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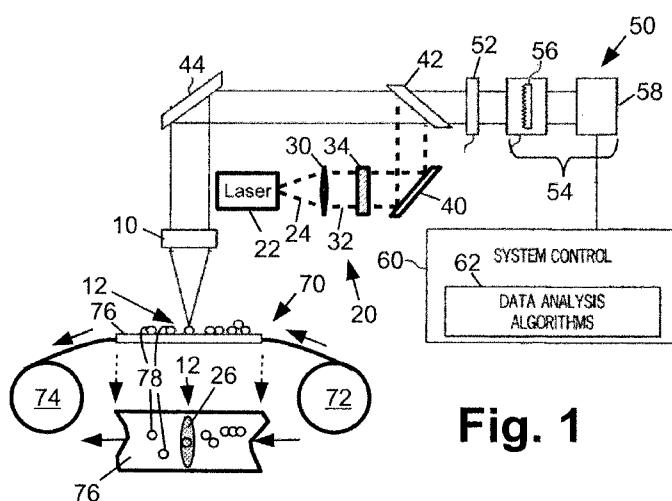


Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: An apparatus comprises: a microscope objective focused on a microscope field of view; a light source including a laser generating an astigmatic beam and optics configured to couple the astigmatic beam into the microscope objective to produce high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view; and a data acquisition system configured to generate data pertaining to light emanating from the microscope field of view responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination. The apparatus may be a Raman spectroscopy system. The laser may be an edge emitting laser. The optics of the light source may include an aspherical lens arranged to compensate the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam. The optics of the light source may include a diffraction grating arranged respective to the laser to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam.

LINE LIGHT SOURCE FOR RAMAN OR OTHER SPECTROSCOPIC SYSTEM

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/440,561 filed February 8, 2011 titled LINE LIGHT SOURCE FOR RAMAN OR OTHER SPECTROSCOPIC SYSTEM and naming inventors Bradley B. Ross and Andrew P. Bartko. U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/440,561 filed February 8, 2011 is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The following relates to the spectroscopy arts, Raman spectroscopy arts, particulate detection or sampling arts, optical characterization arts, and so forth.

[0003] WO 2007/009119 A2 published January 18, 2007 is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. WO 2007/009119 A2 relates to systems and methods for biological and chemical detection and names Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, Ohio, USA as applicant.

[0004] Raman spectroscopy is known for use in microbiological testing. By way of illustrative example, some such techniques are disclosed in WO 2007/009119 A2, and a known microbiological testing system employing Raman spectroscopy is the Rapid Enumerated Bioidentification System (REBS) developed by Battelle Memorial Laboratories (Columbus, Ohio, USA).

[0005] In some types of microscopy, line illumination is employed. Such illumination advantageously provides high resolution controlled by the “width” or narrow dimension of the line illumination, and parallel sampling along the “length” or long dimension of the line. For some cell detection or sampling (e.g., counting) applications, the width of the line illumination is preferably about one micron, which corresponds to a typical size of prokaryotic cells (bacteria, by way of illustrative example) of interest in medical, biohazard, or other applications.

[0006] Typical light sources for illuminating the microscope field of view include arc lamps and semiconductor lasers. Such light sources are commercially available, but are generally designed to produce circular illumination. In the case of edge emitting diode lasers, which naturally produce a high aspect ratio beam, the commercial product is typically packaged with micro-optical components (a micro-cylindrical lens, by way of illustrative example) to circularize the beam output. The circular beam is converted to line illumination of the desired aspect ratio using an aspherical lens, cylindrical lens, or the like.

[0007] In the context of sampling microarrays, it has also been suggested to produce line illumination by focusing the high aspect ratio beam of an edge emitting diode laser. *See WO 2008/0117518 A1.* However, an edge emitting laser actually generates a strongly diverging beam with a high degree of astigmatism. In commercially available edge emitting laser packages, a microlens or other near-field optic is typically provided to circularize the output beam. Moreover, Raman spectroscopy and some other spectroscopy techniques require a highly monochromatic light source. For example, in the case of Raman a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of order 0.1 nanometers or smaller is desired. An edge emitting laser produces a beam with a large spectral FWHM, for example, of order 3 nanometers in the case of some commercially available edge emitting lasers.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0008] In accordance with certain aspects disclosed herein, an apparatus comprises: a microscope objective focused on a microscope field of view; a light source including a laser generating an astigmatic beam and optics configured to couple the astigmatic beam into the microscope objective to produce high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view; and a data acquisition system configured to generate data pertaining to light emanating from the microscope field of view responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination. In some embodiments the laser is an edge emitting laser and the astigmatic

