

Description

This invention relates to transmitter apparatus for generating lightwave signals, and to lightwave systems.

Optical fibers are generally accepted as the transmission medium for most long distance lightwave communication systems. Theoretically, because of almost unlimited bandwidth, fibers can transport thousands of very high speed data channels simultaneously. Realistically, however, loss, dispersion, and nonlinear intensity-dependent effects combine to determine both the number of channels supported by the fiber and the spectral placement of the channels on the fiber. In an effort to reach a maximum data throughput rate, most communication systems are designed as wavelength-division multiplexed (WDM) or frequency-division-multiplexed (FDM) systems having carrier signals transmitted at and in close proximity to a benchmark transmission characteristic for the optical fiber, namely, the zero dispersion wavelength, λ_0 . This wavelength is defined as the point at which the second derivative of the propagation constant for the fiber taken with respect to wavelength is zero. Standard single-mode fibers exhibit zero dispersion nominally at 1.3 μm , while dispersion-shifted fibers have a zero dispersion point at approximately 1.5 μm .

While it has remained a foregone conclusion that one carrier in a WDM or FDM system be transmitted at the zero dispersion wavelength, the placement of other carriers for adjacent channels has been a subject of important study. In fact, several researchers have modeled the problem of carrier placement as a three-wave or four-wave mixing problem to account for nonlinear effects arising when intense lightwave signals propagate in the optical fiber. See, K. O. Hill et al., *J. Appl. Phys.*, 49(10), pp. 5098-5106 (1978) and N. Shibata et al., *IEEE J. Quant. Elect.*, Vol. QE-23, No. 7, pp.1205-1210 (1987). Both Hill et al. and Shibata et al. describe processes in which three input lightwave signals with different frequencies generate lightwave signals at as many as nine corresponding new frequencies. The new lightwave signals result from frequency mixing or crosstalk. Shibata et al. conclude by extrapolating their results from experiments at short wavelengths that, in a frequency multiplexed transmission system with one narrow linewidth carrier signal at the zero chromatic dispersion wavelength of the fiber, transmission of adjacent lightwave signals should occur with frequency separations greater than 400 GHz (2.25 nm) at $\lambda_0 = 1.3 \mu\text{m}$ and greater than 300 GHz (2.4 nm) at $\lambda_0 = 1.5 \mu\text{m}$ to achieve complete suppression of lightwave signals generated through four-wave mixing. It is now understood by me that the conclusion by Shibata et al. is flawed and that complete suppression does not occur in the frequency multiplexed system described by Shibata et al.

According to one aspect of this invention there is provided transmitter apparatus as claimed in claim 1.

According to another aspect of this invention there is provided a lightwave system as claimed in claim 2.

Unwanted, monotonic growth of sideband energy is avoided in wavelength-division-multiplexed and frequency-division-multiplexed lightwave communication systems by transmitting adjacent channels approximately 2nm or more apart in the normal dispersion regime of the optical fiber and by transmitting each channel more than 0.4nm below a mean zero dispersion wavelength, λ_0 , of the optical fiber. Inter-channel spacing and individual channel separation from the zero dispersion wavelength are measured with respect to a nominal carrier wavelength for each channel.

Each transmitter in the wavelength-division-multiplexed or frequency-division-multiplexed lightwave communication system includes a plurality of modulated light sources allocated on the basis of one per channel, wherein each light source is tuned to a particular wavelength in accordance with the desired interchannel spacing and individual separation from the zero dispersion wavelength. Light sources include tunable and fixed wavelength lasers modulated directly or externally.

The invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a simplified block diagram for an illustrative lightwave communication system embodying the invention;

FIG. 2 shows a plot of fiber dispersion versus wavelength for a standard single-mode fiber,

FIG. 3 shows the relationship between channel carriers and intermodulation sidebands for a 2-channel wavelength division multiplexed lightwave communication system;

FIG. 4 shows a graph of cumulative random dispersion as a function of position on the fiber;

FIG. 5 shows a plot of spurious sideband signals produced by four photon mixing of two primary sinusoidal waves;

FIG. 6 shows a sequence of exemplary input data pulses for a channel in the WDM lightwave communication system;

FIGs. 7 through 10 show output pulses for a 2-channel WDM lightwave communication system for both channels and the sideband intermodulation channels when one carrier wavelength is positioned at the zero dispersion wavelength of the optical fiber;

FIGs. 11 and 12 show input and output spectra, respectively, for the signals described in FIGs. 6 through 10;

FIGs. 13 through 18 show output signals for a 2-channel WDM lightwave communication system for both channels and the sideband intermodula-

tion channels when one carrier wavelength is positioned away from the zero dispersion wavelength of the optical fiber; and
 FIGs. 19 and 20 show input and output spectra, respectively, for the signals described in FIG. 6 and FIGs. 16 through 18.

