

COHERENT RECEIVER HAVING AN INTERLEAVE-CHIRPED ARRAYED WAVEGUIDE GRATING

BACKGROUND

5 Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to optical communication equipment and, more specifically but not exclusively, to coherent optical receivers.

Description of the Related Art

10 This section introduces aspects that may help facilitate a better understanding of the invention(s). Accordingly, the statements of this section are to be read in this light and are not to be understood as admissions about what is in the prior art or what is not in the prior art.

An optical coherent-detection scheme is capable of detecting not only the
15 amplitude of an optical signal, but also the signal's phase. These capabilities make optical coherent detection compatible with the use of spectrally efficient modulation formats, such as quadrature-amplitude modulation and phase-shift keying (PSK) in its various forms (e.g., differential binary PSK and differential quadrature PSK). Compared to non-coherent detectors, optical coherent detectors offer relatively easy
20 wavelength tunability, good rejection of interference from adjacent channels in wavelength-division-multiplexing (WDM) systems, linear transformation of the electromagnetic field into an electrical signal for effective application of modern digital-signal-processing techniques, and an opportunity to use polarization-division multiplexing (PDM).

25 An optical coherent detector usually employs a 90-degree hybrid that mixes a received optical communication signal and a local oscillator signal so that the data carried by the optical communication signal can be recovered. However, one problem with a prior-art optical coherent detector is that it typically requires a separate 90-degree hybrid for each WDM and/or PDM component of the optical communication
30 signal. Disadvantageously, this multiplicity of constituent devices makes the use of optical coherent detection in WDM and/or PDM systems relatively expensive and

causes the corresponding receivers to be relatively large and/or to exhibit relatively high optical attenuation.

SUMMARY

5 Disclosed herein are various embodiments of an optical coherent detector having an interleave-chirped arrayed waveguide grating (AWG). The AWG has a periodic chirp pattern that enables the AWG to function as an optical 90-degree hybrid. If the AWG is implemented using a birefringent material, then the AWG can also function as a polarization demultiplexer. In one embodiment, the AWG is
10 designed to simultaneously function as a wavelength demultiplexer, a polarization demultiplexer for each wavelength-division-multiplexed (WDM) signal component, and a 90-degree hybrid for each polarization-division-multiplexed component of each WDM signal component. Advantageously over the prior art, optical coherent detectors of the invention can be implemented using relatively few constituent
15 devices.

According to one embodiment, provided is an apparatus having an AWG that comprises (i) a substrate having a planar surface; (ii) a first optical star coupler being along said surface and having first and second optical inputs and a first spatial array of optical outputs; (iii) a second optical star coupler being along said surface and
20 having a second spatial array of optical inputs and a third spatial array of optical outputs; and (iv) an array of waveguide arms, each waveguide arm connecting one optical output of the first spatial array to a corresponding optical input of the second spatial array. The array of waveguide arms is configured to cause a first set of four optical outputs of the third spatial array to receive four different phase combinations
25 of light received at the first and second optical inputs in response to the light received at the first and second optical inputs being of about the same wavelength.

According to another embodiment, provided is a method of processing an optical signal having the step of providing an AWG that comprises (i) a substrate having a planar surface; (ii) a first optical star coupler being along said surface and
30 having first and second optical inputs and a first spatial array of optical outputs; (iii) a second optical star coupler being along said surface and having a second spatial array of optical inputs and a third spatial array of optical outputs; and (iv) an array of

waveguide arms, each waveguide arm connecting one optical output of the first spatial array to a corresponding optical input of the second spatial array. The method further has the step of applying (a) an optical input signal to a first optical input waveguide and (b) a local-oscillator signal to a second optical input waveguide of the
5 AWG to produce four different phase combinations of the optical input signal and the local-oscillator signal at a set of four optical outputs of the third spatial array.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other aspects, features, and benefits of various embodiments of the invention
10 will become more fully apparent, by way of example, from the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a block-diagram of a coherent optical receiver according to one embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 schematically shows the layout of an arrayed waveguide grating (AWG)
15 that can be used in the receiver of Fig. 1 according to one embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3 schematically shows the layout of an AWG that can be used in the receiver of Fig. 1 according to another embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 4 schematically shows the layout of an AWG that can be used in the
20 receiver of Fig. 1 according to yet another embodiment of the invention; and

