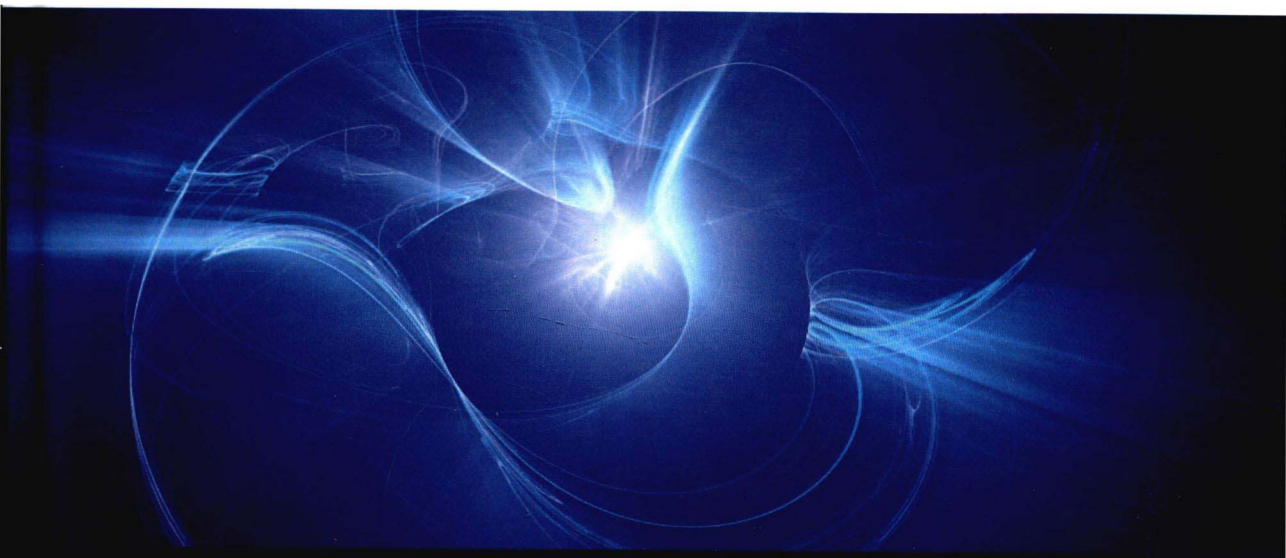
“十一五”国家重点图书出版规划项目

光学与光子学丛书

All-Optical Switches Based on Nonlinear Optics

基于非线性光学的全光开关

Chunfei Li（李淳飞）



Science Press
Beijing

中国科学院科学出版基金资助出版

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SCIENCE PRESS
Beijing, China

Responsible Editors: Fengjuan Liu and Jingwei Zhao

Copyright© 2015 by Science Press
Published by Science Press
16 Donghuangchenggen North Street
Beijing 100717, P. R. China

Printed in Beijing

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ISBN 978-7-03-046130-8

Biography of Prof. Chunfei Li

Chunfei Li graduated from Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) in 1961, where he majored in Physics and Electronics. From 1962 to 1965, he visited Jilin University to study Theoretical Physics. He was employed by the Physics Department of HIT, where he was successively promoted to be Lecturer (1978), Associate Professor (1982), and Full Professor (1985). From 1985 to 1998, he served as Chairman of Physics Department in HIT. After that he is a director of the Institute of Advanced Optics in HIT. Now he is a professor invited specially at South China Normal University in Guangzhou. From 1987 to 1989, Prof. Li was invited to be one of 70 members of the Chinese High Technology Specialist Committee, working in the group of information technology to preside over the research programs on optoelectronic devices in China.

Since 1979 Prof. Li began his research work on nonlinear optics, especially, optical bistability and optical instability. He was invited by Professor Hyatt Gibbs to work in this area at the Optical Sciences Center, University of Arizona, respectively in 1982, 1984 and 1996. In the following years, Prof. Li expanded his research work in China to excited-state nonlinear optics, optical limiting, nonlinear fiber-optics, chiral nonlinear optics, low-power all-optical switches and nanophotonics. He was one of pioneers in these research fields in China.

In the past 30 years, Prof. Li accomplished more than 300 papers published in famous international and domestic journals and 3 books: "*Nonlinear Optics*", "*Principles of All-Optical Switch*" and "*Photonics Technology and Application*" published by Chinese Publishing Houses. Because of his remarkable work, he was awarded 4 science prizes by the Chinese Government, respectively in 1987, 1996, 2000 and 2008. As a supervisor, he has tutored about 80 Ph. D and Master graduate students.

Prof. Li is a fellow of Chinese Optical Society and international member of OSA and SPIE. He was an editor serving for two Chinese journals: "*ACTA OPTICA SINICA*" and "*ACTA PHOTONICA SINICA*" and one international journal: "*Nonlinear Optical Physics and Materials*".

In the past 30 years, as a short-term visiting professor, Prof. Li has invited to work in a number of world-level research groups at University of Arizona, UC Santa Barbara, UC Los Angeles, University of Southern California, University of South Alabama, Penn State University, Tokyo University, University of Queensland and so on.

Prof. Li has rich experience in the international and domestic conferences. He was one of International Chairs of the First Conference on Nonlinear Optics at Hawaii, USA, in 1990. He was a Program Committee Member of the Conference on Optical Computing at Edinburgh, UK, in 1994 and an invited speaker in many international conferences. He has chaired 3 conferences on nonlinear optics in China, at Guangzhou in 1991; at Nanjing in 1993; and at Harbin in 1995, and has chaired 8th Photonic Conference at Nanchang in 2012.

