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DISTRIBUTED FIBER SENSING INTERROGATOR WITH DETACHABLE END

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLCIATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of Untied States Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 62/691,151 filed 28-JUN-2018 the entire contents of which is incorporated by reference as if set forth at length herein.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] This disclosure relates generally to optical fiber sensing systems, methods, and structures. More particularly, it describes a distributed fiber sensing interrogator with detachable end.

BACKGROUND

[0003] As is known in the optical sensing arts, contemporary distributed fiber sensing system DxS (Distributed-x-Sensing, where x can be 'V' for Vibration, 'T' for Temperature, or 'A' for Acoustic) is primarily configured as a standalone system that includes an interrogator for optical signal generation and sensed signal detection/processing. In a typical arrangement, the interrogator is directly connected to the sensing optical fiber for signal generation and receiving. In addition, the interrogator is known to be specialized for its intended application – including specialized optics, specialized electronics/firmware, and specialized configuration/management/monitoring/application software. Such systems are known to work well for those single and/or specialized applications for which it is intended and pre-configured – including fully specialized applications, such as a distributed intrusion detection system.

[0004] With such utility and further technological advances, distributed fiber sensing has found additional application in more industries – some of which oftentimes requires a flexibility for different types of sensing. For example, submarine telecommunications applications require detecting activities proximate to undersea cable

systems employing vibration and/or acoustic sensing. These emerging applications require more than the single-function, fully specialized systems provided in the art.

[0005] And while the specialization of distributed sensing systems described above remains a significant infirmity, so does the performance and sensing distance of such systems. As is known, prior art distributed sensing systems have only about a 50km maximum reach while maintaining reasonable performance. Such systems nevertheless experience significant performance degradation/differentiation at greater distances. Accordingly, increasing the distance(s) over which distributed sensing systems operate reliably at an acceptable and consistent performance across all lengths would be a welcome addition to the art as well.

SUMMARY

[0006] The above problems are solved and advance in the art is made according to aspects of the present disclosure directed to an improved systems, methods, and structures for distributed fiber sensing systems including interrogator and attached fiber in which the interrogator includes a common line card and function-specific, pluggable front end in which the line card is configurable and supports different signal processing paths and automatically senses the front-end type and uses corresponding firmware/software or signal processing path(s) to process sensed data.

[0007] In sharp contrast to the prior art, systems, methods and structures according to aspects of the present disclosure will sense different types of environmental conditions along a fiber – and are not limited to a single, specific type as noted plagues the prior art.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0008] A more complete understanding of the present disclosure may be realized by reference to the accompanying drawing in which:

[0009] **FIG. 1** is a schematic diagram illustrating a distributed vibrational sensing (DVS) system of the prior art;

[0010] FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating a distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system including a common interrogator line card according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0011] FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram illustrating another distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system including a common interrogator line card according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0012] FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating yet another distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system including a common interrogator line card having an analog switch according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0013] FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram illustrating a distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system pluggable line card according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0014] FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram illustrating a distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system line card including a sensing head physically separated from the line card according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0015] FIG. 7 is a schematic diagram illustrating a distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system including a common interrogator line card integrated into a larger network according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0016] FIG. 8 is a schematic diagram illustrating a distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system cascaded for extending sensing distance(s) according to aspects of the present disclosure; and

[0017] FIG. 9 is a schematic diagram illustrating another distributed fiber sensing (DFS) sensing system cascaded for extending sensing distance(s) according to aspects of the present disclosure.

[0018] The illustrative embodiments are described more fully by the Figures and detailed description. Embodiments according to this disclosure may, however, be embodied in various forms and are not limited to specific or illustrative embodiments described in the drawing and detailed description.

DESCRIPTION

[0019] The following merely illustrates the principles of the disclosure. It will thus be appreciated that those skilled in the art will be able to devise various arrangements which, although not explicitly described or shown herein, embody the principles of the disclosure and are included within its spirit and scope.