Figs. 5A-B show diagrams of an AWG that can be used in the receiver of Fig. 1 according to yet another embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

25 Fig. 1 shows a block-diagram of a coherent optical receiver **100** according to one embodiment of the invention. Receiver **100** has an arrayed waveguide grating (AWG) **110** having (i) two input ports labeled **S** and **R** and (ii) a plurality of output ports labeled **1** through **N**. AWG **110** optically mixes input signals **102** and **104** applied to input ports **S** and **R**, respectively, to generate **N** mixed signals **112₁-112_N** at
30 output ports **1** through **N**, respectively. In various embodiments, input signal **102** can be a non-multiplexed signal or a multiplexed signal that has wavelength-division-multiplexed (WDM) and/or polarization-division multiplexed (PDM) signal

components. Depending on the intended type of input signal **102**, AWG **110** can be designed to perform the functions of: (i) a 90-degree hybrid; (ii) a wavelength demultiplexer and a 90-degree hybrid for each WDM component; (iii) a polarization demultiplexer and a 90-degree hybrid for each PDM component; or (iv) a wavelength demultiplexer, a polarization demultiplexer for each WDM component, and a 90-degree hybrid for each PDM component of each WDM component. Representative AWG structures corresponding to these embodiments of AWG **110** are described in more detail below in reference to Figs. 2-5.

Input signal **104** is a local-oscillator (LO) signal that is used for coherent detection of input signal **102**. As such, input signal **104** has signal components corresponding to the signal components of input signal **102**. For example, if input signal **102** has n WDM components, then LO signal **104** also has n spectral components, each having substantially the same optical-carrier frequency (wavelength) as the corresponding WDM component of input signal **102**. Similarly, if input signal **102** has two PDM components for each optical-carrier frequency, then LO signal **104** also has two corresponding polarization components for each optical-carrier frequency. In one embodiment, LO signal **104** is generated at receiver **100**, as known in the art, e.g., using an optical phase-lock loop (PLL, not explicitly shown in Fig. 1). In an alternative embodiment, LO signal **104** is received from a remote transmitter (not explicitly shown in Fig. 1), e.g., as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 7,269,356, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Note that the embodiments of receiver **100** designed for processing PDM signals might include an optional polarization-control element **106** located at input port **R** of AWG **110**. One function of polarization-control element **106** is to ensure that LO signal **104** provides adequate optical power for each of the relevant signal polarizations. For example, polarization-control element **106** might be configured to change/rotate the polarization of LO signal **104** so that, upon coupling into AWG **110**, the LO signal has substantially equal optical power in transverse electric (TE) and transverse magnetic (TM) waveguide-polarization modes. Equal power partition will occur, e.g., when polarization-control element **106** causes (i) the polarization of a linearly polarized LO signal **104** to be oriented at about 45 degrees with respect to the plane of AWG **110** or (ii) LO signal **104** to be circularly polarized.

As used in this specification, the terms TE and TM polarizations/modes are inclusive of both (i) conventional TE and TM polarizations/modes and (ii) quasi-TE and quasi-TM polarizations/modes.

Receiver **100** further has a detector array **120** that converts N optical signals **112₁-112_N** into K electrical signals **122₁-122_K** indicative of complex values corresponding to the independently modulated components of input signal **102**. Each of electrical signals **122₁-122_K** might be amplified in a corresponding (optional) amplifier **130**. Each of the resulting signals **132₁-132_K** is converted into digital form in a corresponding analog-to-digital converter (ADC) **140**. The resulting digital signals **142₁-142_K** are processed by a digital signal processor (DSP) **150** to recover the data carried by each independently modulated component of input signal **102**. In a representative embodiment, N=K or N=2K. In one embodiment, AWG **110** and detector array **120** are implemented on a common substrate as parts of a single integrated circuit.

