

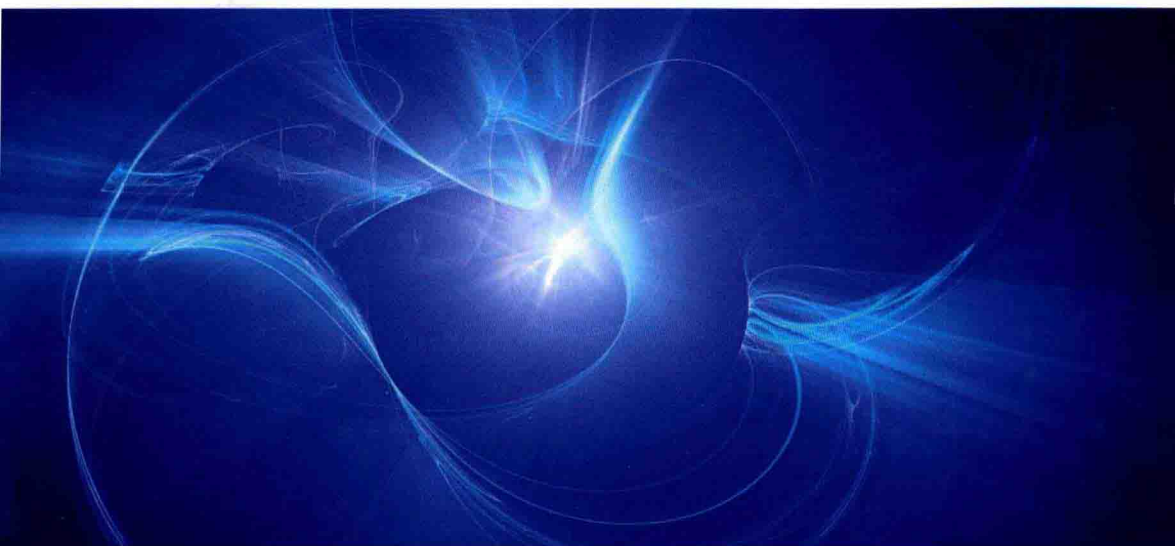
“十二五”国家重点图书出版规划项目

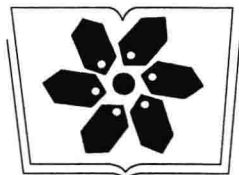
光学与光子学丛书

All-Optical Switches Based on Nonlinear Optics

基于非线性光学的全光开关

Chunfei Li (李淳飞)





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.

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 current 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, displays, 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 important 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's 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 injury 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.



On November 15, 2014

CONTENTS

Preface

Chapter 1 Introduction to Optical Switch	1
1.1 Importance of Optical Switch	1
1.1.1 Optical Switch is a Demand of Optical Physics Development	1
1.1.2 Optical Switch is a Demand of Photonic Technology Progress	6
1.2 Classification of Optical Switch	10
1.2.1 Classification According to the Control Method	10
1.2.2 Classification According to the Working Function	12
1.2.3 Classification According to the Working Domain	13
1.3 Parameters of Optical Switch	19
1.3.1 Performance Parameters of Optical Switch	19
1.3.2 Figure of Merit of Optical-Switch Materials	22
1.4 Research Direction of All-Optical Switch	24
1.4.1 Technical Indicators of Applicable AOS	24
1.4.2 Difficulties and Solutions of AOS Study	24
References	26
Chapter 2 Nonlinear Optical Basics for All-Optical Switch	27
2.1 K-K Relation and Kerr Effect	27
2.1.1 Kramers-Kronig Relation	27
2.1.2 Relation Between $\Delta n(\omega)$ and $\Delta \alpha(\omega)$	28
2.1.3 Optical Kerr Effect and Optical Phase Modulation	32
2.2 Two-Photon-Absorption Effect	38
2.2.1 Optical Intensity Transportation Equation	38
2.2.2 TPA Coefficient Measurement	41
2.2.3 TPA in Silicon Material	43
2.3 Optical Nonlinearity in Semiconductor	45
2.3.1 Free-Carrier Nonlinearity	46
2.3.2 Bound-Electron Nonlinearity	48
2.3.3 Quantum-Confinement Nonlinearity in Semiconductor	49
2.4 Optical Nonlinearity in Glass Materials	55
2.4.1 Silica and Doped Silica	55
2.4.2 Chalcogenide Glass	56