beam generated by the edge emitting laser has astigmatism $\tan(\beta)/\tan(\alpha)$ of at least forty where β is the beam divergence angle transverse to the emission plane of the edge emitting laser and α is the beam divergence angle in the emission plane of the edge emitting laser. In some embodiments the optics of the light source comprise an aspherical lens arranged to compensate the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam. In some embodiments the optics of the light source comprise a diffraction grating arranged respective to the laser to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam.

[0009] In accordance with certain aspects disclosed herein, an apparatus comprises: a laser generating an astigmatic beam; an aspherical lens arranged to convert the astigmatic beam into an astigmatism corrected beam; and a microscope objective focused on a microscope field of view that receives the astigmatism corrected beam and produces high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view. In some embodiments the laser is an edge emitting laser. In some embodiments employing an edge emitting laser, a diffraction grating is arranged respective to the edge emitting laser to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam.

[0010] In accordance with certain aspects disclosed herein, a Raman spectroscopy system is disclosed which employs an apparatus as set forth in the immediately preceding paragraph.

[0011] In accordance with certain aspects disclosed herein, a method comprises: generating an astigmatic beam; correcting astigmatism of the astigmatic beam to produce an astigmatism corrected beam; using a microscope objective to produce high aspect ratio illumination at a microscope field of view from the astigmatism-corrected beam; and generating data pertaining to light emanating from the microscope field of view responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination. In some embodiments the generating comprises generating data pertaining to Raman scattering of the high aspect ratio illumination.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The invention may take form in various components and arrangements of components, and in various process operations and arrangements of process operations. The drawings are only for purposes of illustrating preferred embodiments and are not to be construed as limiting the invention.

[0013] FIGURE 1 diagrammatically shows a Raman spectroscopy system.

[0014] FIGURE 2 diagrammatically shows a perspective view of the light source of the Raman spectroscopy system of FIGURE 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0015] With reference to FIGURES 1 and 2, an illustrative Raman spectroscopy system includes a microscope objective **10** focused on a microscope field of view **12**, a light source **20** including a laser **22** generating an astigmatic beam **24** and optics configured to couple the astigmatic beam **24** into the microscope objective **10** to produce high aspect ratio illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12**. In FIGURE 1, the microscope field of view **12** is shown “on-edge” in the main figure, and an inset indicated by dashed arrows shows a plan-view of the microscope field of view **12** including a diagrammatic depiction of the high aspect ratio illumination **26**. The optics of the illustrative light source **20** include an aspherical lens **30** arranged to compensate the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam **24** to form an astigmatism-corrected beam **32**. The illustrative optics also include a diffraction grating **34** arranged respective to the laser **22** to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam **24**. It will be appreciated that reducing the spectral FWHM of the astigmatic beam **24** inherently also reduces the spectral FWHM of the astigmatism-corrected beam **32** and of the high aspect ratio illumination **26**.

[0016] In the illustrative example of FIGURE 1, additional mirrors **40**, **42**, **44** (which may optionally be dichotic or partially reflective mirrors) are included to direct the astigmatism-corrected beam **32** into the microscope objective **10**. It will be appreciated that these mirrors **40**, **42** are optional and may be omitted or replaced or supplemented by other optics, e.g. other or additional mirrors, beam-steering lenses or gratings or so forth. The illustrative mirror **42** is a partially reflective mirror that permits light emanating from the microscope field of view **12** responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination **26** to be captured using the microscope objective **10** and directed to a data acquisition system **50**. Alternatively, separate illumination and acquisition (or collection) microscope objectives may be employed. Additional optical components may be included in the optics of the light source, such as polarizers, beam width-modifying lens sets, neutral density filters, diverters for redirecting a portion of the beam to an intensity meter for monitoring purposes, or so forth. FIGURE 2 shows a simplified version of the light source **20** coupled with the microscope objective **10** in which the mirrors **40**, **42**, **44** are omitted.