Detailed Description

Lightwave signal transmission over very long distances is encumbered by the usual problems caused by loss and dispersion in the optical fiber. In addition, such transmission is effected by a weak dependence of the fiber material refractive index on the intensity of each lightwave signal. This dependence is nonlinear and can be expressed as $n = n_0 + n_2 |E|^2$, where n_0 represents the linear part of the refractive index, n_2 represents the nonlinear part of the refractive index, and E is the power density of the lightwave signal.

Dependence of refractive index on the intensity of the lightwave signal induces a change of the group velocity for that lightwave. The refractive index change also leads to self phase modulation or self chirping of the lightwave signal which influences pulse shape via interaction of pulses from the lightwave signal with the fiber dispersion. Self phase modulation and dispersion cancel completely during soliton formation. When cancellation is incomplete, self phase modulation leads to spectral broadening and, as a result, additional pulse distortion.

The signal distorting influence of the weak refractive index nonlinearity in optical fibers is minimized for lightwave signals traveling distances comparable to present transoceanic spans. This is achieved in a multi-channel wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) lightwave communication system by transmitting adjacent channels approximately 2nm or more apart in the normal dispersion regime of the optical fiber and also by transmitting each channel more than 0.4nm below the zero dispersion wavelength, λ_0 , of the optical fiber. While the interchannel separation may be large, it has been determined from simulation results that an interchannel separation between 2nm and 3nm is desirable for a WDM lightwave system having at least two channels bearing ASK modulated information. A large interchannel separation is permitted by employing fixed or adaptive equalization elements at the receive end of the communication system. Equalization elements known in the art have both electronic and fiber realizations.

With respect to the separation of the first channel from the zero dispersion wavelength, it has been found from simulation that the closer one channel wavelength is to the zero dispersion wavelength, the more distortion is introduced into the other channel for a 2-channel WDM lightwave system. When viewed as frequency spectra, it is seen that intermodulation increases and causes significant amounts of noise to

occur across the wavelength band of interest. As the first channel is farther from the zero dispersion wavelength, it is understood that both channels of a 2-channel system undergo considerably more dispersion.

It should be noted that the following conventions will be followed in this description for purposes of clarity and not for purposes of limitation. Wavelength division multiplexing is understood to encompass standard WDM and frequency division multiplexing (FDM). Generally, WDM is understood to be the same as FDM. Optical fiber is understood to include such types of optical fiber as standard circular core, single mode fiber, dispersion shifted fiber, polarization maintaining or polarization preserving fiber, and the like. Other conventions are set forth in the description below.

An exemplary multi-channel WDM lightwave communication system is shown in FIG. 1. Each channel supplies data to a related channel transmitter. Data from channel 1 are supplied to channel transmitter 101; data from channel 2 are supplied to channel transmitter 102; and data from channel N are supplied to channel transmitter 103. Channel transmitters 101 to 103 include sufficient elements well known to those skilled in the art for generating lightwave signals modulated by the respective channel data. In an exemplary embodiment, the channel transmitter includes a single wavelength laser diode such as a distributed feedback laser coupled optically through an optical isolator to an external modulator. The laser diode is suitably biased and controlled to operate in a continuous-wave (CW) mode at the single wavelength which is known herein as a carrier wavelength for the channel of interest. CW lightwave signals from the laser diode are modulated by the channel data in the external modulator to generate the modulated lightwave signal. The modulated lightwave signals associated with a particular channel have a generally wider bandwidth than the unmodulated laser diode signal but, for purposes of ease in description, such signals are considered to be nominally at the associated carrier wavelength.

The transmitter apparatus shown in FIG. 1 also includes a WDM multiplexer 107 to combine the separate modulated lightwave signals into a single signal for transmission on optical fiber 108. As such, multiplexer 107 is an $N \times 1$ device which accepts N different inputs and converts them to a single output. All input wavelengths are present in the output signal from multiplexer 107. WDM multiplexer 107 includes couplers such as 3dB couplers to combine pairs of lightwave signals at different wavelengths into a single output lightwave signal.

The multi-wavelength signal output from WDM multiplexer 107 is input to optical fiber 108. While the fiber is depicted simplistically as a single length in FIG. 1, it will be appreciated by those individuals skill-

led in the art that optical fiber 108 may comprise a plurality of long spans (10km or longer) of fiber separated from one another by individual amplifiers, repeaters or regenerators to achieve long distance communication. In this context, long distance is understood to mean distances greater than 100km, for example. It should be understood by those persons skilled in the art that this invention is particularly applicable to long distance WDM systems spanning desirably more than 1000km because it is generally accepted that the fiber nonlinearity only becomes significant over such very long distances. Transmission over very long distances is improved by spacing optical amplifiers along the length of the fiber to compensate intrinsic fiber loss. Several amplifiers have been shown in FIG. 1 along the length of fiber 108. Standard optical amplifiers such as semiconductor amplifiers and doped-fiber amplifiers may be employed for amplification and loss compensation along the length of fiber 108.