2.5	Nonlinear Optical Mechanism in Organic Material	57
2.5.1	Conjugated Polymers	57
2.5.2	Charge Transfer Molecules (Chromophores)	60
2.5.3	Miscellaneous Molecules	62
2.6	Saturable and Reverse Saturable Absorption	64
2.6.1	Saturable Absorption	64
2.6.2	Reverse Saturable Absorption	69
	References	75
Chapter 3	Electric-Controlled Optical Switches	78
3.1	Electro-Optical Switches	78
3.1.1	Electro-Optic Coupler Optical Switches	80
3.1.2	Electro-Optic M-Z Interferometer Optical Switches	86
3.1.3	Branch-Waveguide Electro-Optical Switches	88
3.2	Waveguide Thermo-Optic Switches	89
3.2.1	Coupler Thermo-Optic Switches	91
3.2.2	M-Z Interferometer Thermo-Optic Switches	92
3.2.3	Multi-Mode Interference Thermo-Optic Switches	94
3.2.4	Branch-Waveguide Thermo-Optic Switches	94
3.2.5	Ring-Resonator Thermo-Optic Wavelength Switch	96
3.2.6	Phase Transition Thermo-Optic Switch	97
3.3	Liquid Crystal Optical Switch	99
3.3.1	Birefringent-Type Liquid Crystal Optical Switch	101
3.3.2	Polarization-Type Liquid Crystal Optical Switch	102
3.3.3	Reflection-Type Liquid Crystal Optical Switch	104
3.4	Mechanical Optical Switches	106
3.4.1	Simple Mechanical Optical Switches	106
3.4.2	MEMS Optical Switches	108
3.5	Magneto-Optical Switches	111
3.6	Acousto-Optical Switches	113
3.6.1	Beam Reflection-Type Acousto-Optical Switches	113
3.6.2	Polarization Conversion Acousto-Optical Switches	115
	References	118
Chapter 4	Optical Bistability Devices	120
4.1	Introduction to Optical Bistability	120
4.1.1	Optical Bistability	120
4.1.2	Optical Bistable Devices	121
4.2	Intrinsic Optical Bistable Device	126

4.2.1	Absorptive Optical Bistable Device	126
4.2.2	Refractive Optical Bistable Device	130
4.2.3	Other All-Optical Bistable Devices	142
4.3	Hybrid Optical Bistable Devices	150
4.3.1	Electro-Optic Modulation Fabry-Perot OBD	151
4.3.2	Electro-Optic Polarization Modulation OBD	155
4.3.3	Electro-Optic M-Z Interferometer OBD	158
4.3.4	Other Principles of Hybrid OBDs	160
4.4	Stability and Instability of Optical Bistability	165
4.4.1	Stability of Optical Bistability	165
4.4.2	Double Feedback Instability	168
4.4.3	Time Delay Feedback Instability	172
	References	176
Chapter 5	Nonlinear-Interferometer All-Optical Switches	179
5.1	Optical Coupler All-Optical Switches	180
5.1.1	Low-Power Symmetric Optical Coupler	181
5.1.2	Symmetric Coupler AOS in SPM Mode	184
5.1.3	Asymmetric Coupler AOS in XPM Mode	187
5.1.4	Nonlinear Coupler AOS based on Resonate Nonlinearity	190
5.2	Sagnac Interferometer All-Optical Switches	195
5.2.1	Low-Power Sagnac Interferometer with a 3dB Coupler	195
5.2.2	Sagnac Interferometer AOS with a Non-3dB Coupler in SPM Mode	199
5.2.3	Sagnac Interferometer AOS with a 3dB coupler in XPM Mode	201
5.2.4	Sagnac Interferometer AOS with an Optical Amplifier in SPM Mode	203
5.2.5	Sagnac Interferometer AOS with a Nonlinear Coupler in XPM Mode	206
5.3	M-Z Interferometer All-Optical Switches	209
5.3.1	Phase-Difference Formulae of M-Z Interferometer	209
5.3.2	M-Z Interferometer AOS with Different Arms in Refractive Index	211
5.3.3	M-Z Interferometer AOS with Different Arms in Length	212
5.4	Ring Resonator All-Optical Switches	213
5.4.1	Single-Coupler Ring Resonator AOS	213
5.4.2	Ring Resonator Coupled M-Z interferometer AOS	217
5.4.3	Double-Coupler Ring Resonator AOS	219
5.5	Active Ring Resonator All-Optical Switches	223