[0017] The data acquisition system **50** is configured to generate data pertaining to light emanating from the microscope field of view **12** responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination **26**. The illustrative example of FIGURE 1 is a Raman spectroscopy system designed to detect particles **52** dispersed on the microscope field of view **12**. The illustrative Raman data acquisition system **50** includes optional optics **52** (for example, filtering to remove wavelength components unrelated to Raman scattering), followed by a spectrometer **54** including a light-dispersive element **56** and an optical detector **58** (which in some embodiments may be an array of light detectors **58**). In some embodiments, the light-dispersive element is coupled with an array of light detectors with the light detector elements arranged to detect different portions (i.e., wavelengths or wavelength bins) of the dispersed light. In other embodiments, the light dispersive element rotates or moves relative to a fixed light detector, for example as in a Czerny-Turner monochromator in which a diffraction grating is tilted such that different wavelengths pass through a light output slit to be detected by the light detector. Alternatively, the light dispersive element may be fixed and the light detector may move. Other embodiments are also contemplated

for the spectrometer **54**, such as being embodied as a Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometer (FTIR).

[0018] The output of the spectrometer **54** (or more particularly the light detector or light detector array **58**) is an electrical signal that is input to a system control unit **60** which is suitably embodied as a digital processor (e.g., a computer, a network server, a graphical processing unit or GPU, a dedicated digital processing device, or so forth) executing suitable data analysis algorithms **62**. In the illustrative Raman spectroscopy example, the system control unit **60** generates Raman scattering data from the output of the spectrometer **54**, and in some embodiments includes a display and/or printing device (not shown) for displaying or printing a Raman spectrum.

[0019] The Raman spectroscopy system of FIGURE 1 is an illustrative spectroscopy application of the light source **20**. Other spectroscopy systems can also employ the light source **20**, such as a reflected light spectroscopy system (for example, to measure a reflectance spectrum of a material at the microscope field of view, (ii) a transmitted light spectroscopy system (for example, to measure transmittance through a material at the microscope field of view), a fluorescence spectroscopy system configured to measure fluorescence excited by the high aspect ratio illumination, and the illustrative Raman spectroscopy system that measures high aspect ratio illumination scattered by Raman scattering at the microscope field of view. WO 2007/009119 A2, which published January 18, 2007 is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety, discloses additional Raman spectroscopy embodiments and aspects, as well as embodiments of other types of spectroscopy systems including various combinations of different types of spectroscopy systems.

[0020] The illustrative Raman spectroscopy system of FIGURE 1 is suitably used for biological and chemical detection. In the illustrative example, a sample stage is embodied as a roll-to-roll apparatus **70** including a source roll **72** and a take-up roll **74** that moves a surface **76** across the microscope field of view **12**. Particles **78** disposed on the surface **76** are detected based on a characteristic Raman scattering signal generated by the particle

78 responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination **26**. In other embodiments, the particles may emit a characteristic fluorescence signal that is detected by a fluorescence spectroscopy system. In this regard, it should be noted that the term “spectroscopy system” as used herein does not require collection of a spectrum over a contiguous spectral range – rather, by way of illustrative example, the spectroscopy system may monitor one or more Raman scattering wavelengths (or fluorescence wavelengths in a fluorescence spectroscopy embodiment) that are characteristic of the particles **78**. The type and nature of the particles **78** is specific to the application. For some medical applications, the particles **78** may be bacteria cells or other prokaryotic cells. In rare cell detection applications, the particles **78** may be a certain type of epithelial cells that are indicative of a certain type of cancer. As yet another example, the particles **78** may be particles of a certain hazardous material or chemical that is to be detected.

[0021] For particle detection, it is advantageous for the moving sample surface and the high aspect ratio illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** to be relatively oriented as shown in FIGURE 1, that is, with the sample surface **76** moving across the microscope field of view **12** in a direction transverse to the long side of the high aspect illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12**. In this relative orientation, it is further advantageous from a sampling resolution standpoint for the short side of the high aspect illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** to be commensurate with the average size of the particles **78** to be detected. In the case of bacteria or other prokaryotic cells, this dimension is about one micron, and so it is advantageous for the short side of the high aspect illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** to have a dimension of 1-3 micron inclusive in some embodiments. The dimension of the long side of the high aspect illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** affects the sampling speed (a longer side samples more area per unit time movement of the surface **76**); however, the long side should not be so long as to be statistically likely to sample two or more of the particles **78** at the same time. In some embodiments the long side has a dimension of at least 30 microns. In some embodiments the long side has a dimension of at least 40 microns. In some embodiments the long side has a dimension of at least 50 microns. These are

merely illustrative examples, and the dimensions of the high aspect illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** are suitably determined on an application-specific basis taking into account factors such as the average size of the particles to be detected and the density of such particles on the sample surface.