In the WDM lightwave communication system, multiplexed signals output from fiber 108 are supplied to WDM demultiplexer 109. WDM demultiplexer 109, as shown in FIG. 1, separates the different channels according to wavelength so that the signal on carrier wavelength λ_1 is sent to receiver 110, the signal on carrier wavelength λ_2 is sent to receiver 111, and so on through the signal on carrier wavelength λ_N which is sent to receiver 112. Receivers 110 through 112 detect and process the received lightwave signal information to produce a data output signal for each particular channel of interest.

FIG. 2 shows the variation of dispersion with respect to wavelength for a standard optical fiber such as fiber 108. Two distinct regimes are noted on curve 20; namely, the anomalous dispersion regime ($D > 0$) and the normal dispersion regime ($D < 0$). Curve 20 is shown crossing through a point of zero dispersion at wavelength λ_0 . This wavelength is the so-called zero dispersion wavelength. Of course, in dispersion-shifted fibers, this crossing occurs at a longer wavelength ($\approx 1.5\mu\text{m}$). As described above, prior art WDM lightwave communication systems have been designed to take advantage of the zero dispersion wavelength by launching one channel of the WDM signal into the fiber at a carrier wavelength λ_0 . In contrast, in the present invention, no channel carrier is launched at the zero dispersion wavelength. Rather, carrier wavelengths of adjacent channels are separated by approximately 2nm or more and the carrier wavelength of each channel is separated at least 0.4nm away from the zero dispersion wavelength.

Interchannel spacings and separation from the zero dispersion wavelength is depicted for a 2-channel WDM lightwave communication system in FIG. 3. As shown, channels 1 and 2 are transmitted at carrier wavelengths λ_1 and λ_2 , respectively. Channel 1 is shown as signal line 31 and channel 2 is shown as sig-

nal line 32. The spacing between these channels and the separation from the zero dispersion wavelength, λ_0 , are in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. Four photon mixing causes intermodulation or mixing signals to occur at wavelengths λ_3 and λ_4 . The intermodulation sideband signals are referred to as intermodulation channel 3 shown as signal line 33 and intermodulation channel 4 is shown as signal line 34. Arrow 35 shows the direction of increasing wavelength.

Alternatively, the relationships shown in FIG. 3 can be viewed in terms of frequency according to the equation $f_i = c/\lambda_i$, for $i=1, 2, 3$, and 4. Channels 1 and 2 are transmitted at carrier frequencies f_1 and f_2 , respectively. Channel 1 is shown as signal line 31 and channel 2 is shown as signal line 32. The spacing between these channels and the separation from the zero dispersion frequency, f_0 , are in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. Four photon mixing causes intermodulation or mixing signals to occur at frequencies f_3 and f_4 . The intermodulation sideband signals are referred to as intermodulation channel 3 shown as signal line 33 and intermodulation channel 4 is shown as signal line 34. Arrow 36 shows the direction of increasing frequency.

Four photon mixing causes the intermodulation channels to occur at well-defined wavelengths or frequencies. For the 2-channel WDM system described above, the relationships between the channels may be expressed as follows:

$$f_3 = 2f_1 - f_2,$$

and

$$f_4 = 2f_2 - f_1.$$

Of course, these relationships are easily converted to wavelength relationships by employing the standard relationship that $\lambda_i = c/f_i$, where $i=1, 2, 3$, or 4 and f_i is the frequency for channel i and c is the speed of light in a vacuum.

Channel spacing and zero dispersion separation conditions set forth above contemplate that optical fiber 108 has a substantially uniform zero dispersion characteristic from one end to the remote end. That is, the average value of dispersion is substantially equal to or in the proximate neighborhood of the actual dispersion at any position along the fiber. Alternatively, the magnitude of cumulative dispersion for fiber 108 tends to grow in a substantially random linear manner. An exemplary dispersion characteristic displaying substantial uniformity is shown as curve 40 in FIG. 4 plotted versus distance along the fiber, z . The units for cumulative dispersion are psec/nm. In the context of this description, dispersion is understood to mean the change in pulse delay with change in wavelength per unit fiber length. Dispersion is normally expressed in units of psec/nm-km. Unless specified expressly to the contrary, a substantially uni-

form dispersion characteristic is contemplated for fiber 108 in the description below. The point of zero dispersion for most optical fibers varies randomly along the fiber length so that the entire fiber has its zero dispersion parameter characterized as a mean zero dispersion wavelength.

