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(54) **OPTICAL TIME-DELAYED WAVELENGTH CONVERTER**

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H04B 10/00 (2013.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **398/173**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 398/173; 385/14, 24
See application file for complete search history.

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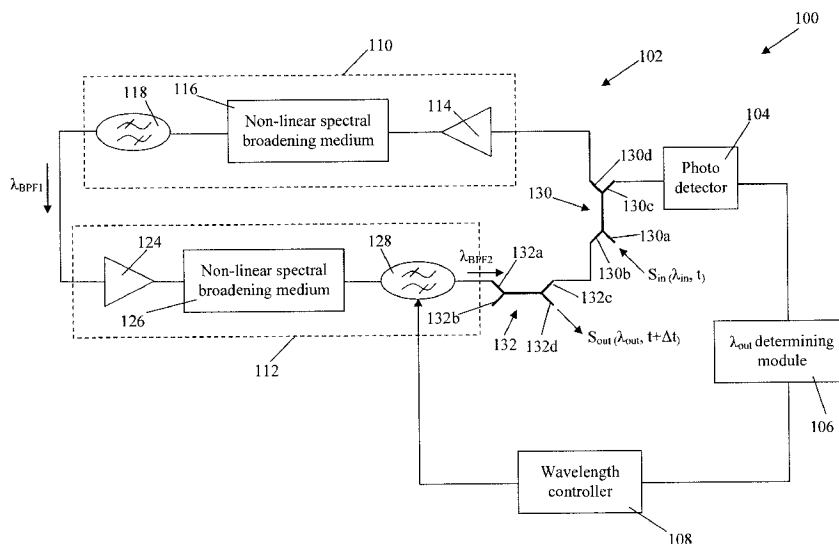
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

There is described a method for converting the wavelength of a pulsed optical signal. An input pulsed signal containing information and having an input wavelength is buffering by propagating the input pulsed signal in a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity. The propagation comprises converting the input pulsed signal at the input wavelength to a buffer pulsed signal at an adjustable wavelength and propagating the buffer pulsed signal within the cavity. The adjustable wavelength is set to a buffer wavelength different from the output wavelength and the buffer pulsed signal contains the information encoded in the input pulsed signal. The output wavelength is determined from the information encoded in the input pulsed signal. Upon determination of the output wavelength, the adjustable wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal is set to the output wavelength in order to; outputting the buffer pulsed signal at the output wavelength from the cavity.

18 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



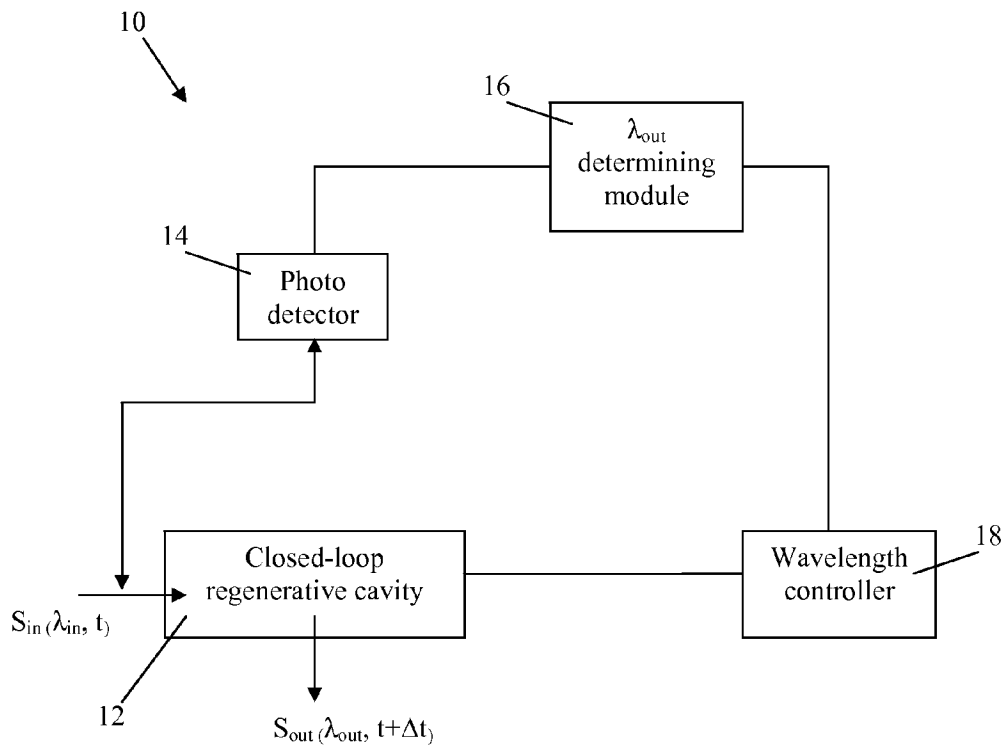


FIGURE 1

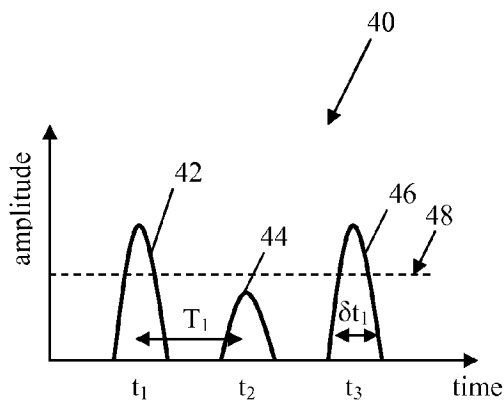


FIGURE 3A

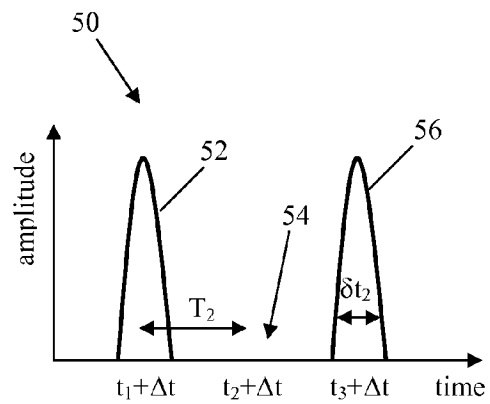


FIGURE 3B

20

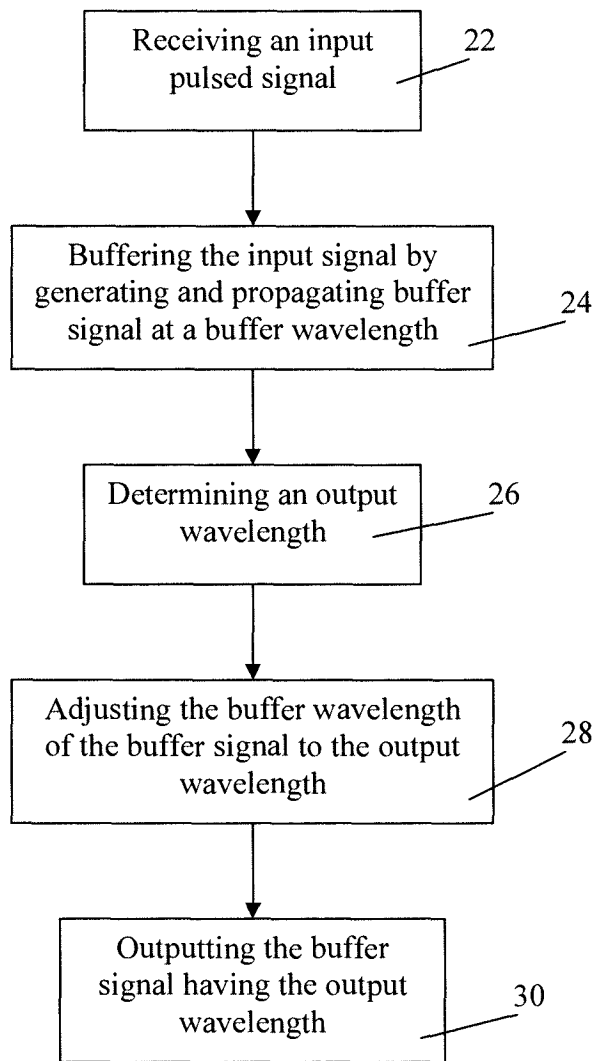
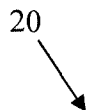


