed into the FBGs **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133**, the FPI **132** will receive light reflected by the FBG **123** first, followed by light reflected by the FBG **125**, then light reflected by the FBG **127**, light reflected by the FBG **129**, light reflected by the FBG **131** and light reflected by the FBG **133**.

As a result of this wavelength-dependent time delay, only one band of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum is reflected at a time and only one spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum will be produced at a time by the FPI **132**. Similarly to the other embodiments hitherto described, the FPI **132** is designed with sufficiently large FSR such that each band only has one peak located therein. As the FPI **132** only receives one band at a time, the FPI **132** will only isolate a single spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum corresponding to particular narrow-band wavelength range within each band.

To further illustrate this, reference is now made to FIGS. **7A**, **7B** and **7C** where there is shown referenced to the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum a wavelength plot $F_1(\lambda)$ of the FBG branch **126** transfer function (FIG. **7A**), a wavelength plot $F_2(\lambda)$ of the FBG branch **128** transfer function (FIG. **7B**) and three wavelength plots of the FPI transfer function respectively denoted by $H_4(\lambda)$, $H_5(\lambda)$ and $H_6(\lambda)$. The FBG branch **126** transfer function (see $F_1(\lambda)$) consists of N FBG reflection bands B_1 , B_2 and B_N (only 3 shown) where each band is associated with a particular FBG **123**, **125**, **127**. Similarly, the FBG branch **128** transfer function (see $F_2(\lambda)$) consists of N FBG reflection bands b_1 , b_2 and b_N (only 3 shown) where each band is associated with a particular FBG **129**, **131**, **133**. Combined, the FBG transfer functions $F_1(\lambda)$ and $F_2(\lambda)$ cover the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum so that light propagating at any wavelength of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum can be fully reflected back to the FPI **132** for continuous monitoring.

For each particular signal pulse produced by the modulator **122**, the FBGs **123**, **125**, **127**, **129**, **131**, **133** each operates to reflect a respective band B_1 , B_2 , B_N , b_1 , b_2 , b_N of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum at a different time. The FPI **132** receives the bands reflected in sequence and produce therefrom a series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. The plots $H_4(\lambda)$, $H_5(\lambda)$ and $H_6(\lambda)$ are each representative of how the FPI transfer function is used for a particular signal pulse to produce a different series of spectrally resolved portions of the optical signal spectrum.

For example, it can be observed from $H_4(\lambda)$ of FIG. **7** that as the band B_1 is reflected, a spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum centered at λ_1 is isolated by the FPI **132**. When the band b_1 is reflected some time later, another spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum centered at λ_2 is isolated. This process is repeated until all bands B_1 , B_2 , B_N and b_1 , b_2 , b_N have been reflected for this signal pulse and the FPI **132** has isolated therefrom a spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

The FPI **132** is then incrementally tuned by the control unit **144** with the clock signal **142** (hereinafter the "FPI

clock signal”) to move the FPI transfer function slightly across the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum by $\delta\lambda$ for the next signal pulse (see $H_2(\lambda)$). For this next pulse, as the band B_1 is reflected, a spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum centered at $\lambda_1 + \delta\lambda$ is isolated by the FPI 132. When the band b_1 is reflected some time later, another spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum this time centered at $\lambda_2 + \delta\lambda$ is isolated. Again, this process is repeated until all bands B_1, b_1, B_2, b_2, B_N and b_N have been reflected and the FPI 132 has isolated therefrom a spectrally resolved portion of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

By operating the FPI 132 to isolate different series (such as shown in $H_4(\lambda)$, $H_5(\lambda)$ and $H_6(\lambda)$) of spectrally resolved portions of the optical signal spectrum, a high-resolution measurement of the entire signal spectrum can be obtained. Similarly to the embodiments described above, the FPI 132 is tuned by the control unit 144 so that each FPI frequency response peak can sweep across an entire band $B_1, b_1, B_2, b_2, B_3, b_3$. Similarly to the other embodiments described above, the incremental tuning of the FPI 132 shown in this embodiment is also continuously repeated in cycles so that each band is continuously scanned and therefore the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum continuously monitored. The tuning of the FPI 132 will now be further described in detail together with the modulation signal 140 and sampling signal 148 generated by the control unit 144. It is understood that with the exception of the modulation signal 140, this description equally applies to the embodiments shown and described above in relation to FIGS. 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Referring back to FIG. 6, the tuning of the FPI 132 is performed with the clock signal 142 generated by the control unit 144. With this clock signal 142, the control unit 144 operates to incrementally move the FPI frequency response along the optical spectrum in cycles to provide continual monitoring of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