In order to appreciate the benefits derived from designing a WDM lightwave communication system embodying the invention, it is important to understand the manner in which systems designed according to prior rules operate. That is, it is important to understand the effect of four photon mixing on the intermodulation sidebands when one channel of the WDM system has its carrier positioned at the zero dispersion wavelength. By choosing a constant amplitude for the wave envelope function of each channel, it is possible to obtain an expression which shows that the power in the upper intermodulation sideband at λ_3 increases monotonically with distance while the spurious signal in the lower sideband at λ_4 oscillates. This behavior is shown in FIG. 5 where curve 51 shows the monotonic growth in the upper sideband intermodulation signal and curves 52 through 56 show the oscillatory nature of the spurious signals in the lower sideband.

FIG. 6 shows a data sequence of pulses for each channel. The sequence represents an alternating stream of "zeros" and "ones" having substantially identical duration spacing and power. The data rate represented by the sequence is 2.5 Gbps. The data sequence modulates the lightwave signal from each channel transmitter so that one sequence is ASK-modulated onto the carrier at wavelength λ_1 and the same sequence is modulated onto the carrier at wavelength λ_2 . When carrier wavelength λ_1 coincides with the zero dispersion wavelength λ_0 and when carrier wavelength λ_2 is separated from λ_1 by three nanometers, output pulses shown in FIGs. 7 through 10 appear at the end of the optical fiber. In an experimental simulation, optical fiber 108 comprised long sections of optical fiber spliced together and compensated at approximately 100 km intervals by suitable optical amplification. The fiber was modeled to be approximately 7500 km in total length (i.e., a transoceanic distance) with an intrinsic loss of 0.21 dB per km and effective mode area of 80 μm^2 .

The pulses shown in FIG. 7 correspond to the received signal in channel 1 at carrier wavelength λ_1 . Similarly, the pulses shown in FIG. 8 correspond to the received signal in channel 2 at carrier wavelength λ_2 . Pulses for the intermodulation sidebands at carrier wavelengths λ_3 and λ_4 are shown in FIGs. 9 and 10, respectively. It is clear from these figures that the data sequence in each channel is severely corrupted. It is also important to note that the instantaneous power for individual pulses in the upper intermodulation sideband is two orders of magnitude greater than the instantaneous power for individual pulses in the lower

intermodulation sideband. It should be noted that the terms "upper" and "lower" have been designated for the sidebands in terms of wavelength. If the sidebands were designated in terms of frequency, the upper sideband for wavelength would become the lower sideband in frequency and, similarly, the lower sideband for wavelength would become the upper sideband in frequency.

Input and output frequency spectra are shown in FIGs. 11 and 12. Because of the inverse relationship between frequency and wavelength ($f=c/\lambda$), curve 21 corresponds to the input spectrum for channel 1 at the zero dispersion frequency (i.e., $f_1=f_0$) and curve 22 corresponds to the input spectrum for channel 2 spaced approximately 2 nm from channel 1. The frequency axis in each of the figures is normalized to dimensionless units by choosing $f-f_0$ as the distance from the zero dispersion frequency and by setting $f_{\text{max}} - f_0$ equal to 1000 GHz. As anticipated from viewing the output data pulse sequences in FIGs. 7 through 10, one readily sees in FIG. 12 that the lower intermodulation sideband at f_3 has increased, after traversing fiber 108, to a value substantially equal in magnitude to that of channel 1. Clearly, this leads one to conclude that the WDM system performance is severely degraded when one channel has its carrier frequency (wavelength) positioned at the zero dispersion frequency (wavelength) of the fiber.

FIGs. 13 through 15 show the results of transmitting the same alternating sequences of "zeros" and "ones" described above over the same optical fiber length as described above. For these figures, the interchannel separation is chosen to be approximately 3 nm with channel 1 positioned approximately 1.5 nm below the zero dispersion frequency in the regime of normal dispersion. In terms of frequency, channels 1 and 2 are approximately 200 GHz and 600 GHz, respectively, above the zero dispersion frequency. As a result, the intermodulation sideband channels 3 and 4 occur 200 GHz below and 1000 GHz above the zero dispersion frequency, respectively. Output pulses in channels 1 and 2 are shown in FIGs. 13 and 14, respectively. While the pulses have undergone some dispersion, the cross interaction of the pulses in the two channels does not seem to have had any noticeable effect. The spurious pulses in the intermodulation sidebands at frequencies f_3 and f_4 are shown in FIG. 15. Pulses labeled as curves 153 correspond to pulses in the lower intermodulation sideband at carrier frequency f_3 whereas very low level pulses labeled as curves 154 correspond to pulses in the upper intermodulation sideband at carrier frequency f_4 .

