

(12) PATENT
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE

(11) Application No. AU 199941976 B2
(10) Patent No. 755073

(54) Title
Method and system for removal of low order optical transmission modes to improve modal bandwidth in a multimode optical fiber computer network

(51)⁶ International Patent Classification(s)
H04B 010/13

(21) Application No: **199941976** (22) Application Date: **1999 .05 .21**

(87) WIPO No: **WO99/60730**

(30) Priority Data

(31) Number	(32) Date	(33) Country
09/082767	1998 .05 .21	US

(43) Publication Date : **1999 .12 .06**

(43) Publication Journal Date : **2000 .02 .17**

(44) Accepted Journal Date : **2002 .12 .05**

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(56) Related Art
US 4723828
US 5003623

419 76/99
PCT

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

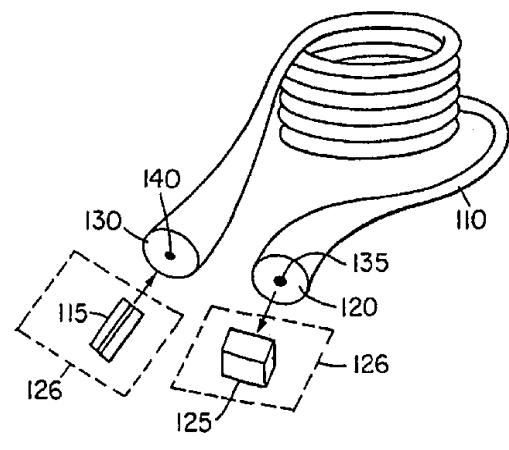


INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : H04B 10/13	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 99/60730
		(43) International Publication Date: 25 November 1999 (25.11.99)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/11358	(22) International Filing Date: 21 May 1999 (21.05.99)	(81) Designated States: AU, CA, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).
(30) Priority Data: 09/082,767 21 May 1998 (21.05.98) US	Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>	
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(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR REMOVAL OF LOW ORDER OPTICAL TRANSMISSION MODES TO IMPROVE MODAL BANDWIDTH IN A MULTIMODE OPTICAL FIBER COMPUTER NETWORK



(57) Abstract
A method of improving modal bandwidth in computer networks using multimode optical fiber and single mode sources is disclosed in which the optical signal from a center of the optical fiber is prevented from reaching the detector. This is accomplished according to a number of different techniques including the use of opaque spots on the fiber media/fiber couplers or the use of dark-cored fiber couplers. These configurations prevent pulse splitting that occurs in single mode source/multimode fiber systems by preventing light from the multimode fiber's center from interfering with the detector. When this is achieved, the detector is insulated from the effects of pulse splitting, supporting increased data rates by increasing the modal bandwidth.

Other solutions have been proposed to constrain pulse splitting in signals from single mode sources that have been launched into multimode fibers. In one case, the signal from the single mode source is launched into a short-length pigtail of single mode fiber. The other end of this fiber is then coupled to the existing multimode fiber,
 5 offset from the multimode fiber core center.

The problem with the offset single mode-multimode fiber coupling solution is the difficulty of implementing it in the typical computer network environment. The single mode fiber must be precisely misaligned to the multimode fiber such that the light is still launched into the multimode fiber with acceptable efficiency, and this misalignment
 10 must be maintained in the coupling module across its lifetime.

United States Patent 4,723,828 to Garel-Jones et al discloses a fiber coupler that functions to attenuate low order modes propagating substantially along the core axis. This attenuation is accomplished by providing optical fiber with a refractive index profile with a "central dip" to inhibit the propagation of the centrally travelling modes. In
 15 order to provide this refractive index profile, however, a complex fiber manufacturing system must be used.

United States Patent 5,003,623 to Asawa is directed to a bimodal optical fiber communication system in which the transmission fiber is a graded index fiber. Two light sources are used, one to provide lower-order-mode light and the other to provide
 20 higher-order-mode light. Spatial filter means are provided to selectively limit the angles of incidence of light on the graded index transmission fiber. The two modes of light are accomplished by launching light at different angles relative to the central axis of the fiber.