[0020] Furthermore, all examples and conditional language recited herein are intended to be only for pedagogical purposes to aid the reader in understanding the principles of the disclosure and the concepts contributed by the inventor(s) to furthering the art and are to be construed as being without limitation to such specifically recited examples and conditions.

[0021] Moreover, all statements herein reciting principles, aspects, and embodiments of the disclosure, as well as specific examples thereof, are intended to encompass both structural and functional equivalents thereof. Additionally, it is intended that such equivalents include both currently known equivalents as well as equivalents developed in the future, i.e., any elements developed that perform the same function, regardless of structure.

[0022] Thus, for example, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that any block diagrams herein represent conceptual views of illustrative circuitry embodying the principles of the disclosure.

[0023] Unless otherwise explicitly specified herein, the FIGs comprising the drawing are not drawn to scale.

[0024] By way of some additional background, we begin by noting that distributed fiber sensing (DFS) is an important and widely used technology to detect environmental conditions (such as temperature, vibration, stretch level etc.) anywhere along an optical fiber that in turn is connected to an interrogator. As is known, contemporary interrogators are systems that generates an input signal to the fiber, detects and analyzes the reflected/scattered and subsequently received signal. The signals are analyzed and an output is generated which is indicative of the environmental conditions encountered along the length of the fiber. The signal(s) so received may result from reflections in the fiber, such as Raman backscattering, Rayleigh backscattering, and Brillion backscattering. It can also be signal of forward direction that uses the speed difference of multiple modes. Without losing generality, the following description assumes reflected signal though the same approaches can be applied to forwarded signal as well.

[0025] **FIG. 1** is a schematic diagram illustrating a typical DFS system according to the prior art using reflected signals. With reference to that figure, interrogator **100** periodically generates optical pulses (**108**, or any coded signal) and injects them into fiber **102**. The injected optical pulse signal is conveyed along fiber **102** as illustrated by **104**.

[0026] At each location along the length of the fiber, a small portion of signal is reflected **106** and conveyed back to the interrogator. The reflected signal carries information the interrogator uses to detect, such as a power level change that indicates a mechanical vibration.

[0027] The reflected signal is converted to electrical domain and processed inside the interrogator. Based on the pulse injection time and the time signal is detected, the interrogator determines at which location along the fiber the signal is coming from, thus able to sense the activity of each location along the fiber.

[0028] With this background in place, we now note that systems, methods, and structures according to aspects of the present disclosure provide a DFS system that has common interrogator line card, and a pluggable, sensor-dependent front-end (or called

sensing head). As shown schematically in **FIG. 2**, interrogator line card **202** having a standard mechanical dimension and backplane interface **216**, advantageously matches and is electrically and mechanically compatible with that of an existing product line such as optical transponder or a switch. As shown therein, common modules such as DFS digital signal processing (DSP) processor **206** and a computer software processor (i.e., microprocessor/microcontroller) **208** are shown as being positioned on the line card. Note that while such integrated components **208** and **206** are shown as individual elements, they can also be integrated in an SoC (system-on-chip) **214**.

[0029] As shown, module **210** is a pluggable sensing front-end that has a sensing fiber **204** attached. Module **210** supports different sensors and has a common mechanical dimension (such as CFP size) and an electrical interface that can be plugged into **202** and interface with **208** (for control, configuration, and monitoring) and **206** (for data path). The interface between **210** and **208** can also be through DSP **206**, such as **212** shown in **FIG. 2**. Operationally, microprocessor and DSP may automatically sense the attached front-end module and configure its processing accordingly, either with different software/firmware set, or with different processing path.

[0030] In an alternative illustrative embodiment according to aspects of the present disclosure - besides DSP and microcontroller - other known devices located in front-end **310** can also be integrated into a line card, such as **320** in line card **302** of **FIG. 3**. Such common devices may include laser(s), signal generator(s) and modulator(s), analog-to-digital converter (ADC), etc.