[0022] WO 2007/009119 A2, which published January 18, 2007 and is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety, discloses additional embodiments and aspects of biological and chemical detection, employing Raman spectroscopy, fluorescence, or so forth. Moreover, particle detection is to be understood to be merely an illustrative application; more generally, the light source **20** may be employed in other applications of spectroscopy.

[0023] With particular reference to FIGURE 2, further aspects of the light source **20** are described. The laser **22** which generates the astigmatic beam **24** is, in the illustrative example, an edge emitting laser, such as a semiconductor-based edge emitting diode laser. A semiconductor-based edge emitting laser includes a stack of semiconductor layers **80**, one or more of which define an active layer in which light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation (that is, lasing or laser action) takes place. By way of illustrative example, the stack of semiconductor layers **80** may be a stack of epitaxial group III-V compound semiconductor layers. Such a stack of epitaxial group III-V compound semiconductor layers may include a binary, ternary, or quaternary group III-V compound semiconductor active layer including at least one group III species selected from the group consisting of Ga, Al, and In and including at least one group V species selected from the group consisting of As, P, N, and Sb.

[0024] To form a laser cavity, a resonant cavity containing at least the active layer, and possibly including additional optical cladding layers, is defined by optically reflective layers of the stack of semiconductor layers **80** and/or by metallic coatings or layers or other non-semiconductor reflective layers parallel with the layers of the stack of semiconductor layers **80**. The result is that the resonant cavity of the edge emitting laser **22** has a high aspect ratio, that is, is essentially an emission “plane”.

[0025] As labeled in FIGURE 2, the astigmatic beam **24** has a largest beam divergence angle β transverse to the emission plane of the edge emitting laser **22**, and has a smallest beam divergence angle α in the emission plane of the edge emitting laser. (More generally, the astigmatic beam **24** inherently has a divergence angle that varies with angle around the beam, and hence inherently has a largest beam divergence angle β and a smallest beam divergence angle α where $\beta > \alpha$). The astigmatic beam **24** has a cross section in the far field (denoted by a distance d in FIGURE 2) with a high aspect ratio $y:x$ where $y=d\times\tan(\beta)$ and $x=d\times\tan(\alpha)$. (This far-field estimate neglects the small but finite dimensions of the actual emission plane of the edge emitting laser **22**). Thus, the astigmatic beam **24** has a cross section in the far field with an aspect ratio of $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$. It will be noted that this aspect ratio is independent of the distance d into the far field.

[0026] With continuing reference to FIGURE 2, the aspherical lens **30** is arranged to compensate the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam **24** to form the astigmatism-corrected beam **32**. It will be noticed that the aspect ratio $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$ of the cross-section of the astigmatic beam **24** in the far field is independent of the distance d into the far field. Accordingly, the aspherical lens **30** can be placed at any distance in the far field from the edge emitting laser **22**. By way of illustrative example, the aspherical lens **30** is located at the distance d in FIGURE 2. Moreover, it should be noted that the aspherical lens **30** does not have to be located “in the far field” – a closer placement of the aspherical lens **30** to the laser **22** merely distorts the cross-section aspect ratio slightly due to effects of the finite emission “plane” of the edge emitting laser **22**.

[0027] The aspherical lens **30** has different foci in the orthogonal directions, i.e. in the “x” and “y” directions as denoted in FIGURE 2. The foci of the aspherical lens **30** are chosen and aligned respective to the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam **22** so as to compensate the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam **24** to form the astigmatism-corrected beam **32**. Thus, the focal length of the aspherical lens **30** for the “y” direction should be chosen to collimate light with the largest beam divergence β , while the focal length of the

aspherical lens **30** for the “x” direction should be chosen to collimate light with the smallest beam divergence α . In some embodiments, the smallest beam divergence α is sufficiently small to be considered negligible – in such embodiments, the focal length of the aspherical lens **30** for the “x” direction is suitably chosen to be infinite, and the aspherical lens **30** is suitably embodied as a cylindrical lens having no curvature along the “x” direction.