Fig. 2 schematically shows the layout of an AWG **200** that can be used as AWG **110** (Fig. 1) according to one embodiment of the invention. More specifically, AWG **200** corresponds to N=4 (see Fig. 1) and is designed to function as an optical 90-degree hybrid. AWG **200** has waveguide couplers (also sometimes referred to as star couplers) **210** and **230** connected by a plurality **220** of AWG waveguide arms **222**. If AWG **200** is used as AWG **110** (Fig. 1), then input ports **208₁** and **208₂** of coupler **210** serve as input ports S and R, respectively, of receiver **100**. Output ports **232₁-232₄** of coupler **230** correspond to output ports **1-4** of AWG **110**.

In a non-chirped AWG, the difference in length between any two adjacent AWG arms (analogous to AWG arms **222** of AWG **200**) is a constant (hereafter designated ΔL). Mathematically, this property of a non-chirped AWG can be expressed using Eq. (1):

$$L_m = L_0 + m\Delta L \quad (1)$$

where m is an index identifying the m -th waveguide arm of the lateral spatial sequence of said arms on the planar substrate. Here, $m=0$ corresponds to the first or shortest AWG arm, which has a length L_0 ; and L_m is the length of the m -th AWG arm of the lateral spatial sequence. In contrast, in an interleave-chirped AWG, the difference in length between adjacent AWG arms can be modulated, e.g., in a periodic

manner, and depends on index m . Mathematically, this property of an interleave-chirped AWG can be approximately expressed using Eq. (2):

$$L_m = L_0 + m\Delta L + l(m \bmod M) \quad (2)$$

where M is the period of the chirp pattern, and $l(m \bmod M)$ is a discrete arm-length-modulation function that depends on the remainder on division of index m by period M . Some chirped AWGs and some non-chirped AWGs can be implemented with $\Delta L=0$. Additional details on the design and implementation of interleave-chirped AWGs can be found, e.g., in commonly owned U.S. Patent Nos. 5,909,522 and 6,049,640, both of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

In one embodiment, AWG **200** is an interleave-chirped AWG, in which AWG arms **222** have a chirp pattern described by an arm-length-modulation function $l(m \bmod M)$ selected from, e.g., the set of eight representative discrete functions $l_1(i)$ - $l_8(i)$ listed in Table 1. Note that the discrete functions listed in Table 1 correspond to a period of $M=4$ AWG arms. Each of the listed discrete functions is normalized, with the wavelength of interest (λ_c) serving as the normalization factor. In various embodiments, λ_c can be a carrier wavelength of the input signal or an average wavelength for the plurality of WDM components to be present in the input signal.

Table 1: Representative AWG Chirp Patterns

	$i=0$	$i=1$	$i=2$	$i=3$
$l_1(i)/\lambda_c$	3/8	0	-1/8	0
$l_2(i)/\lambda_c$	0	-1/8	0	3/8
$l_3(i)/\lambda_c$	-1/8	0	3/8	0
$l_4(i)/\lambda_c$	0	3/8	0	-1/8
$l_5(i)/\lambda_c$	-3/8	0	1/8	0
$l_6(i)/\lambda_c$	0	1/8	0	-3/8
$l_7(i)/\lambda_c$	1/8	0	-3/8	0
$l_8(i)/\lambda_c$	0	-3/8	0	1/8

One skilled in the art will appreciate that other suitable chirp patterns can similarly be used in AWG **200**. In various embodiments, waveguide plurality **220** can have different numbers of AWG arms **222**, with the minimum number of arms being

four. There is no theoretical limit on the maximum number of AWG arms **222**, i.e., the number can be any number greater than four. However, practical considerations, e.g., of construction, might nevertheless limit said maximum number.

