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Title:

Method and apparatus for enhanced evanescent field exposure in an optical fiber resonator for spectroscopic detection and measurement of trace species

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Abstract:

An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in a gas or liquid sample. A sensor of a ring down cell formed from an optical fiber is exposed to the sample gas or liquid. A coherent source emits radiation into the optical fiber loop, which in turn is received at an output coupler. The fiber optic ring is coupled to a sensor which has a portion thereof, between the input and output, exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid. The sensor has an enhanced evanescent region. A processor is coupled to the receiver and determines the level of trace species in the gas or liquid sample based on the rate of decay of the radiation within the fiber optic ring.

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This application is a Continuation-in-Part of application Ser. No. 10/017,367 filed on Dec. 12, 2001 now U.S. Pat. No. 7,046,362.

Claims:

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a closed passive optical fiber ring; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber ring, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector.

2. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive optical fiber and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive optical fiber; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein the level of the trace species is determined based on a rate of decay of the signal generated by the detector.

3. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the coupling means is a single optical coupler.

4. The apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising a filter placed in an optical path between the coupling means and the detector to selectively pass the received portion of radiation from the passive optical fiber to the detector.
5. The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the filter passes radiation to the detector based on a wavelength of the radiation.
6. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the coupling means includes i) a first coupler for introducing the portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the optical fiber and ii) a second coupler for receiving the portion of the radiation in the optical fiber at a second section thereof.
7. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sensor has a tapered portion exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid.
8. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a tapered portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive optical fiber and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive optical fiber; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein the tapered portion is formed by heating and adiabatic stretching of the optical fiber.
9. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid, the exposed portion having a “D” shaped cross section; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive optical fiber and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive optical fiber; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein the “D” shaped cross section is formed by abrading a surface of a cladding of the optical fiber.
10. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein coherent source of radiation is an optical parametric generator
11. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein coherent source of radiation is an optical parametric amplifier.
12. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein coherent source of radiation is a laser.
13. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber ring; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for

determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein coherent source of radiation is a pulsed laser. parametric amplifier.

14. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber ring, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein coherent source of radiation is a continuous waver laser.

15. The apparatus according to claims 12, 13 or 14, wherein the laser is an optical fiber laser.

16. The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the continuous wave laser is a tunable diode laser having a narrow band.

17. The apparatus according to claim 16, further comprising an isolator coupled between the laser and the coupling means and in line with the radiation emitted from the laser, the isolator minimizing noise in the laser.

18. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein an evanescent field of the radiation traveling within the fiber is exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid.

19. The apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the absorption of the radiation from the fiber increases a rate of decay of the radiation received by the coupling means.

20. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein the passive optical is formed from one of fused silica, sapphire and fluoride based glass.

21. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the passive optical fiber is formed from a hollow fiber.

22. The apparatus according to claims 20 or 21, wherein the passive optical fiber is a single mode fiber.

23. The apparatus according to claims 20 or 21, wherein the passive optical fiber is a multi-mode fiber.

24. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising at least one cylindrical body having a predetermined diameter and wrapped with the exposed portion of the sensor, wherein exposure of the evanescent field to the trace species is enhanced by increasing a penetration depth of the evanescent field.

25. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a plurality of cylindrical bodies having respective predetermined diameter and wrapped with respective sections of the exposed portion of respective ones of the sensors.

26. The apparatus according to claims 24 or 25, wherein the tubular structure is a mandrel.

27. The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein the mandrel has a cross sectional radius of at least about 1 cm.

28. The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein the mandrel has a cross sectional radius of between about 1 cm and 10 cm.

29. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the trace species is at least one of water, acetylene and ammonia.

30. The apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the coherent source is a single mode laser tunable in the wavelength region of about 1390 nm and about 1513 nm.

31. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the passive optical fiber resonates at a wavelength between a visible to a mid-infrared region of an electromagnetic spectrum.

32. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the sensor is disposed within the liquid sample for determining a presence of the trace species in the liquid sample.

33. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the sensor is coated with a material to selectively increase a concentration of the trace species at the coated portion of the sensor.

34. The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein the material attracts analyte molecules of the trace species.

35. The apparatus according to claim 34, wherein the material is polyethylene.

36. The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein at least the coated portion of the sensor is disposed within the liquid sample for determining a presence of the trace species in the liquid sample.

37. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector; and an input detector for determining when energy from the coherent source of radiation is provided to the optical fiber.

38. The apparatus according to claim 37, further comprising control means to deactivate the coherent source of radiation based on the receiving means receiving radiation from the optical fiber after the input detector determines that the coherent source of radiation provided energy to the optical fiber.

39. The apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the control means

and the input detector are coupled to the processing means.

40. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein an index of refraction of the optical fiber is greater than an index of refraction of the sample liquid.

41. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein an index of refraction of the optical fiber is based on an index of refraction of the sample gas and an absorption band of the trace species.

42. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein the portion of the radiation coupled into the optical fiber is less than about 1% of the radiation provided to the coupling means.

43. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive optical fiber; at least one sensor in line with the optical fiber ring, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the radiation resonant in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector, wherein the portion of the radiation coupled into the optical fiber is variable.

44. The apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the portion of the radiation coupled into the optical fiber is varied based on a loss within the passive fiber optic loop.

45. The apparatus according to claim 44, wherein the loss within the optical fiber is based on at least connector losses and fiber losses.

46. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the optical fiber is at least about 1 meter long.

47. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the optical fiber is at least about 10 meters long.

48. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the optical fiber is at least about 1 km long.

49. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a closed passive optical fiber optic ring; at least one sensor in line with the optic fiber ring, each of the at least one sensor having a tapered portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source emitting radiation; a first optical coupler to provide at least a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the passive resonant fiber ring; a second optical coupler for receiving a portion of the radiation in the passive resonant fiber ring from a second section of the resonant fiber ring; a processor coupled to the second optical coupler for determining a level of the trace species in the gas or liquid sample based on a rate of decay of the radiation received by the second optical coupler.

50. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive resonant fiber optic ring; at least one sensor in line with the fiber optic ring, each of the at least one sensor having a tapered portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source emitting radiation; a first optical coupler to provide at least a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the passive resonant fiber ring; a second optical coupler for receiving a portion of the radiation in the passive resonant fiber ring from a second section of the resonant fiber ring; a processor coupled to the second optical coupler for determining a level of the trace species in the gas or liquid sample based on a rate of decay of the radiation received by the second optical coupler; and a first optical detector coupled between the second optical coupler and the processor for generating a signal responsive to the radiation received by the second optical coupler.

51. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a passive resonant fiber optic ring; at least one sensor in line with the fiber optic ring, each of the at least one sensor having a tapered portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source emitting radiation; a first optical coupler to provide at least a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the passive resonant fiber ring; a second optical coupler for receiving a portion of the radiation in the passive resonant fiber ring from a second section of the resonant fiber ring; and a processor coupled to the second optical coupler for determining a level of the trace species in the gas or liquid sample based on a rate of decay of the radiation received by the second optical coupler; and a second optical detector coupled between the first optical coupler and the processor for determining when energy from the coherent source of radiation is provided to the passive fiber optic ring.

52. The apparatus according to claim 51, wherein the second optical detector generates a trigger signal to the processor responsive to receiving radiation from the coherent source.

53. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a closed passive resonant fiber optic ring; at least one sensor in line with the fiber optic ring, each of the at least one sensor having a tapered portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source emitting radiation; a first optical coupler to provide at least a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the passive resonant fiber ring; a second optical coupler for receiving a portion of the radiation in the passive resonant fiber ring from a second section of the resonant fiber ring; and a processor coupled to the second optical coupler for determining a level of the trace species in the gas or liquid sample based on a rate of decay of the radiation received by the second optical coupler, wherein the first and second optical couplers are a unitary coupler.

54. The apparatus according to claim 49, further comprising at least one cylindrical body coupled to the tapered portion of the sensor to form the portion of the sensor with a predetermined radius, at least a portion of the sample liquid or sample gas contacting the formed portion of the sensor.

55. An apparatus for detection and measurement of trace species in at least one of a sample gas and a sample liquid comprising: a continuous closed passive resonant fiber optic ring; at least one sensor in line with the fiber optic, the at least one sensor having a “D” shaped cross section portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source emitting radiation; a first optical coupler to provide at least a portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the passive resonant fiber ring; a second optical coupler for receiving a portion of the radiation in the passive resonant fiber ring from a second section of the resonant fiber ring; and a processor coupled to the second optical coupler for determining a level of the trace species in the gas or liquid sample based on a rate of decay of the radiation received by the second optical coupler.

56. The apparatus according to claim 55, further comprising at least one cylindrical body coupled to the “D” shaped cross section portion of the sensor to form the portion of the sensor with a predetermined radius, at least a portion of the sample liquid or sample gas contacting the formed portion of the sensor.

Description:

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to absorption spectroscopy and, in particular, is directed to fiber optic sensors having enhanced evanescent field regions for use with a fiber-optic resonator for ring-down cavity spectroscopy.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawing, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout, FIG. 1 illustrates the electromagnetic spectrum on a logarithmic scale. The science of spectroscopy studies spectra. In contrast with sciences concerned with other parts of the spectrum, optics particularly involves visible and near-visible light—a very narrow part of the available spectrum which extends in wavelength from about 1 mm to about 1 nm. Near visible light includes colors redder than red (infrared) and colors more violet than violet (ultraviolet). The range extends just far enough to either side of visibility that the light can still be handled by most lenses and mirrors made of the usual materials. The wavelength dependence of optical properties of materials must often be considered.

Absorption-type spectroscopy offers high sensitivity, response times on the order of microseconds, immunity from poisoning, and limited interference from molecular species other than the species under study. Various molecular species can be detected or identified by absorption spectroscopy. Thus, absorption spectroscopy provides a general method of detecting important trace species. In the gas phase, the sensitivity and selectivity of this method is optimized because the species have their absorption strength concentrated in a set of sharp spectral lines. The narrow lines in the spectrum can be used to discriminate against most interfering species.

In many industrial processes, the concentration of trace species in flowing gas streams and liquids must be measured and analyzed with a high degree of speed and accuracy. Such measurement and analysis is required because the concentration of contaminants is often critical to the quality of the end product. Gases such as N₂, O₂, H₂, Ar, and He are used to manufacture integrated circuits, for example, and the presence in those gases of impurities—even at parts per billion (ppb) levels—is damaging and reduces the yield of operational circuits. Therefore, the relatively high sensitivity with which water can be spectroscopically monitored is important to manufacturers of high-purity gases used in the semiconductor industry. Various impurities must be detected in other industrial applications. Further, the presence of impurities, either inherent or deliberately placed, in liquids have become of particular concern of late.