[0031] In yet another alternative embodiment according to aspects of the present disclosure - the ADCs are located in the common line card, such as **420** in **FIG. 4**. In addition, the line card may include multiple front-end modules, such as **410**, **412**, and **414**, either of the same sensing function or a combination of different functions. On the line card, the ADCs (such as **420**) can be dynamically allocated to connect to different front-end modules(s), through configuration circuit **418**. For example, when a front-end has coherent receiver which takes polarization-X in-phase and quadrature, polarization-Y in-

phase and quadrature, for 4 analog inputs in total, there will be 4 ADCs allocated for data acquisition and processing; when a front-end is direct-detection of single wavelength, there will be only one ADC used.

[0032] In one illustrative example configuration according to aspects of the present disclosure, the line card may include 8 ADCs, that can take 2x coherent front-end modules, or 1x coherent front-end plus 4 single-wavelength direct-detection, or other combinations. The ADCs can be allocated based on the plugged front-end modules.

[0033] In yet another illustrative embodiment, **418** in **FIG. 4** is an analog switch, which routes analog signals from a front-end connector to different ADCs. In still yet another illustrative embodiment, **418** is an electrical coupler, that one or more signal sources may be connected to one ADC, as illustrated in **FIG. 5**, where modules **502** and **504** are pluggable front-end, **510**, **512**, **514**, and **518** are ADCs, and **506/508** are electrical couplers that implement the function of **418** in **FIG. 4**.

[0034] In an illustrative configuration according to aspects of the present disclosure, only coherent front-end **504** is plugged in, while **502** is empty, so the 4 signals output from **504** are detected by **510**, **512**, **514**, and **518** respectively. In another illustrative configuration according to aspects of the present disclosure, both **504** and **502** have two analog channels, with **504** using the lower two branches, so ADCs **510** and **512** sample signals from **502** only.

[0035] In yet another illustrative embodiment according to aspects of the present disclosure, the sensing head is physically separated from the line card, as shown schematically in **FIG. 6**. As illustrated in that figure, front-end sensing head **602** has integrated sensing optics and an ADC, so that any sensed signal is converted to the digital domain and transmitted through link **612**. Advantageously, link **612** may be a serial link, connecting transceivers **606**, which can be either electrical or optical.

[0036] Advantageously, an optical transceiver such as SFP+ may transmit signals up to 100km, which greatly increases sensing reach from the line card. The serial link can be a directly encoded ADC signal, such as ADC serial interface standard JESD204B. The serial link can also be ADC signal encrypted in standard network frame, such as 10GE frame or SONET/SDH or fiber channel frame. We note that line card **604** is like **202** shown schematically in **FIG. 2** except that the direct front-end socket is replaced by a digital transceiver module **606**.

[0037] In yet another illustrative embodiment according to aspects of the present disclosure, the serial signal may be transmitted through network **710** as in **FIG. 7**, which can be wavelength switched network, or TDM, or a packet switched network. Because of the switching feature from network **710**, line card **712** can be located anywhere in the network and is capable to be virtually attached to any front-end, such as front-end **702** and **704**.

[0038] With physically detached front-end module and the serialized digital connection with line card, multiple sensing head can be cascaded to form a longer sensing link, as shown illustratively in **FIG. 8**, wherein sensing heads such as **802**, **804**, and **806** are cascaded along the same cable **800**. Each sensing head generates sensing signal such as signal **814**, which is transmitted along its sensing segment. The reflected/sensed signal from each segment is connected back to its corresponding sensing head, such as signal **816** back to sensing head **802**. The digitized signal (such as signal **818**) from each sensing head (called up-link digital signal) is coupled into the cable **810** and further delivered to DSP section of the interrogator (such as sensing line card **604**), using either wavelength multiplexing or other multiplexing methods. Advantageously, signal **818** can be bidirectional, with signal from line card to sensing head (called down-link digital signal) for control/configuration. The down-link digital signal can be broadcast as well, meaning that a single signal is transmitted from line card and received by all the sensing head, with each sensing head takes its portion only (such as assigned time slot, or the frame's ID tag).