The discussion of the background to the invention herein is included to explain the context of the invention. This is not to be taken as an admission that any of the material referred to was published, known or part of the common general knowledge in
 25 Australia as at the priority date of any of the claims.

Summary of the Invention

30 Pulse splitting may be constrained in single mode source/multimode fiber systems by preventing light from the center of the multimode fiber from being transmitted to the detector. When this is achieved, the detector is insulated from the effects of any pulse splitting, supporting data rates of greater than one GSPS by increasing the modal bandwidth.

35 According to one aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of improving modal bandwidth in an optical link using a multimode optical fiber transmission media the method including:



generating an optical signal with a single mode laser source and coupling the optical signal into the multimode optical fiber, the method further including:

preventing the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching an optical detector by applying an opaque spot to a surface of the optical fiber between
5 the laser source and the detector to block the center of the optical fiber from transmitting the optical signal.

In one implementation, the source may be a Fabry-Perot or vertical cavity surface emitting laser.

In specific embodiments, the spot may be applied to either the entrance or exit
10 apertures of the fiber. In any case, the spot should preferably be approximately 4 to 7 microns in diameter.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer network optical transmission media including:

a multimode optical fiber for transmitting an optical signal between a laser
15 source and a detector, the media further including:
at least one opaque spot applied to a surface of the optical fiber for preventing the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching the detector.

According to a still further aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer network optical transmission media including:

20 a multimode optical fiber for transmitting an optical signal between a laser source and a detector; and
at least one fiber coupler for preventing the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching the detector, the at least one fiber coupler including:
an opaque spot applied to a surface of at least one of an exit aperture and an
25 entrance aperture of the fiber coupler to prevent the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching the detector.

The above and other features of the present invention, including various novel details of construction and combinations of parts, and other advantages, will now be more particularly described with reference to the accompanying drawings and pointed
30 out in the claims. It will be understood that the particular method and device embodying the invention are shown by way of illustration and not as a limitation of the invention. The principles and features of this invention may be employed in various and numerous embodiments without departing from the scope of the invention.



Brief Description of the Drawings

In the accompanying drawings, like reference characters refer to the same parts throughout the different views. The drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis
5 instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention.

Figs. 1 and 2 are plots of the differential mode delay in picoseconds per meter as a function of axial launch position for 850 nanometer and 1300 nanometer sources in two exemplary multimode fiber samples;

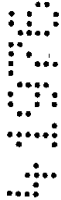
10 Fig. 3 is a plot of the index of refraction (n) as a function of axial position for an exemplary multimode fiber;

Fig. 4 shows a pulse function input signal from a 1300 nm single mode Fabry-Perot laser launched into a 610 meter long, 62.5 micron, fiber run (horizontal scale is 500 ps/division, and the vertical scale is 10 millivolts/division);

15 Fig. 5 is a schematic drawing showing embodiments of the inventive system for increasing modal bandwidth by preventing center mode light from reaching the detector;

Fig. 6 is a schematic drawing showing other embodiments of the invention using a fiber coupler;

20 Fig. 7 is a schematic drawing showing still other embodiments of the invention using a dark core fiber coupler; and



Figs. 8A and 8B are two refractive index profiles for the dark core fiber.

Detailed Description of the Invention

The modal bandwidth of graded index multimode optical fiber depends directly on the fiber's refractive index profile. The profile is designed to compensate for the different paths traveled by the numerous optical modes supported by the multimode optical fiber. The goal is to equalize delays of all propagating modes. The propagation time of an optical mode through a fiber is proportional to the optical path length. Low order modes propagate nearly straight through the fiber, traveling a distance close to the fiber's physical length L. Higher order modes travel at higher angles, and the physical distance L traveled is consequently longer. The optical path length of all modes is a product of the distance traveled and the refractive index of the optical medium along their respective paths. Compensation for the different modal physical distances is achieved by lowering the refractive index of the region of the fiber in which the higher order modes travel.