During each clock signal cycle, the FPI frequency response is progressively shifted across the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum so that the FPI 132 can isolate different series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. In order to progressively shift the FPI frequency response, the control unit 144 increases the FPI clock signal 142 amplitude (voltage or current) in fixed increments until the FPI frequency response has been moved across the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. Each clock signal increment places the FPI frequency response to a different wavelength location along the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. According to the invention, a new signal pulse is generated by the modulator 122 each time the clock signal amplitude is incremented so that for each clock signal increment, the FPI 122 can isolate a different series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. By sampling the resulting output signal 138 in the processing unit 145, the spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum isolated can be digitized and collected therein to produce a high-resolution measurement of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

To further illustrate this, reference is now made to FIG. 8 where there is shown a timing diagram of a cycle portion of the FPI clock signal 142 together with the modulation signal 140 and the optical spectrum analyzer sampling signal 148 referenced thereto. From this figure, it can be observed that during each clock signal increment, a new signal pulse is generated by the modulator 122 and a different series of spectrally resolved portions of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum is isolated by the FPI 132. It can also be observed that during each clock signal increment, samples of each spectrally resolved portion isolated are taken at ΔT intervals following an initial processing delay to construct in the processing unit 145 (see FIG. 145) a high resolution of the entire $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

The speed at which the optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum can be cyclically swept is a function of the speed at which the optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ can be modulated. For fast monitoring of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum, the signal $s_{in}(t)$ must be modulated by the modulator 122 at a high modulation frequency $1/T_{mod}$ to define a small modulation (sweeping) period T_{mod} . It will be appreciated that the modulation period T_{mod} cannot be any less than the time necessary T_{sweep} for the optical spectrum analyzer 120 to sweep across the entire optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum (also referred to as the “sweeping speed”):

$$T_{mod} \geq T_{sweep}$$

In order to select the smallest modulation period T_{mod} possible, the sweeping time T_{sweep} of the optical spectrum analyzer 120 shown in FIG. 6 must first be determined. The following section will now describe an example of how T_{sweep} can be determined to calculate the smallest modulation period T_{mod} possible.

An important constraint affecting T_{sweep} is the scanning speed of the FPI 132 (time to scan an entire FSR period). The scanning speed of an FPI is a measure of the time required to move the FPI transfer function across the optical spectrum to scan an entire FSR period. Generally, the scanning speed of a typical FPI scanning speed using a piezo-electric translator (PZT) can be in the order of one millisecond (ms). The FPI scanning speed can also be expressed on a per-step basis. For example, if 200 steps are used to scan an FSR period, it can be assumed for any commercially available FPI exhibiting a scanning speed in the order of 1 ms that the FPI scanning time per step also referred to as the “settling time per step” will not exceed 20 μ sec:

$$\text{FPI settling time/step} = 20 \mu\text{sec} > (1 \text{ ms}/200 = 5 \mu\text{sec})$$

In addition to being dependent upon the scanning speed of the FPI 132, the sweeping time T_{sweep} of the optical spectrum analyzer 120 is also a function of the processing time necessary for the FPI 132 to process each signal pulse. It will be recalled that before reaching the FPI 132, each pulse is time-delayed by the FBGs 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133 as a function of wavelength. The time necessary to process a particular pulse (hereinafter referred to as the “data acquisition time”) can be defined as the time necessary for all the pulse spectrum bands to propagate through the FBG branches 126, 128 and reach the FPI 132. The data acquisition time can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Data acquisition time} = 2 * N * \Delta T$$

where N is the number of FBGs 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133 present in each branch 126, 128 defining the number of reflected bands therein and ΔT is the time elapsed at the FPI 132 between the receipt of any two sequentially reflected bands of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum.