FIGURE 2

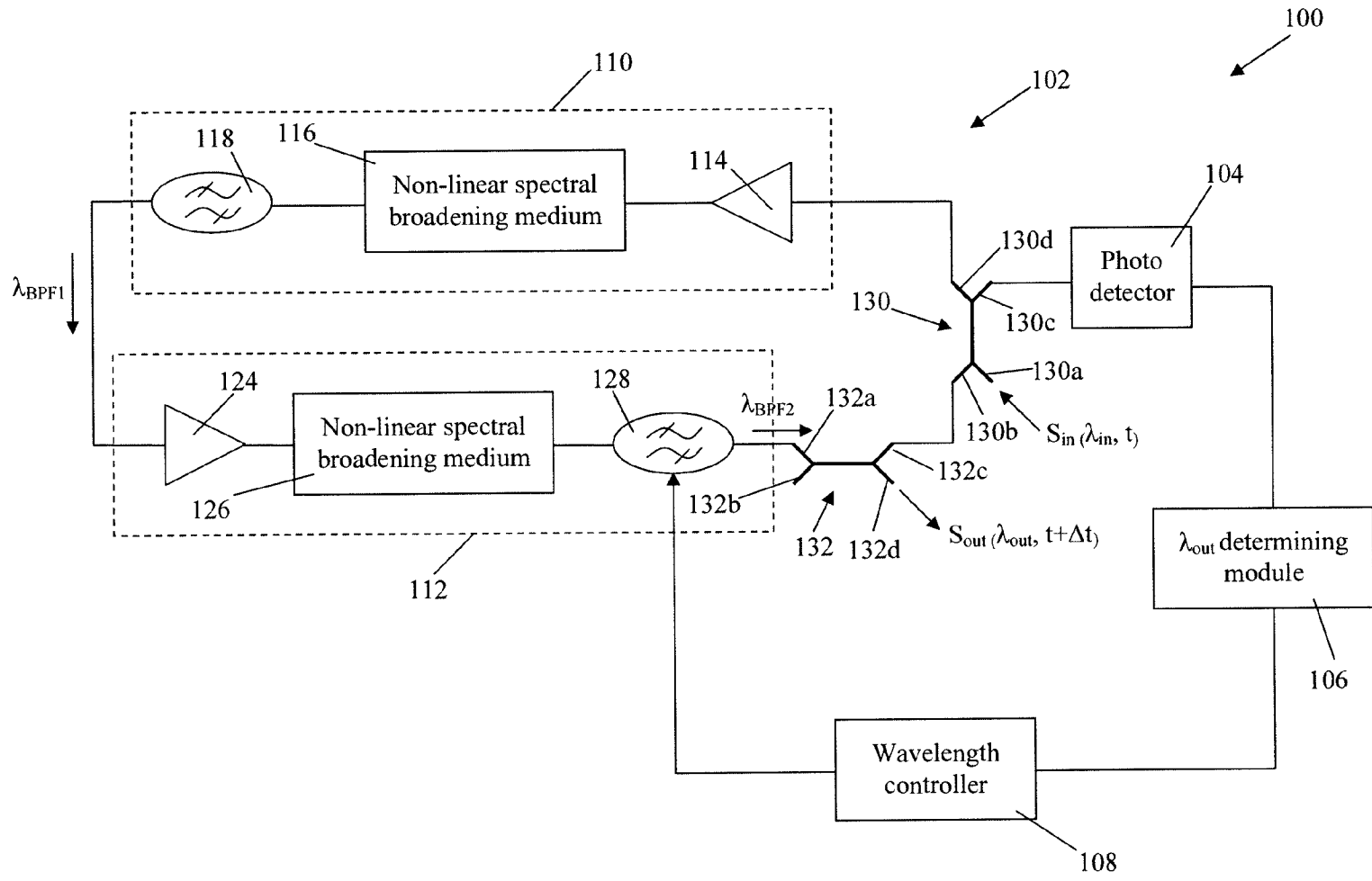


FIGURE 4

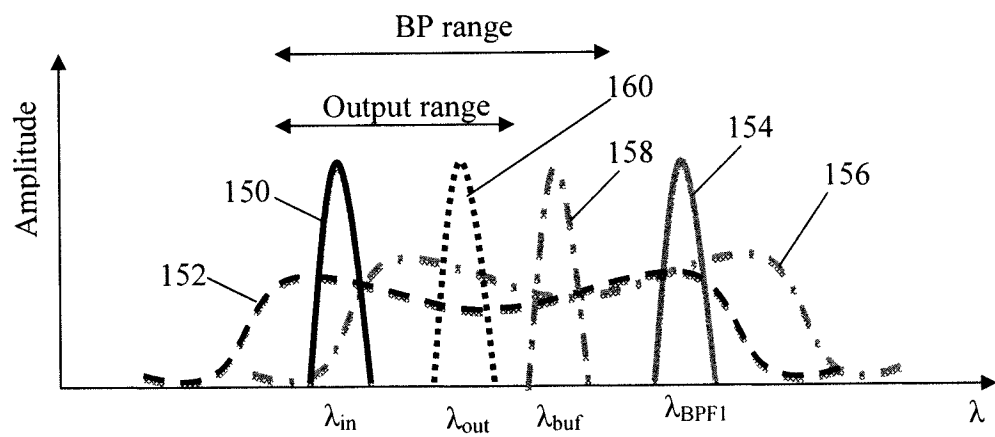


FIGURE 5

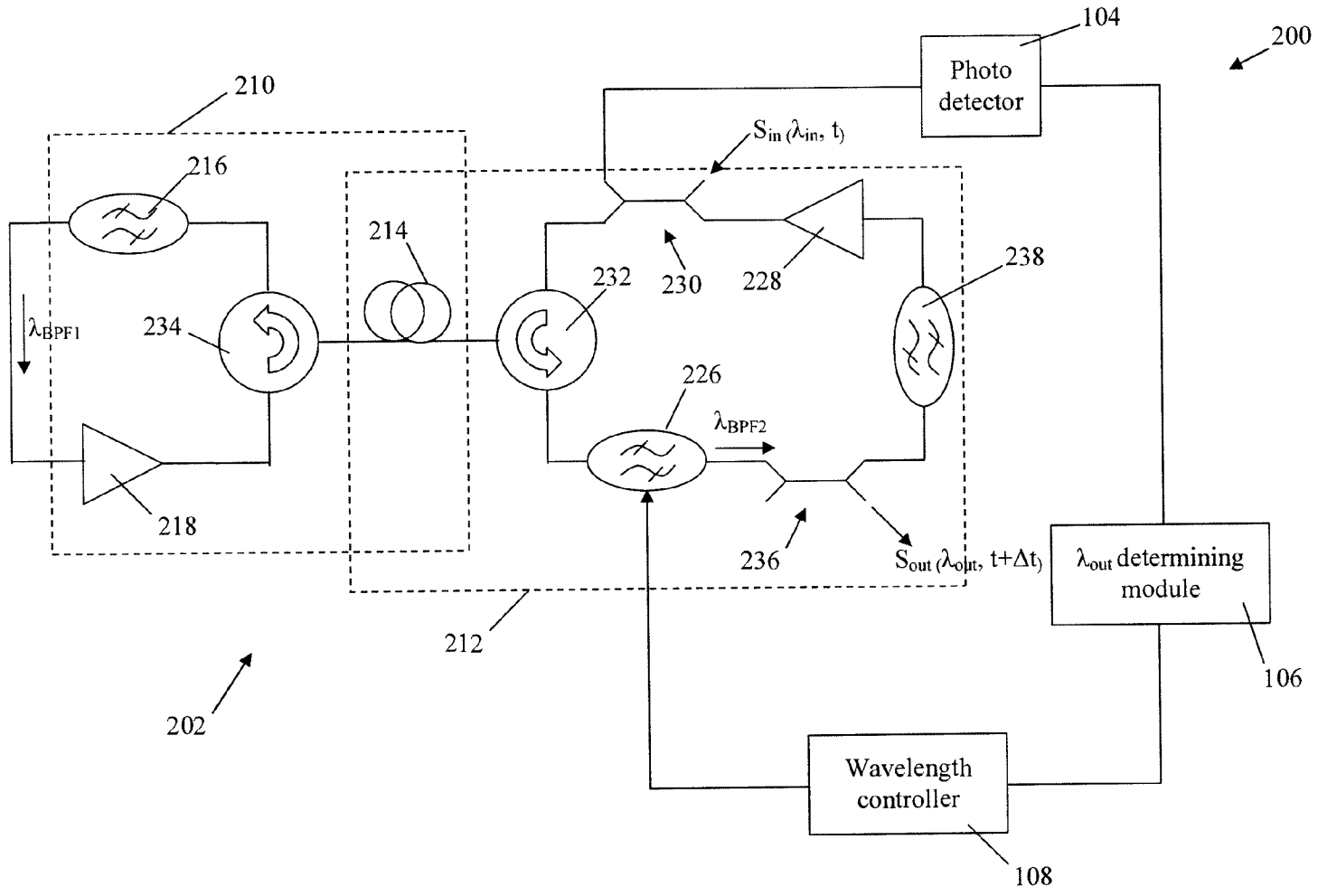


FIGURE 6

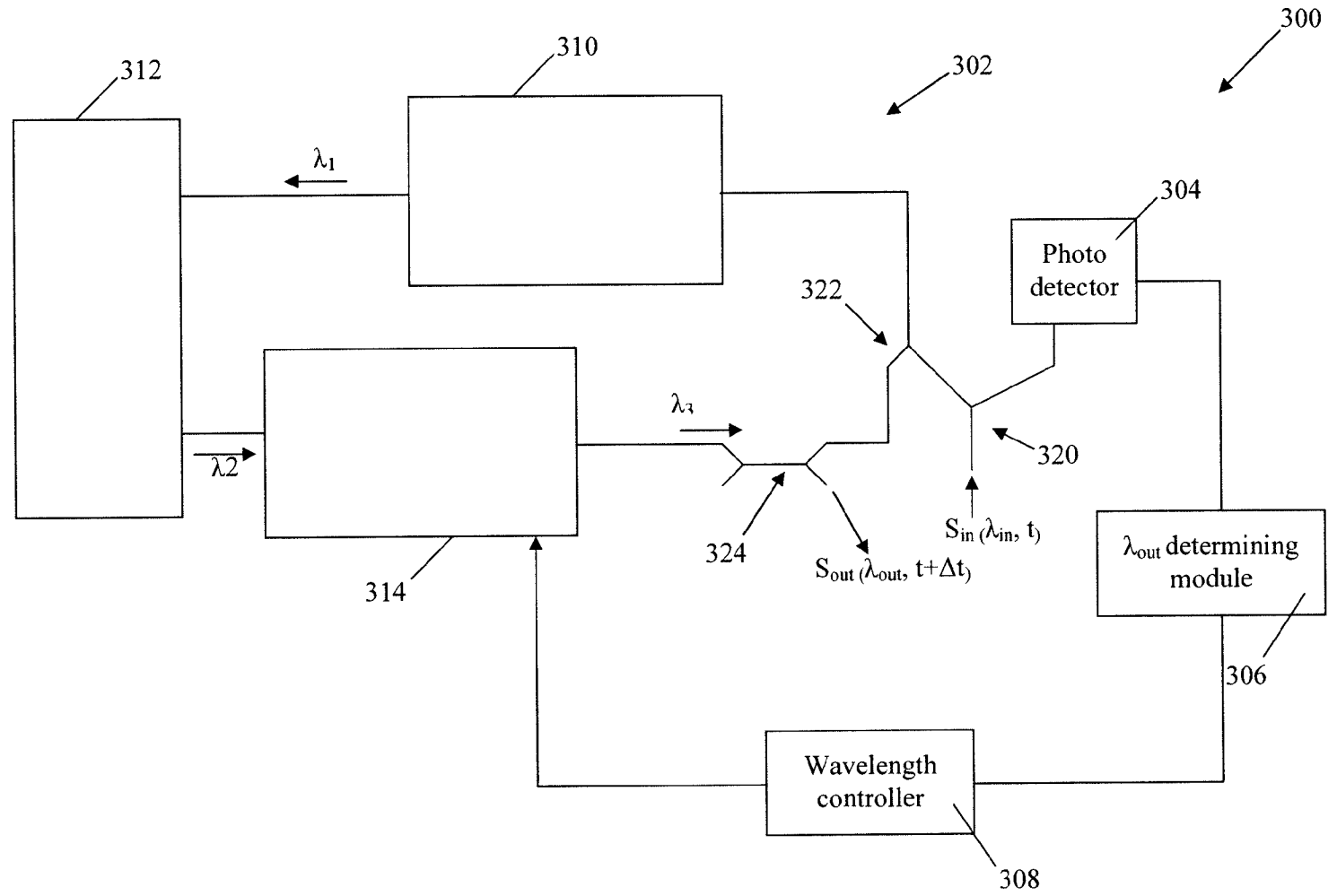


FIGURE 7

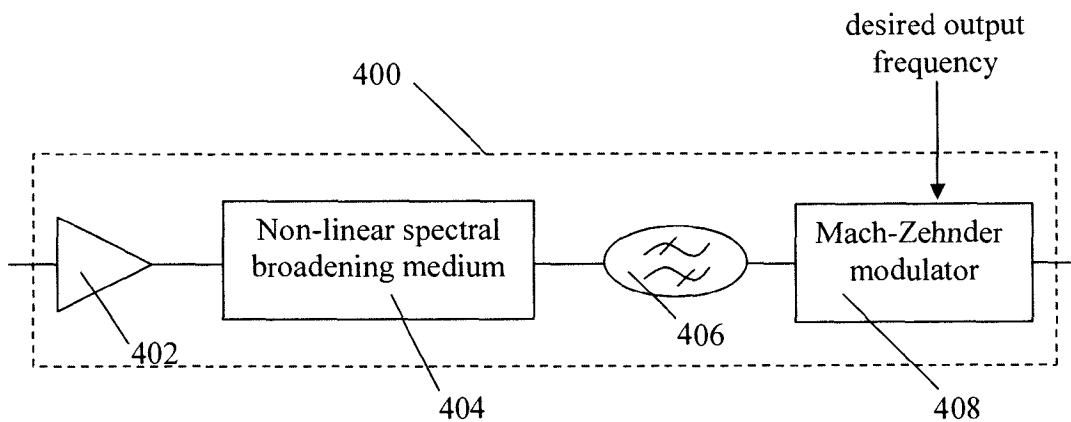


FIGURE 8

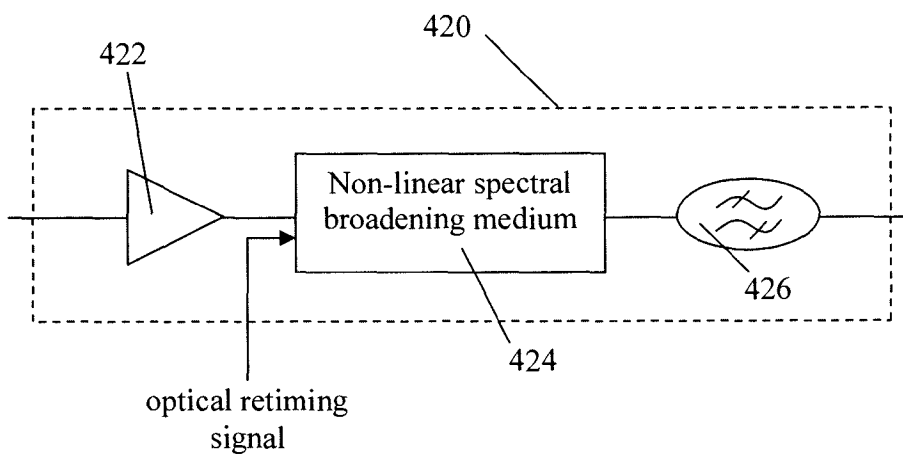


FIGURE 9

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OPTICAL TIME-DELAYED WAVELENGTH CONVERTER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is the first application filed for the present invention.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to the field of optical wavelength converter systems, and particularly to systems having both wavelength converting and time delay line capabilities.

BACKGROUND

In all-optical wavelength-agile telecommunication networks, wavelength converters are used for converting the wavelength of an optical signal carrying a data packet in order to propagate the data packet into an appropriate channel. The selection of the appropriate channel is performed according to the destination address of the data packet. The destination address encoded in the data packet must first be read in order to determine the appropriate channel before converting the wavelength of the optical signal carrying the data packet to the appropriate wavelength corresponding to the appropriate channel. The determination of the appropriate channel and the wavelength conversion represent time-consuming processes. Therefore, a time delay must be introduced in the propagation of the optical signal in order to allow for the determination of the appropriate channel and the conversion of the optical signal to the appropriate wavelength.

In order to introduce a time delay in the propagation of the optical signal, delay lines, such as "slow light" devices, adapted to slow down the propagation speed of an optical signal can be used along with optical wavelength converters. For example, photonic crystals presenting slow light propagation modes can be used to reduce the propagation speed of the optical signal carrying the data packet while the appropriate channel is determined and the optical wavelength converter is adjusted to the appropriate wavelength. In another example, the slowing down of the optical signal may be achieved by first converting the optical signal into a phonon which has a reduced propagation speed with respect to that of light, and then converting the phonon back into an optical signal. The phonon may be generated via Brillouin scattering by propagating the optical signal into an adequate medium such as an optical fiber or a crystal for example. However, because the length of the photonic crystal or that of the Brillouin scattering medium is predetermined and fixed, such "slow light" devices usually introduce a fixed time delay for the propagation of the data packet.