Spectroscopy has obtained parts per million (ppm) level detection for gaseous contaminants in high-purity gases. Detection sensitivities at the ppb level are attainable in some cases. Accordingly, several spectroscopic methods have been applied to such applications as quantitative contamination monitoring in gases, including: absorption measurements in traditional long pathlength cells, photoacoustic spectroscopy, frequency modulation spectroscopy, and intracavity laser absorption spectroscopy. These methods have several features, discussed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,528,040 issued to Lehmann, which make them difficult to use and impractical for industrial applications. They have been largely confined, therefore, to laboratory investigations.

In contrast, cavity ring-down spectroscopy (CRDS) has become an important spectroscopic technique with applications to science, industrial process control, and atmospheric trace gas detection. CRDS has been demonstrated as a technique for the measurement of optical absorption that excels in the low-absorbance regime where conventional methods have inadequate sensitivity. CRDS utilizes the mean lifetime of photons in a high-finesse optical resonator as the absorption-sensitive observable.

Typically, the resonator is formed from a pair of nominally equivalent, narrow band, ultra-high reflectivity dielectric mirrors, configured appropriately to form a stable optical resonator. A laser pulse is injected into the resonator through a mirror to experience a mean lifetime which depends upon the photon round-trip transit time, the length of the resonator, the absorption cross section and number density of the species, and a factor accounting for intrinsic resonator losses (which arise largely from the frequency-dependent mirror reflectivities when diffraction losses are negligible). The determination of optical absorption is transformed, therefore, from the conventional power-ratio measurement to a measurement of decay time. The ultimate sensitivity of CRDS is determined by the magnitude of the intrinsic resonator losses, which can be minimized with techniques such as superpolishing that permit the fabrication of ultra-low-loss optics.

At present, CRDS is limited to spectroscopic regions where high reflectivity dielectric mirrors can be used. This has significantly limited the usefulness of the method in much of the ultraviolet and infrared regions, because mirrors with sufficiently high reflectivity are not presently available. Even in regions where suitable dielectric mirrors are available, each set of mirrors only allows for operation over a small range of wavelengths, typically a fractional range of a few percent. Further, construction of many dielectric mirrors requires use of materials that may degrade over time, especially when exposed to chemically corrosive environments. Because these present limitations restrict or prevent the use of CRDS in many potential applications, there is a clearly recognized need to improve upon the current state of the art with respect to resonator construction.

The article by A. Pipino et al., “Evanescent wave cavity ring-down spectroscopy with a total-internal reflection micravity,” *Rev. Sci. Instrum.* 68 (8) (August 1997), presents one approach to an improved resonator construction. The approach uses a monolithic, total internal reflection (TIR) ring resonator of regular polygonal geometry (e.g., square and octagonal) with at least one convex facet to induce stability. A light pulse is totally reflected by a first prism located outside and in the vicinity of the resonator, creating an evanescent wave which enters the resonator and excites the stable modes of the resonator through photon tunneling. When light impinges on a surface of lower index of refraction that the propagation medium at greater than a critical angle, it reflects completely. J. D. Jackson, “Classical Electrodynamics,” Chapter 7, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: New York, N.Y. (1962). A field exists, however, beyond the point of reflection that is non-propagating and decays exponentially with distance from the interface. This evanescent field carries no power in a pure dielectric medium, but attenuation of the reflected wave allows observation of the presence of an absorbing species in the region of the evanescent field. F. M. Mirabella (ed.), “Internal Reflection Spectroscopy,” Chapter 2, Marcel Dekker, Inc.: New York, N.Y. (1993).

The absorption spectrum of matter located at the totally reflecting surfaces of the resonator is obtained from the mean lifetime of a photon in the monolithic resonator, which is extracted from the time dependence of the signal received at a detector by out coupling with a second prism (also a totally reflecting prism located outside, but in the vicinity of, the resonator). Thus, optical radiation enters and exits the resonator by photon tunneling, which permits precise control of input and output coupling. A miniature-resonator realization of CRDS results and the TIR-ring resonator extends the CRDS concept to condensed matter spectroscopy. The broadband nature of TIR circumvents the narrow bandwidth restriction imposed by dielectric mirrors in conventional gas-phase CRDS. The work of A. Pipino et al. is only applicable to TIR spectroscopy, which is intrinsically limited to short overall absorption pathlengths, and thus powerful absorption strengths. In contrast, the present invention provides long absorption pathlengths and thus allows for detection of weak absorption strengths.

Various novel approaches to mirror based CRDS systems are provided in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,973,864, 6,097,555, 6,172,823 B1, and 6,172,824 B1 issued to Lehmann et al., and incorporated herein by reference. These approaches teach the use of a near-confocal resonator formed by two reflecting elements or prismatic elements.

FIG. 2 illustrates a prior art CRDS apparatus **10**. As shown in FIG. 2, light is generated from a narrow band, tunable, continuous wave diode laser **20**. Laser **20** is temperature tuned by a temperature controller **30** to put its wavelength on the desired spectral line of the analyte. An isolator **40** is positioned in front of and in line with the radiation emitted from laser **20**. Isolator **40** provides a one-way transmission path, allowing radiation to travel away from laser **20** but preventing radiation from traveling in the opposite direction. Single mode fiber coupler (F.C.) **50** couples the light emitted from laser **20** into the optical fiber **48**. Fiber coupler **50** is positioned in front of and in line with isolator **40**. Fiber coupler **50** receives and holds optical fiber **48** and directs the radiation emitted from laser **20** toward and through a first lens **46**. First lens **46** collects and focuses the radiation. Because the beam pattern emitted by laser **20** does not perfectly match the pattern of light propagating in optical fiber **48**, there is an inevitable mismatch loss.