When AWG **200** is implemented using arm-length modulation function $l_1(i)$,
 5 with input ports **208₁** and **208₂** being spaced by a quarter diffraction zone and output ports **232₁-232₄** being correspondingly spaced, the chirp pattern of AWG arms **222** causes the AWG to produce four output signals of substantially equal intensity at the output ports. Eq. (3) approximately gives the relationship between the electric fields E_p at output ports **232₁-232₄** of AWG **200** (where the subscript $p=1\ldots 4$ denotes the
 10 output-port number):

$$\begin{bmatrix} E_1 \\ E_2 \\ E_3 \\ E_4 \end{bmatrix} = \frac{1}{2} \begin{bmatrix} E_S - E_R \\ -E_S + jE_R \\ -jE_S - jE_R \\ -jE_S + E_R \end{bmatrix} \quad (3)$$

where E_S and E_R are the electric fields of the optical signals applied to input ports **208₁** and **208₂**, respectively. One skilled in the art will recognize that Eq. (3) corresponds to the functionality of a conventional optical 90-degree hybrid, meaning
 15 that an embodiment of AWG **200** can be used to implement that functionality in a coherent receiver, such as receiver **100** (Fig. 1). One skilled in the art will further recognize that the use of the other arm-length-modulation functions listed in Table 1 will result in the relationships between the electric fields E_p at output ports **232₁-232₄** of AWG **200** that are analogous to the relationship given by Eq. (3).

20 AWG arms **222** are typically arranged on a plane in a non-intersecting manner to form a planar array of waveguides, the planar array having a first side edge **224** and a second side edge **226**. In one embodiment corresponding to a non-zero value of ΔL , the lengths of AWG arms **222** in the planar array monotonically increase with a change of the lateral position on the plane, in accordance with Eq. (2), so that the
 25 AWG arm located at side edge **224** has the smallest length and the AWG arm located at side edge **226** has the largest length. In an alternative embodiment corresponding to $\Delta L=0$, if the chirp pattern defined by the arm-length-modulation function $l(m \bmod M)$ is disregarded, then all AWG arms **222** have the same length.

Fig. 3 schematically shows the layout of an AWG **300** that can be used as AWG **110** (Fig. 1) according to another embodiment of the invention. AWG **300** is generally analogous to AWG **200** (Fig. 2), with analogous elements of the two AWGs designated with labels having the same last two digits. However, in contrast with
5 AWG **200**, AWG **300** corresponds to $N=8$ (also see Fig. 1) and is designed to simultaneously function as a polarization demultiplexer and a 90-degree hybrid for each PDM component. In various embodiments, waveguide plurality **320** can have different numbers of AWG arms **322**, with the minimum number of arms being eight.

The polarization demultiplexer functionality of AWG **300** is enabled by the
10 presence of a birefringence zone **340**. For example, for each AWG arm **322**, a portion of the arm within zone **340** might be made of a waveguide material characterized by relatively high birefringence. Another suitable arrangement for implementing AWG arms **322** within zone **340** might include a waveguide core with a large aspect ratio, such as an InP deeply etched ridge with a thin InGaAsP guiding layer. Birefringence
15 zone **340** might include the entire waveguide plurality **320** or only a portion of it. The waveguides in zone **340** might or might not use birefringent materials. In addition to the above-mentioned materials, other suitable materials for implementing the waveguides in zone **340** might be Si, InGaAs, SiO₂, and SiON.

Exemplary designs and methods of fabrication of birefringent segments of
20 planar optical waveguides are described, e.g., in U.S. Patent Application 12/194352, filed on August 19, 2008, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. These designs and methods may be useful for implementing the portions of AWG waveguide arms **322** in zone **340**.

Birefringence zone **340** causes each of the output signals corresponding to Eq.
25 (3) to split into two spatially separated components corresponding to the TE and TM polarization modes, respectively. The magnitude of the polarization-dependent wavelength split (PDWS) is determined by the difference between the effective refraction indices for the TE and TM modes within waveguide plurality **320** in general and in zone **340** in particular. Hence, the materials for implementing
30 birefringence zone **340** are selected so that the PDWS is sufficiently large to enable side-by-side placement of eight output waveguides **332** at an output facet **328** of waveguide coupler **330**. Eqs. (4a-4b) approximately give the relationship between the