Therefore, there is a need for an improved wavelength converter device having time delay capability.

SUMMARY

There is described a system and method for converting the wavelength of a pulsed optical signal to a desired wavelength while inducing a delay in the propagation of the pulsed optical signal. The pulsed optical signal is propagated into a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity which may convert the wavelength of the pulsed optical signal to the desired wavelength. Furthermore, a desired adjustable delay may be introduced in the propagation of the pulsed optical signal by buffering the pulsed optical signal in the closed-loop optical regenerative cavity for a period of time corresponding to the desired delay,

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i.e. by propagating the pulsed optical signal in the closed-loop optical regenerative cavity for the period of time corresponding to the desired delay. The closed-loop optical regenerative cavity may be seen as an integrated wavelength converter and adjustable delay line.

According to a broad aspect, there is provided a method for converting a wavelength of a pulsed signal to an output wavelength, the method comprising: receiving an input pulsed signal containing information encoded therein and having an input wavelength; buffering the input pulsed signal by propagating the input pulsed signal in a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity, the propagating comprising converting the input pulsed signal at the input wavelength to a buffer pulsed signal at an adjustable wavelength and propagating the buffer pulsed signal within the cavity, the adjustable wavelength being set to a buffer wavelength different from the output wavelength and the buffer pulsed signal containing the information encoded in the input pulsed signal; determining the output wavelength from the information encoded in the input pulsed signal; upon the determining the output wavelength, setting the adjustable wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal to the output wavelength; and outputting the buffer pulsed signal at the output wavelength from the cavity, thereby obtaining an output pulsed signal having the output wavelength and containing the information encoded in the input pulsed signal.