[0039] Finally, we note that in still another illustrative embodiment according to aspects of the present disclosure, the optical sensing signal is generated at the line card, and transmitted down the sensing cable covering all the sensing segments, as shown illustratively in **FIG. 9**. Along the cable **900**, there can be positioned amplifiers for this down-link sensing signal. For each sensing segment, the backscattering signal (such as signal **916**) is received by the sensing-head for that segment only.

[0040] At this point, while we have presented this disclosure using some specific examples, those skilled in the art will recognize that our teachings are not so limited. Accordingly, this disclosure should be only limited by the scope of the claims attached hereto.

Claims:

1. An improved distributed fiber sensing system including an interrogator and attached fiber, send improved sensing system CHARACTERIZED BY:

the interrogator includes a common line card configured to receive one or more function-specific, plug attachable/removable front-end, said front end configured to interrogate and sense one selected from the group consisting of: vibration, temperature, and acoustic characteristics of locations along the length of the fiber.

2. The improved sensing system according to claim 1 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the common line card provides different signal processing for each of the one or more function-specific, plug attachable/removable front end.

3. The improved sensing system according to claim 2 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the common line card automatically senses a type of function-specific plug attachable/removable front end plugged into the line card and automatically invokes appropriate firmware/software and/or signal processing to appropriately process sensed data for that type of front end.

4. The improved sensing system according to claim 3 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end exhibits a standard mechanical size and interface(s).

5. The improved sensing system according to claim 4 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the common line card includes a digital signal processor and software signal processor automatically configured to support the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end.

6. The improved sensing system according to claim 5 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the common line card includes a digital signal processor and software signal processor automatically configured to support the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end.

7. The improved sensing system according to claim 5 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the common line card includes a common optical elements configured to support a plurality of function-specific plug attachable/removable front end of different types including vibration, acoustic, and temperature type(s).

8. The improved sensing system according to claim 5 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end is remote from the line card and electrically/mechanically connected to the line card via cable and the front end is in electrical communication with the line card via digital serial link.

9. The improved sensing system according to claim 5 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end is remote from the line card and optically/mechanically connected to the line card via optical cable SFP+.

10. The improved sensing system according to claim 5 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end is connected to the line card via serial link that is communicated via a network selected from the group consisting of packet switched network, wavelength switched network, and circuit switched network.

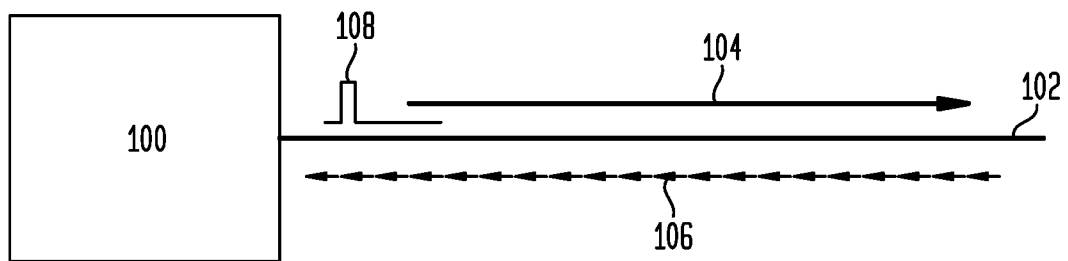
11. The improved sensing system according to claim 10 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

the function-specific plug attachable/removable front end is located at one end of the network and the line card is located at another end of the network and the

line card is configurable to connect to any of a plurality of function-specific plug attachable/removable front end communicating via the network.

12. The improved sensing system according to claim 10 FURTHER CHARACTERIZED BY:

multiple function-specific plug attachable/removable front end are cascaded to form a longer link, each individual one of the multiple front end senses a different fiber segment.