5.5.1	Active Ring Resonator Coupled M-Z Interferometer AOS	224
5.5.2	Active Double Ring Resonator AOS	229
5.5.3	Active Double-Coupler Ring Resonator OBD	234
	References	239
Chapter 6	Nonlinear-Fiber-Grating All-Optical Switches	241
6.1	Fiber-Bragg-Grating AOSs	242
6.1.1	Principle of Fiber-Bragg-Grating AOS	242
6.1.2	Experiments of Fiber-Bragg-Grating AOS	247
6.1.3	High Nonlinear Fiber-Bragg-Grating AOS	250
6.1.4	Phase-Shifted Fiber Grating AOS	251
6.2	Long-Period-Fiber-Grating AOSs	255
6.2.1	Principle of Long-Period-Fiber-Grating AOS	255
6.2.2	Experiment of Long-Period-Fiber-Grating AOS	258
6.3	Nonlinear Fiber Connected LPFG Pare AOS	261
6.3.1	Usual Fiber Connected LPFG-Pair AOS	261
6.3.2	Nonlinear Fiber Connected LPFG-Pair AOS	268
6.4	Nonlinear Fiber Connected FBG-Pare OBD	272
6.4.1	Transmission Matrix of Single FBG	273
6.4.2	Theory of Nonlinear-Fiber-Connected FBG-Pair OBD	275
6.4.3	Simulations of OB Loops in Nonlinear FBG-pair	279
	References	283
Chapter 7	Nanophotonic All-Optical Switches	285
7.1	Nano-Waveguide Interferometer All-Optical Switches	287
7.1.1	Nano-Waveguide Microring-Coupled MZI AOS	287
7.1.2	Nano-Waveguide Single-Coupler Microring AOS	288
7.1.3	Nano-Waveguide Double-Coupler Microring AOS	289
7.2	Photonic Crystal All-Optical Switches	296
7.2.1	Basic Conception of Photonic Crystal	296
7.2.2	Two-Dimensional Photonic-Crystal Coupler AOS	299
7.2.3	Two-Dimensional Photonic-Crystal Ring Resonator AOS	300
7.2.4	Two-Dimensional Photonic-Crystal M-Z Interferometer AOS	302
7.2.5	ZnS/ZnSe 1D Photonic-Crystal Bandgap-Shift OBD	305
7.2.6	Nano-Ag Polymer 2-D Photonic-Crystal Bandgap-Shift AOS	309
7.2.7	PST Polymer 2-D Photonic-Crystal Defect-Shift AOS	314
7.2.8	Silicon 2D Photonic-Crystal Nanocavity AOS	318
7.3	Surface-Plasmon-Polaritons All-Optical Switches	321
7.3.1	Introduction to Surface-Plasmon-Polaritons	321

7.3.2	Metal-Nanometer-Structure and Its Absorption Spectra	324
7.3.3	Gallium Phase-Transition Grating Coupled SPP AOS	328
7.3.4	Gallium Phase-Transition Prism-Coupled SPP AOS	329
7.3.5	Photochromics Phase-Transition Grating-Coupled SPP AOS	330
7.3.6	MDM-Waveguide Absorption SPP AOS	331
7.3.7	Nonlinear Grating SPP OBD	332
7.4	Silicon-Nanowaveguide Resonance-Cavity All-Optical Switches	335
7.4.1	Silicon-Ridge-Nanowaveguide Microring-Resonator AOS	336
7.4.2	Organic-Material-Filled Silicon-Vertical-Slot-Nanowaveguide All-Optical Signal Processing	337
7.4.3	Si-nc/SiO ₂ -Filled Silicon-Horizontal-Slot-Nanowaveguide Ring AOS	340
7.4.4	Silicon/Air Photonic-Crystal-Waveguide F-P Cavity AOS	343
7.4.5	Silicon-Based MDM-Type SPP-Waveguide Nanoring Resonator AOS	346
	References	350
Chapter 8	Optical Flip-Flop and Wavelength Converter	353
8.1	SOA and Its Applications	353
8.1.1	General Principle of Optical Amplifier	353
8.1.2	Semiconductor Optical Amplifier	356
8.1.3	Nonlinear Properties and Applications of SOA	359
8.2	All-Optical Flip-Flop	365
8.2.1	Semiconductor-MQW Optical-Bistability Optical Flip-Flop	366
8.2.2	Semiconductor Grating-Waveguide-Refractive Optical Flip-Flop	367
8.2.3	Distributed-Feedback-SOA Reflection Optical Flip-Flop	369
8.2.4	SOA-Polarization-Switch Optical Flip-Flop	371
8.2.5	Double-Laser Absorption/Gain-Saturation Optical Flip-Flop	372
8.2.6	SOA-Contained M-Z Interferometer Optical Flip-Flop	373
8.2.7	InP/SOI Microdisk-Laser Integrated Optical Flip-Flop	374
8.3	All-Optical Wavelength Converter	378
8.3.1	SOA Cross-Gain-Saturation Wavelength Converter	379
8.3.2	SOA Four-Wave-Mixing Wavelength Converter	380
8.3.3	Electroabsorption Modulator Wavelength Converter	381
8.3.4	SOA-XPM M-Z Interferometer Wavelength Converter	382
8.3.5	SOA-XPM Sagnac Interferometer Wavelength Converter	384
	References	386
Chapter 9	Optical-Limiting All-Optical Switches	387
9.1	Introduction to Optical Limiter	387