The index of refraction compensation is performed during the manufacture of the fiber. When the index is graded correctly, modes of different orders will propagate at compensated velocities and arrive at the far end of the fiber at nearly the same time. Research has shown that the optimum grading is obtained with a refractive index profile of the form:

$$n(r) = n_1 * [1 - 2 * \Delta n * (1 - (r/a)^g)]^{0.5} \text{ for } r < a, \text{ and}$$

$$n(r) = n_2 \text{ for } r \geq a,$$

where:

$n(r)$ is the refractive index at radial position r ,
 n_1 is the refractive index peak value,
 n_2 is the refractive index of the cladding glass,
 a is the core diameter,
 Δn is the index difference = $(n_1^2 - n_2^2) / (2 * n_1^2)$, and
 g is the profile parameter, a value of $g=1$ gives a straight line curve from 0 to a , a value of $g=\infty$ gives a flat, or step index profile.

A g value of approximately 1.9 to 2.0 has been found to provide optimal propagation delays for multimode optical fibers.

Differential mode delay (DMD) measurements are a method for testing the effectiveness of the index profiling. A fiber is tested by launching a single mode pulse into the core at the

core/cladding boundary. The output of the fiber is detected with a high bandwidth detector. The input point is then traversed across a diameter of the fiber while the relative time difference is read and recorded at the other end. The relative delays are plotted against radial position. Fibers with lower DMD profiles, or differences between the delays experienced at the fiber's center relative to near the core/cladding interface, have higher modal bandwidths than those with high DMD profiles.

Fig. 1 is a plot of the DMD for a graded index multimode fiber. Curves A and B show a relatively acceptable DMD for a multimode fiber operating at 850 (see \blacklozenge data points) and 1300 (see \blacksquare data points) nanometers (nm), respectively. In each case, the DMD is less than 0.5 picoseconds per meter (ps/m).

Fig. 2 is a plot of the DMD for another multimode, nominally similar, fiber. The DMD is limited for 1300 nm, but at 850 nm the DMD reaches 2ps/m for modes launched at a fiber axial position of +/-25 microns from the fiber's center. As a result, when operating at 850 nm, modes transmitted along the fiber's center travel much faster than those near the cladding/core interface.

The reduced delay for modes traveling along the fiber's center is theorized to be an artifact of the manufacturing techniques used for the multimode fiber. The fibers are manufactured by slowly depositing closely controlled combinations of chemicals on the inner surface of a hollow glass tube. This process slowly closes the tube off, slowly reducing its inner diameter by the sequential depositions. The last stages, just before the tube is closed-off, can sometimes be incomplete, yielding indexes such as that illustrated in Fig. 3 when the tube is pulled into the fiber. A sharp anomaly in the graded index (n) occurs near the fiber's center, position 0.

It is theorized that the fiber's center index of refraction anomaly results in pulse splitting such as that shown in Fig. 4 when a single mode laser launches into a multimode fiber. In an experiment, a 1300 nm single mode Fabry-Perot laser launched a pulse function into a 610 meter long, 62.5 micron, fiber run. In the plot, the horizontal scale is 500 ps/division, and the vertical scale is 20 millivolts/division.

After propagating the 610 meters, the original signal is converted into an initial pulse 410 and a secondary pulse 420. This pulse splitting differs from the pulse broadening usually seen when multimode sources are launched into multimode fibers. The highly multimodal and wide bandwidth characteristics of the LED are believed to excite all or most of the fiber's

transmission modes. As a result, a relatively small amount of the energy carried by the fiber is transmitted in the fiber's center and thus experiences the problematic transmission delay associated with the center index anomalies. In contrast, it is believed that the single mode laser source excites relatively few of the fiber's modes. Some of those modes propagate along the fiber's center, experiencing little delay, and an almost equivalent optical power is contained in other modes that propagate more toward the cladding/core interface, experiencing delay that would be predicted from the graded fiber configuration. These effects result in the distinct splitting, which severely undermines the decision logic in the detector yielding unacceptably high error rates when the transmission speeds approach 1 GBPS. While not all existing multimode fiber has this problem, a non-trivial amount does, and there is no easy test for identifying the problem fibers.

