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(56) Documents Cited

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(58) Field of Search

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INT CL⁶ G01J , H01L
Online: WPI,JAPIO,INSPEC**

(54) **Optical detector for echelle spectrometer**

(57) A solid-state detector for use in an atomic spectrometer comprises a plurality of arrays of sensing elements (56), or pixels, each of the arrays being positioned along and on the locations of spectral signals on a focal plane of an echelle grating spectrometer. The sensing elements are positioned along the many diffraction orders presented on a two-dimensional echelle grating focal plane so that at least one element is located at each and every resolution element regardless of global x-y coordinate positioning of the elements or with reference to each other. The result is a series of skewed lines of sensing elements, those lines being in the same shape as the series of diffraction order lines which comprise an echelle spectrum. The solid-state detector is particularly useful in an atomic spectrometer wherein an echelle grating is used to diffract incident radiation such that the various components of the radiation may be observed.

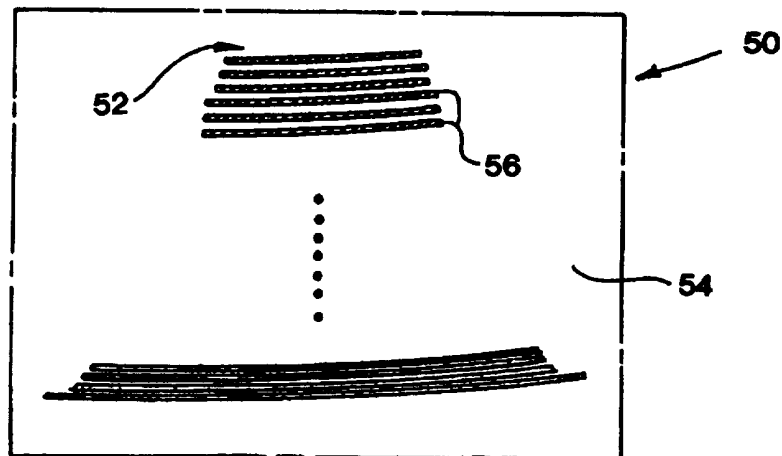


FIG. 3

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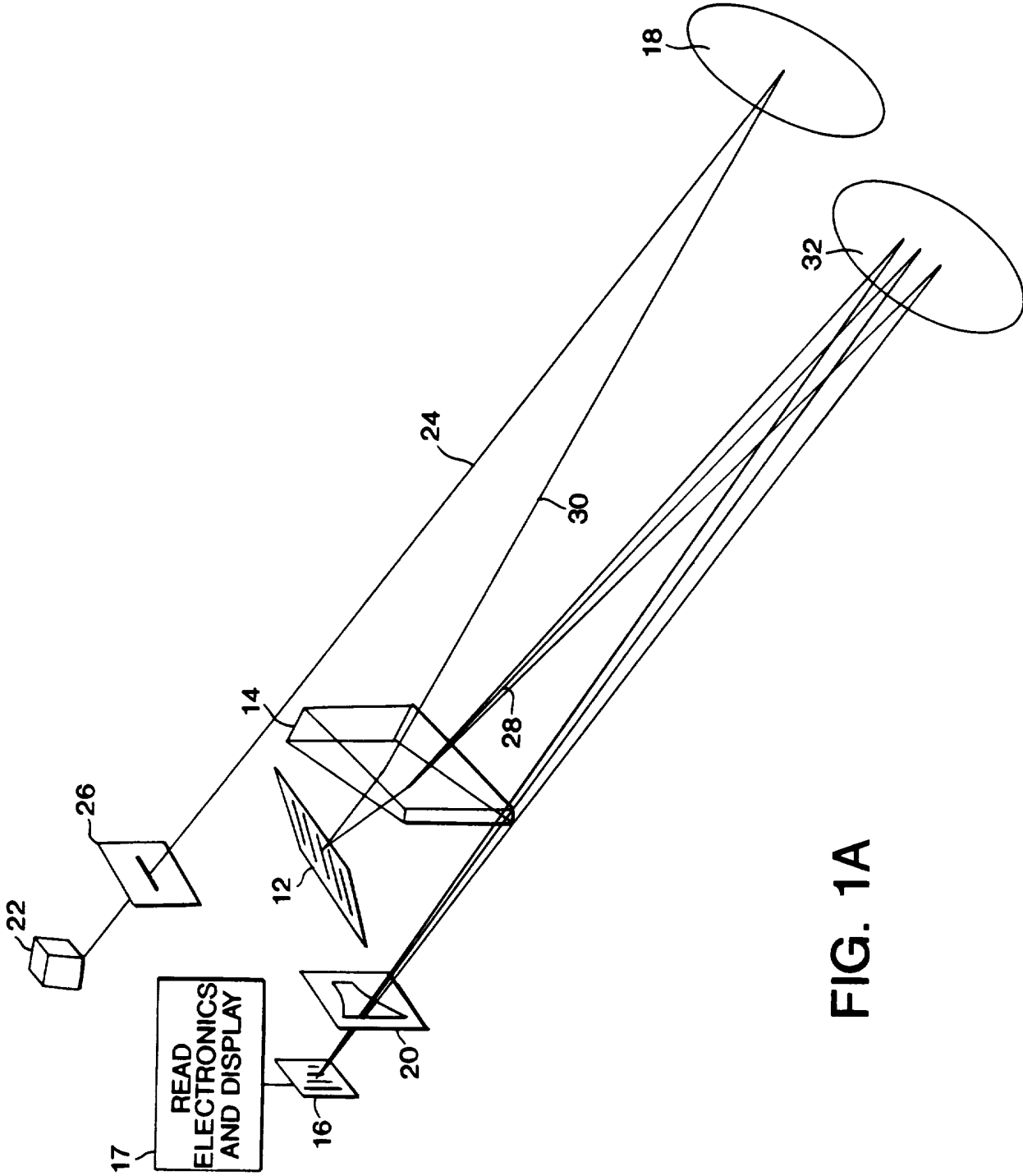