The laser radiation is approximately mode-matched into a ring down cavity (RDC) cell **60**. A reflective mirror **52** directs the radiation toward a beam splitter **54**. Beam splitter **54** directs about 90% of the radiation through a second lens **56**. Second lens **56** collects and focuses the radiation into cell **60**. The remaining radiation passes

through beam splitter **54** and is directed by a reflective mirror **58** into an analyte reference cell **90** .

The radiation which is transmitted through analyte reference cell **90** is directed toward and through a fourth lens **92** . Fourth lens **92** is aligned between analyte reference cell **90** and a second photodetector **94** (PD **2**). Photodetector **94** provides input to computer and control electronics **100** .

Cell **60** is made from two, highly reflective mirrors **62** , **64** , which are aligned as a near confocal etalon along an axis, a. Mirrors **62** , **64** constitute the input and output windows of cell **60** . The sample gas under study flows through a narrow tube **66** that is coaxial with the optical axis, a, of cell **60** . Mirrors **62** , **64** are placed on adjustable flanges or mounts that are sealed with vacuum tight bellows to allow adjustment of the optical alignment of cell **60** .

Mirrors **62** , **64** have a high-reflectivity dielectric coating and are oriented with the coating facing inside the cavity formed by cell **60** . A small fraction of laser light enters cell **60** through front mirror **62** and “rings” back and forth inside the cavity of cell **60** . Light transmitted through rear mirror **64** (the reflector) of cell **60** is directed toward and through a third lens **68** and, in turn, imaged onto a first photodetector **70** (PD **1**). Each of photodetectors **70** , **94** converts an incoming optical beam into an electrical current and, therefore, provides an input signal to computer and control electronics **100** . The input signal represents the decay rate of the cavity ring down.

FIG. 3 illustrates optical path within a prior art CRDS resonator **100** . As shown in FIG. 3, resonator **100** for CRDS is based upon using two Brewster's angle retroreflector prisms **50** , **52** . The polarizing or Brewster's angle, Θ_B , is shown relative to prism **50** . Incident light **12** and exiting light **14** are illustrated as input to and output from prism **52** , respectively. The resonant optical beam undergoes two total internal reflections without loss in each prism **50** , **52** at about 45° , an angle which is greater than the critical angle for fused quartz and most other common optical prism materials. Light travels between prisms **50** , **52** along optical axis **54** .

Although, when compared with the other spectroscopy methods, ring down cavity spectroscopy is a simpler and less expensive to implement, it is still costly in that a ring down cavity spectroscopy system can cost on the order of many thousands of dollars per unit. In addition, conventional CRDS devices are prone to misalignment between the optical elements while being fabricated as well as during use.

To overcome the shortcomings of the known approaches to improved resonator construction, a new optic-fiber based optical resonator for CRDS is provided. An object of the present invention is to replace conventional fiber optic sensors with sensors having enhanced evanescent field portion, thereby providing a more sensitive fiber optic sensor.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

To achieve that and other objects, and in view of its purposes, the present invention provides an improved apparatus for trace species detection and measurement in a sample gas. The apparatus includes a passive fiber optic cable; at least one sensor in line with the fiber optic cable, the at least one sensor having a portion thereof exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid; a coherent source of radiation; coupling means for i) introducing a portion of the radiation emitted by the

coherent source to the passive fiber optic ring and ii) receiving a portion of the resonant radiation in the passive fiber optic ring; a detector for detecting a level of the radiation received by the coupling means and generating a signal responsive thereto; and a processor coupled to the detector for determining a level of the trace species in the gas sample or liquid sample based on the signal generated by the detector.

According to another aspect of the invention, the sensor has a tapered portion exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid.

According to a further aspect of the invention, the sensor has an exposed portion with a “D” shaped cross section.

According to yet another aspect of the invention, the level of the trace species is determined based on a rate of decay of the signal generated by the detector means.

According to a further aspect of the invention, a filter is placed between the coupling means and the detector to selectively pass the received portion of radiation from the passive fiber optic loop to the detector.

According to yet another aspect of the invention, the coupler includes i) a first coupler for introducing the portion of the radiation emitted by the coherent source to a first section of the fiber optic ring and ii) a second coupler for receiving the portion of the radiation in the passive fiber optic ring at a second section thereof.

According to still another aspect of the invention, the exposed portion of the fiber is the cladding of the fiber.

According to yet a further aspect of the invention, the exposed portion of the fiber is the inner core of the fiber.

According to another aspect of the invention, the coherent source is an optical parametric generator, an optical parametric amplifier, or a laser.

According to yet another aspect of the invention, an evanescent field of the radiation traveling within the fiber is exposed to the sample gas or sample liquid.

According to still another aspect of the invention, the absorption of the radiation from the fiber increases a rate of decay of the radiation.

According to yet a further aspect of the invention, the passive resonant fiber has a hollow core.

According to yet another aspect of the invention, the apparatus further comprises a sensor formed from a cylindrical body and wrapped with a section of the exposed portion of the resonant fiber such that exposure of the evanescent field to the trace species is enhanced by increasing the penetration depth of the evanescent field.

According to a further aspect of the invention, at least a portion of the passive fiber optic ring is coated with a material to selectively increase a concentration of the trace species at the coated portion of the fiber optic ring.