By moving both channels closer together and closer to the zero dispersion wavelength, it is possible to compare the results with those shown in FIGs. 13 through 15. For interchannel separation of 2 nm and separation of 0.5 nm for channel 1 from the zero dispersion wavelength, using the simulated two-channel

WDM lightwave communication system described above, it is possible to obtain output pulses as shown in FIGs. 16 through 18. In terms of frequency, channels 1 and 2 are approximately 66.67 GHz and 333.3 GHz, respectively, above the zero dispersion frequency. As a result, the intermodulation sideband channels 3 and 4 occur 200 GHz below and 600 GHz above the zero dispersion frequency, respectively. Output pulses for channels 1 and 2 are shown in FIGs. 16 and 17, respectively. Output pulses for the intermodulation sidebands are shown in FIG. 18. Output pulses for the lower (at f_3) intermodulation sideband are labeled as curves 183. Output pulses (not labeled) for the upper (at f_4) intermodulation sideband appear as a very low, almost indiscernible ripple along the time axis at the bottom of FIG. 18. Input and output frequency spectra for the signals shown in FIGs. 16 through 18 are shown in FIGs. 19 and 20. Clearly, as seen in FIG. 20, the intermodulation sidebands are at significantly lower levels for a WDM communication system embodying the invention.

In the description above, the laser diode has been shown as a CW source tuned to a carrier wavelength and modulated externally. It should be understood by those persons of ordinary skill in the art that many other embodiments will accomplish the function of placing data signals on a carrier at wavelength, λ_c . For example, distributed feedback (DFB) and distributed Bragg reflector (DBR) lasers are well adapted for generating lightwave signals at a single predetermined wavelength. Both DFB and DBR lasers are capable of tunable operation and direct or external modulation.

In the simulation results provided above, ASK modulation was described as the type modulation applied in each channel transmitter. It should be understood that other types of modulation such as FSK and PSK are contemplated for use in the multi-channel WDM lightwave communication system.

In general, external modulation has been described as a preferred modulation technique in order to avoid the effects of nonuniform FM response and the like. In practice, optical coupling of the laser source to the external modulator is accomplished with standard lens or butt coupling techniques which maximize coupling efficiency. Isolators placed between the laser and the modulator reduce unwanted reflections back into the laser.

While DFB and DBR lasers may be set to operate at a particularly desirable wavelength in accordance with the teachings of the invention herein, it may be desirable, although not necessary, to add a standard stabilization element to the laser. Stabilization elements, generally configured as control loops, are well known in the art for monitoring the signal output from the laser and responsively adjusting the current or temperature of the laser to correct any wavelength deviations from the desired wavelength.

In the description above, optical fiber 108 has been described as having a substantially uniform dispersion characteristic over its entire length. Since random fluctuations may occur in the dispersion characteristic of the optical fiber, it is understood that the carrier wavelength is offset from the mean zero dispersion wavelength.

While a uniform dispersion characteristic over the entire fiber length is desirable, it may not be practical. Therefore, it is also contemplated that optical fiber 108 comprises a plurality of fiber sections wherein each fiber section has a substantially uniform dispersion characteristic over the length of the particular section but the dispersion characteristics for the plurality of sections are different. In this case, channel 1 has its carrier wavelength set to the mean zero dispersion wavelength for the entire combination of fiber sections in fiber 108 provided that the dispersion in any section does not equal zero at or within 0.4 nm of the mean zero dispersion wavelength for a substantially continuous length greater than the beat length defined as

$$A_3 = \frac{2\pi}{|2\beta_1 - \beta_2 - \beta_3|}$$

where β_1 is the propagation constant in optical fiber 108 at wavelength λ_c .

For the earlier described condition of substantially uniform dispersion over the entire fiber length where random fluctuations tend to cause the dispersion of the fiber to be zero at or within 0.4 nm of the carrier wavelength for channel 1, the condition should exist for a substantially continuous length less than the beat length as defined above.

Claims

1. Transmitter apparatus for generating lightwave signals to be wavelength-division-multiplexed in an optical fiber (108) having a mean zero dispersion wavelength associated therewith, said transmitter apparatus comprising at least first and second channel transmitters (101, 102), each transmitter including a light source and a modulating means optically coupled together, each said light source being for generating a lightwave signal nominally at a carrier wavelength, characterised by said carrier wavelength for said first channel transmitter being at least 0.4nm below said zero dispersion wavelength, and a difference between said carrier wavelengths for said at least first and second channel transmitters being greater than or equal to 2nm.
2. A lightwave system comprising transmitter apparatus and optical fiber (108) coupled thereto for transmitting lightwave signals in an N-channel