FIG. 1A

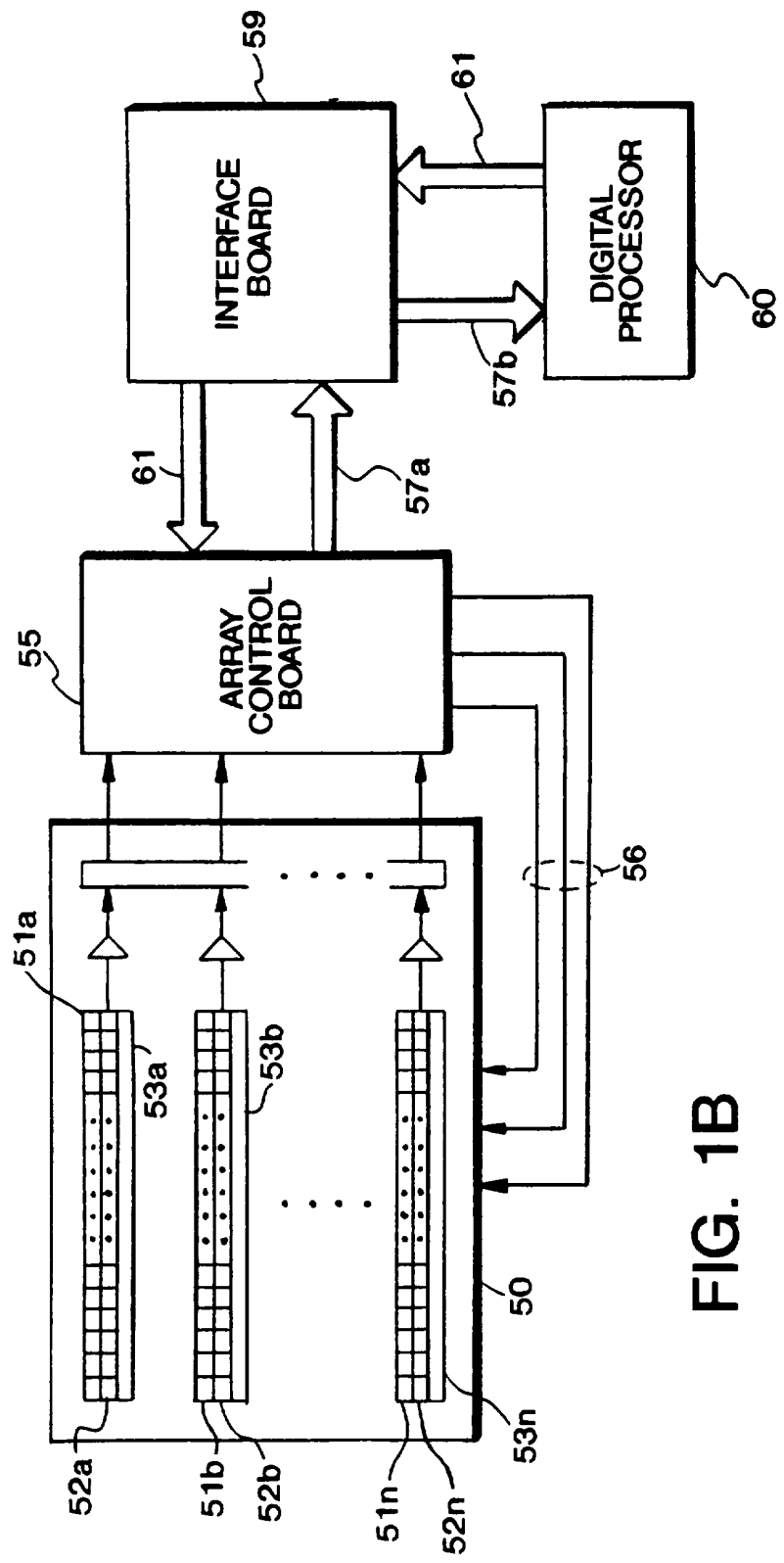


FIG. 1B

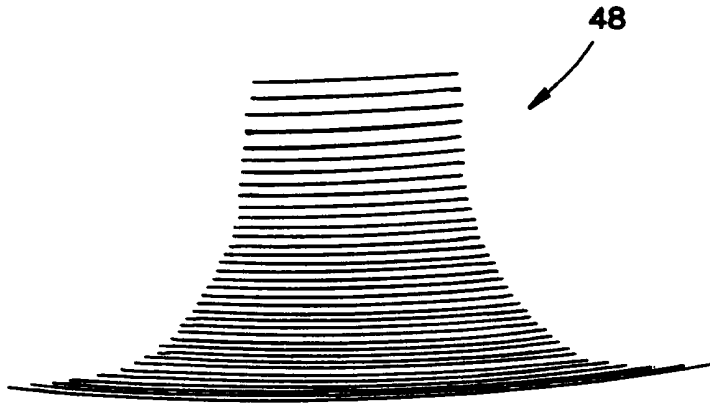


FIG. 2

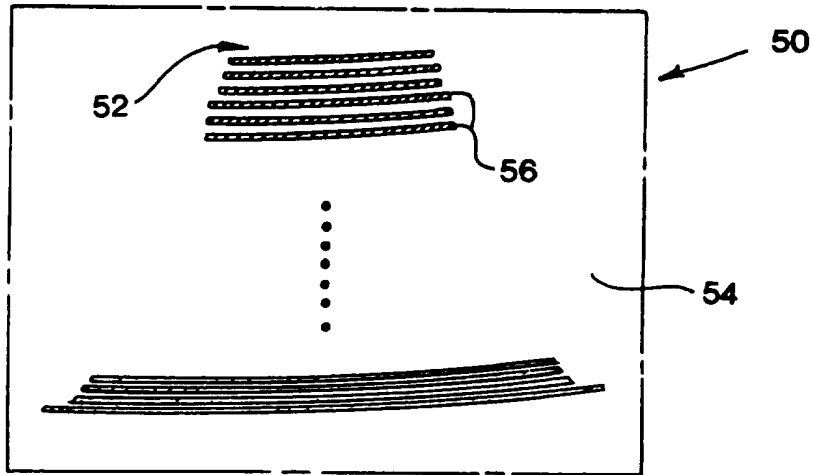


FIG. 3

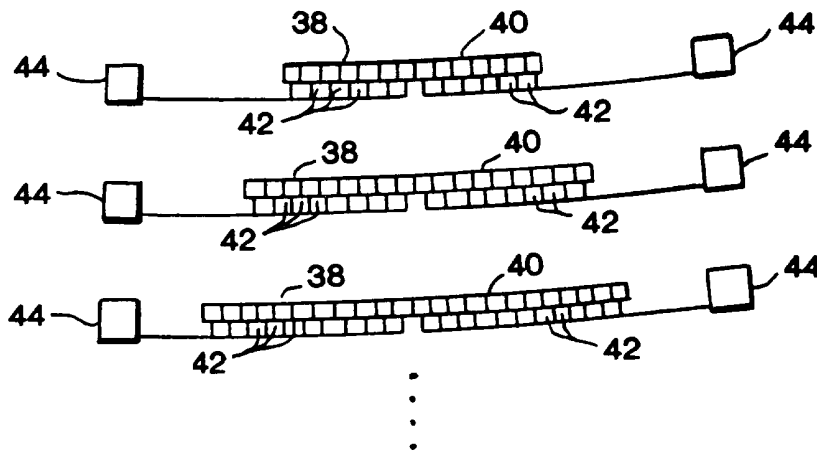


FIG. 4

OPTICAL DETECTOR FOR ECHELLE SPECTROMETER

Atomic spectroscopy finds extensive application in areas of atomic emission, atomic absorption and atomic fluorescence. In particular, spectrometers of the echelle variety, in which an echelle grating is used to disperse the radiation of interest, have proven to have certain advantageous characteristics, related to resolution and spectrometer design, when compared to spectrometers using conventional, high ruling density diffraction gratings. In an echelle spectrometer, greater resolution of the spectral lines derives from the fact that resolution increases as the diffraction order increases. Thus, the use of orders 20-90, for example, will yield greater resolution than the use of orders 1, 2 and 3, for example. Also, the physical size of the spectrometer is reduced by use of an echelle diffraction grating.

When using an echelle grating, the various diffraction orders normally lie essentially atop one another. A prism is commonly used to separate the orders after diffraction by the grating, and a two-dimensional pattern is formed at the focal plane in the spectrometer. The detector then comprises a two-dimensional surface containing sensing elements to detect the spectral lines.

Various types of optically-detecting semiconducting material devices have been used to collect and detect the photon signals present on focal planes of various configuration in analytical spectrometers. Linear and area arrays of photodiodes, charge-coupled devices, charge injection devices, and plasma coupled devices have been used to