Fig. 5 illustrates one embodiment of a system for preventing the pulse splitting in multimode fiber 110/single mode source 115 computer data network transmission systems. Briefly, the invention is based on the principle that an opaque spot, applied to the center axis of the multimode fiber, between the detector and source, prevents the fiber modes traveling along the fiber's center axis from reaching the detector. Experiments have shown that stopping the coupling of the fiber's center modes to the detector prevents either the pulse splitting effect entirely or the effect at the detector where it causes problems.

In the embodiment of Fig. 5, an opaque spot 135 is applied to exit aperture 120 of the fiber 110, which forms the optical transmission media of the network. This configuration prevents any center modes of the optical signal propagating in the multimode fiber 110 from reaching the detector 125, which is typically part of a network interface card 126 of the computer node or network communications device. As a result, the center modes, which may propagate too quickly due to a reduced center index of refraction present in some multimode fibers, will not contribute to a pulse splitting effect at the detector 125 thereby preserving modal bandwidth.

The opaque spot 135 is preferably large enough to prevent substantially all of the energy in the center modes from reaching the detector 125. In the preferred embodiment, the opaque spot blocks approximately 90% of the energy. This requires a spot approximately 5 to 7 microns in diameter for 62.5 micron fiber. The opaque spot is preferably circular and applied substantially centered on the fiber's axis, as shown.

The opaque spot 135 is applied according to a number of different techniques. In the preferred embodiment, it is painted-on, possibly using a jig. Alternatively, it is scribed, etched, or deposited on the fiber end.

As also shown in Fig. 5, an opaque spot 140 is alternatively applied to the input or
5 entrance aperture 130 of the fiber 110. This second configuration prevents the optical signal from the single mode laser source 115, typically also found in a network interface card 126, from exciting any of the center modes of the fiber 110. A characteristic of multimode fibers that allows this embodiment to work is the limited coupling between the fiber's modes. That is, the center modes will not be excited by optical power crossing over from other modes.

10 According to the invention, the opaque spot is applied to the fiber's input aperture 130 or output aperture 120, individually. Alternatively, opaque spots 140, 135 are applied to both of the input and output apertures 130, 120.

Fig. 6 shows another embodiment in which the opaque spot(s) is/are not necessarily applied to the existing multimode fiber 110 but applied to a fiber pigtail or coupler 150 between
15 the existing multimode fiber 110 and the single mode light source 115 and/or detector 125. As before, the fiber couplers 150 are used at the detector or laser ends, or both. Moreover, the opaque spots 155 on the coupler 150 can be applied to the entrance/exit aperture ends 130, 120 that face the laser 115/detector 125 or to the coupler end 160 that interfaces with the multimode fiber 110, or both.

20 Fig. 7 shows still another embodiment of the invention. In this case, a coupler 170 is used as in the embodiment in Fig. 6. The fiber coupler's refractive index, however, is constructed so that it has a dark core 175 that can not transmit light, rather than the reliance on the opaque spots.

Fig. 8A and 8B show two index profiles that will not transmit any light through the
25 fiber's center axis. By doping the fiber during its manufacture such that the index of refraction drops sharply near the fiber's center axis, as shown in Fig 8A, light will be coupled only into modes existing in an annular ring centered on the fiber. Similarly, Fig 8B shows a fiber index with an annular step profile. Here, the center 5-7 microns of the fiber transmits no light. As in the previous embodiments, these dark core couplers 170 are placed either at the front end
30 between the transmission fiber 110 and the laser 115 at the tail end between the transmission fiber 110 and the detector 125, or both.