electric fields E_{pX} and E_{pY} at output ports **332_{1X}**-**332_{4X}** and **332_{1Y}**-**332_{4Y}**, respectively, of AWG **300**:

$$\begin{bmatrix} E_{1X} \\ E_{2X} \\ E_{3X} \\ E_{4X} \end{bmatrix} = \frac{1}{2} \begin{bmatrix} E_{SX} - E_{RX} \\ -E_{SX} + jE_{RX} \\ -jE_{SX} - jE_{RX} \\ -jE_{SX} + E_{RX} \end{bmatrix} \quad (4a)$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} E_{1Y} \\ E_{2Y} \\ E_{3Y} \\ E_{4Y} \end{bmatrix} = \frac{1}{2} \begin{bmatrix} E_{SY} - E_{RY} \\ -E_{SY} + jE_{RY} \\ -jE_{SY} - jE_{RY} \\ -jE_{SY} + E_{RY} \end{bmatrix} \quad (4b)$$

- 5 where E_{SX} and E_{SY} are the electric fields corresponding to the TE and TM polarizations, respectively, of the optical signal applied to input port **308₁** of AWG **300** (e.g., optical communication signal **102** of Fig. 1); and E_{RX} and E_{RY} are the electric fields corresponding to the TE and TM polarizations, respectively, of the optical signal applied to input port **308₂** of the AWG (e.g., LO signal **104** of Fig. 1).
- 10 Eqs. (4a-4b) demonstrate that AWG **300** simultaneously serves as a polarization demultiplexer for the TE and TM polarizations and an optical 90-degree hybrid for each of the polarizations for two reasons. First, the different optical output ports of the first set of optical output ports **332_{1X}**-**332_{4X}** and of the second set of optical output ports **332_{1Y}**-**332_{4Y}** output combinations of signal and local oscillator light with
- 15 different relative phase combinations, i.e., as in optical 90-degree hybrids. Second, the first set of optical output ports **332_{1X}**-**332_{4X}** output such combinations for one polarization component, and the second set of optical output ports **332_{1Y}**-**332_{4Y}** output such combinations for the other, relatively orthogonal polarization component, i.e., as in a polarization demultiplexer.

- 20 Fig. 4 schematically shows the layout of an AWG **400** that can be used as AWG **110** (Fig. 1) according to yet another embodiment of the invention. AWG **400** is generally analogous to AWG **200** (Fig. 2), with analogous elements of the two AWGs designated with labels having the same last two digits. However, in contrast with AWG **200**, AWG **400** corresponds to N=8 (also see Fig. 1) and is designed to
- 25 simultaneously function as a two-channel wavelength demultiplexer and a 90-degree hybrid for each of the WDM components (having carrier wavelengths λ_1 and λ_2 , respectively). One skilled in the art will understand that the design of AWG **400** can

be generalized for any desired integer number n (>2) of WDM channels, which generalization will result in the number of output waveguides **432** being $N=4n$. In various embodiments, waveguide plurality **420** can have different numbers of AWG arms **422**, with the minimum possible number of arms being $4n$.

5 AWGs that can serve as wavelength demultiplexers are known in the art. A detailed description of the wavelength-demultiplexer functionality of AWG **400** is not given here because it is generally similar to that of certain prior-art AWGs. For additional details, the reader is referred to, e.g., the above-cited U.S. Patent Nos. 5,909,522 and 6,049,640, where a suitable description can be found.

10 The added 90-degree-hybrid functionality of AWG **400** is similar to that of AWG **200** and is enabled by the chirp pattern (e.g., defined by one of the discrete functions listed in Table 1) of AWG arms **422**. In effect, the chirp pattern causes each de-multiplexed WDM signal produced in accordance with the wavelength-demultiplexer functionality of AWG **400** to split four ways in accordance with Eq.
 15 (3). To capture and direct the mixed signals corresponding to the split WDM components for further processing, e.g., in detector array **120** (Fig. 1), AWG **400** has eight output waveguides **432** _{$\lambda_{1,1}$} -**432** _{$\lambda_{1,4}$} and **432** _{$\lambda_{2,1}$} -**432** _{$\lambda_{2,4}$} that are appropriately positioned at an output facet **428** of waveguide coupler **430**.