retrieve optical signals from conventional diffraction grating spectrometers as well as echelle grating spectrometers.

As one example of a charge-coupled device that has been employed to detect the two-dimensional diffraction patterns in echelle spectrometers, an x-y grid of pixels having 1000 rows and 1000 columns of pixels, or a total of 1,000,000 pixels, may be placed at the focal plane to detect the spectral lines. This arrangement has the advantage of being able to detect virtually all signals within the spectrometer, including background noise. Disadvantages of this form of detector include mismatch between the information sought and the detector array, loss of portions of the spectrum, and unnecessarily long read-out time. The two-dimensional diffraction pattern for continuous wavelength coverage at a given diffraction angle will form a "keystone" pattern, rather than a rectangle. The use of one or more x-y grid detectors means a mismatch of shapes between the detector and the diffraction pattern. Tradeoffs exist between underfilling/overfilling of the detector and loss of portions of the diffraction spectrum. In addition, because every pixel is read in the x-y grid, read-out time is high, even though most of the pixels will have no useful information.

Another version of solid-state detector is reflected in U.S. Patent No. 4,820,048, to Barnard. Barnard, in effect, eliminates most of the pixels in the x-y grid, leaving small sets of linear CCD arrays positioned so as to receive only selected spectral lines and nearby background radiation. This drastic reduction in the number of pixels reduces the

