

Photoelectric Sensors and Controls

SELECTION AND APPLICATION

Scott M. Juds

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Preface

Light sensing as a means of industrial control has been available for many decades. The technology incorporated into photoelectric controls and sensors since the early 1970s has revolutionized the market with significant advances in the state of the art in electronics, optics, and packaging. These advances have enabled photoelectric controls and sensors to overcome most of the barriers to their practical application.

The scope of technologies encompassed by these products generally extends into one or more areas in which the user has little background or training. This book is designed to provide the background and reference information necessary for making informed selection decisions. It is designed to improve the success in application of these devices by maintenance personnel, electricians, designers, and engineers. Material in this text is targeted at system designers, who must make the initial selection, and at maintenance personnel, who make sure installed systems keep working.

The book covers the basic fundamentals of optics and also gives an in-depth practical analysis of the major sensor configurations. Electrical control interfaces, control logic functions and specifications are described. Environmental issues, often a "gotcha" and important for system reliability, are discussed.

Finally, application issues and specific examples are discussed to help the reader understand the possibilities, practical limitations, and pitfalls. I thoroughly recommend experimentation as you read to help solidify concepts. Confucius put it this way: "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand."

The text was specifically designed to be useful to readers with minimal experience in enclosures, optics, electronics, or industrial controls. Many drawings and graphs are used to simplify explanations and impart a solid practical understanding.

After reading *Photoelectric Sensors and Controls* you will be prepared with the insight and knowledge to tackle even the toughest optical sensing and control problems.

I would like to extend special thanks and appreciation to physicist Rocky Kyle for his technical review and for the photoelectric optics expertise he was willing to share over the years; to electrical engineer and photoelectric expert Paul Mathews, who reviewed the manuscript while sailing his boat to exotic places in the South Pacific; to artist John Jolley for his accuracy and aesthetic interpretation of my stick figures; and to secretary Jeri Barnhart for her assistance with the intricacies of our written language, compilations, and correspondence.

Scott M. Juds

Contents

PREFACE	v
CHAPTER 1 PHOTOELECTRIC CONTROLS AND SENSORS: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Principles of Operation	2
1.2.1 Conventional unmodulated photoelectrics	2
1.2.2 Modern pulse-modulated photoelectrics	6
1.3 Principal Optical Modes of Operation	8
1.3.1 Thru-beam sensing	8
1.3.2 Reflex sensing	9
1.3.3 Proximity sensing	10
1.4 Photoelectric Trends	11
1.4.1 Circuit technology	12
1.4.2 Interference testing	13
1.4.3 Interfacing	13
1.4.4 Optics	16
1.4.5 Packaging	16
CHAPTER 2 OPTICAL FUNDAMENTALS	18
2.1 Producing the Beam	18
2.1.1 Photoelements	20
2.1.2 Lenses	21
2.1.3 Beam patterns	24
2.2 Reflection	28
2.2.1 Diffuse reflection	29
2.2.2 Specular reflection	30

2.2.3	Mixed diffuse and specular reflection	31
2.2.4	Retroreflection	32
2.3	Transmission	40
2.3.1	Refraction	40
2.3.2	Scattering and absorption	43
2.3.3	Polarization	49
2.4	The Spectrum	53
2.4.1	Source and detector spectra	54
2.4.2	Filters and dyes	57
2.4.3	Fluorescence	60
2.5	Fiber Optics	61
2.5.1	Total internal reflection	61
2.5.2	Glass versus plastic fibers	63
2.5.3	Spectral attenuation	66
2.5.4	End termination	69
2.6	Excess Gain	69
2.6.1	Definition	69
2.6.2	Sensor characteristics	72
2.6.3	Environmental effects	74
2.6.4	Sensor and target variation	75
2.7	Contrast Ratio	77
2.7.1	Low-contrast targets	77
2.7.2	Low-contrast sensor techniques	78
2.7.3	Contrast and target size	82
2.7.4	Color contrast	83
CHAPTER 3 PHOTOELECTRIC OPTICAL CONFIGURATIONS		87
3.1	Diffuse Proximity Sensing	87
3.1.1	Long-range proximity sensors	88
3.1.2	Short-range proximity sensors	91
3.1.3	Fixed-focus proximity sensors	94
3.1.4	Variable proximity sensors	96
3.1.5	Ultraviolet fluorescent proximity sensors	100
3.1.6	Registration mark detection	101
3.2	Reflex Sensing	103
3.2.1	Standard reflex sensors	104
3.2.2	Visible beam sensors	109
3.2.3	Polarized reflex sensors	110