[0028] The astigmatism-corrected beam **32** is collimated and has a large aspect ratio of $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$. This astigmatism-corrected beam **32** is imaged by the microscope objective **10** to form the high aspect ratio illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** also having the large aspect ratio of $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$.

[0029] In some embodiments, the high aspect ratio illumination **26** at the microscope field of view **12** is chosen to have a short dimension of about 1 micron as is suitable for detection of bacteria or other prokaryotic cells. Advantageously, the beam emitted by the laser **22** is typically of this order of magnitude in size – accordingly, the magnification of the overall optical system including the aspherical lens **30** and the microscope objective **10** is about unity. Since large magnification or demagnification is not involved, errors or distortions due to lens aberrations or other optical system imperfections are advantageously reduced.

[0030] In the light source **20** of FIGURE 2, the edge emitting laser **22** does not include a microlens or other near field optic for circularizing the astigmatic beam, as is conventionally included in commercial edge emitting laser packages. Rather the light source **20** of FIGURE 2 employs the laser **22** without such circularizing optics, so that the astigmatic beam **24** is output with a high degree of astigmatism (e.g., $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$ of 50 or higher in some contemplated embodiments). Instead of attempting to circularize the beam, the light source **20** takes advantage of the combination of high astigmatism and large divergence (at least in the “y” direction) of to automatically generate a beam with a cross-section that is both (i) relatively large (the precise size being determined by the

distance d in FIGURE 2) and (ii) having a large aspect ratio. The aspherical lens **30** then operates to compensate the astigmatism, but not the high aspect ratio, so as to provide the astigmatism-corrected beam **32** which does not have astigmatism but which does have a large aspect ratio commensurate with the astigmatism – the aspect ratio is about $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$. Because the astigmatism is not corrected in the near field, the aspherical lens **30** is not a micro-optical component and consequently its manufacturing is simplified.

[0031] With continuing reference to FIGURE 2, some spectroscopy applications call for the spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the light source to be small. For example, in Raman spectroscopy the spectral FWHM of the light source is preferably less than 0.1 nanometer, and in some embodiments is preferably about 0.05 nanometer or smaller. Semiconductor lasers, however, tend to generate beams with spectral FWHM substantially larger than this. For example, a typical spectral FWHM for a semiconductor-based edge emitting diode laser is about 3 nanometers. In some embodiments, the optics of the light source include a laser line filter having a narrow spectral pass-band meeting the stringent spectroscopy requirement. However, this approach discards a large portion of the spectrum (and hence discards a large portion of the intensity) of the astigmatic beam.

[0032] In the illustrated embodiment, spectral FWHM narrowing is achieved by using the diffraction grating **34** arranged respective to the laser **22** to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam **24**. As previously noted, this inherently also reduces the spectral FWHM of the astigmatism-corrected beam **32** and of the high aspect ratio illumination **26**. In effect, the diffraction grating **34** creates an extended resonant cavity of length D_{cavity} as labeled in FIGURE 2. The resonance condition for the astigmatic beam **24** includes resonance in the internal resonant cavity of the laser **22**, and also includes resonance over the resonant cavity of length D_{cavity} defined by the relative separation between the laser **22** and diffraction grating **34**.

[0033] Substantially any diffraction grating can be employed. In some embodiments the diffraction grating **34** is embodied as a volume phase grating, such as (by way of illustrative example) a volume phase holography diffraction grating. Although in illustrative FIGURE 2 the diffraction grating **34** is located after the aspherical lens **30** in the optical train, it is also contemplated to place the diffraction grating between the laser and the aspherical lens. Moreover, if the spectral FWHM of the laser **22** operating without the diffraction grating **34** is adequate for the specific spectroscopy application, then the diffraction grating **34** is optionally omitted entirely.

[0034] This application has described one or more preferred embodiments. Modifications and alterations may occur to others upon reading and understanding the preceding detailed description. It is intended that the application be construed as including all such modifications and alterations insofar as they come within the scope of the appended claims or the equivalents thereof.

