

ENGINEERING SCIENCES

*Electrical Engineering*

# ADVANCED FIBER OPTICS

## CONCEPTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Luc Thévenaz, Editor



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With contributions by Francis Berghmans, John Dudley, Sébastien Février, Thomas Geernaert, Goery Gentry, Miguel González-Herráez, Mircea Hotoleanu, Kyriacos Kalli, Michel M. Marhic, Thibaut Sylvestre, Luc Thévenaz, Moshe Tur, David J. Webb, and Marc Wuilpart.



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# ADVANCED FIBER OPTICS

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## PREFACE

Few techniques have had an impact on society that can compare to that of fiber optics. These tiny hair-sized glass wires have deeply transformed, at the dawn of this third millennium, access to information, modes of communicate, and even the behavior of consumers. This tremendous impact was rightfully honored by the presentation of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physics to Charles K. Kao, who predicted in 1966, by careful calculations, that optical fibers could transmit a broadband signal over distances outperforming any existing transmission line. Since then, optical fibers have gradually occupied a more and more predominant place in the world of telecommunications, while deeply revolutionizing the field of optics by confining light in these small silica waveguides, transforming classical free-beam optics into a novel concept of wired optical circuits.

Today optical fibers are omnipresent in modern optical systems, so that a solid background in fiber optics is absolutely required by any engineer or scientist who has the ambition to become specialist in the design and the understanding of systems based on light signals. The tremendous development of optical communication has convinced a wide public that optical fibers can do much more than passively transmit a light signal. The objective of this book is to provide, to advanced students and early-career researchers, an extensive knowledge about novel applications and optical functions that can be realized using optical fibers. The research in this field remains extremely active as a consequence of the extraordinary properties of optical fibers, which allow them to confine light within a microscopic-sized surface over kilometric distances. This converts a minute effect into a large interaction that can lead to fantastic transformations on the light. The constant search for new functions entirely carried out within optical fibers has gradually led to the development of special fibers with specific properties, such as rare earth-doped fibers for amplification and laser emission, or photonic crystal fibers offering a larger control of the light confinement and dispersion properties.

This book is an enlarged collection of lectures given during a training school for young researchers, organized in the framework of an action of the European Scientific and Technical Cooperation (COST Action 299 “FIDES: Optical Fibers for New Challenges facing the Information Society”) and held in Larnaca, Cyprus, from March 30 to April 1, 2009. The lectures were given by eminent European specialists in fiber optics with a long experience in research and education. This resulted in a unique collection of high quality teaching on this particular topic and, as a response to the enthusiastic interest of the participants, teachers decided to collect the content

of the teaching material in a book with the ambition to disseminate the knowledge to a broader community.

The level of the contributions here allow a scientist or engineer to acquire the solid theoretical knowledge that will provide them an entry into the latest technology of fiber optics, requiring only as a prerequisite a background at the bachelor level in physics or electrical engineering. The book is self-contained, and each chapter gives a list of references to deepen the knowledge on a particular topic. After an initial chapter, which summarizes the basic properties of optical fibers, as well as their light guiding mechanism and their fabrication procedure by a glass-drawing process, each subsequent chapter addresses an advanced feature of fiber optics. For instance the behavior of light polarization – a fairly complex topic in optical fibers – is described in Chapter 2, while the amplification and the emission of light by fibers are addressed in Chapter 6. The interaction processes required for light amplification are better realized using specific atoms not present in silica, such as erbium, requiring the fabrication of fibers with a doped core (Chap. 4). Amplification and light conversion can also be achieved using a set of nonlinear optical interactions, presented in Chapter 5, that are the key mechanisms to achieve novel and creative functions. The best conditions for the generation of important nonlinear interactions are often realized by properly modeling the guiding and propagation in the fiber and, more recently, in photonic crystal fibers, a subject presented in Chapter 3, where these are seen to be an essential tool for creating flexible propagation conditions that are simply impossible to obtain in standard fibers. One of the most striking achievements based on the combination of nonlinear interactions and modified propagation conditions in photonic crystal fibers is the generation of a light supercontinuum, in which the single color light from a laser is spread over a very broad spectrum, giving a white light source that is more radiatively dense, by orders of magnitude, than the sun (Chap. 7).

An important field of applications of optical fibers is the domain of sensing that is currently experiencing economic growth that is proportionally larger than optical telecommunications. As a consequence of this new importance, the different aspects of fiber sensing are addressed in detail with three distinct chapters. One of the main assets of fiber sensing is its capability to realize distributed sensing, for which the measure of a quantity, such as temperature or strain, can be independently carried out at any point along the fiber. This offers the possibility of instantaneously obtaining a map of the distribution of the measured quantity along the fiber and to advantageously substitute a fiber for thousands of point sensors. Natural scattering processes in the fiber material are judiciously used for this purpose, and Chapter 8 describes the most intense and most widely used type of scattering in fibers: Rayleigh scattering. More advanced configurations use a weaker inelastic scattering (Brillouin and Raman) that turn out to be more sensitive to the environmental quantities and thus more favorable for sensing. Chapter 9 is entirely dedicated to the study of inelastic scattering and their numerous applications ranging from sensing to amplification and the active control of the speed of a light signal (slow light). The possibility to realize sequential changes of the refractive index directly in the fiber core by high-energy illumination, with a periodicity in the range of the light wavelength, has offered a novel class of all-fiber optical devices to the community, designated as fiber Bragg gratings. These important

devices are described in Chapter 10 and offer a wavelength-selective function that makes excellent filters and very efficient miniature point sensors.

Finally there is a constant search for alternative materials to draw fibers from, which can potentially offer a better susceptibility to nonlinear optical interactions, in order to obtain certain advanced functions more efficiently; or a better sensitivity to the environment for more accurate sensing; or other advantages related to the economics and ease of implementation for particular applications. Among these alternative materials, particular attention is currently paid to organic polymers, and Chapter 11 addresses all recent progress and potential future applications using polymer optical fibers. Chalcogenide and soft glasses are other types of materials that may lead to nonlinear optical effects enhanced by two or three orders of magnitude, while offering a better transparency in the infrared. Although presenting their own limitations in terms of optical-power density, and despite difficulties in handling and coupling to standard fibers, these new materials have a promising future to turn optical fibers into an even more efficient and omnipresent tool for advanced photonics.

*Luc Thévenaz*

*Chairman of COST Action 299*

*Lausanne, January 2011*



Group picture of the specialists teaching at the Larnaca training school and co-authoring this book. Front, from left to right: Michel Marhic, John Dudley, Michael Komodromos (Local Organizer, not authoring), Marc Wuilpart, Francis Berghmans, Miguel González Herráez, Mircea Hotoleanu. Back, from left to right: Roy Taylor (not authoring), Kyriacos Kalli, Sébastien Février, Thibaut Sylvestre, Luc Thévenaz. Absent from the picture: Moshe Tur.



Group picture of the 72 students and the 12 teachers participating to the COST299 Training School on Advanced Fiber Optics in Larnaca, Cyprus, during Spring 2009.



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