 Figs. 5A-B show diagrams of an AWG **500** that can be used as AWG **110** (Fig.
 20 1) according to yet another embodiment of the invention. More specifically, Fig. 5A shows a block diagram of AWG **500**. Fig. 5B schematically shows the layout of AWG **500**. AWG **500** is generally analogous to AWG **300** (Fig. 3), with analogous elements of the two AWGs designated with labels having the same last two digits. However, in contrast with AWG **300**, AWG **500** corresponds to $N=32$ (also see Fig.
 25 1) and is designed to simultaneously function as a four-channel wavelength demultiplexer, a polarization demultiplexer for each of the four WDM channels, and a 90-degree hybrid for each of two orthogonal polarizations of each of the four WDM channels. Illustratively, the four WDM channels are shown as having carrier wavelengths λ_1 - λ_4 , where $\lambda_1 < \lambda_2 < \lambda_3 < \lambda_4$.

30 The polarization-demultiplexer functionality of AWG **500** is enabled by a birefringence zone **540**. The 90-degree-hybrid functionality of AWG **500** is enabled by a chirp pattern (e.g., defined by one of the discrete functions listed in Table 1) of

AWG arms **522**. In effect, birefringence zone **540** and the chirp pattern of AWG arms **522** cause each de-multiplexed WDM channel signal S produced in accordance with the conventional wavelength-demultiplexer functionality of AWG **500** to be directed to a set of eight output ports **532**_{S1}, **532**_{S2}, ..., **532**_{S8}. That is, a set of eight output
 5 ports of AWG **500** output eight different relative phase and polarization combinations of signal light and local oscillator light for each input WDM wavelength channel in accordance with Eqs. (4a-4b). To capture and direct the mixed signals corresponding to the split WDM/PDM components for further processing, e.g., in detector array **120** (Fig. 1), AWG **500** has thirty two (32) output waveguides **532** that are appropriately
 10 positioned at an output facet **528** of waveguide coupler **530**.

The block diagram of Fig. 5A shows the relative spatial arrangement of different output waveguides **532** corresponding to different WDM/PDM components of the input signal applied to input port **508**₁ (e.g., optical communication signal **102** of Fig. 1). More specifically, the following nomenclature is used in Fig. 5A to label
 15 the various mixed signals produced in output waveguides **532**: (1) λ_i indicates the wavelength, where $i=1, 2, 3, 4$; (2) 1X, 2X, 3X, and 4X indicate the TE-polarized mixed signals corresponding to the four rows of Eq. (4a); and (3) 1Y, 2Y, 3Y, and 4Y indicate the TM-polarized mixed signals corresponding to the four rows of Eq. (4b).

One skilled in the art will understand that the design of AWG **500** can be
 20 generalized for any desired number n (where $2 \leq n \leq n_{max}$) of WDM channels, which generalization will result in the number of output waveguides **532** being $N=8n$. The maximum number of WDM channels (n_{max}) that can be accommodated in such a design is determined by the polarization-dependent wavelength split (PDWS) in the AWG and is given by Eq. (5):

$$25 \quad n_{max} \leq \frac{PDWS}{\Delta\lambda} \quad (5)$$

where $\Delta\lambda$ is the channel spacing. The PDWS is expressed by Eq. (6) as follows:

$$PDWS = 2\lambda_c \frac{n_{TE} - n_{TM}}{n_{TE} + n_{TM}} \quad (6)$$

where λ_c is the average wavelength for the WDM channels of the AWG; n_{TE} is the effective refractive index for the TE polarization mode at wavelength λ_c ; and n_{TM} is
 30 the effective refractive index for the TM polarization mode at wavelength λ_c . In

various embodiments, waveguide plurality **520** can have different numbers of AWG waveguide arms **522**, with the minimum number of arms being $8n$. In one embodiment, AWG **500** has one hundred AWG waveguide arms **522**, is designed to operate in the 21st grating order, and has channel spacing $\Delta\lambda$ of about 200 GHz.