It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary, but are not restrictive, of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The invention is best understood from the following detailed description when read in connection with the accompanying drawing. It is emphasized that, according to common practice, the various features of the drawing are not to scale. On the contrary, the dimensions of the various features are arbitrarily expanded or reduced for clarity. Included in the drawing are the following figures:

FIG. 1 illustrates the electromagnetic spectrum on a logarithmic scale;

FIG. 2 illustrates a prior art CRDS system using mirrors;

FIG. 3 illustrates a prior art CRDS cell using prisms;

FIG. 4 is an illustration of a first exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5A is a end view of a conventional optical fiber;

FIG. 5B is a perspective view of a sensor according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6A is a cross sectional view of fiber optic cable illustrating propagation of radiation within the cable;

FIG. 6B is a cross section of a fiber optic sensor illustrating the evanescent field according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention

FIG. 6C is a cross section of a fiber optic sensor illustrating the evanescent field according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6D is a cross-section of a fiber optic sensor according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is an illustration of a second exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 8A-8D are illustrations of a fiber optic sensor according to a third exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 9A-9C are illustrations of a fiber optic sensor according to a fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention; and

FIGS. 10A-10C are illustrations of a fiber optic sensor according to a fifth exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The entire disclosure of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/017,367 filed Dec. 12, 2001 is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

FIG. 4 illustrates fiber optic based ring-down apparatus **400** according to a first exemplary embodiment of the present invention through which trace species, or analytes, in gases and liquids may be detected. In FIG. 4, apparatus **400** includes resonant fiber optic ring **408** which has fiber optic cable **402** and sensors **500** (described below in detail) distributed along the length of fiber optic cable **402**. The length of resonant fiber optic ring **408** is easily adaptable to a variety of acquisition situations, such as perimeter sensing or passing through various sections of a physical plant, for example. Although as shown, sensors **500** are distributed along the length of fiber optic loop **408**, the invention may be practiced using only one sensor **500**, if desired. The

distribution of more than one sensor **500** allows for sampling of a trace species at various points throughout the installation site. The invention may also be practiced using a combination of sensors **500** with straight section of fiber **402** exposed to sample liquids or gases, or with only straight sections of fiber **402** exposed to the sample liquid or gas. It is contemplated that the length of resonant fiber optic ring may be as small as about 1 meter or as large as several kilometers.

Coherent source of radiation **404**, such as an optical parametric generator (OPG), optical parametric amplifier (OPA) or a laser, for example, emits radiation at a wavelength consistent with an absorption frequency of the analyte or trace species of interest. Coherent source **404** may be a tunable diode laser having a narrow band based on the trace species of interest. An example of a commercially available optical parametric amplifier is model no. OPA-800C available from Spectra Physics, of Mountain View, Calif.

Examples of frequencies of coherent source **404** versus analytes are outlined in Table 1. Table 1 is merely illustrative and not intended as restrictive of the scope of the present invention. Further, it is contemplated that the present invention may be used to detect a variety of chemical and biological agents harmful to humans and/or animals. It is also contemplated that such detection may be enhanced by coating the surface of the passive fiber optic ring with antibodies that specifically bind the desired antigen.

TABLE 1

Analyte or Trace Species	Approximate Wavelength(s)	Approximate Wavelength(s)
	Near Infrared	Mid Infrared
Water (H ₂ O)	1390 nm	5940 nm
Ammonia (NH ₃)	1500 nm	10300 nm
Methane (CH ₄)	1650 nm	3260 nm
Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂)	1960 nm	4230 nm
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	1570 nm; 2330 nm	4600 nm
Nitric Oxide (NO)	1800 nm; 2650 nm	5250 nm
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	2680 nm	6140 nm
Nitrous Oxide (N ₂ O)	2260 nm	4470 nm
Sulfur Dioxide (SO ₂)		7280 nm
Acetylene	1520 nm	7400 nm
Hydrogen Fluoride (HF)	1310 nm	
Hydrogen Chloride (HCl)	1790 nm	3400 nm
Hydrogen Bromide (HBr)	1960 nm	3820 nm
Hydrogen Iodide (HI)	1540 nm	
Hydrogen Cyanide (HCN)	1540 nm	6910 nm
Hydrogen Sulfide (H ₂ S)	1570 nm	
Ozone (O ₃)		9500 nm
Formaldehyde (H ₂ CO)	1930 nm	3550 nm
Phosphine (PH ₃)	2150 nm	10100 nm
Oxygen (O ₂)	760 nm	

In the first exemplary embodiment, radiation from coherent source **404** is provided to resonant fiber optic ring **408** through optional optical isolator **406**, coupler **410**, and evanescent input coupler **412**. When coherent source **404** is a diode laser, using optical isolator **406** provides the benefit of minimizing noise in the laser by preventing reflections back into the laser. Evanescent input coupler **412** may provide a fixed percentage of radiation from coherent source **404** into resonant fiber

optic ring **408**, or may be adjustable based on losses present throughout resonant fiber optic ring **408**. Preferably, the amount of radiation provided by evanescent input coupler **412** to resonant fiber optic ring **408** matches the losses present in fiber optic cable **402** and the connectors (not shown). A commercially available evanescent coupler providing 1% coupling (99%/1% split ratio coupling) of radiation is manufactured by ThorLabs of Newton, N.J., having part number 10202A-99. In a preferred embodiment, evanescent input coupler **412** couples less than 1% of the radiation from coherent source **404** into fiber **402**.