WDM lightwave communication system described above, it is possible to obtain output pulses as shown in FIGs. 16 through 18. In terms of frequency, channels 1 and 2 are approximately 66.67 GHz and 333.3 GHz, respectively, above the zero dispersion frequency. As a result, the intermodulation sideband channels 3 and 4 occur 200 GHz below and 600 GHz above the zero dispersion frequency, respectively. Output pulses for channels 1 and 2 are shown in FIGs. 16 and 17, respectively. Output pulses for the intermodulation sidebands are shown in FIG. 18. Output pulses for the lower (at f_3) intermodulation sideband are labeled as curves 183. Output pulses (not labeled) for the upper (at f_4) intermodulation sideband appear as a very low, almost indiscernible ripple along the time axis at the bottom of FIG. 18. Input and output frequency spectra for the signals shown in FIGs. 16 through 18 are shown in FIGs. 19 and 20. Clearly, as seen in FIG. 20, the intermodulation sidebands are at significantly lower levels for a WDM communication system embodying the invention.

In the description above, the laser diode has been shown as a CW source tuned to a carrier wavelength and modulated externally. It should be understood by those persons of ordinary skill in the art that many other embodiments will accomplish the function of placing data signals on a carrier at wavelength, λ_1 . For example, distributed feedback (DFB) and distributed Bragg reflector (DBR) lasers are well adapted for generating lightwave signals at a single predetermined wavelength. Both DFB and DBR lasers are capable of tunable operation and direct or external modulation.

In the simulation results provided above, ASK modulation was described as the type modulation applied in each channel transmitter. It should be understood that other types of modulation such as FSK and PSK are contemplated for use in the multi-channel WDM lightwave communication system.

In general, external modulation has been described as a preferred modulation technique in order to avoid the effects of nonuniform FM response and the like. In practice, optical coupling of the laser source to the external modulator is accomplished with standard lens or butt coupling techniques which maximize coupling efficiency. Isolators placed between the laser and the modulator reduce unwanted reflections back into the laser.

While DFB and DBR lasers may be set to operate at a particularly desirable wavelength in accordance with the teachings of the invention herein, it may be desirable, although not necessary, to add a standard stabilization element to the laser. Stabilization elements, generally configured as control loops, are well known in the art for monitoring the signal output from the laser and responsively adjusting the current or temperature of the laser to correct any wavelength deviations from the desired wavelength.

In the description above, optical fiber 108 has been described as having a substantially uniform dispersion characteristic over its entire length. Since random fluctuations may occur in the dispersion characteristic of the optical fiber, it is understood that the carrier wavelength is offset from the mean zero dispersion wavelength.

While a uniform dispersion characteristic over the entire fiber length is desirable, it may not be practical. Therefore, it is also contemplated that optical fiber 108 comprises a plurality of fiber sections wherein each fiber section has a substantially uniform dispersion characteristic over the length of the particular section but the dispersion characteristics for the plurality of sections are different. In this case, channel 1 has its carrier wavelength set to the mean zero dispersion wavelength for the entire combination of fiber sections in fiber 108 provided that the dispersion in any section does not equal zero at or within 0.4 nm of the mean zero dispersion wavelength for a substantially continuous length greater than the beat length defined as

$$A_3 = \frac{2\pi}{|2\beta_1 - \beta_2 - \beta_3|}$$

where β_1 is the propagation constant in optical fiber 108 at wavelength λ_1 .

For the earlier described condition of substantially uniform dispersion over the entire fiber length where random fluctuations tend to cause the dispersion of the fiber to be zero at or within 0.4 nm of the carrier wavelength for channel 1, the condition should exist for a substantially continuous length less than the beat length as defined above.

Claims

1. Transmitter apparatus for generating lightwave signals to be wavelength-division-multiplexed in an optical fiber (108) having a mean zero dispersion wavelength associated therewith, said transmitter apparatus comprising at least first and second channel transmitters (101,102), each transmitter including a light source and a modulating means optically coupled together, each said light source being for generating a lightwave signal nominally at a carrier wavelength, characterised by said carrier wavelength for said first channel transmitter being at least 0.4nm below said zero dispersion wavelength, and a difference between said carrier wavelengths for said at least first and second channel transmitters being greater than or equal to 2nm.
2. A lightwave system comprising transmitter apparatus and optical fiber (108) coupled thereto for transmitting lightwave signals in an N-channel



wavelength-division-multiplexed format in said fiber, N being a positive integer greater than or equal to 2, said optical fiber having mean zero dispersion at a predetermined wavelength, said transmitter apparatus comprising at least first and second channel transmitters, (101,102), each transmitter including a light source and a modulating means optically coupled together, each said light source being for generating a lightwave signal nominally at a carrier wavelength, characterised by said carrier wavelength for said first channel transmitter being at least 0.4nm below said zero dispersion wavelength, and a difference between said carrier wavelengths for said at least first and second channel transmitters being greater than or equal to 2nm.