read-out time for the detector, but any radiation not falling at the selected line positions will not be sensed, decreasing the flexibility of this detector as compared to the x-y grid.

The invention is set out alternatively in the various independent claims.

In a preferred embodiment, the detector includes read-out circuitry formed within the solid-state device. The read-out circuitry includes a plurality of read circuits, each read circuit coupled to a portion of one skewed line of pixels, and a plurality of read-out amplifiers, each amplifier being coupled to a plurality of read circuits.

The invention can be used in an echelle spectrometer diffraction grating and associated optical elements. The echelle grating and optical elements cooperate to form a two-dimensional diffraction pattern in a focal plane at which the detector is located. The skewed lines of pixels of the detector are positioned so as to coincide with the diffraction orders in the focal plane. Such coincidence of pixel lines and diffraction orders allows for detection of all spectral information along each diffraction order presented without unduly increasing read-out time.

Examples of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1A illustrates the main components of an echelle spectrometer in which the detector of the present invention may be utilized.

Figure 1B is a representative schematic of the read-out electronics.

Figure 2 illustrates a two-dimensional diffraction pattern created in an echelle spectrometer.

Figure 3 illustrates one embodiment of the detector of the present invention.

Figure 4, showing an enlarged portion of one embodiment of the detector, demonstrates how the read-out circuitry may be positioned on the detector and how the circuitry may interconnect with the pixel arrays on the detector.