According to another broad aspect, there is provided an optical time-delayed wavelength converter for adjusting a wavelength of an optical pulsed signal, the converter comprising: a photodetector for detecting and converting an input pulsed signal to an electrical signal, the input pulsed signal containing information encoded therein and having an input wavelength; an output wavelength determining module for determining the output wavelength from the electrical signal; a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity for receiving the input pulsed signal, the cavity adapted to convert the input pulsed signal at the input wavelength to a buffer pulsed signal at an adjustable wavelength, and propagate and output the buffer pulsed signal therein as a function of the adjustable wavelength, the buffer pulsed signal containing the information encoded in the input pulsed signal; and a wavelength controller for controlling the adjustable wavelength of the pulsed buffer signal, the wavelength controller adapted to set the adjustable wavelength to a buffer wavelength different from the output wavelength in order to propagate the buffer pulsed signal at the buffer wavelength within the cavity, and to the output wavelength upon reception of the output wavelength from the output wavelength determining module in order to output the buffer pulsed signal at the output wavelength from the cavity.

The expression "pulsed signal" refers to an optical signal comprising a series of pulses spaced in time. The pulses are used for encoding information into the pulsed signal. For example, the pulsed signal may be used to carry and propagate a data packet into an optical telecommunication network.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1. is a block diagram of a time-delayed wavelength converter in accordance with a first embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a flow chart illustrating a method of converting the wavelength of a pulsed signal, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 3A illustrates an exemplary embodiment of an input pulsed signal;

FIG. 3B illustrates an exemplary embodiment of an output pulsed signal obtained when the input pulsed signal of FIG. 3A is inputted into the time-delayed wavelength converter of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 illustrates a time-delayed wavelength converter comprising two optical regenerators each having a respective nonlinear spectral broadening medium, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 5 is an exemplary graph of an amplitude of pulses as a function a wavelength;

FIG. 6 illustrates a time-delayed wavelength converter comprising two optical regenerators sharing a same nonlinear spectral broadening medium, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 7 illustrates a time-delayed wavelength converter comprising three optical regenerators connected together in a closed-loop configuration, in accordance with an embodiment; and

FIG. 8 illustrates an optical 3R-regenerator for use in a time-delayed wavelength converter, in accordance with a first embodiment; and

FIG. 9 illustrates an optical 3R-regenerator for use in a time-delayed wavelength converter, in accordance with a second embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of a time-delayed wavelength converter system **10** comprising a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity **12**, a photodetector **14**, a module for determining an output wavelength, and a wavelength controller **18**.

The time-delayed wavelength converter **10** is adapted to receive an input pulsed signal S_{in} having an input wavelength λ_{in} at a time t , determine an output wavelength λ_{out} for an output pulsed signal S_{out} and control the time $t+\Delta t$ at which the output pulsed signal S_{out} is outputted. The input pulsed signal S_{in} contains information about the output wavelength λ_{out} encoded therein. For example, the information about the output wavelength λ_{out} may be a particular value for the output wavelength λ_{out} or information from which the particular value for the output wavelength λ_{out} can be determined, such as a destination or a channel for the output wavelength λ_{out} for example. The output pulsed signal S_{out} contains substantially the same information as that encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} but at the output wavelength λ_{out} . The time-delayed wavelength converter **10** is adapted to buffer the input pulsed signal S_{in} for a time duration Δt during which the output wavelength λ_{out} is determined and the output wavelength of the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** is set to λ_{out} . It should be understood that the input and output wavelengths λ_{in} and λ_{out} may be different. Alternatively, they may be substantially identical.

The closed-loop optical regenerative cavity **12** is adapted to convert the input pulsed signal S_{in} at the input wavelength λ_{in} to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at an adjustable wavelength. The cavity **12** is further adapted to propagate and output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} as a function of the value of the adjustable wavelength. The photodetector **14** is adapted to detect or sense an optical signal and convert the detected optical signal to an electrical signal which is an electrical representation of the detected optical signal and therefore contains the same information as that contained in the detected optical signal. In one embodiment, the electrical signal represents the amplitude in time of the detected optical signal. The photodetector **14** is further adapted to send the electrical signal to the output wavelength determining mod-

ule **16**. The output wavelength determining module **16** is adapted to detect the electrical signal and read the information contained therein. The output wavelength determining module **16** is further adapted to determine an output wavelength λ_{out} from the electrical signal, i.e. from the information carried by the electrical signal. The output wavelength determining module **16** is adapted to send an electrical signal representative of the determined output wavelength λ_{out} to the wavelength controller which controls the adjustable wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} within the cavity **12**. The operation of the time-delayed wavelength converter system **10** for converting the wavelength of a pulsed signal and delaying in time the transmission of the wavelength-converted pulsed signal is described below with respect to FIG. 2.

While the present description refers to the amplitude in time of a pulsed signal, it should be understood that the photodetector **14** may be adapted to measure the intensity in time, the power in time, etc. for the detected pulsed signal. The electrical signal outputted by the photodetector may be indicative of the amplitude, intensity, power, or the like, of the detected pulsed signal.

In one embodiment, the cavity **12** has 2R-regeneration capabilities, i.e. the cavity **12** is adapted to re-amplify and re-shape the input pulsed signal S_{in} in addition to buffering the input pulsed signal S_{in} and converting the wavelength of the input pulsed from the input wavelength λ_{in} to the output wavelength λ_{out} . In another embodiment, the cavity **12** has 3R-regeneration capabilities, i.e. the cavity **12** is adapted for re-amplifying, re-shaping, and re-timing the input pulsed signal S_{in} in addition to buffering the input pulsed signal S_{in} and converting the wavelength of the input pulsed from the input wavelength λ_{in} to the output wavelength λ_{out} .

FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of a method **20** for converting the wavelength of a pulsed signal using the time-delayed wavelength converter system **10** of FIG. 1. The first step **22** comprises receiving an input pulsed signal S_{in} having an input wavelength λ_{in} at a time t . The input pulsed signal S_{in} contains information about an output wavelength λ_{out} . As described above, the information about the output wavelength λ_{out} may be a particular value for the output wavelength λ_{out} or data from which the output wavelength λ_{out} may be determined such as a network channel, a destination, and the like.

At step **24**, the input pulsed signal S_{in} is buffered in the cavity **12** until the output wavelength λ_{out} encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} be determined. The buffering of the input pulsed signal S_{in} is achieved by propagating the input pulsed signal S_{in} in the closed-loop optical regenerative cavity **12**. The input pulsed signal S_{in} at the input wavelength λ_{in} is then converted to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at a buffer wavelength λ_{buf} which propagates within the cavity **12** until the output wavelength λ_{out} be determined. The buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} contains substantially the same information as that encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} but at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} . The buffer wavelength λ_{buf} is chosen to be different from the output wavelength λ_{out} .

At step **26**, the output wavelength λ_{out} is determined. This is done by first detecting the input pulsed signal S_{in} using the photodetector **14**. The photodetector **14** converts the optical input pulsed signal into an electrical signal which contains the same information as that contained in the optical input pulsed signal. For example, the electrical signal may represent the amplitude, intensity, or power in time of the input pulsed signal S_{in} . Then the electrical signal is sent to the output wavelength determining module **16**.

The output wavelength determining module **16** receives the electrical signal from the photodetector **14** and determines the output wavelength λ_{out} from the electrical signal. The

wavelength controller **18** receives the determined output wavelength λ_{out} from the output wavelength determining module **16** and adjusts the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} propagating in the cavity **12** from the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} at step **28**. At step **30**, the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} having the output signal is outputted from the cavity **12**, thereby generating an output pulsed signal S_{out} having the output wavelength λ_{out} and containing substantially the same information as that encoded in input pulsed signal S_{in} .

Following the method **20**, an input pulsed signal S_{in} is received by the cavity **12** at a time t and converted to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at a buffer wavelength λ_{buf} containing substantially the same information as that encoded in. The buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} propagates within the cavity as long as the output wavelength λ_{out} has not been determined. Upon determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} or after a buffering time corresponding to a desired delay, the wavelength controller **18** sets the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} and the buffer pulsed signal at the time $t+\Delta t$. In one embodiment, the time duration Δt corresponds to the time required for determining the output wavelength λ_{out} and adjusting the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} . During the time duration Δt , the input pulsed signal S_{in} is converted to the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} which is buffered in the cavity **12**. In this embodiment, the buffering time for the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} is minimized and, as soon as the output wavelength λ_{out} has been determined, the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} is adjusted to the output wavelength λ_{out} in order to output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} from the cavity **12**. In another embodiment, the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} may be propagated in the cavity **12** for a predetermined period of time so that the time difference between the input of the input pulsed signal S_{in} and the output of the output pulsed signal S_{out} substantially corresponds to a desired delay to be introduced in the propagation of the pulsed signal. In this case, the time duration Δt may be longer than the time required for detecting the input pulsed signal S_{in} , determining the output wavelength λ_{out} , and adjusting the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} . In this embodiment, further to the determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} (step **26**) and the setting of the adjustable wavelength to the output wavelength λ_{out} (step **28**), other steps may be performed by the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** during the time duration Δt . For example, a step of verification of the value for the output wavelength λ_{out} may be performed.

In one embodiment, the detection of the input pulsed signal S_{in} with the photodetector **14** is performed before the propagation of the input pulsed signal S_{in} in the cavity **12**. In another embodiment, the detection of the input pulsed signal S_{in} occurs substantially concurrently to the coupling of the input pulsed signal S_{in} into the cavity **12**. In a further embodiment, the detection of the input pulsed signal S_{in} is performed after the coupling of the input pulsed signal S_{in} into the cavity **12**.