3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or a system as claimed in claim 2 wherein each transmitter includes means for modulating said lightwave signal in response to a supplied channel data signal.
4. Apparatus or a system as claimed in claim 3 wherein said means for modulating performs modulation in accordance with a method selected from the group consisting of ASK, FSK, and PSK.
5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1,3 or 4, or a system as claimed in claim 2,3 or 4, comprising means (104,101,106) connected to said at least first and second channel transmitters for combining lightwave signals from each said channel transmitter into a single wavelength-division-multiplexed lightwave signal.
6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1,3,4 or 5, or a system as claimed in claim 2,3,4 or 5, wherein said difference between said carrier wavelengths for said at least first and second channel transmitters is less than or equal to 3nm.
7. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1,3,4,5 or 6, or a system as claimed in claim 2,3,4,5 or 6, wherein said light source of said first channel transmitter is adapted to generate lightwave signals at said carrier wavelength being coincident with or less than 0.4nm away from said mean zero dispersion wavelength over any substantially continuous distance less than the beat length defined as

$$A_3 = \frac{2\pi}{|2\beta_1 - \beta_2 - \beta_3|}$$

where β_1 and β_2 are propagation constants in the optical fiber at the carrier wavelengths λ_1 and λ_2 of the first and second channel transmitters, respectively, and β_3 is the propagation constant in the optical fiber at a wavelength equal to

$$\frac{\lambda_1 \lambda_2}{2\lambda_2 - \lambda_1}$$

5 Patentansprüche

1. Sendervorrichtung zum Erzeugen von Lichtwellensignalen zum Wellenlängenmultiplexen in einer Glasfaser (108) mit zugehöriger Wellenlänge mit einer mittleren Streuung von Null, wobei die besagte Sendervorrichtung mindestens erste und zweite Kanalsender (101, 102) umfaßt, wobei jeder Sender eine Lichtquelle und ein Moduliermittel enthält, die optisch zusammengekoppelt sind, wobei jede besagte Lichtquelle zur Erzeugung eines Lichtwellensignals nominell auf einer Trägerwellenlänge vorgesehen ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die besagte Trägerwellenlänge für den besagten ersten Kanalsender mindestens 0,4 nm unterhalb der besagten Wellenlänge mit Streuung Null liegt, und ein Unterschied zwischen den besagten Trägerwellenlängen für die besagten mindestens ersten und zweiten Kanalsender größer als oder gleich 2 nm ist.
2. Lichtwellensystem mit Sendervorrichtung und daran angekoppelter Glasfaser (108) zur Übertragung von Lichtwellensignalen in einem wellenlängengemultiplexten N-Kanal-Format in der besagten Faser, wobei N eine positive Ganzzahl größer als oder gleich 2 ist, wobei die besagte Glasfaser eine mittlere Streuung von Null bei einer vorbestimmten Wellenlänge aufweist, wobei die besagte Sendervorrichtung mindestens erste und zweite Kanalsender (101, 102) umfaßt, wobei jeder Sender eine Lichtquelle und ein Moduliermittel enthält, die optisch zusammengekoppelt sind, wobei jede besagte Lichtquelle zur Erzeugung eines Lichtwellensignals nominell auf einer Trägerwellenlänge vorgesehen ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die besagte Trägerwellenlänge für den besagten ersten Kanalsender mindestens 0,4 nm unterhalb der besagten Wellenlänge mit Streuung Null liegt, und ein Unterschied zwischen den besagten Trägerwellenlängen für die besagten mindestens ersten und zweiten Kanalsender größer als oder gleich 2 nm ist.
3. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1 oder ein System nach Anspruch 2, wobei jeder Sender Mittel zum Modulieren des besagten Lichtwellensignals als Reaktion auf ein zugeführtes Kanaldatensignal enthält.
4. Vorrichtung oder ein System nach Anspruch 3, wobei das besagte Mittel zum Modulieren Modulation nach einem aus der Gruppe bestehend aus



ASK, FSK und PSK ausgewählten Verfahren durchführt.

5. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, 3 oder 4, oder ein System nach Anspruch 2, 3 oder 4, mit mit den besagten mindestens ersten und zweiten Kanalsendern verbundenen Mitteln (104, 101, 106) zum Kombinieren von Lichtwellensignalen von jedem besagten Kanalsender zu einem einzigen wellenlängengemultiplexten Lichtwellensignal. 5 10
6. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, 3, 4 oder 5, oder ein System nach Anspruch 2, 3, 4 oder 5, wobei der besagte Unterschied zwischen den besagten Trägerwellenlängen für die besagten mindestens ersten und zweiten Kanalsender kleiner als oder gleich 3 nm ist. 15
7. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, 3, 4, 5 oder 6, oder ein System nach Anspruch 2, 3, 4, 5 oder 6, wobei die besagte Lichtquelle des besagten ersten Kanalsenders zur Erzeugung von Lichtwellensignalen auf der besagten Trägerwellenlänge geeignet ist, wobei die besagte Trägerwellenlänge über jede geringer im wesentlichen kontinuierliche Entfernung als die als 20