Figure 1 illustrates the main components of an echelle spectrometer 10 in which the detector of the present invention may be used. The spectrometer 10 generally includes an echelle grating 12, a cross dispersion element 14, for example, a prism, and a detector 16. Additional optical elements, such as reflectors 18 and 32, may be included to reflect and focus the incoming radiation, the diffracted radiation, and ultimately the dispersed radiation. Also, a mask 20 may be used between the cross dispersion element 14 and the detector 16 for screening unwanted radiation from the detector 16. The shape

of the mask 20 may correspond to the shape of the two-dimensional diffraction pattern created at the focal plane in the spectrometer. The shape of this pattern will be discussed in further detail below.

The electromagnetic radiation 24 to be analyzed, typically emanating from a source 22 by way of a slit 26, may first be reflected at reflector 18 and becomes incident on the echelle grating 12. The diffracted beam 28 includes relatively high orders, but because the angle between the incident beam 30 and the diffracted beam 28 is small compared to the equivalent angle in a conventional grating spectrometer, the higher orders in the diffracted beam lie generally atop one another. A prism 14 may be used to disperse the various orders, and a two-dimensional diffraction pattern is created. Reflector 32 may be used to focus the multitude of spectral lines in a predetermined focal plane in the spectrometer. A detector 16 according to the present invention is positioned to intercept the spectrum at the focal plane. Signals developed at detector 16 are processed in read-out electronics 17 as further described elsewhere.

Turning now to figure 1B, CCD array 50 represents an array of photodetectors 51a, 51b,...51n, each of which transfers charge to a corresponding register 52a, 52b,...52n and thence to the corresponding read line 53a, 53b,...53n. The data propagating on the read line are directed through a corresponding amplifier and multiplexer and thence to array control board 55. Array control board 55 provides functions normally required for the control and operation of a CCD array, particularly power and control signals 56. One of ordinary skill in the art is familiar with the nature and function of these controls which direct the manner and sequence in which the several read lines 53a, 53b,...53n are

interrogated. The data are then organized and directed through data bus 57a through interface board 59 via data bus 57b to general purpose digital processor 60. Digital processor 60 develops the control signals 61 which are conditioned on interface board 59 for directing the operations carried out on array control board 55. The processor 60 also includes display functions for exhibiting the data and for such data processing as may be desired.

An echelle grating that is useful in utilizing a detector of the present invention may be made of fused silica using well-known manufacturing techniques. The grating may have approximately 95 grooves per millimeter cut at a blaze angle of approximately 45°. In this particular spectrometer, the wavelength coverage of primary interest would be about 165 nm to about 800 nm, and diffraction orders 19-88 would be utilized.

Figure 2 illustrates a two-dimensional diffraction pattern created in the focal plane of an echelle spectrometer. Depending on the particular spectrometer design, each individual order in the pattern may include a plurality of resolution elements of varying sizes. The sizes of the resolution elements may change with diffraction order across the echelle spectrum. Thus, diffraction orders near one end of the pattern could have resolution elements larger in size than the resolution elements in the diffraction orders near the other end of the pattern.

The diffraction order lines 48 in the echelle spectrum, as shown in Figure 2, are skewed. The lines 48 are not straight, and they are not exactly parallel to one another.

Nor are the wavelength regions of interest for different orders of equal length. However, as is well known, for any specific set of echelle spectrometer design parameters, the locations, sizes, spacing and orientations of the lines are predictable.

Figure 3 illustrates the geometric configuration of pixels 52 in one embodiment of the detector of the present invention. The detector 50 comprises a semiconductor chip 54 of silicon generally square or rectangular in shape. A plurality of sensing elements, or pixels 52, is formed in the silicon chip using well-known semiconductor device fabrication processes. The sensing elements are arranged to form a plurality of linear arrays 56, each of which forms a skewed line on the detector. Examination of Figures 2 and 3 together reveals that the skewed lines formed on the detector by the pixel arrays 56 are positioned to coincide with the projections of the echelle diffraction orders 48 in the focal plane of the spectrometer. Each of the skewed lines of pixels coincides with a particular echelle diffraction order projection in the focal plane.

Each skewed line array 56 is oriented such that its angle tracks the angle and curvature of the particular diffraction order 48 to be detected by that array. As the angle of a diffraction order 48 changes along its length, the angle of the corresponding pixel array 56 also changes to maintain continuous tracking of the diffraction order. This positioning of the pixel arrays on the detector allows for continuous tracking of the diffraction orders along the entire length of interest. That is, because each pixel array 56 is positioned continuously along a diffraction order projection 48 in the focal plane, each

pixel array provides continuous acceptance of spectral information across the order over one free spectral range.