9.1.1	Conception and Application of Optical Limiter	387
9.1.2	Classification and Parameters of Optical Limiting	389
9.2	Linear Optical Limiters	392
9.2.1	Multilayer-Film Reflective Mirror Optical Limiter	392
9.2.2	Two-Dimensional Diffraction Grating Optical Limiter	394
9.3	Nonlinear Optical Limiters	395
9.3.1	Suspension Liquid Scattering Nonlinear Optical Limiter	395
9.3.2	Tow-Photon Absorption Optical Limiter	396
9.3.3	Reverse Saturable Absorption Optical Limiter	397
9.4	Linear and Nonlinear Combined Optical Limiter	408
9.4.1	Frosted-Glass-Scattering based Optical Limiter	409
9.4.2	All-Reflection-Prism Based Optical Limiter	410
9.4.3	Grating Diffraction Based Optical Limiter	410
	References	418
Chapter 10	AOS Application in All-Optical Network	420
10.1	Introduction to All-Optical Network	420
10.1.1	Classification of All-Optical Network	420
10.1.2	Physical Structure of the All-Optical Network	424
10.1.3	Development Tendency of All-Optical Network	425
10.1.4	Applications of AOS in Optical Network Security	428
10.2	Wavelength Division Multiplexing	429
10.2.1	Introduction to WDM	429
10.2.2	Interference-Filter WDM	430
10.2.3	Optical-Grating WDM	432
10.2.4	Arrayed-Waveguide-Grating WDM	433
10.2.5	Fused-Tapering Fiber WDM	434
10.3	Optical Time Division Multiplexing	435
10.3.1	Introduction to OTDM	435
10.3.2	Fiber-Delayed-Line OTDM	436
10.3.3	SOA-FWM OTDM	437
10.3.4	SOA-XPM OTDM	438
10.3.5	SOA-Polarization OTDM	440
10.3.6	PPLN-Waveguide OTDM	442
10.4	Broadcast Network and Wavelength Routing	443
10.4.1	Broadcast and Select Optical Network	444
10.4.2	Wavelength-Routing Optical Network	445
10.4.3	Waveguide-Grating Router	446

10.5	Optical-Add-Drop Multiplexer.....	448
10.5.1	Grating-Assisted Coupler OADM.....	449
10.5.2	Grating-Assisted M-Z Interferometer OADM.....	450
10.5.3	Grating-Assisted Circulator OADM.....	451
10.5.4	Microring-Resonator OADM.....	452
10.5.5	Optical-Switch-Based Dynamic OADM.....	453
10.5.6	OADM Applications in Communication Networks.....	454
10.6	Optical Cross Connects.....	455
10.6.1	Wavelength-Selective OXC.....	455
10.6.2	Wavelength-Interchanging OXC.....	458
10.6.3	Free-Space OXC.....	459
10.7	Optical Circuit, Packet and Burst Switching.....	461
10.7.1	Three Optical Switching Modes.....	461
10.7.2	Optical Circuit Switching.....	463
10.7.3	Optical Packet Switching.....	464
10.7.4	Optical Burst Switching.....	469
	References.....	472

Chapter 1 Introduction to Optical Switch

In this chapter, we discuss the significance of optical switch, introduce the classification and the parameters of optical switch, and point out the necessary technical indexes of practical all-optical switches. In order to achieve these technical indexes, the only way out is to study and develop the nanoscale all-optical switches with low power, high speed and low loss.