In one exemplary embodiment, to detect the trace species or analyte, a portion of the jacket **402 a** covering the fiber optic cable **402** is removed to expose cladding **402 b** that surrounds inner core **402 c** of fiber optic cable **402**. Alternatively, either both jacket **402 a** and cladding **402 b** may be removed to expose inner core **402 c**, or the jacketed portion of fiber optic cable **402** may be exposed to the sample liquid or gas. The latter approach may be useful for example, in the case where the evanescent field (discussed below) extends into the jacket for interaction with the trace species (which has been absorbed or dissolved into the jacket). Removing both the jacket and cladding may not be the most preferred, however, because of the brittle nature of inner core **402 c** used in certain types of fiber optic cables. A cross section of a typical fiber optic cable is shown in FIG. 5A.

Bending a total internal reflection (TIR) element changes the angle at which the incident electromagnetic wave contacts the reflection surface. In the case of bending an optical fiber about a cylindrical body, the angle of reflection on the surface of the fiber core opposite the body is closer to normal, and the penetration depth of the evanescent field is increased. By wrapping several turns of optical fiber **402** around cylindrical core element **502** (see FIG. 5B), the evanescent field penetration depth is increased and a greater length of fiber can be exposed to the detection fluid in a smaller physical volume. An experimental, verification of the improvement in optical fiber sensing through varying bending radii is discussed by D. Littlejohn et al. in "Bent Silica Fiber Evanescent Absorption Sensors for Near Infrared Spectroscopy," Applied Spectroscopy 53: 845-849 (1999).

FIG. 5B illustrates an exemplary sensor **500** used to detect trace species in a liquid or gas sample. As shown in FIG. 5B, sensor **500** includes cylindrical core element **502** (which may be solid, hollow or otherwise permeable), such as a mandrel, with a portion of fiber optic cable **402**, with cladding **402 b** exposed (in this example), wrapped around core element **502** over a predetermined length **506**. It is also possible to fabricate sensor **500** by wrapping core element **502** where core **402 c** of fiber optic cable **402** is exposed. The diameter of core element **502** is such that fiber core **402 c** is formed with less than a critical radius r , at which point excess radiation may be lost through fiber core **402 c** as it circumscribes core element **502**, or fiber integrity is compromised. The critical radius r is dependent on the frequency of the radiation passing through fiber optic cable **402** and/or the composition of the fiber. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the radius of core element **502** is between about 1 cm and 10 cm, and most preferably at least about 1 cm. As illustrated, radiation from fiber **402** is provided at input **504** and extracted at output **508**. Cylindrical core element **502** may have a spiral groove on its surface in which fiber **402** is placed as well as a means to secure fiber **402** to cylindrical core element **502**. Such securing means may take many forms, such as a screw tapped into cylindrical core element **502**, an adhesive, such as epoxy or silicon rubber, etc. The invention may be practiced where sensors **500** are integral with fiber **402** or may be coupled to fiber **402** utilizing commercially available fiber-optic connectors.

FIG. 6A illustrates how radiation propagates through a typical fiber

optic cable. As shown in FIG. 6A, radiation **606** exhibits total internal reflection (TIR) at the boundary between inner core **402 c** and cladding **402 b**. There is some negligible loss (not shown) by which radiation is not reflected, but is absorbed into cladding **402 b**. Although FIG. 6A is described as a fiber optic cable, FIG. 6A and the exemplary embodiments of the present inventions are equally applicable to a hollow fiber, such as a hollow waveguide; in which cladding **402 b** surrounds a hollow core.

FIG. 6B is a cross sectional view of one exemplary embodiment of sensor **500** which illustrates the effect of wrapping fiber optic cable **402** around core element **502**. As shown in FIG. 6B, only jacket **402 a** is removed from fiber optic cable **402**. Radiation **606** travels within core **402 c** and exhibits total internal reflection at the boundary between inner core **402 c** and the portion of cladding **402 b - 1** adjacent core element **502** with a negligible loss **609**. On the other hand, in the presence of trace species or analyte **610**, evanescent field **608** passes through the interface between inner core **402 c** and the exposed portion of cladding **402 b - 2**. This essentially attenuates radiation **606** based on the amount of trace species **610** present and is called attenuated total internal reflection (ATR). It should be noted that if there is no a trace species present having an absorption band compatible with the wavelength of the radiation, radiation **606** is not attenuated (other than by inherent loss in the fiber).

FIG. 6C is a cross sectional view of another exemplary embodiment of sensor **500** which illustrates the effect of wrapping fiber optic cable **402** around core element **502** with a portion of jacket **402 a** remaining intact. As shown in FIG. 6D, only an upper portion of jacket **402 a** is removed from fiber optic cable **402**. Similar to the first exemplary embodiment of sensor **500**, radiation **606** travels within core **402 c** and exhibits total internal reflection at the boundary between inner core **402 c** and the portion of cladding **402 b - 1** adjacent core element **502** with negligible loss **609**. On the other hand, in the presence of trace species or analyte **610** evanescent field **608** passes through the interface between inner core **402 c** and the exposed portion of cladding **402 b - 2**.

It is contemplated that the removal of jacket **402 a** (in either example of sensor **500**) may be accomplished by mechanical means, such as a conventional fiber optic stripping tool, or by immersing the portion of the fiber cable in a solvent that will attack and dissolve jacket **402 a** without effecting cladding **402 b** and inner core **402 c**. In the case of partial removal of jacket **402 a**, the solvent approach may be modified by selectively applying the solvent to the portion of the jacket intended for removal.