$$A_3 = \frac{2\pi}{|2\beta_1 - \beta_2 - \beta_3|}$$

definierte Schwebungslänge mit der besagten Wellenlänge mit mittlerer Streuung von Null zusammen trifft oder weniger als 0,4 nm von ihr entfernt ist, wobei β_1 und β_2 Fortpflanzungskonstanten in der Glasfaser bei den Trägerwellenlängen λ_1 und λ_2 der ersten beziehungsweise zweiten Kanalsender sind und β_3 die Fortpflanzungskonstante in der Glasfaser bei einer Wellenlänge 30

gleich $\frac{\lambda_1 \lambda_2}{2\lambda_2 - \lambda_1}$ ist. 35

Revendications

1. Appareil émetteur pour générer des signaux optiques à multiplexer en longueur d'onde dans une fibre optique (108) ayant une longueur d'onde à dispersion nulle moyenne associée, ledit appareil émetteur comprenant au moins des premier et second émetteurs de voie (101, 102), chaque émetteur comportant une source de lumière et un moyen de modulation couplés optiquement ensemble, chaque dite source de lumière servant à générer un signal optique nominale-ment à une longueur d'onde de porteuse, caractérisé par ladite longueur d'onde de porteuse dudit premier émetteur de voie étant au moins 0,4nm en dessous de ladite longueur d'onde à dispersion nulle, et une différence entre lesdites longueurs d'onde 45

de porteuse pour lesdits au moins premier et second émetteurs de voie étant supérieure ou égale à 2nm.

2. Système optique comprenant un appareil émetteur et une fibre optique (108) couplés à celui-ci pour transmettre des signaux optiques dans un format multiplexé en longueur d'onde à N voies dans ladite fibre, N étant un nombre entier positif supérieur ou égal à 2, ladite fibre optique ayant une dispersion moyenne nulle à une longueur d'onde prédéterminée, ledit appareil émetteur comprenant au moins des premier et second émetteurs de voie, (101, 102), chaque émetteur comportant une source de lumière et un moyen de modulation couplés optiquement ensemble, chaque dite source de lumière servant à générer un signal optique nominale-ment à une longueur d'onde de porteuse, caractérisé par ladite longueur d'onde de porteuse dudit premier émetteur de voie étant au moins 0,4nm en dessous de ladite longueur d'onde à dispersion nulle, et une différence entre lesdites longueurs d'onde de porteuse pour lesdits au moins premier et second émetteurs de voie étant supérieure ou égale à 2nm. 5 10
3. Appareil selon la revendication 1 ou un système selon la revendication 2, dans lesquels chaque émetteur comporte un moyen pour moduler ledit signal optique en réponse à un signal de donnée de voie fourni. 15
4. Appareil ou système selon la revendication 3, dans lesquels chaque moyen pour moduler effectue une modulation conformément à une méthode sélectionnée dans un groupe consistant en ASK, FSK ou PSK. 20
5. Appareil selon la revendication 1, 3 ou 4, ou système selon la revendication 2, 3 ou 4, comprenant un moyen (104, 101, 106) connecté auxdits au moins premier et second émetteurs de voie pour combiner des signaux optiques provenant de chaque dit émetteur de voie en un unique signal optique multiplexé par longueur d'onde. 25
6. Appareil selon la revendication 1, 3, 4 ou 5, ou système selon la revendication 2, 3, 4 ou 5, dans lesquels ladite différence entre lesdites longueurs d'onde de porteuse pour lesdits au moins premier et second émetteurs de voie est inférieure ou égale à 3 nm. 30
7. Appareil selon la revendication 1, 3, 4, 5 ou 6, ou système selon la revendication 2, 3, 4, 5 ou 6, dans lesquels ladite source de lumière dudit premier émetteur de voie est adaptée pour générer 35



des signaux optiques à ladite longueur d'onde de porteuse coïncidant avec ou écartée de moins de 0,4nm de ladite longueur d'onde à dispersion nulle moyenne sur n'importe quelle distance substantiellement continue inférieure à la longueur de battement définie par

$$A_3 = \frac{2\pi}{|2\beta_1 - \beta_2 - \beta_3|}$$

où β_1 et β_2 sont des constantes de propagation dans la fibre optique aux longueurs d'onde de porteuse λ_1 et λ_2 des premier et second émetteurs de voie, respectivement, et β_3 est la constante de propagation dans la fibre optique à une

longueur d'onde égale à $\frac{\lambda_1 \lambda_2}{2\lambda_2 - \lambda_1}$.

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

9