At the FPI 132, any two sequentially received bands of the $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum are reflected by a FBG 123, 125, 127 of branch 126 and an FBG 129, 131, 133 of branch 128 which are distance interleaved relative to directional coupler 124 by a fiber length of $L/2$. The time ΔT elapsed at the FPI 132 between the receipt of any two sequentially reflected bands of the incoming signal spectrum is a function of the distance separating the reflecting FBGs 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133 relative to the directional coupler 124 and can be expressed as:

$$\Delta T = 2 * n * \Delta L / c;$$

where n is the refractive index of the fiber used, ΔL is the distance separating the reflecting FBGs 123, 125, 127, 129,

131, 133 ($L/2$) and c is the speed of light in vacuum. Considering the above expressions, the data acquisition time can be reformulated as:

$$\text{Data acquisition time} = (2 \cdot N \cdot 2 \cdot n \cdot L) / (2 \cdot c) = 2 \cdot N \cdot n \cdot L / c;$$

Without loss of generality, the data acquisition time and the FPI settling time/step summed can be said to define the minimum amount of time necessary for the optical spectrum analyzer 120 to sweep across the entire optical signal $s_{in}(t)$ spectrum. In other words, they define T_{sweep} :

$$T_{sweep} = \text{data acquisition time} + \text{FPI settling time/step}$$

Considering the above expressions for the data acquisition time and the FPI settling time/step, T_{sweep} for a 200 step scan FPI exhibiting a scanning speed in the order of 1 ms is given by:

$$T_{sweep} = 2 \cdot N \cdot n \cdot L / c + 20 \text{ } \mu\text{sec}$$

As an example, assuming the refractive index of the fiber used is 1.5, if 10 FBGs ($N=10$) are used in the FBG branches 126, 128, and the length L separating adjacent FBGs in a same branch 126, 128 is 1.5 meters (m), T_{sweep} would be:

$$\begin{aligned} T_{sweep} &= (2 \cdot 10 \cdot 1.5 \cdot 1.5 \text{ m}) / (3 \cdot 10^8 \text{ m/s}) + 20 \text{ } \mu\text{sec}; \\ &= 300 \text{ nsec} + 20 \text{ } \mu\text{sec}; \\ &= 20.3 \text{ } \mu\text{sec} \end{aligned}$$

As the modulation period T_{mod} cannot be any less than T_{sweep} ($T_{mod} > T_{sweep}$), T_{sweep} defines a lower limit for the modulation period T_{mod} and the minimum value possible for T_{mod} would be 20.3 μsec .

To further illustrate this, FIG. 9A shows a time plot of the modulation signal 140 with $T_{mod} = 20.3 \text{ } \mu\text{sec}$ and FIG. 9B shows a corresponding portion of the FPI clock signal 142 with a period T_{sweep} formed of a 300 nsec data acquisition time and a 20 μsec FPI settling time per step.

According to the invention, the spectrum range provided by the optical spectrum analyzer can be expended either by cascading more FBGs in each FBG branch 126, 128 or by increasing the reflection band of each FBG and the FSR period of the FPI 132. Another way to extend the measurable spectrum range is to use a WDM coupler to increase the number of FBG branches that can be used. FIG. 10 shows an example where a 3-port WDM coupler 150 is used to add another pair of FBG branches 152, 154 and therefore double the measurable spectrum range.

In this particular example, the WDM coupler 150 interconnects each FBG branch 126, 128, 152, 154 to the directional coupler 124. The new FBG branches 152, 154 are identical to the existing FBG branches 126 and 128 and, as such, are each formed of N cascaded FBGs 147, 149, 151 and 153, 155, 157 respectively (only three shown in each branch 156, 158). Similarly to the FBGs 123, 125, 127 and 129, 131, 133 of the existing branches 126, 128, the FBGs 147, 149, 151 and 153, 155, 157 of the new branches 156, 158 are distance interleaved relative to the directional coupler 124 with a fiber length differential of $L/2$. The new branches 156, 158 are connected to the directional coupler 124 by a fiber of length $(N \cdot L + L/2)$ to prevent light reflected therein from interfering with light reflected in the existing branches 126, 128. With this additional fiber length, the FPI 132 will receive bands reflected by the existing branches 126, 128 first before receiving any band reflected by the new branches 156, 158.

Instead of using optical fiber gratings, an alternative way to make wavelength-dependent delay lines is to use WDM

demultiplexers. FIG. 11 shows an example where each FBG branch 126, 128 of the embodiment of FIG. 6 has been replaced by a WDM demultiplexer 160, 162 connected to separate the $S_{in}(t)$ spectrum into N bands and coupling each band separated into one of a plurality N of optically terminated fiber lines (only 3 shown). In this particular example, the fiber lines are each of a different length to implement a different delay for each band. As a result of the different lengths, the bands are reflected to the FPI 132 at a different time therefore achieving a time domain separation of the optical signal spectrum. An advantage of this particular configuration is that the different bands are time delayed in parallel without any cascading loss incurred as would otherwise be the case with the use of cascaded FBGs.