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus comprising:
 - a microscope objective focused on a microscope field of view;
 - a light source including a laser generating an astigmatic beam and optics configured to couple the astigmatic beam into the microscope objective to produce high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view; and
 - a data acquisition system configured to generate data pertaining to light emanating from the microscope field of view responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination.
2. The apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the laser comprises an edge emitting laser.
3. The apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the laser comprises a semiconductor-based edge emitting diode laser.
4. The apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein the semiconductor-based edge emitting diode laser comprises a stack of epitaxial group III-V compound semiconductor layers.
5. The apparatus as set forth in claim 4, wherein the stack of epitaxial group III-V compound semiconductor layers include a binary, ternary, or quaternary group III-V compound semiconductor active layer including at least one group III species selected from the group consisting of Ga, Al, and In and including at least one group V species selected from the group consisting of As, P, N, and Sb.
6. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims 1-5, wherein the data acquisition system comprises:
 - a spectrometer configured to generate said data.

7. The apparatus as set forth in claim 6, wherein the spectrometer is configured to generate said data comprising an optical spectrum.

8. The apparatus as set forth in claim 6, wherein the spectrometer is configured to generate said data comprising a Raman spectrum.

9. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims 6-8, wherein the spectrometer is selected from a group consisting of (1) a combination of a light-dispersive element and an array of light detectors, (2) a combination of a light dispersive element and a light detector wherein one of the light dispersive element and the light detector moves relative to the other, (3) a Czerny-Turner monochromator, and (4) a Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometer (FTIR).

10. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims 1-9, further comprising: a sample stage configured to move a surface across the microscope field of view in a direction transverse to the long side of the high aspect illumination at the microscope field of view.

11. The apparatus as set forth in claim 10, wherein the sample stage comprises a roll-to-roll apparatus.

12. The apparatus as set forth in claim 1-11, wherein the data acquisition system is configured to generate data pertaining to at least one of (i) reflected light, (ii) transmitted light, (iii) fluorescence excited by the high aspect ratio illumination, and (iv) high aspect ratio illumination scattered by Raman scattering at the microscope field of view.

13. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims 1-12, wherein the laser is an edge emitting laser and the astigmatic beam generated by the edge emitting laser has astigmatism $\tan(\beta)/\tan(\alpha)$ of at least forty where β is the beam divergence angle

transverse to the emission plane of the edge emitting laser and α is the beam divergence angle in the emission plane of the edge emitting laser.

14. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **1-12**, wherein the astigmatic beam generated by the laser has astigmatism $\tan(\beta)/\tan(\alpha)$ of at least forty where β is the largest beam divergence angle of the astigmatic beam and α is the smallest beam divergence angle of the astigmatic beam.

15. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **1-14**, wherein the high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view has an aspect ratio of at least 40:1.

16. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **1-15**, wherein the high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view has a short dimension of less than five microns and a large dimension of at least 30 micron.

17. The apparatus as set forth in claim **16**, wherein the high aspect ratio illumination has a short dimension of between one and three microns inclusive.

18. The apparatus as set forth in claim **16**, wherein the high aspect ratio illumination has a short dimension of about one micron.

19. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **1-18**, wherein the optics of the light source comprise an aspherical lens arranged to compensate the astigmatism of the astigmatic beam.

20. The apparatus as set forth in claim **19**, wherein the aspherical lens converts the astigmatic beam to a collimated beam and the microscope objective images the collimated beam at the microscope field of view to produce the high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view.

21. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **1-20**, wherein:
the astigmatic beam has astigmatism $\tan(\beta)/\tan(\alpha)$ where β is largest divergence angle of the astigmatic beam and α is the smallest divergence angle of the astigmatic beam, and
the high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view has an aspect ratio of $\tan(\beta):\tan(\alpha)$.

22. The apparatus as set forth in claim **21**, wherein $\tan(\beta)/\tan(\alpha)$ is greater than or equal to 30.

23. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **1-22**, wherein the optics of the light source comprise a diffraction grating arranged respective to the laser to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam.

24. The apparatus as set forth in claim **23**, wherein:
the laser is an edge emitting laser operable without the diffraction grating to produce a beam having a spectral FWHM of at least one nanometer, and
the spectral FWHM of the astigmatic beam is less than 0.1 nanometer.

25. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **23-24**, wherein the diffraction grating reduces the spectral FWHM of the astigmatic beam by at least a factor of ten.

26. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **23-25**, wherein the diffraction grating comprises a volume phase grating.

27. The apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **23-25**, wherein the diffraction grating comprises a volume phase holography diffraction grating.