FIG. 1

2/7

FIG. 2

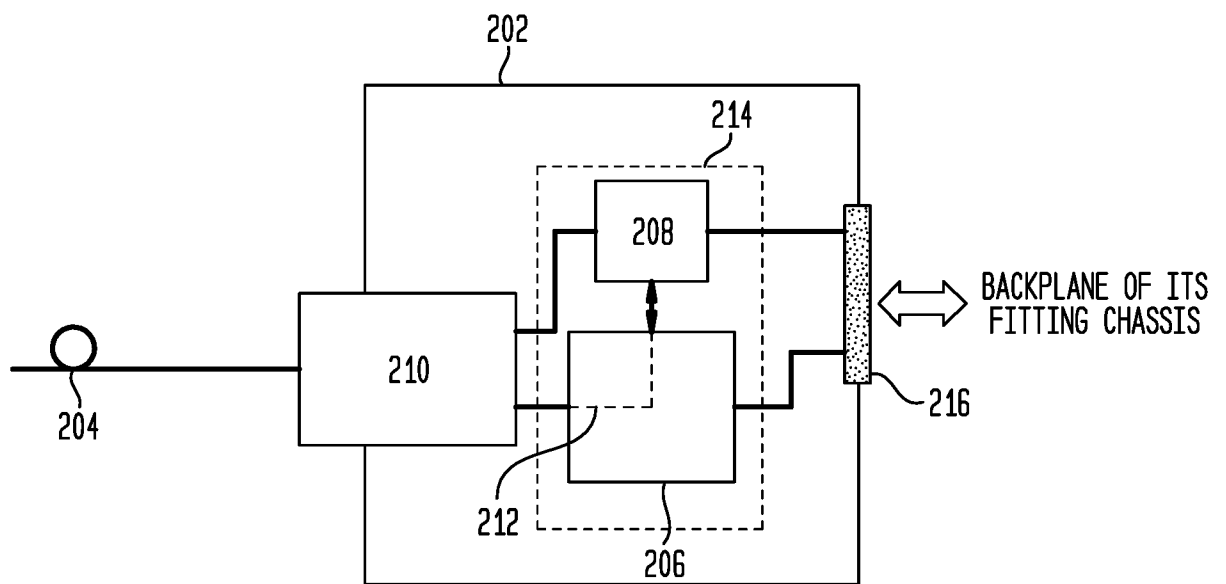


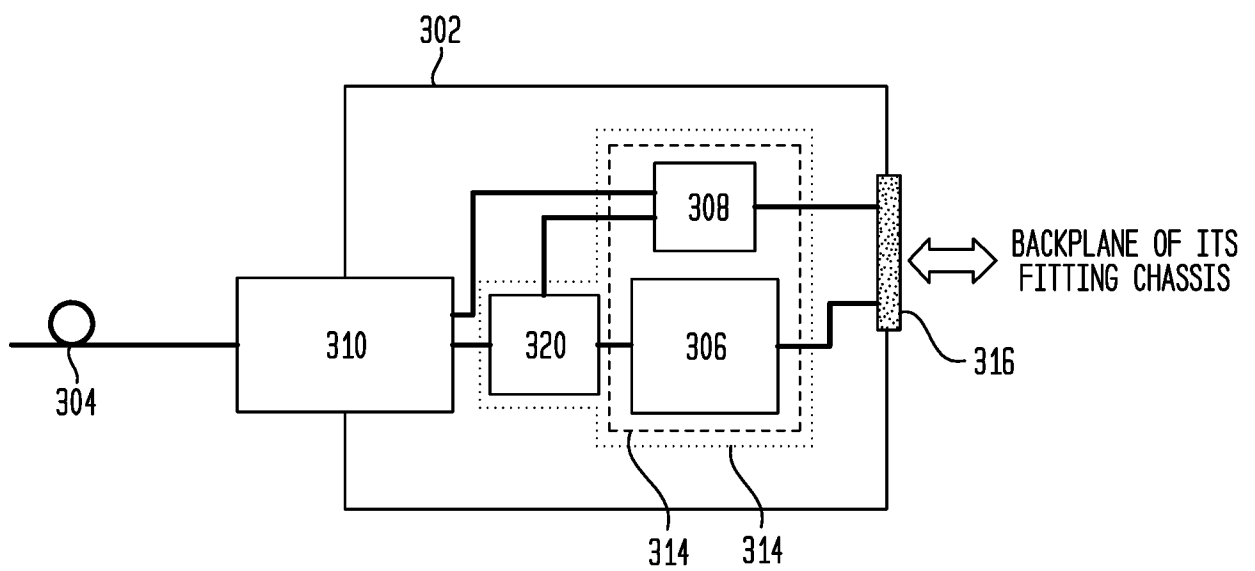