Contents

ix

3.3	Thru-Beam Sensing	115
3.3.1	Standard thru-beam sensors	115
3.3.2	Edge guide control	124
3.3.3	Data transmission	125
3.4	Fiber Optics	127
3.4.1	Thru-beam sensors	128
3.4.2	Proximity sensors	131
3.4.3	Reflex sensors	134
3.4.4	Fiber cable construction	135
3.4.5	Fiber cable tips	139
3.5	Scanners	141
3.5.1	Diameter scanners	142
3.5.2	Safety light curtains	147
3.5.3	Multiplexed remote sensor scanners	150
3.5.4	Other scanners	150
CHAPTER 4 PHOTOELECTRIC OUTPUT INTERFACE		156
4.1	Electromechanical Relays	155
4.1.1	Construction	156
4.1.2	Contact styles	157
4.1.3	Contact materials	159
4.1.4	Contact protection	160
4.1.5	Rated life	164
4.2	Solid-State Relays	166
4.2.1	Construction	169
4.2.2	Triacs	171
4.2.3	Inverse-parallel SCRs	174
4.2.4	Bridged transistors	175
4.2.5	Bilateral FETs	176
4.3	Transistor Interfaces	178
4.3.1	Construction	178
4.3.2	NPN sink transistors	180
4.3.3	PNP source transistors	182
4.3.4	Optically isolated circuits	183
4.4	Two-Wire Controls	183
4.4.1	Construction	184
4.4.2	Electrical performance	186
4.5	Analog Interfaces	189
4.5.1	Circuit adjustment	189
4.5.2	Output circuits	190

CHAPTER 5	PHOTOELECTRIC LOGIC	193
5.1	Timing Logic	193
5.1.1	Time delay logic	194
5.1.2	One-shot circuits	196
5.1.3	Underspeed/overspeed	199
5.2	Counting Logic	200
5.2.1	Latch	200
5.2.2	Preset counter	201
5.2.3	Totalizing counter	202
5.2.4	Shift register	202
5.3	Output Device Logic	204
5.3.1	Parallel OR	205
5.3.2	Series AND	209
5.4	Photodetector Logic	213
5.4.1	Parallel OR	214
5.4.2	Sum/difference	216
5.4.3	Series AND	217
5.4.4	Fiber optic logic	218
5.4.5	Multiple LEDs	222
CHAPTER 6	TESTING STANDARDS	227
6.1	Optical Standards	227
6.1.1	Sunlight immunity	228
6.1.2	Fluorescent light immunity	230
6.1.3	Excess gain specifications	231
6.1.4	Field of view and sensing zone specification	233
6.2	Electrical Standards	240
6.2.1	Conducted noise immunity	240
6.2.2	Radio-frequency noise immunity	243
6.2.3	Transient voltage spike immunity	244
6.2.4	Output ratings	244
6.2.5	No false pulse	248
6.2.6	Safety	249
6.3	Mechanical/Environmental Standards	250
6.3.1	Enclosures	250
6.3.2	Temperature	255
6.3.3	Humidity	256
6.3.4	Shock	256
6.3.5	Vibration	258

CHAPTER 7	SELECTION QUESTIONS	261
7.1	What Requires Detection?	262
7.1.1	Size	262
7.1.2	Reflectivity/transmissivity	262
7.2	Where Is It Located?	265
7.2.1	Distance	265
7.2.2	Local environment	269
7.2.3	Mounting location	270
7.3	How Fast Does It Move?	272
7.3.1	Object transition time	272
7.3.2	Sensor response time	274
7.3.3	Repeatability	275
7.4	With What Will the Photoelectric Interface?	275
7.4.1	Load interface	275
7.4.2	Power supply interface	276
7.5	How Much Do Installation and Maintenance Count?	277
7.5.1	Mounting	277
7.5.2	Wiring	282
7.5.3	Alignment and adjustment	284
7.5.4	Upkeep	286
CHAPTER 8	APPLICATION EXAMPLES	289
8.1	Material and Process Control	290
8.1.1	Broken yarn detection	290
8.1.2	Broken thread detection	291
8.1.3	Broken wire detection	292
8.1.4	Web loop control	293
8.1.5	"Rate of feed" tension control	294
8.1.6	Web material centering	295
8.1.7	Web edge control	296
8.1.8	Web break detection: clear plastic	297
8.1.9	Web break detection: paper	298
8.1.10	Web splice detection	299
8.1.11	Web flaw detection	300
8.1.12	Roll wind length control	301
8.1.13	Roll end detection	302
8.1.14	Trim length control	303
8.1.15	Filter paper length control	304
8.1.16	Cutoff saw control	305