28. An apparatus comprising:

- a laser generating an astigmatic beam;
- an aspherical lens arranged to convert the astigmatic beam into an astigmatism-corrected beam; and
- a microscope objective focused on a microscope field of view that receives the astigmatism-corrected beam and produces high aspect ratio illumination at the microscope field of view.

29. The apparatus of claim **28**, wherein the laser is an edge emitting laser.

30. The apparatus of claim **29**, further comprising:

- a diffraction grating arranged respective to the edge emitting laser to provide feedback reducing a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam.

31. The apparatus of claim **30**, wherein the diffraction grating comprises a volume phase grating that reduces the spectral FWHM of the astigmatic beam by at least a factor of ten.

32. A Raman spectroscopy system employing an apparatus as set forth in any one of claims **28-31**.

33. A method comprising:

- generating an astigmatic beam;
- correcting astigmatism of the astigmatic beam to produce an astigmatism-corrected beam;
- using a microscope objective to produce high aspect ratio illumination at a microscope field of view from the astigmatism-corrected beam; and
- generating data pertaining to light emanating from the microscope field of view responsive to the high aspect ratio illumination.

34. The method of claim **33**, wherein the generating comprises:
generating data pertaining to Raman scattering of the high aspect ratio illumination.

35. The method of any one of claims **33-34**, wherein the generating comprises:
generating a Raman spectrum.

36. The method of any one of claims **33-35**, further comprising:
generating the astigmatic beam using an edge emitting laser.

37. The method of claim **36**, further comprising:
providing feedback using a diffraction grating to reduce a spectral full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the astigmatic beam.

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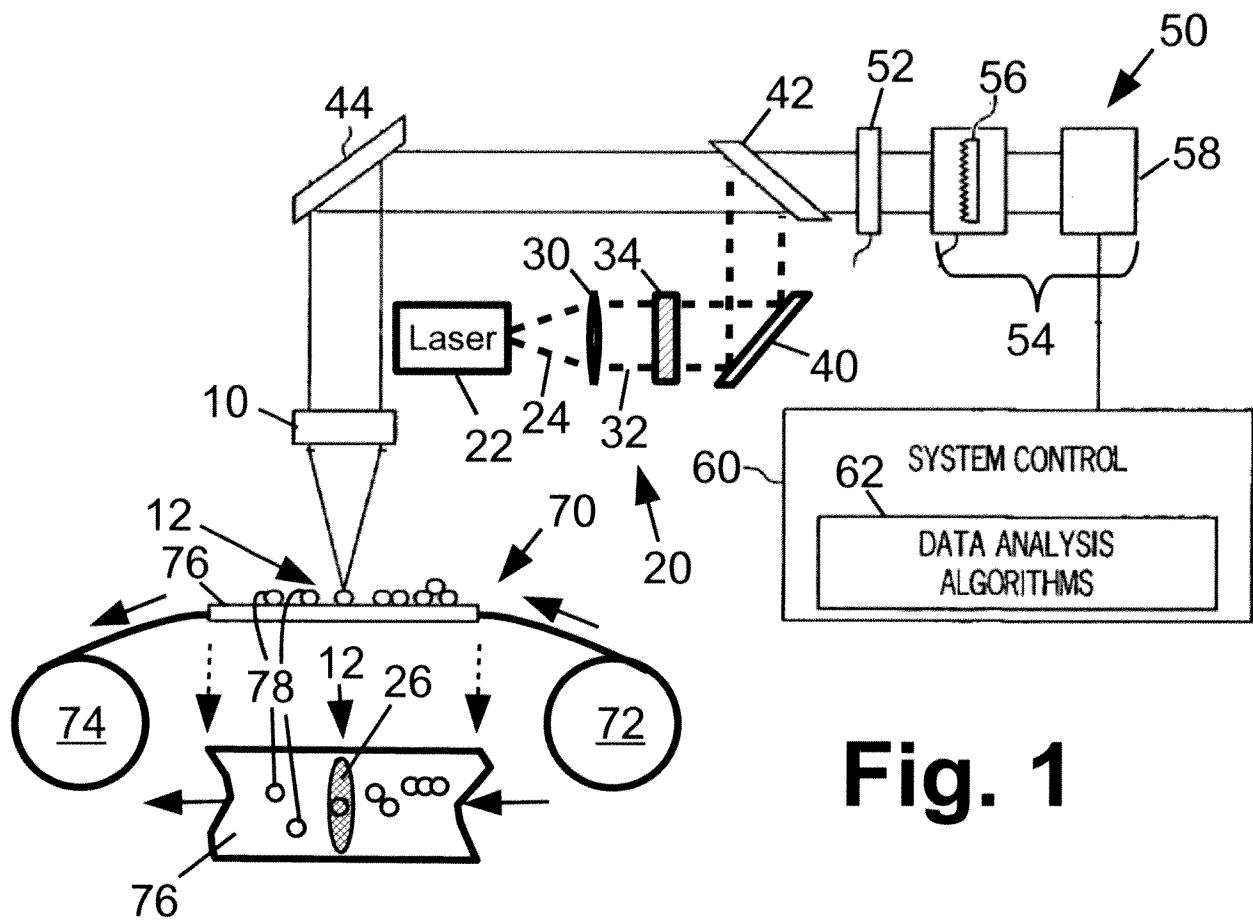