FIG. 3A illustrates an example of an input pulsed signal **40** which comprises three pulses **42**, **44**, and **46** corresponding to a "1, 0, 1" series of bits. Pulses **42**, **44**, and **46** have a duration or width δt_1 and successive "0" and "1" pulses **42**, **44**, and **46** are spaced in time by a pulse interval T_1 corresponding to a first bit rate or frequency. The amplitude of pulses **42** and **46** is twice that of pulse **44**, for example. FIG. 3B illustrates an example of an output pulsed signal **50** obtained when the input pulsed signal **40** is propagated into the time-delayed

wavelength converter system of FIG. **1**. The output pulsed signal **50** substantially contains the same information as that contained in the input pulsed signal **40**, i.e. the "1, 0, 1" series of bits. The pulsed output signal **50** comprises two pulses **52** and **56** each corresponding to a "1" bit. The absence of pulse **54** at time $t_2+\Delta t$ is interpreted as a "0" bit. The pulses **52**, and **56** have a duration δt_2 and the pulse interval between successive "0" and/or "1" pulses **52**, **54**, and **56** is T_2 corresponding to a second bit rate or frequency.

In an embodiment in which the cavity **12** is provided with 2R-regeneration capabilities, the input pulsed signal **40** is re-amplified and re-shaped while propagating in the cavity **12**. In this case, the amplitude and duration δt_2 of the pulses **52** and **54** are set to predetermined values. For example, the input pulses **42** and **46** having an amplitude greater than a predetermined amplitude threshold **48** are converted into "1" pulses **52** and **56** having a predetermined and non-zero amplitude. The amplitude of the input pulse **44** which is below the amplitude threshold **48** is substantially set to zero. It should be understood that the amplitude and duration of the "1" pulses **52** and **56** can be any adequate value. For example, the amplitude of pulses **52** and **56** may be greater than the amplitude of pulses **42** and **46** and the pulse duration or width δt_2 can be less than that of the input pulses **42** and **46** δt_1 . In one embodiment, the "1" output pulses **52** and **56** have substantially the same amplitude and duration.

In another embodiment in which the cavity is provided with 3R-regeneration capabilities, the input pulsed signal **40** is re-amplified, re-shaped, and re-timed while propagating in the cavity **12**. In this case, the amplitude and duration δt_2 of the pulses **52** and **54** are set to predetermined values. In addition, any jitter present in the input pulsed signal **40** is substantially eliminated, i.e. the time interval T_2 between successive pulses **52**, **54**, and **56** is substantially constant throughout the output pulsed signal **50** and substantially constant corresponds to the bit rate of the input pulsed signal **40**.

The skilled person will understand that errors may occur during the generation of the output pulse signal **50** so that the information contained in the output pulsed signal substantially corresponds to that contained in the input pulsed signal with an acceptable error rate. For example, a "1" bit of the input pulsed signal **40** may be reproduced as a "0" bit in the output pulsed signal **50**.

In one embodiment, the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** is used as an optical switch in an optical wavelength-agile telecommunication network. In such a network, data packets are routed through channels which are each associated with a respective wavelength. The channels followed by a data packet depend on the final destination for the data packet. The data packet usually comprises information about its final destination. For example, such destination information may be included in the header of the data packet. The channels to be taken by the data packet are determined from the destination for the data packet. Because the channels are each assigned a respective wavelength, it is necessary to convert the wavelength of the optical signal carrying the data packet in order to route the data packet from one channel to another. This wavelength conversion can be achieved by the time-delayed wavelength converter **10**. An input pulsed signal S_{in} having an input wavelength λ_{in} corresponding to an input channel and carrying the data packet to be transmitted to a destination is received by the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** which determines the appropriate output channel for the data packet. The output wavelength determining module determines the appropriate output channel from the destination information contained in the header of the data packet. Since each channel is associated with a corresponding wave-

length, determining the output channel allows for the determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} for the data packet. During the determination of the appropriate output wavelength λ_{out} , the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** buffers the data packet into the regenerative cavity **12** by converting the input pulsed signal S_{in} to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} having a predetermined buffer wavelength λ_{buf} and containing substantially the same information as that encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} , and propagating the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} therein. Once the output wavelength λ_{out} has been determined, the wavelength controller **18** sets the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} to the determined output wavelength λ_{out} and the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** outputs the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} . The pulsed signal outputted by the converter **10** carries the same information as the input pulsed signal S_{in} , i.e. the data packet carried by the input pulsed signal S_{in} . The outputted pulsed signal having the appropriate output wavelength λ_{out} is then propagated in the appropriate channel in order to reach its final destination or another time-delayed wavelength converter **10**.

In one embodiment, the length of the closed-loop regenerative cavity **12** is chosen as a function of the time interval between successive data packets arriving at the time-delayed wavelength converter **10** so that no superposition of data packets occur within the closed-loop regenerative cavity **12**. For example, the length of the closed-loop regenerative cavity **12** may be chosen so that each packet only propagates one round-trip within the closed-loop regenerative cavity **12**. In another embodiment, the time-delayed wavelength converter system **10** comprises a plurality of closed-loop regenerative cavities **12** and the data packets are distributed between the different closed-loop regenerative cavities **12** which are each provided with a photodetector **14**, a module **16** for determining an output wavelength, and a wavelength controller **18**. In this case, the time-delayed wavelength converter system **10** further comprises an optical switch for directing successive data packets to different closed-loop regenerative cavities **12**. In this case, the buffering time of the data packets in at least some of the closed-loop regenerative cavities **12** may be longer than the time required for determining the output wavelength λ_{out} or the desired predetermined delay. For example, if three closed-loop regenerative cavities **12** are used, three successive data packets are each propagated into a corresponding one of the three closed-loop regenerative cavities **12**, and a priority determination may be performed during the buffering of the three data packets in order to determine which data packet has priority and should be outputted first. In this case, the two other data packet may be buffered during a duration longer than the duration required for determining their respective output wavelength.

In one embodiment, the cavity **12** is adapted to propagate therein the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} having the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} and output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} only when at the output wavelength λ_{out} . In this case, the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} having the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} cannot exit the cavity. In another embodiment, part of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} exits the cavity **12** at each round-trip.

In one embodiment, the cavity **12** is adapted to output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} while preventing the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} from propagating in the cavity **12**. In this case, the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} propagates less than one round-trip in the cavity before exiting the cavity **12**.

It should be understood that the cavity **12** may be any optical cavity adapted to receive an input pulsed optical signal at an input wavelength λ_{in} , convert the input pulsed signal S_{in} to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at an adjustable wavelength, and propagate therein and output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} as a function of the value of the adjustable wavelength.

In one embodiment, the output wavelength determining module **16** comprises a processing unit adapted to read the electrical signal to determine the information contained therein and determine the output wavelength value from the information. In one embodiment, the output processing unit is adapted to determine a destination from the information contained in the electrical signal and assign a value for the output wavelength as a function of the determined destination.

FIG. **4** illustrates one embodiment of a time-delayed wavelength converter **100** which comprises a closed-loop regenerative optical cavity **102**, a photodetector **104**, an output wavelength determining module **106**, and a wavelength controller **108**. The closed-loop regenerative optical cavity **102** comprises a pair of cascaded optical 2R-regenerators **110** and **112** optically connected together in a closed-loop configuration.

The optical regenerator **110** comprises an optical amplifier **114**, a nonlinear spectral broadening medium **116**, and a bandpass filter **118** which are connected together so that the amplifier **114** and the bandpass filter **118** be positioned respectively upstream and downstream from the nonlinear spectral broadening medium **116**. An optical signal received by the first regenerator **110** is first amplified by the amplifier **114** before being spectrally broadened by the nonlinear spectral broadening medium **116**. The spectrally broadened signal is then spectrally filtered by the bandpass filter **118**, thereby providing a filtered signal having a wavelength corresponding to the central wavelength of the bandpass filter **118**, i.e. λ_{BPF1} .

The optical regenerator **112** comprises an optical amplifier **124**, a nonlinear spectral broadening medium **126**, and an adjustable bandpass filter **128** which are optically connected together so that the second amplifier **124** and the second bandpass filter **128** be respectively positioned upstream and downstream from the second nonlinear spectral broadening medium **126**. The central wavelength λ_{BPF2} of the bandpass filter **128** is adjustable so that the second regenerator **112** outputs a signal having an adjustable wavelength λ_{BPF2} . The output of the bandpass filter **118** of the first regenerator **110** is connected to the input of the amplifier **124** of the second regenerator **112** so that the filtered signal at the wavelength λ_{BPF1} be coupled into the second regenerator **112**. The signal at the wavelength λ_{BPF1} is first amplified by the amplifier **124**, then spectrally broadened by the nonlinear spectral broadening medium **126**, and spectrally filtered by the bandpass filter **128**. The output of the second regenerator **112** is a signal having a wavelength corresponding to the central wavelength of the adjustable bandpass filter **128**, i.e. λ_{BPF2} .