The invention described above by way of preferred embodiments can be used to effectively resolve the optical signal spectrum with a high resolution. Referring now to FIG. 12, a spectrum mask can be used to facilitate the monitoring of various signal transmission parameters such as carrier wavelengths, optical SNRs, ASE noise levels, optical non-linearities or other signal baseband information such as data rates and formats.

Although embodiments of the invention have been described above, it is not limited thereto and it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that numerous modifications form part of the present invention insofar as they do not depart from the spirit, nature and scope of the claimed and described invention.

The preferred embodiments of the present invention have each been described above in relation to a particular optical spectrum analyzer implementation. It is to be understood that for monitoring optical signals, the invention is not limited to optical spectrum implementations and can also be incorporated directly into any optical terminal. This could be useful for example for link quality monitoring (LQM) in optical communications networks.

The invention has been described above in relation to a FPI interferometer operable to scan different wavelength regions of an optical signal spectrum. It is to be understood that other interferometers could be used provided they exhibit a cyclical transfer function of narrow-band peaks each tunable to a particular narrow-band wavelength range and are operable to isolate different spectrally resolved portions of the signal spectrum in accordance with the principles described therein.

Further, the preferred embodiments described above in relation to FIGS. 2, 3, 4, have been described with respect to separate optical band pass filters to separate the optical signal spectrum. It is to be understood that other types of optical filtering devices such as WDM demultiplexers could also be used to achieve the same function provided the filtering bands used for separating the signal spectrum fully cover the entire spectrum. If WDM demultiplexers are used to separate the signal spectrum, at least two WDM demultiplexers with complimentary pass bands would have to be used in order to ensure that the WDM filtering bands combined fully cover the entire spectrum.

The control unit responsible for controlling the FPI scanning, the timing of data acquisition in the processing unit and in some embodiments, the modulation of the incoming optical signal in a modulator and the processing unit responsible for data acquisition, recording, processing and spectrum monitoring have been described above as separate units. It is understood that other implementations are possible. For example, the control unit and processing unit could alternatively be implemented together as a single controlling and processing unit. In the further alternative, the

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control, and processing units could also be implemented as a series of smaller units, each responsible for a particular control or processing function and still fall within the purview of the invention.

We claim:

1. Apparatus for measuring parameters of an input optical signal comprising:

an interferometer having a cyclical transfer function of narrow band peaks to produce a plurality of spectrally resolved portions of said optical signal;

means for isolating said spectrally resolved portions; and means for measuring said parameters from said isolated spectrally resolved portions.

2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said means for isolating includes means for separating said spectrally resolved portions in the space domain as a function of wavelength.

3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein said means for separating is located before said interferometer for first separating the optical signal spectrum into different wavelength bands, and wherein each band is scanned by said interferometer.

4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein said means for separating is located after said interferometer for separating the spectrally resolved portions in the space domain.

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said means for isolating includes means for separating said spectrally resolved portions in the time domain as a function of time.

6. A link quality monitor for an optical transmission system comprising the apparatus of claim 1 wherein said parameters include carrier wavelengths.

7. A link quality monitor for an optical transmission system comprising the apparatus of claim 1 wherein said parameters include optical signal to noise ratios.

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8. A link quality monitor for an optical transmission system comprising the apparatus of claim 1 wherein said parameters include ASE noise levels.

9. A link quality monitor for an optical transmission system comprising the apparatus of claim 1 wherein said parameters include optical non-linearities.

10. A link quality monitor an optical transmission system comprising the apparatus of claim 1 wherein said parameters include signal baseband information.

11. A method for measuring parameters of an input optical signal comprising:

scanning said optical signal with an interferometer having a cyclical transfer function of narrow band peaks to produce a plurality of spectrally resolved portions of said optical signal; isolating said spectrally resolved portions; and

measuring said parameters from said isolated spectrally resolved portions.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11 wherein said step of isolating includes separating said spectrally resolved portions in the space domain as a function of wavelength.

13. A method as claimed in claim 12 wherein said step of separating occurs prior to the scanning by interferometer in order to first separate the optical signal spectrum into different wavelength bands, and then scanning each band by said interferometer.

14. A method as claimed in claim 12 wherein said step of separating occurs after said interferometer for separating the spectrally resolved portions in the space domain.

15. A method as claimed in claim 11 wherein said step of isolating includes separating said spectrally resolved portions in the time domain as a function of time.

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