FIG. 3

FIG. 4

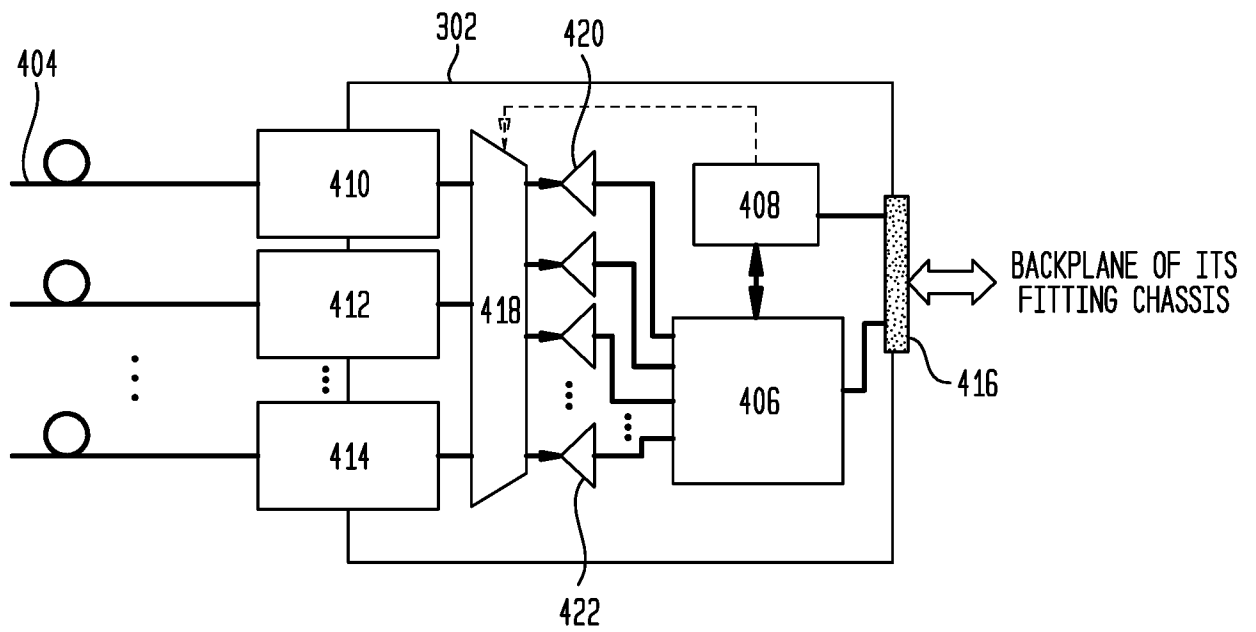
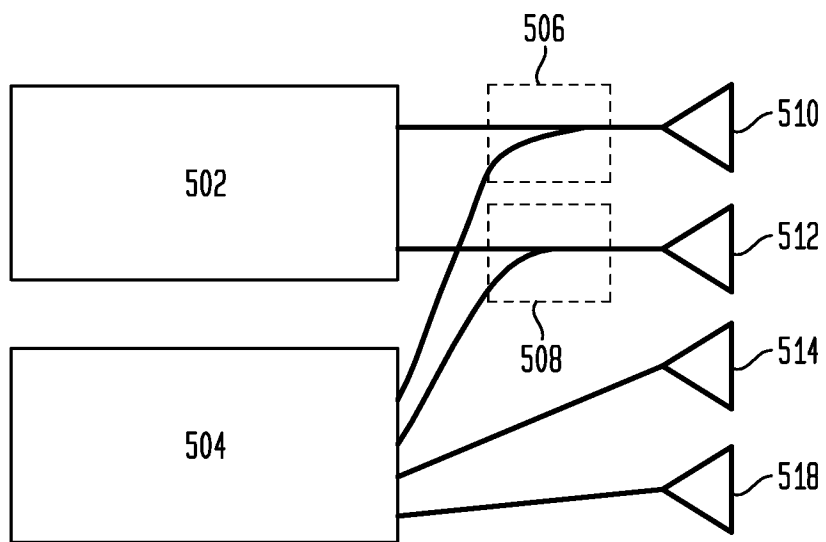