The closed-loop regenerative optical cavity **102** further comprises an input coupler **130** for coupling an input pulsed signal S_{in} into the cavity **102** and an output coupler **132** for outputting an output pulsed signal S_{out} from the cavity **102**. Each coupler **130** and **132** comprises two inputs **130a** and **130b**, and **132a** and **132b**, respectively, and two outputs **130c** and **130d**, and **132c** and **132d**, respectively. The input **130a** of the coupler **130** is used for receiving the input pulsed signal S_{in} . The output **130c** of the coupler **130** is connected to the photodetector **104** while the other output **130d** is connected to the first regenerator **110**, i.e. the input of the amplifier **114**. The input **132a** of the coupler **132** is connected to the output of the second regenerator **112**, i.e. the output of the second

bandpass filter **128**. The output **132c** of the coupler **132** is connected to the input **130b** of the first coupler **130** while the output **132d** of the coupler **82** is used for outputting the output signal S_{out} .

As a result of the above described connections between the regenerators **110** and **112** and the couplers **130** and **132**, an input signal S_{in} having an input wavelength λ_{in} and containing information about an output wavelength λ_{out} is received by the input **130a** of the coupler **130** at a time t and converted to an output pulsed signal S_{out} which is outputted at a time $t+\Delta t$ and contains substantially the same information as that encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} . Part of the input pulsed signal S_{in} received by the input **130a** of the coupler **130** is directed towards the photodetector **104** while the remaining of the input pulsed signal S_{in} is transmitted to the first regenerator **110**. The photodetector **104** detects the input pulsed signal S_{in} and transmits an electrical signal representative of the input pulsed signal S_{in} to the output wavelength determining module **106** which determines the output wavelength λ_{out} from the received electrical signal. The determined output wavelength λ_{out} is then transmitted to the wavelength controller **108** which adjusts the central wavelength of the adjustable bandpass filter **128** to the output wavelength λ_{out} .

The pulsed signal received by the first regenerator **110** from the output **130d** of the coupler **130** is converted to a signal at the central wavelength of the bandpass filter **118**, i.e. λ_{BPF1} . The signal at λ_{BPF1} is sent into the second regenerator **112** which outputs a signal at the central wavelength of the adjustable bandpass filter **128**, i.e. λ_{BPF2} . Part of the signal at λ_{BPF2} outputted by the second regenerator **112** is outputted from the cavity **102** via the output **132d** of the second coupler **132** while the remaining of this signal is directed towards the input **130b** of the first coupler **130**.

The cavity **102** has at least three operational modes depending on the filter offset (FO) between the bandpass filter **118** and **128**, i.e. depending on the difference between the central wavelengths λ_{BPF1} and λ_{BPF2} for the bandpass filter **118** and **128**, respectively.

For FO comprised between zero and a first threshold value, the cavity **102** operates in a continuous-wave (CW) mode. In this mode, the signal outputted by the cavity **102** is a CW signal at λ_{BPF2} and therefore the information contained in the input pulsed signal S_{in} is lost.

For FO comprised between the first threshold value and a second threshold value, the cavity **102** operates in a self-pulsating mode. In this case, the signal at λ_{BPF2} outputted by the cavity **102** is a pulsed signal of which the characteristics are unrelated to those of the input pulsed signal S_{in} . The characteristics of pulses of the pulsed output signal S_{out} depends only on the characteristics of the cavity **102**. For example, the time spacing between successive pulses of the output signal S_{out} may be different from that of the input pulsed signal S_{in} , the amplitude of the pulses of the output signal may be unrelated to that of the pulses of the input pulsed signal S_{in} , and/or the duration of the pulses of the output pulsed signal S_{out} may be different from that of the input pulsed signal S_{in} . Therefore, the information comprised in the input pulsed signal S_{in} is lost.

For FO comprised between the second threshold value and a third threshold value, the cavity **102** operates in a pulse-buffering (PB) mode. The two regenerators **110** and **112** which each comprise an amplifier **114** and **124**, a nonlinear spectral broadening medium, **116** and **126**, and a bandpass filter **118** and **128** each allow for re-amplification and re-shaping of an incoming pulse. The two regenerators **110** and **112** generate a nonlinear power transfer function for the cavity **102**, which acts as a pulse shaper and stabilizer. As a result,

the cavity **102** supports eigenpulses, i.e. pulses that are substantially identical at the input of the first regenerator **110** and the output of the second regenerator **112**. The eigenpulses are regenerated twice per cavity round-trip which provides them with a profile, a group velocity, and a relative spacing in time that remain substantially stable over time. As a result, the cavity **102** operated in the PB mode supports the oscillation of pulses that are injected therein, thereby buffering the injected pulses.

In one embodiment, the operation parameters including the bandwidth of the bandpass filter **128** are chosen such that the pulse duration of the output signal S_{out} is substantially equal to that of the input signal S_{in} . In another embodiment, the operation parameters are chosen such that the pulse duration of the input and output signals are different. Similarly, the operation parameters can be chosen such that the amplitudes of the pulses of the input and output signals are substantially identical or different.

Therefore, by setting the central wavelength λ_{BPF1} of the bandpass filter **118** to a predetermined wavelength adequately chosen as a function of a predefined range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} , the cavity **102** operates in the PB mode and the pulsed signal outputted by the bandpass filter **128** is substantially identical to the input pulsed S_{in} for a particular range of wavelength λ_{BPF2} , i.e. the PB wavelength range. The PB wavelength range includes the predefined range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} . A value for a buffer wavelength λ_{buf} is chosen so as to be comprised within the PB wavelength range but outside of the range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} . As a result, the time-delayed wavelength converter **100** operates as follows.

Referring to FIGS. **4** and **5**, the central wavelength λ_{BPF2} of the bandpass filter **128** is set to the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} and an input pulsed signal **150** at the input wavelength λ_{in} enters the cavity **102** which is operated in the PB mode. The input pulsed signal **150** is amplified and broadened by the amplifier **114** and the spectrally broadening medium **116**, respectively, to generate a broadened signal **152**. The broadened signal **152** is filtered by the bandpass filter **118** to generate a signal **154** at the predetermined central wavelength λ_{BPF1} . The signal at λ_{BPF1} is inputted into the second generator **112** where it is amplified and broadened by the amplifier **124** and the spectrally broadening medium **126**, respectively, to generate a broadened signal **156**. The broadened signal **156** is filtered by the bandpass filter **128** to generate a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} . The buffer wavelength λ_{buf} is included in the PB range of wavelength allowing the operation of the cavity **102** in the PB mode, but outside of the range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} . Since the cavity **102** operates in the PB mode, the buffer pulsed signal **158** is substantially identical to the input pulsed signal **150**. The buffer pulsed signal **158** then enters the first regenerator **110** via the couplers **130** and **132** to generate the signal **154** at λ_{BPF1} . The signal **154** propagates through the second regenerator **112** to generate the buffer pulsed signal **158** at λ_{buf} . The buffer pulsed signal **158** at λ_{buf} propagates within the cavity **102** during the determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} . Upon reception of the determined output wavelength λ_{out} from the output wavelength determining module **106**, the wavelength controller **108** adjusts the central wavelength λ_{BPF2} of the adjustable bandpass filter **128** from the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} . The buffer pulsed signal having the output wavelength λ_{out} then corresponds to the output pulsed signal **160** which is substantially identical to the input pulsed signal **150** and outputs the cavity **112** via the output **132d** of the coupler **132**.

In one embodiment, the coupler **132** is a power or tap coupler splitting the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} between the outputs **132c** and **132d**. In this case, the cavity **102** may further comprise a spectral filter positioned downstream of the coupler **132**. The spectral filter allows the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} to propagate therethrough when at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} , but prevents the propagation of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} in the cavity **102** when at the output wavelength λ_{out} . Alternatively, the amplifiers **114** and **124** may be shut down once the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} has outputted the cavity **102** so that no buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} propagates in the cavity **102**. The cavity **102** may also comprise a spectral filter preventing the propagation of a signal at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} and positioned at the output **132d** of the coupler **132**, so that only the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} having the output wavelength λ_{out} may exit the converter **100**.

In another embodiment, the coupler **132** can be a wavelength-division multiplexing (WDM) coupler adapted to transmit all of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} from the input **132a** to the output **132d** so that no buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} can propagate in the cavity **102**. The WDM coupler **132** may also be designed so that the entire buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} is transmitted from the input **132a** to the output **132c** so that no buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} exits the cavity **102**. Alternatively, the cavity **102** may comprise a spectral filter preventing the propagation of a signal at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} and positioned at the output **132d** of the coupler **132**.

It should be understood that the position of the couplers **130** and **132** within the cavity **102** is exemplary only. The couplers **130** and **132** may be positioned at any adequate locations within the cavity **102** as long as the coupler **130** is positioned upstream of the broadening medium **116** and the coupler **132** is positioned downstream of the adjustable bandpass filter **128**. For example, the couplers **130** and **132** may be positioned between the amplifier **114** and the broadening medium **116**.

While the photodetector **104** is connected to the output **130c** of the coupler **130** in order to detect the input pulsed signal S_m , it should be understood that other configurations are possible. For example, the photodetector may be connected to a waveguide used for propagating the input pulsed signal up to the input **130a** of the coupler **130**. In this case, the input pulsed signal S_m is detected by the photodetector **104** before entering the cavity **102**. When the photodetector **104** is so positioned, the coupler **130** may be replaced by an optical Y-junction comprising two inputs and a single output and adapted to transmit the entire input pulsed signal S_m received at one input and the entire buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} received at the other input to the output.