While this invention has been particularly shown and described with references to preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims. Those skilled in the art will recognize or be able to ascertain using no more than routine experimentation, many equivalents to the specific embodiments of the invention described specifically herein. Such equivalents are intended to be encompassed in the scope of the claims.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of improving modal bandwidth in an optical link using a multimode optical fiber transmission media the method including:
- 5 generating an optical signal with a single mode laser source and coupling the optical signal into the multimode optical fiber, the method further including:
- preventing the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching an optical detector by applying an opaque spot to a surface of the optical fiber between the laser source and the detector to block the center of the optical fiber from
- 10 transmitting the optical signal.
2. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the step of generating the optical signal comprises generating the optical signal with a Fabry-Perot laser.
- 15 3. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the step of generating the optical signal comprises generating the optical signal with a vertical cavity surface emitting laser.
4. The method as recited in any one of Claims 1-3, further including applying the opaque spot to at least one of an exit aperture and an entrance aperture of the optical fiber.
- 20 5. The method as recited in any one of Claims 1-4, wherein the opaque spot is approximately 4 to 7 microns in diameter.
- 25 6. The method as recited in any one of claims 1-5, wherein the opaque spot is applied to the optical fiber by at least one of:
- painting;
- scribing;
- 30 etching; and
- depositing.
7. A computer network optical transmission media including:
- a multimode optical fiber for transmitting an optical signal between a laser
- 35 source and a detector, the media further including:
- at least one opaque spot applied to a surface of the optical fiber for preventing the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching the detector.



8. The optical transmission media as recited in Claim 7, wherein the opaque spot is positioned between the laser source and the detector along a center axis of the optical fiber.
- 5
9. The optical transmission media as recited in Claim 7 or 8, wherein the opaque spot is applied to at least one of on an exit aperture and an entrance aperture of the optical fiber.
- 10
10. The optical transmission media as recited in any one of Claims 7-9, wherein the opaque spot is approximately 4 to 7 microns in diameter.
11. The optical transmission media as recited in any one of claims 7-10, wherein the opaque spot is applied to the optical fiber by at least one of:
- 15
- painting;
 - scribing;
 - etching; and
 - depositing.
- 20
12. A computer network optical transmission media including:
a multimode optical fiber for transmitting an optical signal between a laser source and a detector; and
at least one fiber coupler for preventing the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching the detector, the at least one fiber coupler including:
- 25
- an opaque spot applied to a surface of at least one of an exit aperture and an entrance aperture of the fiber coupler to prevent the optical signal from a center portion of the optical fiber from reaching the detector.
13. The optical transmission media as recited in Claim 12, wherein the fiber coupler transmits only an annular ring of light.
- 30
14. The optical transmission media as recited in Claim 12 or 13, wherein the fiber coupler is positioned between the optical fiber and the detector.
- 35
15. The optical transmission media as recited in any one of Claims 12-14, wherein the fiber coupler is positioned between the optical fiber and the laser source.



16. The optical transmission media as recited in any one of Claims 12-15, wherein opaque spot is applied to the fiber coupler by at least one of:

- painting;
- scribing;
- 5 etching; and
- depositing.

17. A method of improving modal bandwidth in an optical link using a multimode optical fiber transmission media substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

18. A computer network optical transmission media substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



15 DATED: 13 September, 2002

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Attorneys for:
ENTERASYS NETWORKS, INC.

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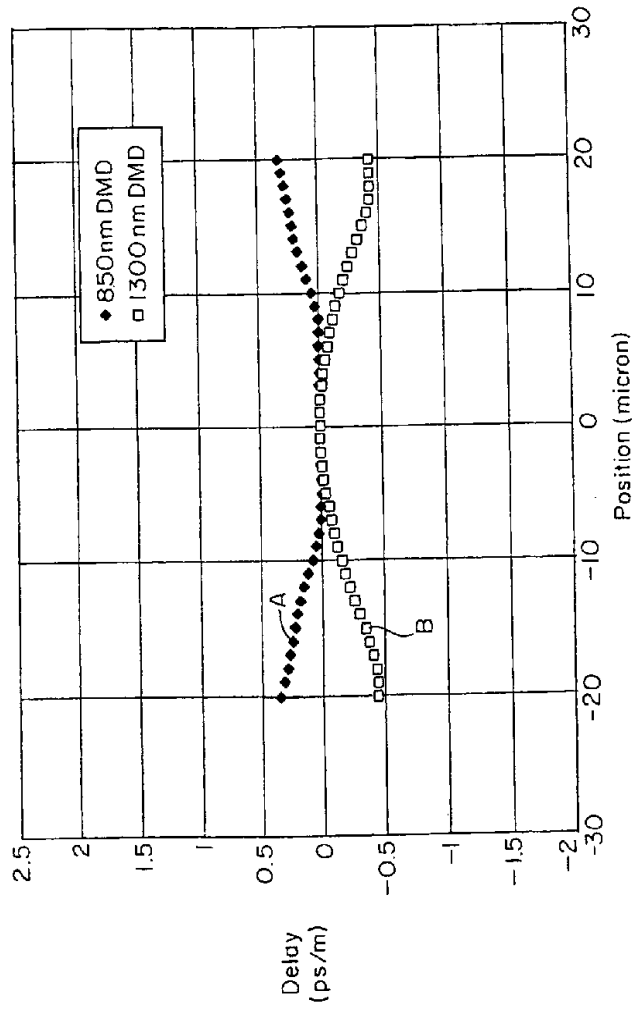