Fig. 1

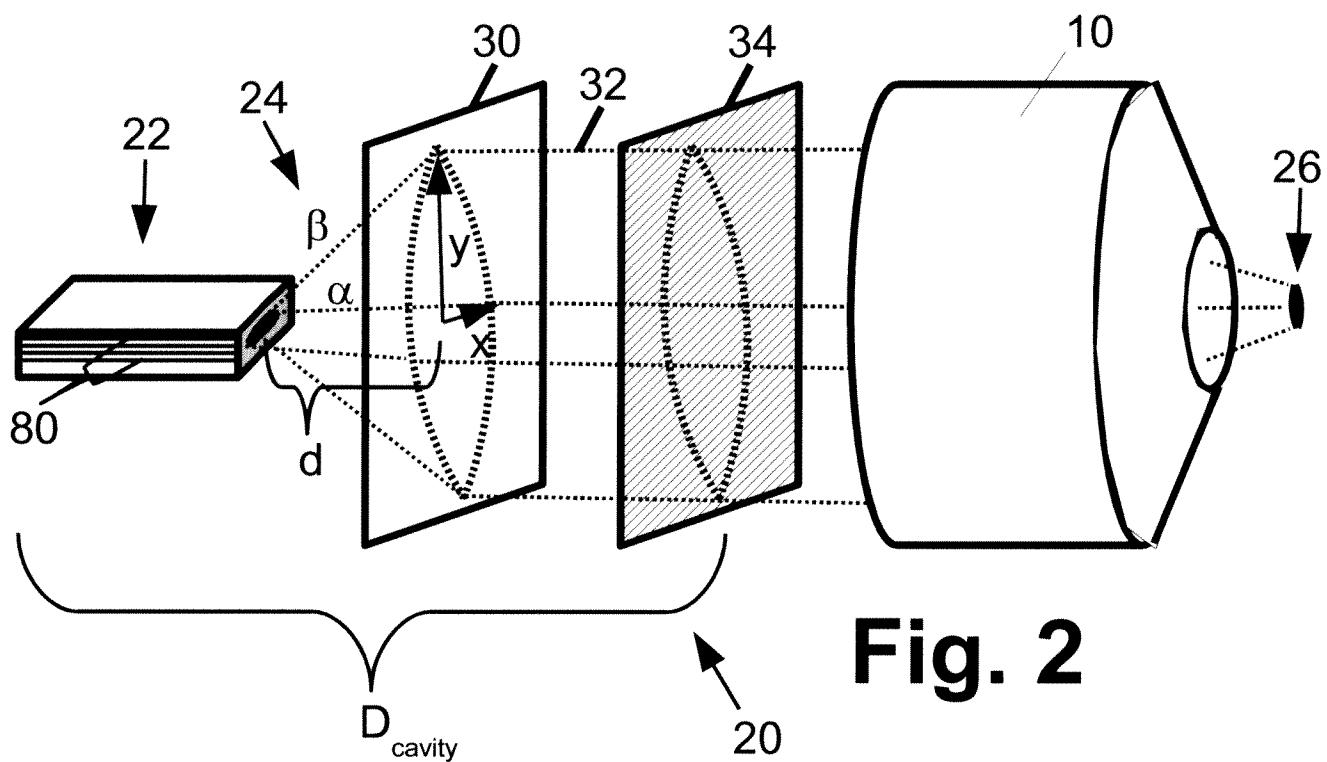


Fig. 2