To enhance the attraction of analyte molecules of the trace species in a liquid sample, a jacket-less portion of the passive fiber optic ring may be coated with a material to selectively increase a concentration of the trace species at the coated portion of the fiber optic ring. An example of one such coating material is polyethylene. Additionally, antigen specific binders may be used to coat the fiber to attract a desired biological analyte with high specificity.

Referring again to FIG. 4, the radiation that remains after passing through sensors **500** continues through fiber loop **402**. A portion of that remaining radiation is coupled out of fiber optic loop **402** by evanescent output coupler **416**. Evanescent output coupler **416** is coupled to processor **420** through detector **418** and signal line **422**. Processor **420** may be a PC, for example, having a means for converting the analog output of detector **418** into a digital signal for processing. Processor **420** also controls coherent source **404** through control line **424**. Once the signals are received from detector **418** by processor **420**, the processor may determine the amount and type of trace species present based the decay rate of the radiation received.

Optionally, wavelength selector **430** may be placed between evanescent output coupler **416** and detector **418**. Wavelength selector **430** acts as a filter to prevent radiation that is not within a predetermined range from being input into detector **418**.

Detector **414** is coupled to the output of input coupler **412**. The output of detector **414** is provided to processor **420** via signal line **422** for use in determining when resonant fiber optic ring **402** has received sufficient radiation by which to perform trace species analysis.

In the case of detection of trace species or analytes in liquids, the index of refraction of the liquid must be lower than the index of refraction of the fiber optic cable. For example, given a fiber optic cable having an index of refraction of $n=1.46$, the invention may be used to detect trace species dissolved in water ($n=1.33$) and many organic solvents, including methanol ($n=1.326$), n-hexane ($n=1.372$), dichloromethane ($n=1.4242$), acetone ($n=1.3588$), diethylether ($n=1.3526$), and tetrahydrofuran ($n=1.404$), for example. An extensive list of chemicals and their respective index of refraction may be found in *CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, 52nd edition*, Weast, Rober C., ed. The Chemical Rubber Company: Cleveland Ohio, 1971, p. E-201, incorporated herein by reference. There are other types of optical fiber available with different indexes of refraction, and the present invention can be tailored to a given liquid matrix assuming the optical fiber has both a higher index of refraction than the liquid and effectively transmits light in the region of an absorption band by the target analyte.

There are many different types of optical fiber currently available. One example is Corning's SMF-28e fused silica fiber which has a standard use in telecommunications applications. Specialty fibers exist that transmit light at a multitude of different wavelengths, such as a 488 nm/514 nm single mode fiber, manufactured by 3M of Austin, Tex. (part no. FS-VS-2614), 630 nm visible wavelength single-mode fiber manufactured by 3M of Austin, Tex. (part no. FS-SN-3224), 820 nm standard single-mode fiber manufactured by 3M of Austin, Tex. (part no. FS-SN-4224), and 0.28-NA fluoride glass fiber with 4-micron transmission, manufactured by KDD Fiberlabs of Japan (part no. GF-F-160). Further, and as mentioned above, fiber optic cable **402** may be a hollow fiber.

It is contemplated that fiber **402** may be a mid-infrared transmitting fiber to allow for access to spectral regions having much higher analyte absorption strengths, thereby increasing the sensitivity of the apparatus **400**. Fibers that transmit radiation in this region are typically made from fluoride glasses.

FIG. 7 illustrates a second exemplary embodiment of the present invention through which trace species, or analytes, in gases and liquids may be detected. In describing FIG. 7, elements performing similar functions to those described with respect to the first exemplary embodiment will use identical reference numerals. In FIG. 7, apparatus **700** uses a similar resonant fiber optic ring **408** including fiber optic cable **402** and sensors **500**. Radiation from coherent source **404** is provided to resonant fiber optic ring **408** through optional optical isolator **406**, coupler **410**, and evanescent input/output coupler **434**. Evanescent input/output coupler **434** may provide a fixed percentage of radiation from coherent source **404** into resonant fiber optic ring **408**, or may be adjustable based on losses present throughout resonant fiber optic ring **404**. In the exemplary embodiment evanescent input/output coupler **434** is essentially a reconfiguration of evanescent input coupler **412** discussed above with respect to the first exemplary embodiment. In a preferred embodiment, evanescent input/output coupler **434** couples less than 1% of the radiation from laser **404** into fiber **402**.

Detection of trace species is similar to that described in the first

exemplary embodiment and is therefore not be repeated here.

The radiation that remains after passing through sensors **500** continues through fiber loop **402**. A portion of that remaining radiation is coupled out of fiber optic loop **402** by evanescent input/output coupler **434**. Evanescent input/output coupler **434** is coupled to processor **420** through detector **418** and signal line **422**. As in the first exemplary embodiment, processor **420** also controls coherent source **404** through control line **424**. Once the signals are received from detector **418** by processor **420**, the processor may determine the amount and type of trace species present based the decay rate of the radiation received.

Optionally, wavelength selector **430** may be placed between evanescent input/output coupler **434** and detector **418**. Wavelength selector **430** acts as a filter to prevent radiation that is not within a predetermined range from being input into detector **418**. Wavelength selector **430** may also be controlled by processor **420** to prevent radiation from coherent source **404** “blinding” detector **418** during the time period after the radiation from coherent source **404** was coupled into fiber **402**.