While the amplifiers **114** and **124** have an upstream position in the regenerator **110** and **112**, it should be understood that other configurations are possible as long as the bandpass filters **118** and **128** are positioned downstream of their respective spectrally broadening medium **116** and **126**. For example, the amplifier **114** may be positioned between the spectrally broadening medium **116** and the bandpass filter **118** while the amplifier **124** may be positioned between the bandpass filter **128** and the output coupler **132**.

It should be understood that any adequate optical amplifier, nonlinear spectral broadening medium, and bandpass filter may be used. For example, the amplifier **114** and **124** may be an optical fiber amplifier such as an Erbium-doped fiber amplifier (EDFA), a fiber Raman amplifier, and the like. Alternatively, the amplifier **114**, **124** can be a semiconductor

optical amplifier (SOA). The nonlinear spectral broadening medium **116**, **126** can be a highly nonlinear fiber (HNLF) in which an optical pulse experiences self-phase modulation (SPM) spectral broadening, a photonic crystal, and the like. While the bandpass filter **128** is tunable, i.e. the central wavelength λ_{BPF2} is adjustable, the bandpass filter **118** may have a fixed and predetermined central wavelength λ_{BPF1} . Alternatively, the bandpass filter **118** may also be tunable. Examples of adequate optical bandpass filter comprise a thin film bandpass filter, a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS) filter, a fiber Bragg grating (FBG) connected to the cavity via an optical circulator.

It should be understood that the wavelength controller **108** is adapted to the type of tunable bandpass filter used in the cavity. For example, if the tunable bandpass filter is a MEMS filter, the wavelength controller is adapted to send an electrical signal having an adequate voltage and/or current for controlling the MEMS filter. The MEMS filter may comprise a diffractive crystal and a motor for rotating the crystal. In this case, the wavelength controller is adapted to control the position of the motor in order to adjust the central wavelength of the MEMS filter. In another example, the tunable bandpass filter is a FBG and the wavelength controller is adapted to control the wavelength reflected by the FBG. In this case, the wavelength controller may be adapted to control the temperature of the FBG in order to adjust the reflected wavelength to a desired value.

Alternatively, the wavelength controller can be adapted to stretch the FBG to adjust the reflected wavelength.

FIG. **6** illustrates a time-delayed wavelength converter **200** comprising a single nonlinear spectral broadening medium. The converter **200** comprises an optical regenerative cavity **202**, a photodetector **104**, an output wavelength determining module **106**, and a wavelength controller **108**. The cavity **202** comprises two optical 2R-regenerators **210** and **212** which are connected together in a closed-loop configuration and share a same nonlinear spectral broadening medium, i.e. a HNLF **214**. The optical regenerator **210** comprises the HNLF **214**, a bandpass filter **216** having a central wavelength λ_{BPF1} , and an optical amplifier **218**. The optical regenerator **212** comprises the HNLF **214**, a tunable bandpass filter **226** having a central wavelength λ_{BPF1} and an optical amplifier **228**.

An optical coupler **230** is used for inputting the input pulsed signal S_m into the cavity **202**. The coupler **230** is a tap coupler having one output connected to the photodetector **104** and another output connected an optical circulator **232**. The circulator **232** is also connected to the HNLF **214** and the bandpass filter **226** so that a signal coming from the coupler **230** is directed towards the HNLF **214** and a signal coming from the HNLF **214** is directed towards the tunable bandpass filter **226**. A second optical circulator **234** connects the HNLF **214** to the bandpass filter **216** and the optical amplifier **218** so that a signal propagating from the HNLF **214** is directed towards the bandpass filter **216** and a signal coming from the amplifier **218** is directed towards the HNLF **214**.

An output coupler **236** is positioned downstream from the tunable bandpass filter **226** in order to output an output signal S_{out} at an output wavelength λ_{out} from the cavity **202**. A third bandpass filter **238** adapted to prevent a signal having the output wavelength λ_{out} out from propagating within the cavity **202** is connected between the coupler **236** and the amplifier **228**. It should be understood that the third bandpass filter **238** may be replaced by any adequate passive or active spectral filter device which allows a signal having the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} to propagate therethrough while preventing a signal having the output wavelength λ_{out} to propagate there-through. For example, a switch, a variable attenuator, a modu-

lator, an electro-optic filter, or the like may be used. Alternatively, the converter **200** may comprise no third bandpass filter **238**. In this case, at least one of the amplifiers **218** and **228** is stopped once the output signal S_{out} exited the converter **200**.

As described above, by adequately choosing the values for the wavelength λ_{BPF1} of the bandpass filter **216** and the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} as a function of the range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} , the converter **200** can convert an input pulsed signal S_{in} at an input wavelength λ_{in} to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} , buffer the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} during the determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} by propagating the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} within the cavity **202**, convert the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} from the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} upon determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} and output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} , thereby generating an output pulsed signal S_{out} substantially identical to the input pulsed signal S_{in} .

In one embodiment, a further bandpass filter (not shown) may be connected at the output of the coupler **236** in order to prevent the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} from exiting the converter **200**.

In one embodiment, the HNLF **214** has the following characteristics: length=1007 m; chromatic dispersion at 1550 nm=-0.71 ps/nm-km; second order chromatic dispersion=0.01 ps/nm²-km; and nonlinearity coefficient=11.5 W⁻¹-km⁻¹. The amplifiers **218** and **228** are EDFAs which provide a gain adapted to compensate for the losses within the cavity **200** so that a signal outputted by a regenerator **210**, **212** has substantially the same power as a signal entering the regenerator. The bandpass filter **216** and **226** have each a full width at half maximum (FWHM) of about 0.39 nm and a substantially squared Lorentzian overall profile. It should be understood that the amplitude of the pulses of the output signal may be different from that of their respective pulses of the input signal. In this case, an amplifier or an attenuator may be positioned at the output of the optical regenerative cavity **202** to obtain a desired pulse amplitude for the output signal.

The range of possible values for the input wavelength λ_{in} and the output wavelength λ_{out} is identical and set to [1522 nm-1528 nm]. By setting the central wavelength λ_{BPF1} of the bandpass filter **216** to about 1529.9 nm, the cavity **202** has the following modes: CW mode for FO= $\lambda_{BPF1}-\lambda_{BPF2}$ comprised between zero and 1 nm, i.e. λ_{BPF2} comprised between 1528.9 nm and 1529.9 nm; SP mode for FO comprised between 1 nm and 1.2 nm i.e. λ_{BPF2} comprised between 1528.7 nm and 1528.9 nm; PB mode for FO comprised between 1.2 nm and 10.5 nm, i.e. λ_{BPF2} comprised between 1519.4 nm and 1528.7 nm. Therefore, the cavity **202** operates in the PB mode for the range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} .

For example, the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} is set to about 1520 nm which is comprised within the range of values for λ_{BPF2} allowing the PB mode of operation of the cavity **202** but outside of the range of values for the output wavelength λ_{out} . In this case, the converter **200** can receive an input pulsed signal S_{in} at an input wavelength λ_{in} , having any value comprised between 1522 nm and 1528 nm such as 1524.2 nm for example, convert the input pulsed signal S_{in} at 1524.2 nm to a substantially identical buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at 1520 nm, determine the value of the output wavelength λ_{out} such as 1526.4 nm for example, adjust the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} from the 1520 nm to 1526.4 nm, and output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at 1526.4 nm.

While the converters **100** and **200** each comprise two optical regenerators **110** and **112**, and **210** and **212**, respectively,

it should be understood that a time-delayed wavelength converter may comprise more than two optical regenerators connected together in a closed-loop configuration. FIG. 7 illustrates one embodiment of a time-delayed wavelength converter **300** adapted to receive an input pulsed signal S_{in} at an input wavelength λ_{in} and output an output pulsed signal S_{out} at an output wavelength λ_{out} which contains substantially the same information as that encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} .

The converter **300** comprises an optical regenerative cavity **302**, a photodetector **304**, an output wavelength determining module **306**, and a wavelength controller **308**. The cavity **302** comprises three optical regenerators **310**, **312**, and **314** connected together. The regenerators **310**, **312**, and **314** are each adapted to receive an incoming signal at a first wavelength and output a signal at a different wavelength, i.e. λ_1 , λ_2 , and λ_3 , respectively. The wavelength λ_3 of the signal generated by the third regenerator **314** is tunable.

Part of the input pulsed signal S_{in} is sent to the photodetector **304** via a first Y-junction **320** while the remaining of the input pulsed signal S_{in} is sent to a second Y-junction **322**. The second Y-junction **322** comprises two inputs of which one is connected to an output of the first Y-junction **320**, and a single output. The second Y-junction **322** is adapted to transmit substantially the entire signal received at each one of the two inputs to the output. The second Y-junction **322** is used for propagating the input pulsed signal S_{in} up to the first optical regenerator **310** which converts the input signal to a signal at λ_1 . The signal at λ_1 is coupled into the second optical regenerator **312** which generates a signal at λ_2 . The signal at λ_2 is inputted into the third regenerator **314** in order to generate a signal at λ_3 . The wavelength controller **308** is adapted to control the wavelength λ_3 of the signal generated by the third regenerator **314**. An output coupler **324** is positioned downstream from the third optical regenerator **314** for outputting the output pulsed signal S_{out} at the output wavelength λ_{out} . The coupler **324** has an output connected to the other input of the Y-junction **322** for propagating the signal at λ_3 up to the first regenerator **310**.