Figure 3 illustrates that the pixel arrays 56 are of differing lengths. Each array is designed to have a length that matches or approximates the length of the diffraction order 48 that particular array 56 is intended to track. Because the lengths of the orders of each free spectral range vary, likewise the lengths of the pixel arrays vary. Also, as the lengths of the diffraction orders increase, the number of resolution elements in the orders tends to increase. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the number of pixels 52 in each pixel array 56 will correspond to the number of resolution elements in the diffraction order that particular array is intended to track. Furthermore, as the size of the resolution elements varies from order to order or along any given order, the size of the respective pixels will also vary. That is, in the preferred embodiment, each of the pixels is sized according to the size of the resolution element that particular pixel is intended to detect. Even in those embodiments in which the number of pixels in an array is not equal to the number of resolution elements in the particular diffraction order to be detected by that array, the sizes of the pixels can still be made to vary in the array according to variation in the sizes of the resolution elements in that diffraction order. In other words, certain advantages may be realized from variation in pixel size within each array, independent of advantages realized from matching the number of pixels in an array to the number of resolution elements in an order. For example, some of those advantages would include matching pixel height to image height to keep the overall photoactive detector small for

reduced cost while maintaining full coverage. Also, pixel width may be optimized to achieve efficient readout at a desired resolution.

As pointed out above, for any given set of echelle spectrometer design parameters, the locations, sizes, spacings and orientations of the diffraction order projections in the focal plane may be predicted. The presently preferred embodiment of the detector of the present invention includes approximately 80,000 pixels arranged into seventy arrays to track diffraction orders 19-88 in an echelle spectrometer. The arrays are constituted as follows:

Order No.	Approx. # of Pixels	Pixel Width (mm)	Pixel Height (mm)	Array Length (mm)	Wavelength Coverage (nm)
88	722	0.0125	0.105	9.02	168.7046-166.7983
87	730	0.0125	0.105	9.12	170.6426-168.6924
86	738	0.0125	0.1	9.23	172.6262-170.6305
85	746	0.0125	0.1	9.33	174.657-172.6143
84	755	0.0125	0.095	9.44	176.7368-174.6453
83	764	0.0125	0.09	9.55	178.8674-176.7253
82	773	0.0125	0.09	9.66	181.0505-178.8559
81	782	0.0125	0.085	9.78	183.2881-181.0392
80	792	0.0125	0.085	9.90	185.5823-183.2769
79	802	0.0125	0.08	10.02	187.9352-185.5712
78	812	0.0125	0.08	10.15	190.3491-187.9243
77	822	0.0125	0.08	10.28	192.8264-190.3383
76	833	0.0125	0.075	10.41	195.3695-192.8157
75	844	0.0125	0.075	10.55	197.9812-195.3589
74	855	0.0125	0.075	10.69	200.6642-197.9707

Order No.	Approx. # of Pixels	Pixel Width (mm)	Pixel Height (mm)	Array Length (mm)	Wavelength Coverage (nm)
73	867	0.0125	0.07	10.83	203.4214-200.6538
72	878	0.0125	0.07	10.98	206.2561-203.4111
71	891	0.0125	0.07	11.13	209.1713-206.2459
70	903	0.0125	0.065	11.29	212.1707-209.1612
69	916	0.0125	0.065	11.45	215.2579-212.1607
68	929	0.0125	0.065	11.62	218.4368-215.248
67	943	0.0125	0.06	11.79	221.7116-218.427
66	957	0.0125	0.06	11.97	225.0865-221.7018
65	972	0.0125	0.06	12.15	228.5663-225.0768
64	987	0.0125	0.06	12.34	232.1559-228.5566
63	1002	0.0125	0.06	12.53	235.8606-232.1463
62	1018	0.0125	0.055	12.73	239.686-235.851
61	1035	0.0125	0.055	12.94	243.6381-239.6765
60	1052	0.0125	0.055	13.15	247.7232-243.6286
59	1070	0.0125	0.055	13.37	251.9481-247.7137
58	1088	0.0125	0.055	13.60	256.3202-251.9387
57	1107	0.0125	0.055	13.84	260.8473-256.3108
56	1127	0.0125	0.055	14.08	265.5376-260.8378
55	1147	0.0125	0.055	14.34	270.4003-265.5282
54	1168	0.0125	0.055	14.60	275.4449-270.3909
53	1190	0.0125	0.055	14.88	280.6819-275.4355
52	1213	0.0125	0.055	15.16	286.1224-280.6725
51	1237	0.0125	0.055	15.46	291.7786-286.113
50	1261	0.0125	0.055	15.77	297.6635-291.7691
49	1287	0.0125	0.055	16.09	303.7911-297.654
48	1314	0.0125	0.055	16.42	310.177-303.7816
47	1341	0.0125	0.055	16.77	316.8376-310.1673