1.1 Importance of Optical Switch

1.1.1 Optical Switch is a Demand of Optical Physics Development

1.1.1.1 Development Tendency of Optics and Photonics

As is known to all, the light wave is part of the electromagnetic wave; its frequency range is within $10^{11} \sim 10^{16}$ Hz, including terahertz (THz), infrared, visible, and ultraviolet light wave. It likes other electromagnetic waves to comply with the Maxwell equations. The light wave also can be regarded as a combination of photons. The photon is a kind of fundamental particles. It likes other fundamental particles, as well as to obey the Schrodinger equations, but it has no quality and is not charged. Figure 1.1 shows the frequency division of electromagnetic wave, and the corresponding methods used in the communication.

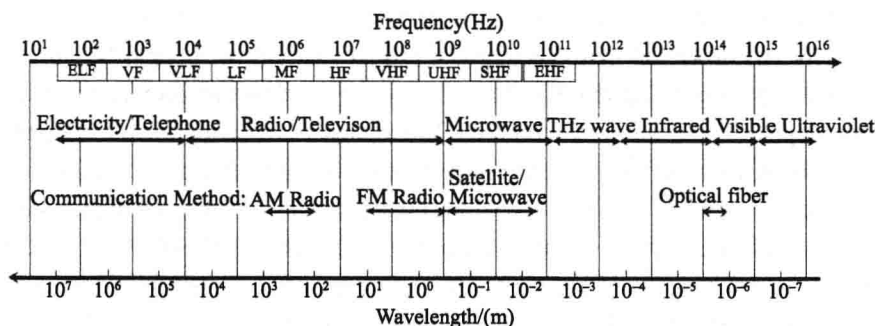


Figure 1.1 Electromagnetic wave frequency division and the corresponding methods used in communication

Optics and electromagnetism, both born in the 18th century, are two branches of the

physics. The development process of the photonics is very similar to that of the electronics as shown in Figure 1.2, which shows development roadmaps of photonics and electronics [1].

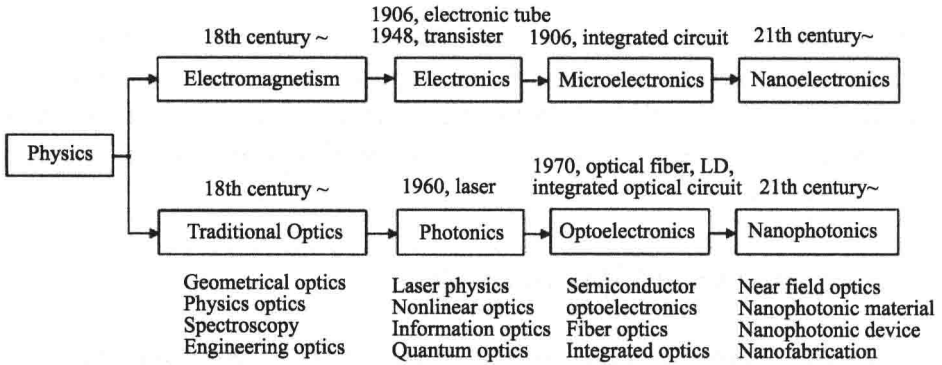


Figure 1.2 A comparison between two development roadmaps of photonics and electronics

Firstly, let us brief review the history of the electronics. On the basis of electromagnetism, in the 19th century, various electronic products and technologies such as the generator, motors, electric car, electric lamp, electric telephone, radio communication etc. were invented, and then people said that the human has been entered into the “Electrical Age”.

At the beginning of 20th century, the invention of the electronic tube marked the people knew how to produce and control electrons, thus a new discipline-Electronics was established. The development stages of electronics can be divided into two: one is Vacuum-Tube Electronics since the invention of the vacuum tube in 1906; and the other is Semiconductor Electronics since the invention of the transistor in 1948.

In 1960, the invention of the integrated circuit marked the people began to master the technology integrating the micron-scale electronic elements such as the transistors, resistor, capacitor etc. into a silicon chip. Since then Electronics was developed to Microelectronics, as a result, brilliant achievements in microelectronic technology flourished, for instance, the radio, television, tape recorder, video, video cameras, radar, microwave communication, electronic computers, as well as the electronic internet. In summary, the electronic technology has brought great changes to human life, so in later of 20th century, people declared: “The human has entered the Electronic Age.”

Unfortunately, nowadays the development of microelectronics has met some bottlenecks: the miniaturization of electronic chip has been restricted by the diffraction limit. Recently, people are studying the nanoscale electronic components, such as the carbon