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Preface

In 1960 the invention of the laser marked the human began to master the coherent-photon source. It means that photonics and photonic technology were born. Since then, the photonic technology and electronic technology began a long-term competition. Who will be the final winner? The currant competition results show that each of these two techniques has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The electronic technology in the 20th century has made brilliant achievements, for example, the computer, internet, and mobile phone etc. The wide application of electronic technology brings great changes to human life. That is because the electronic technology is good at digital information processing.

As for the photonic technology, it also has a great progress in the past 30 years. As we know, the photonic technology is particularly suitable for information transmission. In this respect it has many advantages: wide band, large capacity, parallel processing and fast speed. Now the optical-fiber communication has replaced the electrical-cable communication; the optical disc has replaced the magnetic disk in information storage technology; and the fiber grating sensor has replaced the semiconductor sensor in sensing technology. In addition, the solar cell and LED lighting push the green-energy-source technology fast developing.

Look at today's extensively used computer, its external equipment including the memorizers, displayers, input and output components, etc. have been totally changed to the photonic components. However, so far all of the computer's CPU is composed with electronic chips. Furthermore, today's optical fiber communication is a photoelectric hybrid technology, in which the signal transmission has changed to the all-optical technology, but the signal switching is still using the electronic technology. The underlying reason is that the optical switch (or optical transistor) cannot replace the electronic switch (or transistor) yet.

Photon technology, therefore, has not yet been overcome the last position in digital information processing, which is now occupied by electronic technology. If the photonic technology can capture this final position, it will gain the final victory. At that time, the all-optical switch will be used instead of the existing electronic switch. As a result, the all-optical communication and all-optical computation will be realized.

In the past half a century, the researchers in optical-physics field focused on the study of laser sources, however, in this century they may turn to "controlling light with light". The most importent subject is just all-optical switch. However, because the interaction between photons is too weak, a group of photons cannot directly control the

other group of photons like the electronic transistor, the only way is to indirectly use the nonlinear-optics method. That means using a high-power light to change the optical parameters of medium (such as the refractive index), and then controlling the power of the signal light passing through the medium, and switching its outputted power between the low-level and high-level.

Scientists around the world spent half a century of time and a lot of money in the research of all-optical switches, but they met some inherent difficulties coming from the nonlinear optics: in order to achieve the all-optical switching, it requires a strong control-light power, which is much higher than the signal power; to reduce the switching power, it must pay the price for decreasing the switching speed and increasing the device loss; and the switch-off time is always longer than the switch-on time in about two order of magnitude. Therefore, so far there are not any all-optical-switch products available for application.

However, people have obtained a lot of research results and accumulated a wealth of experiences. The long-term research experience tells us that in order to make the practical all-optical switches we should use the nanophotonic technology and ultrafast-laser technology. Now the researches are focusing on the nanoscale all-optical switches.

In fact, all-optical switch is a very broad concept, which contains the intensity-type, space-type, time-type as well as the wavelength-type switching devices. Generally speaking, if a device can be discontinuously, rapidly and reversibly converted from a physical state to another using a pure optical method, this device is called all-optical switch.

The purpose of this book is to summarize the research results, systematically introduce the physical thought, basic principle and main application of various optical switches, which were studied by scientists in the past half century. The book also contains the author's contributions in the research of all-optical switches based on nonlinear optics in the past 30 years.

In last ten years, author offered a new course named "Principle of optical switches" to the graduate students in Harbin Institute of Technology and South China Normal University. This book' writing is based on lectures of the course. The author makes every effort to highlight the physical concepts and make them easy to understand. Having certain knowledge of optical physics, including laser principle, nonlinear optics, optical interferometers, etc., the readers can easily read this book.

The content of this book is divided into 10 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the importance, classification and parameter of optical switch, and points out the research direction of the all-optical switch; Chapter 2 gives the basic knowledge of nonlinear optical physics and materials for all-optical switches; Chapter 3 introduces the electricity-controlled optical switches, which are available in the market; Chapter 4 studies the

optical bistable device (OBD) including the pure optical OBD and the electro-optical hybrid OBD, in addition the instability of OBD; Chapter 5 discusses the nonlinear interferometer all-optical switches as a kind of space-type AOSs; Chapter 6 introduces the nonlinear fiber grating AOS, which is one of intensity-type AOSs; Chapter 7 shows the nanoscale AOS including the nanoscale waveguide AOS, the photon crystal AOS and the surface plasmonic AOS; Chapter 8 discusses the optical flip-flop, a time-type AOS, and the wavelength convertor, a wavelength-type AOS; Chapter 9 talks about optical-limiting optical switches, which is a transmittance switch used for preventing laser injure to eyes. Finally, Chapter 10 discusses the applications of AOSs in all-optical communication networks.

Actually, the optical switches have many other applications besides in optical communication, for example in computer technology, sensing technology, as well as optical metering, and optical storage. These applications have not been included in the book because those applications are immature yet.

I hope this book can make the readers systematically understand the basic principles of all-optical switches, and can encourage the young readers having interest to engage in the future research of all-optical switch.

The author sincerely thank professors H. M. Gibbs, Y. R. Shen, E. Garmire, and P. W. Smith, to guide me in my early works on optical bistability; thank Chinese professors (Academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences) Wang Dahang, Wang Zhijiang, Liu Songhao and Wang Qiming to encourage me in research on nonlinear optics and all-optical switch. I should also thank my 80 PhD and Master students in Physics Department, Harbin Institute of Technology to join the research works in my group. The book also contains their hard work results.

My teaching and research work were very busy in the past decades; I only spent some spare time in writing this book. I sincerely invite my readers provide some suggestions to further modify the book, making it a valuable textbook for graduate students and reference book for researchers.

Chunfei Li

On November 15, 2014

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