5 One advantage of various embodiments of the invention is that the 90-degree-phase characteristic of the hybrid can be highly accurate even when the device is implemented using the photonic-integrated-circuit (PIC) technology. For comparison, in prior-art 90-degree hybrids implemented using the PIC technology, the phase differences for the various outputs of the 90-degree hybrid can significantly deviate
10 from 90 degrees because they are typically determined by a single element, e.g., a multi-mode-interference coupler, used in the hybrid. Thus, even a relatively small error or inaccuracy (e.g., in the dimensions during the fabrication process) of that single element can lead to a significant deviation of the phase differences from the requisite 90 degrees. In contrast, in various embodiments of the present invention, a
15 small error in the length of one particular AWG arm does not have a profound effect on the phase because that error is mitigated by the effective averaging over many AWG arms.

 While this invention has been described with reference to illustrative embodiments, this description is not intended to be construed in a limiting sense.
20 Although embodiments of the invention have been described in reference to TE and TM polarization modes, various embodiments of the invention can also be used to process any suitable polarization-multiplexed signals, e.g., those using (i) left and right circular polarizations and (ii) mutually orthogonal linear polarizations. Various modifications of the described embodiments, as well as other embodiments of the
25 invention, which are apparent to persons skilled in the art to which the invention pertains are deemed to lie within the principle and scope of the invention as expressed in the following claims.

 As used herein, the term “optical hybrid” refers to an optical mixer designed to mix an optical input signal having a carrier frequency and a local-oscillator signal
30 having the same carrier frequency to generate a plurality of mixed signals corresponding to different relative phase shifts between the input signal and the LO signal. An optical 90-degree hybrid is a particular type of an optical hybrid that is

designed to produce at least four mixed signals corresponding to the relative phase shifts between the input signal and the LO signal of approximately 0, 90, 180, and 270 degrees, respectively. One skilled in the art will understand that each of the phase shifts is defined without accounting for a possible additional phase shift that is
5 an integer multiple of 360 degrees.

The present invention may be implemented using free space optics and/or waveguide circuits, including possible implementation on a single integrated circuit or package.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, each numerical value and range should be
10 interpreted as being approximate as if the word "about" or "approximately" preceded the value of the value or range.

It will be further understood that various changes in the details, materials, and arrangements of the parts which have been described and illustrated in order to explain the nature of this invention may be made by those skilled in the art without
15 departing from the scope of the invention as expressed in the following claims.

Although the elements in the following method claims, if any, are recited in a particular sequence with corresponding labeling, unless the claim recitations otherwise imply a particular sequence for implementing some or all of those elements, those elements are not necessarily intended to be limited to being implemented in that
20 particular sequence.

Reference herein to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment can be included in at least one embodiment of the invention. The appearances of the phrase "in one embodiment" in various places in the specification
25 are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment, nor are separate or alternative embodiments necessarily mutually exclusive of other embodiments. The same applies to the term "implementation."

Throughout the detailed description, the drawings, which are not to scale, are illustrative only and are used in order to explain, rather than limit the invention. The
30 use of terms such as height, length, width, top, bottom, is strictly to facilitate the description of the invention and is not intended to limit the invention to a specific orientation. For example, height does not imply only a vertical rise limitation, but is

used to identify one of the three dimensions of a three dimensional structure as shown in the figures. Such "height" would be vertical where the electrodes are horizontal but would be horizontal where the electrodes are vertical, and so on. Similarly, while all figures show the different layers as horizontal layers such orientation is for

5 descriptive purpose only and not to be construed as a limitation.