Order No.	Approx. # of Pixels	Pixel Width (mm)	Pixel Height (mm)	Array Length (mm)	Wavelength Coverage (nm)
46	1370	0.0125	0.055	17.13	323.7911-316.8279
45	1401	0.0125	0.055	17.51	331.0573-323.7813
44	1433	0.0125	0.055	17.91	338.6576-331.0473
43	1466	0.0125	0.055	18.32	346.6157-338.6476
42	1520	0.0125	0.055	19.00	354.9574-346.6055
41	1520	0.0125	0.055	19.00	363.7111-354.947
40	1520	0.0125	0.055	19.00	372.7228-363.7752
39	1520	0.0125	0.055	19.00	382.2711-373.0927
38	1520	0.0125	0.055	19.00	392.322-382.9007
37	1520	0.0125	-0.055	19.00	402.9163-393.2392
36	1520	0.0125	-0.055	19.00	414.0992-404.1522
35	1520	0.0125	-0.055	19.00	425.9213-415.689
34	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	438.4388-427.9046
33	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	451.7151-440.8607
32	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	465.8211-454.6268
31	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	480.8373-469.2812
30	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	496.8545-484.9126
29	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	513.9764-501.6222
28	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	532.3212-519.5253
27	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	552.0248-538.7547
26	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	573.244-559.4633
25	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	596.1606-581.8285
24	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	620.9866-606.0574
23	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	647.9711-632.3929
22	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	677.4083-661.1223
21	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	709.6484-692.5873
20	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	745.1119-727.1983

Order No.	Approx. # of Pixels	Pixel Width (mm)	Pixel Height (mm)	Array Length (mm)	Wavelength Coverage (nm)
19	760	0.025	-0.055	19.00	784.3075-765.4518

The read-out circuitry may be fabricated as a part of the detector chip using well-known design and fabrication techniques, although such an arrangement is not required in order to make or use the invented detector. Indeed, no specific form or arrangement of read-out circuitry is required, but in the presently preferred embodiment shown in Figure 4, the detector includes the associated read-out circuitry as a part of the same semiconductor chip. Each of the 70 pixel arrays is divided into two portions, a left sub-array 38 and a right sub-array 40. Each of the 140 sub-arrays has dedicated circuits 42 for reading the sub-array pixels. The read-out circuitry is generally positioned between the arrays of pixels, in that area where no spectral information will exist and where no pixels are located. Amplification circuits 44 are positioned at the end of each sub-array, and each amplification circuit is coupled to a plurality of read-out circuits. This arrangement allows for variation in integration time such that where greater time is needed, it is available, whereas additional time is not taken where not needed. The result is improved signal-to-noise ratio and reduced read-out time. Other details of the read-out electronics were described above in connection with Figure 1B.

Although the embodiment described thus far contemplates the use of a silicon substrate for fabrication of the detector and associated circuitry, other embodiments will be fabricated using different semiconductor materials. Also, the detector of the present invention may be realized in a monolithic substrate comprising two or more different

semiconducting materials. For example, the detector may include one area that is silicon based and another area that is based on gallium-arsenide. Such a detector would be useful, for example, where both the visible and infrared regions are of interest. That portion of the detector for sensing the visible spectrum might be silicon, whereas the portion of the detector for sensing the infrared region would be gallium-arsenide. Further, the detector could be constructed to include three or more materials. For example, a gallium-arsenide region would detect the infrared spectra, a silicon region would detect the visible region, and a platinum silicide region would detect the ultraviolet spectra. Each of these embodiments would be well within the skill of the ordinary artisan in view of the above specific teachings. All these embodiments could utilize the present invention and realize all or many of the advantages enjoyed by the above-described embodiment.

As will be appreciated, the present invention may take many specific forms and be realized in many different embodiments. The above description relates to but one of the many possible embodiments. The invention is thus described by the following claims.

CLAIMS

1. A solid-state detector for an echelle spectrometer, comprising:
a plurality of sensing elements on a surface of the detector arranged to form a plurality of sensing element arrays,
the plurality of sensing element arrays forming a corresponding plurality of skewed lines on the detector surface, each skewed line positioned to lie along a projection of an echelle diffraction order so as to continuously track the order over the free spectral range.
2. The detector of claim 1, wherein each skewed line is oriented at an angle that is congruent with the projection on said surface of the diffraction order to which that skewed line corresponds.
3. The detector of claim 1, wherein each sensing element array has a length that approximates the predetermined wavelength range of the diffraction order over the free spectral range along which the array is to be positioned.