8.1.17	Hypodermic needle quality control	306
8.1.18	Steel strip misalignment detection	307
8.1.19	Oven belt control	308
8.1.20	Sorting potatoes by size	309
8.1.21	Nail length inspection	310
8.1.22	Cookie motion detection	311
8.1.23	Liquid level control	312
8.1.24	Hopper fill level control	313
8.1.25	Liquid clarity control	314
8.1.26	Smoke detection	315
8.1.27	Smoke density monitor	316
8.1.28	Missing print detection	317
8.1.29	Quality control: tile warp	318
8.1.30	Integrated circuit lead inspection	319
8.2	Packaging	320
8.2.1	Label on glass bottle detection	320
8.2.2	Cap and bottle presence detection	321
8.2.3	Cap orientation detection	322
8.2.4	Bottle fill level and cap detection	323
8.2.5	Reversed cap detection	324
8.2.6	Liquid level detection	325
8.2.7	Liquid fill level detection	326
8.2.8	Wine bottle missing cork inspection	327
8.2.9	Container spacing adjustment	328
8.2.10	Fallen bottle control	329
8.2.11	Aerosol can inspection	330
8.2.12	Carton sealing	331
8.2.13	Registration mark detection	332
8.2.14	Tube orientation	333
8.2.15	Label position control	334
8.2.16	Shiny container detection	335
8.2.17	Indexing: shrink wrap	336
8.2.18	Glue bead control	337

8.3	Material Handling	338
8.3.1	Conveyor jam detection	338
8.3.2	Container size sorting: two sensors	339
8.3.3	Container size sorting: one sensor	340
8.3.4	Container sorting by retro tape	341
8.3.5	Shift register delayed ejection	342
8.3.6	Carton counting	343
8.3.7	Batch counting	344
8.3.8	Pallet load wrapping control	345
8.3.9	Palletizer off-load control	346
8.3.10	Stack height control	347
8.3.11	Log diverter	348
8.4	Machine Tool	349
8.4.1	Bent/broken drill bit detection	349
8.4.2	Broken drill bit detection	350
8.4.3	Broken drill bit detection: fiber optics	351
8.4.4	Mechanical thread detection	352
8.4.5	Part detection: chute	353
8.4.6	Small parts detection	354
8.4.7	Part detection: robotic	355
8.4.8	Die casting machine protection	356
8.4.9	Part detection: assembly	357
8.4.10	Part orientation	358
8.4.11	Control of sequential operations	359
8.5	People and Vehicle Detection	360
8.5.1	Tollbooth control	360
8.5.2	Vehicle over-height detection	361
8.5.3	Vehicle detection: drive-up window	362
8.5.4	Customer detection: bank teller window	363
8.5.5	Long-range perimeter security	364
8.5.6	Automatic carwash control	365

8.5.7	Automatic door control	366
8.5.8	Automatic door control	367
8.5.9	Collision avoidance	368
8.5.10	Photoelectric race track finishes	369
APPENDIX A CONVERSION AND CONSTANTS		371
APPENDIX B TEST STANDARDS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY		373
APPENDIX C RESISTANCE TO CHEMICAL ATTACK		377
REFERENCES		379
INDEX		381

1

Photoelectric Sensors and Controls: Introduction

History, a distillation of rumour.

Thomas Carlyle
The French Revolution

In this chapter we provide a description of photoelectric controls and sensors, what they are, principles of operation, basic terminology, a look backward, and a look forward. Much of the information here will already be familiar to many readers. However, the foundation for material in other chapters will be laid here and may be useful to a complete understanding of later chapters.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The number and variety of light-operated or light-controlled devices and equipment produced is tremendous. Photoelectric controls and sensors are only a small part of this vast product spectrum. Dusk lamp controls, television brightness compensation for ambient light, photo interrupters for paper and ribbon cartridge empty signals on printers, cassette auto-reverse sensors, automobile ignition electronic cams, television and stereo remote controls, door annunciators in small shops, smoke detectors, CRT light pens, the optical mouse for personal computers, shaft encoders, elevator door safety guards, invisible perimeter security sensors, and garage and toll gate automobile detection are a few of the many light-sensitive controls and sensors with which we interact in everyday life. Many of these are very specific in form to a particular market or need. As such, they will not be discussed here directly, although the principles of operation are

likely to apply. Hidden within industry are countless other varieties of optically based sensors, controls, array scanners, bar code scanners, measurement scanners, range finders, and machine vision systems. In the larger sense, all of the aforementioned devices could be considered photoelectric controls and sensors. However, in this book, a more categorical definition will be used with particular attention to industrial sensors and controls.

The term "sensor" will be used to refer to a device that provides a simple signal-level output that is determined by the light level it receives. The term "control" will be used to refer to a device that, in addition to sensing, provides a control output capable of switching power to actuators that alter the flow of materials or other process events. Both sensors and controls are concerned with only a single sense point. The term "scanner" will be reserved for devices that have built-in physical or electronically synthesized scanning motion in order to gather information from more than a single sense point. A scanner may be a self-contained unit or an ensemble of sensors connected to a scan controller. Single-point sensors and controls are often erroneously referred to as scanners despite their inability, physically or electronically, to move the sense point in space. Although fixed-beam sensors and controls are not scanners, they can provide that function when the scanning motion is provided external to the sensor by the object's motion through the sensor's beam. In this book, these definitions are used consistently to avoid confusion.