FIG. 1

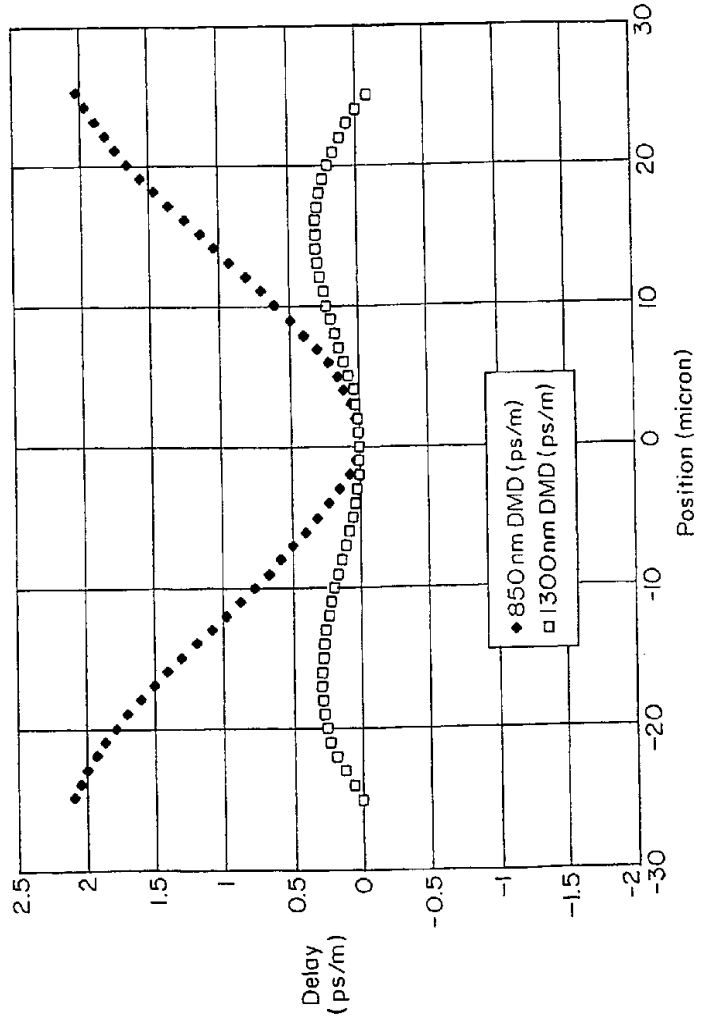


FIG. 2

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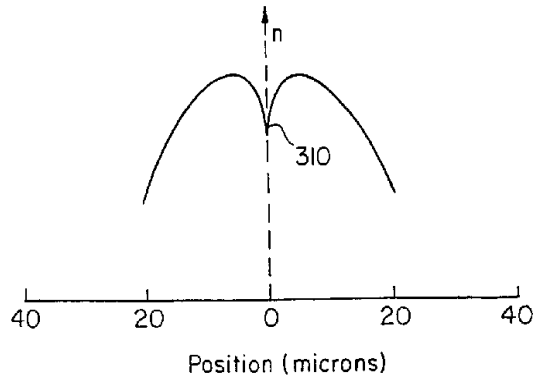