By adequately choosing the values for the wavelengths λ_1 and λ_2 for the first and second regenerators **310** and **312** and a buffer wavelength λ_{buf} as a function of the range of possible values for the output wavelength λ_{out} , the converter **300** can convert an input pulsed signal S_{in} at an input wavelength λ_{in} to a buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} , buffer the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} during the determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} by propagating the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} within the cavity **302**, convert the wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} from the buffer wavelength λ_{buf} to the output wavelength λ_{out} upon determination of the output wavelength λ_{out} and output the buffer pulsed signal S_{buf} at the output wavelength λ_{out} thereby generating an output pulsed signal S_{out} substantially identical to the input pulsed signal S_{in} .

Using the converter **10**, **100**, **200**, and **300**, it is possible to both convert an input signal at an input wavelength to an output signal at an output wavelength which contains substantially the same information as that encoded in the input pulsed signal S_{in} , and introduce a delay line in the transmission of the output signal using a single device, namely the regenerative cavity **12**, **102**, **202**, and **302**.

While the time-delayed wavelength converter systems described above only offers 2R-regeneration, i.e. they comprise at least two optical 2R-regenerators optically connected together in a closed-loop configuration, it should be understood that the time-delayed wavelength converter system may also provide for 3R-regeneration, i.e. the system allows for

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re-amplifying, re-shaping, and re-timing the input signal in addition to converting the wavelength of an input signal. In this case, the system comprises at least one optical 3R-regenerator. For example, the system may comprise one optical 3R-regenerator and at least one optical 2R-regenerator. In another embodiment, the system may comprise at least two optical 3R-regenerators.

FIG. 8 illustrates one embodiment of an adequate optical 3R-regenerator 400 which comprises an optical amplifier 402, a non-linear spectral broadening medium 404, a bandpass filter 406, and a Mach-Zehnder modulator 408 for retiming the input pulsed signal so that the output pulsed signal be at a desired frequency or bit rate. The Mach-Zehnder modulator 408 is adjusted at the desired frequency by receiving a clock signal having the desired frequency in order to resynchronize the output signal. It should be understood that the Mach-Zehnder modulator 408 may be replaced by any adequate optical modulator such as an electro-absorption modulator, an acousto-optic modulator, or the like.

FIG. 9 illustrates another embodiment of an adequate optical 3R-regenerator 420 which comprises an optical amplifier 422, a non-linear spectral broadening medium 424, and a bandpass filter 426. The retiming is performed by modulating the non-linearity of the nonlinear spectral broadening medium 424 to obtain cross-phase modulation (XPM) therein. The modulation of the non-linearity of the HLNLF 424 is done by propagating a pulsed retiming signal having a wavelength different from that of the input, output, and buffer signals in the HLNLF and having a pulse frequency equal to that of the desired frequency for the output signal. The wavelength of the retiming signal is chosen to be adequately offset from the output in order to transmit only XPM generated frequencies.

The embodiments described above are intended to be exemplary only. The scope of the invention is therefore intended to be limited solely by the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A method for converting a wavelength of an optical pulsed signal to an output wavelength, the method comprising:

receiving an input pulsed signal containing information encoded therein and having an input wavelength;

buffering the input pulsed signal by propagating the input pulsed signal in a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity, said propagating comprising:

converting the input pulsed signal at the input wavelength to an intermediary pulsed signal at a predetermined wavelength; and

repeatedly converting the intermediary pulsed signal at the predetermined wavelength to a buffer pulsed signal at an adjustable wavelength, and converting the buffer pulsed signal at the adjustable wavelength to the intermediary pulsed signal at the predetermined wavelength, the adjustable wavelength being set to a buffer wavelength different from the output wavelength and the buffer pulsed signal containing the information encoded in the input pulsed signal;

determining the output wavelength from the information encoded in the input pulsed signal;

upon said determining the output wavelength, setting the adjustable wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal to the output wavelength; and

outputting the buffer pulsed signal at the output wavelength from the cavity, thereby obtaining an output pulsed signal having the output wavelength and containing the information encoded in the input pulsed signal.

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2. The method of claim 1, wherein said converting the input pulsed signal to the intermediary pulsed signal and said repeatedly converting are performed by propagating the input pulsed signal in at least a first optical regenerator and a second optical regenerator optically connected together in a closed-loop configuration to form the cavity, the first optical regenerator being adapted to convert an incoming pulsed signal to the intermediary pulsed signal at the predetermined wavelength and the second optical regenerator being adapted to convert the intermediary pulsed signal at the predetermined wavelength to the buffer pulsed signal at the adjustable wavelength, the first and second optical regenerators each being one of an optical 2R-regenerator and an optical 3R-regenerator.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising preventing the buffer pulsed signal, when at the output wavelength, from propagating from the second optical generator to the first optical regenerator.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein said propagating the input pulsed signal in a first optical regenerator comprises propagating the input pulsed signal in a first amplifier, a first nonlinear spectral broadening medium, and a first bandpass filter having a central wavelength corresponding to the predetermined wavelength.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said converting the input pulsed signal at the input wavelength to the intermediary pulsed signal at the predetermined wavelength comprises amplifying, spectrally broadening, and spectrally filtering the input pulsed signal to obtain the intermediary pulsed signal.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein the second optical regenerator comprises a second amplifier, a second nonlinear spectral broadening medium, and a second bandpass filter having an adjustable central wavelength.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein said repeatedly converting comprises repeatedly:

amplifying, spectrally broadening, and spectrally filtering the intermediary pulsed signal to obtain the buffer pulsed signal; and

amplifying, spectrally broadening, and spectrally filtering the buffer pulsed signal to obtain the intermediary pulsed signal.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein said setting the adjustable wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal to the output wavelength comprises setting the adjustable central wavelength of the second bandpass filter to the output wavelength.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said determining comprises:

detecting the input pulsed signal and converting the input pulsed signal to an electrical signal; and

determining the output wavelength from the electrical signal;

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said detecting is performed before said buffering.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the information comprises at least destination information contained in a header of a data packet carried by the input pulsed signal.

12. An optical time-delayed wavelength converter for adjusting a wavelength of an optical pulsed signal, the converter comprising:

a photodetector for detecting and converting an input pulsed signal to an electrical signal, the input pulsed signal containing information encoded therein and having an input wavelength;

an output wavelength determining module for determining the output wavelength from the electrical signal;

a closed-loop optical regenerative cavity for receiving the input pulsed signal, the cavity comprising at least a first

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optical regenerator for receiving the input pulse signal and a second optical regenerator optically connected together in a closed-loop configuration, the first and second optical regenerators each being one of an optical 2R-regenerator and an optical 3R-regenerator, the cavity being adapted to convert the input pulsed signal at the input wavelength to a buffer pulsed signal at an adjustable wavelength, and propagate and output the buffer pulsed signal therein as a function of the adjustable wavelength, the buffer pulsed signal containing the information encoded in the input pulsed signal; and

a wavelength controller for controlling the adjustable wavelength of the buffer pulsed signal, the wavelength controller being adapted to set the adjustable wavelength to a buffer wavelength different from the output wavelength in order to propagate the buffer pulsed signal at the buffer wavelength within the cavity, and to the output wavelength upon reception of the output wavelength from the output wavelength determining module in order to output the buffer pulsed signal at the output wavelength from the cavity.

13. The optical time-delayed wavelength converter of claim 12, wherein the first optical generator is adapted to convert an incoming pulsed signal to an intermediary pulsed signal at a predetermined wavelength and the second optical regenerator is adapted to convert the intermediary pulsed signal to the buffer pulsed signal at the adjustable wavelength, the predetermined wavelength being chosen as a function of the buffer wavelength and the output wavelength so that the cavity supports eigenpulses, the eigenpulses being substantially identical at an input of the first optical regenerator and at an output of the second optical regenerator.

14. The optical time-delayed wavelength converter of claim 12, further comprising a spectral filter device posi-

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tioned between the first and second optical regenerators for preventing a propagation of the buffer pulsed signal at the output wavelength from the second optical regenerator to the first optical regenerator.

15. The optical time-delayed wavelength converter of claim 13, wherein the first optical regenerator comprises a first amplifier, a first spectrally broadening medium, and a first bandpass filter having a central wavelength corresponding to the predetermined wavelength, and the second optical regenerator comprises a second amplifier, a second spectrally broadening medium, and a second bandpass filter being adjustable and controlled by the wavelength controller.

16. The optical time-delayed wavelength converter of claim 15, wherein the first amplifier is positioned one of upstream the first spectrally broadening medium, downstream the first bandpass filter, and between the first spectrally broadening medium and the first bandpass filter, and the second amplifier is positioned one of upstream the second spectrally broadening medium, downstream the second bandpass filter, and between the second spectrally broadening medium and the second bandpass filter.

17. The optical time-delayed wavelength converter of claim 12, wherein the information encoded in the input pulsed signal comprises destination information, the output wavelength determining module being adapted for:

determining the destination from the electrical signal; and
determining the output wavelength from the destination.

18. The optical time-delayed wavelength converter of claim 17, wherein the information about the destination is contained in a header of a data packet carried by the input pulsed signal.

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