FIGS. 8A-8D illustrates another exemplary sensor **800** used to detect trace species in a liquid or gas sample. As shown in FIGS. 8A and 8D, sensor **800** is formed from fiber **801** by tapering the inner core **804** and cladding **805** to create tapered region **802** having tapered inner core **808** and tapered cladding **809**. The forming of tapered region **802** may be accomplished using either of two techniques. The first technique is heating of a localized section of fiber **801** and simultaneous adiabatic pulling on either side of the region in which it is desired to form sensor **800**. This procedure creates a constant taper in fiber **801**. This tapered fiber can then be for used as a spectroscopic sensor according to the first exemplary embodiment, for example. In the second exemplary technique, tapered region **802** may be formed by using a chemical agent to controllably remove a predetermined thickness of fiber cladding **805** to form tapered cladding **809**. A detailed description of a sensor formed using the second technique is described below with respect to FIGS. 10A-10C.

FIG. 8B illustrates a cross section of sensor **800** in the pre taper and post taper regions. As shown in FIG. 8B, inner core **804** and cladding **805** are in an unmodified state. It should be noted, for simplicity, the illustrations and description do not refer to the jacketing of fiber optic cable **801**, though such jacketing is assumed to be in place for at least a portion of fiber optic cable **801**.

FIG. 8C, illustrates a cross section of sensor **800** in tapered region **802**. As shown in FIG. 8C, tapered inner core **808** and tapered cladding **809** each have a significantly reduced diameter as compared to inner core **804** and cladding **805**. Tapered region **802** may be of any desired length based on the particular application. In the exemplary embodiment, as shown in FIG. 8D, for example, the length of the tapered region is approximately 4 mm with a waist diameter **814** of about 12 microns.

Referring again to FIG. 8A, evanescent field **806** in the region of inner core **804** is narrow and confined when compared to enhanced evanescent field **810** in taped region **802**. As illustrated, enhanced evanescent field **810** is easily exposed to the trace species (not shown) as discussed above with respect to the earlier exemplary embodiments and, thus, is better able to detect the trace species in region **812**.

FIGS. 9A-9C illustrate yet another exemplary sensor **900** used to detect trace species in a liquid or gas sample. As shown in FIG. 9A, sensor **900** is formed from fiber **901** by removing a portion of cladding **905** to create a substantially “D” shaped cross section region **902**. The forming of “D” shaped cross section region **902** may be accomplished by polishing one side of optical fiber cladding **905** using an abrasive,

for example. The abrasive is used to remove cladding **905** in continuously increasing depths along region **902** to preserve guided mode quality, ultimately reaching a maximum depth at the point of minimum cladding thickness **909**. This area of lowest cladding thickness represents the region of maximum evanescent exposure **910**.

FIGS. 10A-10C illustrate still another exemplary sensor **1000** used to detect trace species in a liquid or gas sample. Sensor **1000** is formed using the second technique described above with respect to the tapered sensor exemplary embodiment. As shown in FIG. 10A, sensor **1000** is formed from fiber **1001** by removing a portion of cladding **1005** using a chemical agent, known to those of skill in the art, to create tapered region **1002** having tapered cladding **1009**. It is important that the chemical agent not be permitted to disturb or remove any portion of the inner core, as this may introduce significant losses in sensor **1000**.

FIG. 10B illustrates a cross section of sensor **1000** in the pre taper and post taper regions. As shown in FIG. 10B, inner core **1004** and cladding **1005** are in an unmodified state. It should again be noted, for simplicity, the illustrations and description do not refer to the jacketing of fiber optic cable **1001**, though such jacketing is assumed to be in place for at least a portion of fiber optic cable **1001**.

FIG. 10C illustrates a cross section of sensor **1000** in tapered region **1002**. As shown in FIG. 10C, inner core **1004** is not affected while tapered cladding **1009** has a significantly reduced diameter as compared to cladding **1005**. Tapered region **1002** may be of any desired length based on the particular application. In the exemplary embodiment, for example, the length of the tapered region is approximately 4 mm with a waist diameter **1014** of about 12 microns.

Referring again to FIG. 10A, evanescent field **1006** in the region of inner core **1004** is narrow and confined when compared to enhanced evanescent field **1010** in tapered region **1002**. As illustrated, enhanced evanescent field **1010** is easily exposed to the trace species (not shown) as discussed above with respect to the earlier exemplary embodiments and, thus, is better able to detect the trace species in region **1012**.

With respect to the above described sensors **800**, **900** and **1000**, losses created in the optical fiber by forming the sensors may be balanced with the amount of evanescent field exposure by determining the appropriate taper diameter or polish depth for the desired detection limits prior to fiber alteration. Further, it may be desirable to provide a protective mounting for sensors **800**, **900** and/or **1000** to compensate for increased fragility due to the respective tapering and polishing operations.

It is contemplated that sensors **800**, **900** and/or **1000** may be used in either as an unrestricted fiber, on a cylindrical core element **502** (which may be solid, hollow or otherwise permeable), such as a mandrel (shown in FIG. 5B) or in a loop or bent configuration (not shown).

Sensors **800**, **900** and **1000** may be further enhanced by coating the sensing region with a concentrating substance, such as a biological agent to attract an analyte of interest. Such biological agents are known to those of ordinary skill in the art. It is also contemplated that several detecting regions **800**, **900** and/or **1000** may be formed along a length of a fiber optic cable to produce a distributed ring down sensor.

Although illustrated and described herein with reference to certain specific embodiments, the present invention is nevertheless not intended to be limited to the details shown. Rather, various modifications may be made in the details within the scope and range of equivalents of the claims and without departing from the spirit of the invention.

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