FIG. 5



6/7

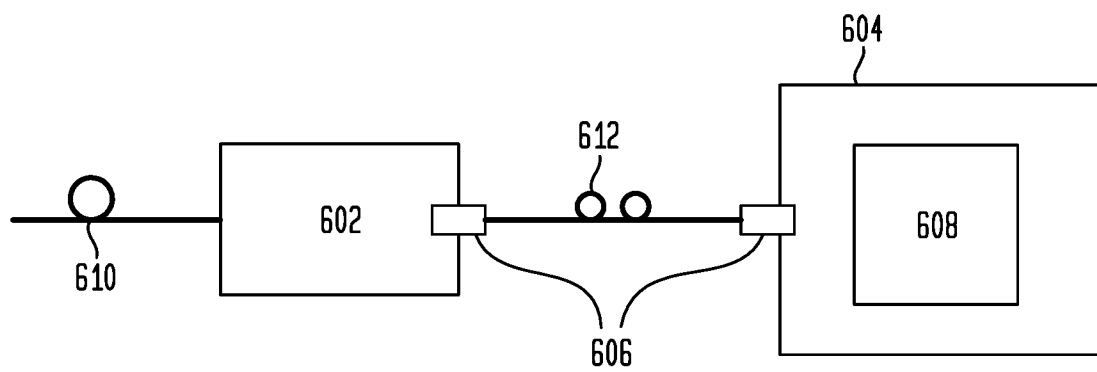
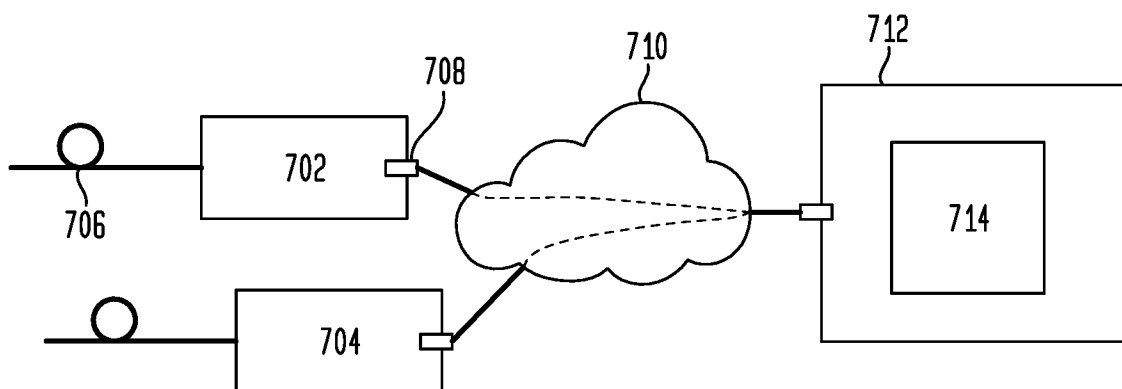
FIG. 6*FIG. 7*