FIG. 3

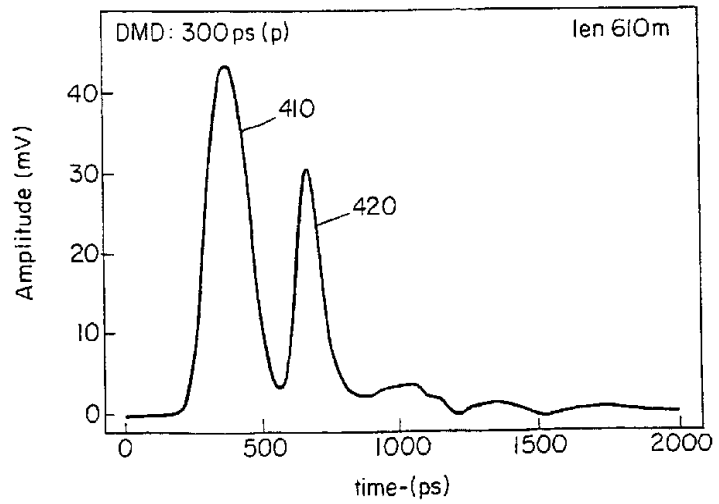


FIG. 4

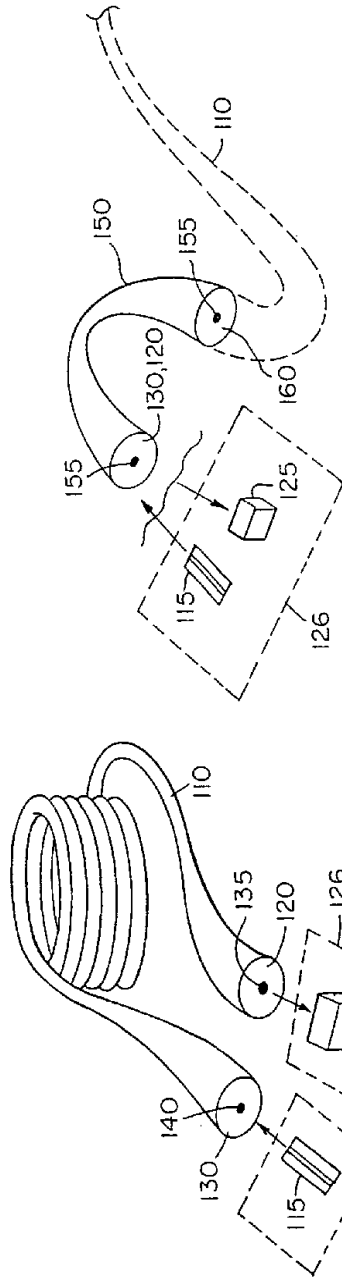


FIG. 6

FIG. 5

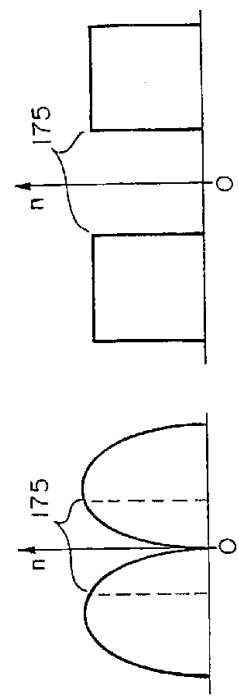


FIG. 8A

FIG. 8B

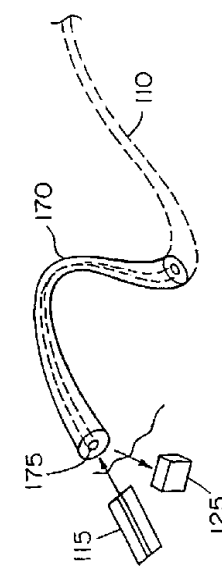


FIG. 7