Also for purposes of this description, the terms "couple," "coupling," "coupled," "connect," "connecting," or "connected" refer to any manner known in the art or later developed in which energy is allowed to be transferred between two or more elements, and the interposition of one or more additional elements is

10 contemplated, although not required. Conversely, the terms "directly coupled," "directly connected," etc., imply the absence of such additional elements.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus, comprising an arrayed waveguide grating (AWG) that comprises:
 - 5 a substrate having a planar surface;
 - a first optical star coupler being along said surface and having first and second optical inputs and a first spatial array of optical outputs;
 - a second optical star coupler being along said surface and having a second spatial array of optical inputs and a third spatial array of optical outputs; and
 - 10 an array of waveguide arms, each waveguide arm connecting one optical output of the first spatial array to a corresponding optical input of the second spatial array, wherein the array of waveguide arms is configured to cause a first set of four optical outputs of the third spatial array to receive four different phase combinations of light received at the first and second optical inputs in response to the light received at the
 - 15 first and second optical inputs being of about the same wavelength.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the four different phase combinations are combinations of the light from the first and second optical input ports with relative phases of about 0, $\pi/2$ radians, π radians, and $3\pi/2$ radians..
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3. The apparatus of claim 1, the array of waveguide arms is configured to cause a separate second set of four optical outputs of the third array to receive four second combinations of the light, the second combinations being a polarization of component of the light that is about orthogonal to a polarization of the light output to the first set
25 of optical outputs of the third array.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, the array of waveguide arms is configured to cause a separate second set of four optical outputs of the third array to receive four second combinations of the light, the second combinations having a wavelength that is
30 different than a wavelength of the light output to the first set of optical outputs of the third array.

5. The apparatus of claim 1,
 wherein, for at least some of the waveguide arms, at least a portion of the arm
 comprises a birefringent waveguide; and
 further comprising a polarization-control element configured to change a
 5 polarization of the light received at the second optical input so that optical power is
 partitioned between a first polarization and a second polarization approximately
 orthogonal to the first polarization.
6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:
 10 the AWG is adapted to function as an n -channel wavelength demultiplexer, where
 n is a positive integer greater than one; and
 the third spatial array of optical outputs comprises $4n$ optical outputs, each for
 receiving a corresponding mixed signal that differs from each of the remaining $(4n-1)$
 mixed signals in at least one of (i) a carrier wavelength and (ii) a value of relative
 15 phase shift between the light applied to the first and second optical inputs.
7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:
 the array of waveguide arms has a periodic chirp pattern with a period of four
 waveguide arms; and
 20 the chirp pattern consists of:
 (i) two zeros, $-\frac{\lambda_c}{8}$, and $\frac{3\lambda_c}{8}$; or
 (ii) two zeros, $-\frac{3\lambda_c}{8}$, and $\frac{\lambda_c}{8}$,
 arranged in a selected order, where λ_c is a wavelength corresponding to one or more
 wavelength channels of the AWG.
- 25 8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the apparatus is an optical receiver further
 comprising:
 an array of photo-detectors, each optically coupled to a corresponding output of
 the third spatial array of optical outputs and adapted to convert a corresponding
 30 optical output signal into an electrical signal;

an analog-to-digital converter adapted to convert the electrical signals produced by the array of photo-detectors into corresponding digital signals; and

a digital signal processor that receives the digital signals, wherein:

an optical input signal applied to the first optical input comprises a plurality of
5 independently modulated components; and

the digital signal processor is adapted to process the digital signals to recover data carried by each of said independently modulated components, wherein the plurality of independently modulated components comprises two or more WDM components.

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9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the plurality of independently modulated components also comprises two or more PDM components.

10. A method of processing an optical signal, comprising:

15 (a) providing an arrayed waveguide grating (AWG) comprising:

a substrate having a planar surface;

a first optical star coupler being along said surface and having first and second optical inputs and a first spatial array of optical outputs;

20 a second optical star coupler being along said surface and having a second spatial array of optical inputs and a third spatial array of optical outputs; and

an array of waveguide arms, each waveguide arm connecting one optical output of the first spatial array to a corresponding optical input of the second spatial array; and

25 (b) applying (i) an optical input signal to a first optical input waveguide and (ii) a local-oscillator signal to a second optical input waveguide of the AWG to produce four different phase combinations of the optical input signal and the local-oscillator signal at a set of four optical outputs of the third spatial array.