1.2 PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

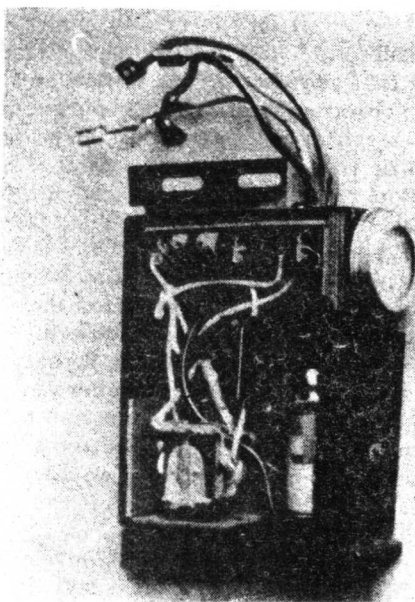
An industrial photoelectric sensor is a device composed of a light transmitter and light receiver. Light is directed toward the object by the transmitter. The receiver is pointed toward the same object and detects the presence or absence of reflected light originating from the transmitter. Detection of the light generates an output signal for use by an actuator, controller, or computer. The output signal can be analog or digital and is often internally modified with timing logic, scaling, or offset adjustments prior to output.

1.2.1 Conventional Unmodulated Photoelectrics

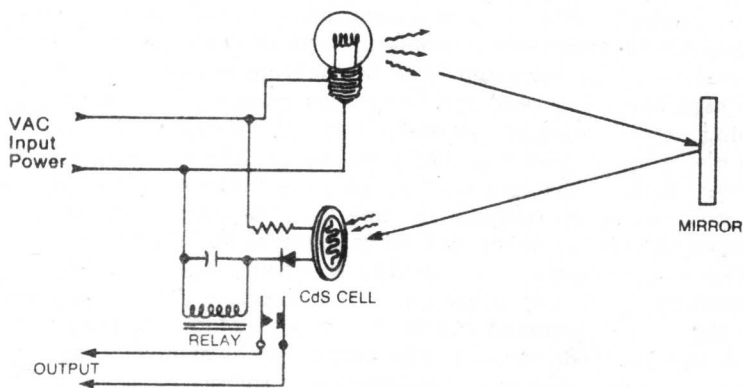
The light beam in early photoelectrics was generated by a constant-intensity (unmodulated) incandescent filament bulb much

like those used for automotive taillights. The light detector was generally a cadmium sulfide cell that allowed current to flow and energize a relay when lit, and blocked current flow, deenergizing the relay when dark. A cadmium sulfide cell is a photoresistive detector. Its ability to conduct or resist the flow of current is controlled by the intensity of light incident on its surface. Early photoelectrics were generally called "electric eyes" and even today are frequently referred to as "eyes." Figure 1.1a shows an early electric eye, and Fig. 1.1b shows schematically how it functioned. In operation, this device projected light toward a reflector that would return it back to the electric eye's cadmium sulfide cell. If enough light fell on the cell, sufficient current would be conducted through the cell to activate the relay. It was generally necessary to shield the detector from other light sources and to use a powerful filament light source to achieve any sensitivity without false triggering. An object breaking the beam would then cause the darkened cadmium sulfide cell to switch off the relay.

In the late 1960s, the light-emitting diode (LED) was developed and provided an alternative light source to the incandescent light bulb. LEDs are a common sight today as numerical displays in clocks and stereos, illuminators in toy games, and indicator lamps on security system controls and floppy disk drives. A solid-state LED, sketched in Fig. 1.2, is constructed without the two most serious life-limiting design problems found in incandescent bulbs. Incandescent bulb tungsten filaments operate at about 4000°F. This high operating temperature creates great thermal stress, causing deterioration of the filament structure over time. The high operating temperature limits the useful life of these bulbs to about 2000 to 5000 hours. Further, the filament is a coil spring structure stretched between two posts. This delicate structure is stressed heavily by shock and vibration common to industrial production environments. The already short bulb life is significantly reduced by shock and vibration. In contrast, the LED has a bond wire that is encapsulated and is able to withstand extremely high shock and vibration stress. The LED operates at nearly ambient temperature and does not encounter great thermal stress. The typical rated life of an LED is in excess of 100,000 hours, which is more than 10 years of 24-hour days. This does not guarantee that all LEDs will last 10 years and then die. It means that the field failure rate will be on the order of 2 to 5% of that experienced with incandescent bulbs. This is a feature of significant value when the cost of maintenance and production downtime are considered.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1.1 (a) Early electric eye with its cover removed; (b) schematic diagram of its function.