FIG. 8

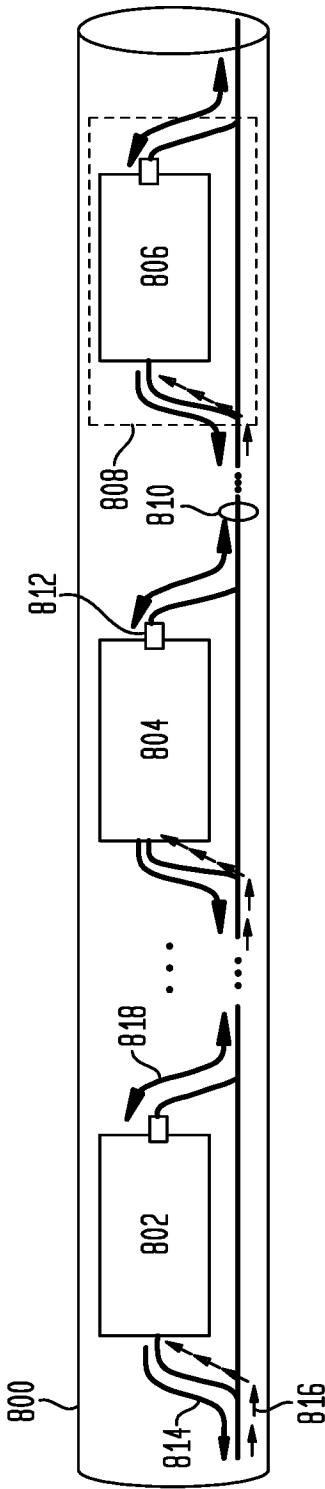
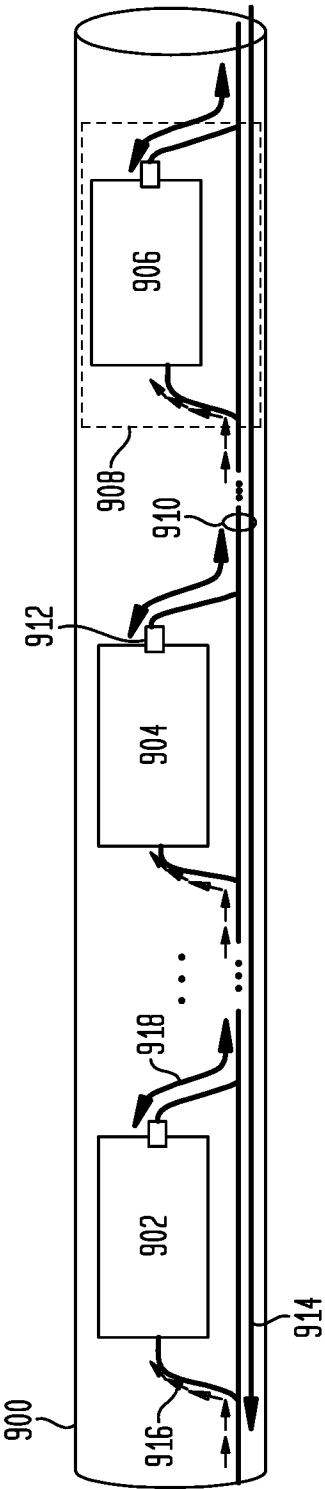


FIG. 9



A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER**G01D 5/353(2006.01)i**

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

G01D 5/353; B61L 1/16; G01H 9/00; G01J 1/04; G01V 8/16; G02B 6/00; H04Q 5/22

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Korean utility models and applications for utility models

Japanese utility models and applications for utility models

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & Keywords: distributed fiber sensing system, interrogator, attached fiber, line card, front-end

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2016-0161632 A1 (HALLIBURTON ENERGY SERVICES, INC.) 09 June 2016 See paragraphs [0009]–[0065] and figures 1–2.	1–6, 8–11
Y		7, 12
Y	US 2002-0190845 A1 (MOORE, SCOTT E.) 19 December 2002 See paragraph [0052] and figure 3.	7, 12
A	US 2007-0047867 A1 (GOLDNER, ERIC L.) 01 March 2007 See paragraphs [0032]–[0050] and figure 4.	1–12
A	WO 2017-093741 A1 (OPTASENSE INC. et al.) 08 June 2017 See page 11, line 6 - page 12, line 2 and figure 1.	1–12
A	US 2010-0155583 A1 (GOLDNER et al.) 24 June 2010 See paragraphs [0019]–[0032] and figure 1.	1–12



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

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"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

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