4. The detector of claim 3, wherein each sensing element array includes a number of sensing elements equal to the number of resolution elements available in the diffraction order along which the array is to be positioned.
5. The detector of claim 4, wherein each of the sensing elements is sized according to the size of the resolution element to be detected by that sensing element.
6. The detector of claim 3, wherein the sensing elements included within any sensing element array are sized according to the sizes of resolution elements available in the diffraction order along which the sensing element array is to be positioned.
7. A solid state detector for use in an echelle spectrometer, comprising:
a semiconductor chip having a plurality of pixel arrays positioned thereon, each pixel array positioned to lie continuously along a projection of a diffraction order at a focal plane in the spectrometer, each pixel array for providing continuous acceptance of spectral information across the diffraction order.
8. A spectrometer, comprising:
an echelle grating for receiving electromagnetic radiation to be analyzed;
a cross dispersion element for dispersing diffraction orders diffracted from the echelle grating, the echelle grating and the cross dispersion element designed to cooperate to form a two-dimensional diffraction pattern at a focal plane in the spectrometer;

a detector situated at the focal plane, the detector including a plurality of pixels arranged to form a plurality of skewed lines on a face of the detector, each skewed line positioned to coincide with a diffraction order at the focal plane; and

circuitry, coupled to the plurality of pixels, for generating signals indicative of spectral information received by the pixels.

9. The spectrometer of claim 8, wherein each skewed line is oriented at an angle that is congruent with the projection on said face of the diffraction order with which the skewed line is to be coincident.

10. The spectrometer of claim 9, wherein each array of pixels has a length that approximates the predetermined wavelength range at the focal plane of the diffraction order over the free spectral range with which the array is to be coincident.

11. The spectrometer of claim 10, wherein each array includes a number of pixels equal to the number of resolution elements available in the diffraction order with which the array is to be coincident.

12. The spectrometer of claim 11, wherein each of the pixels is sized according to the size of the resolution element to be detected by that pixel.

13. The spectrometer of claim 8, further comprising a mask positioned between the cross dispersion element and the detector, the mask having a shape corresponding to the shape of the two-dimensional diffraction pattern.

14. A solid state detector for an echelle spectrometer, comprising:
a first area having a first plurality of sensing element arrays forming a
corresponding plurality of skewed lines on a surface of the detector, each
skewed line positioned to lie along a projection of an echelle diffraction
order so as to continuously track the diffraction order over the free spectral
range; and
a second area having a second plurality of sensing elements arranged to form an
X-Y grid of sensing elements;
the sensing element arrays of the first area for sensing selected orders of an echelle
diffraction pattern and the X-Y grid of sensing elements of the second area for sensing
selected other orders of the echelle diffraction pattern.

15. A solid-state detector for an echelle spectrometer, comprising:
a first area comprising a first material, the first area including a first plurality of
sensing element arrays forming a corresponding first plurality of skewed
lines on a surface of the detector, the skewed lines positioned to lie along
projections of first selected echelle diffraction orders so as to continuously
track the first selected orders over the free spectral range; and

a second area comprising a second material, the second area including a second plurality of sensing element arrays forming a corresponding second plurality of skewed lines on the surface of the detector, the second plurality of skewed lines positioned to lie along projections of second selected echelle diffraction orders so as to continuously track the second selected orders over the free spectral range, the first and second materials selected to optimize the detection of wavelengths to be detected in the first and second selected echelle diffraction orders, respectively.

16. A solid state detector substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

17. A spectrometer substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



1a

Application No: GB 9611599.3
Claims searched: 1-17

Examiner: SJ Morgan
Date of search: 23 August 1996

**Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17**

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.O): H1K(KECA,KPAC,KQAX)

Int Cl (Ed.6): G01J; H01L

Other: Online:WPI,JAPIO,INSPEC

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	EP 0 550 076 A1 (INSTITUT FUR HALBLEITERPHYSIK) See whole document.	1-3,7
X,Y	US 4 940 325 (AKADEMIE DER WISSENSHAFTEN) Note the passage at lines 21-36, column 3, in particular.	X:1-3,7 Y:8-10
Y	US 4 820 048 (PERKIN-ELMER) See lines 41-43, column 4.	Y:8-10

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
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