

Developments in Homodyne Interferometry

Fortschritte in der Homodyn-Interferometrie

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Summary The trend in many fields of enabling technologies, such as microelectronics, communications, microsystems, and micromechanics, toward imposing increasingly stringent demands upon precision continues. Those types of technologies allow creating micromechanical components having dimensions of a few micrometers that have to be accurately measured, positioned relative to one another, and assembled. In that conjunction, laser-interferometric metrology provides unique opportunities that combine measurements over large ranges at extraordinarily fine resolutions with traceability of measurement results to international length standards. Laser-interferometric metrological systems may be used for measuring displacements ranging from subnanometers to several meters, without need for reconfiguring the optical or electronic systems involved or their component devices. ▶▶▶ **Zusammenfassung** Auf verschiedenen Gebieten der Zukunftstechnologien, wie der

Mikroelektronik, der Kommunikationstechnik, der Mikrosystemtechnik und Mikromechanik hat sich die Tendenz der weiteren Miniaturisierung und der weiteren Erhöhung der Präzisionsanforderungen fortgesetzt. Mit derartigen Technologien erzeugt man mikromechanische Bauelemente mit Abmessungen von wenigen Mikrometern, die genau vermessen, zueinander positioniert und montiert werden müssen. Laserinterferometrische Messverfahren bieten in diesem Zusammenhang einzigartige Eigenschaften, die durch eine Verbindung eines großen Längenmessbereiches mit einer außerordentlichen Auflösung und der Rückführbarkeit von Messergebnissen auf die internationalen Längenmessnormale gekennzeichnet werden. Die laserinterferometrischen Messsysteme können zur Messung der Verschiebung von Sub-Nanometern bis einigen Metern eingesetzt werden, ohne dass eine Änderung weder der optischen noch elektronischen Gerätekonfiguration notwendig wird.

Keywords Laser interferometer, plane-mirror interferometer, stabilized HeNe laser, metrology, angle and displacement measurements ▶▶▶ **Schlagwörter** Laser-Interferometer, Planspiegel-Interferometer, stabilisierter He-Ne-Laser, Messtechnik, Winkel- und Abstandsmessung

1 Introduction to Homodyne Interferometers

Homodyne interferometers are based on comparisons of the values of the parameters to be determined to light wavelengths and allow attaining ultraprecise, nanometer-scale resolutions. A metrological analysis of the metrological method involved indicates the opportunities they afford and the metrological limits of laser-interferometric systems. For that purpose, consider a Michelson interferometer, the basic type of interferometer involved, and assume that the laser light source employed emits plane waves that are split into a pair of coherent, partial waves and interfere through superposi-

tion. The intensity distribution in the image plane will then be given by Eq. (1):

$$I = I_1 + I_2 + 2\sqrt{I_1 I_2} \cos\left(\gamma + \frac{2\pi}{\lambda_0} \cdot n \cdot i \cdot s\right), \quad (1)$$

where I is the intensity, I_1 is the intensity of partial wave 1, I_2 is the intensity of partial wave 2, γ is the phase angle of the measurement, λ_0 is the source vacuum wavelength, n is the refractive index of the transmitting medium, i is the interferometer factor (the optical interpolation factor) and s is the displacement to be measured.

From Eq. (1) it follows that

$$s = \frac{\delta \cdot \lambda_0}{i \cdot n}, \quad (2)$$

where δ is the order of interference, from which the smallest, resolved displacement-quantization unit, s_q , may be derived as

$$s_q = \frac{\lambda_0}{e \cdot i \cdot n}. \quad (3)$$

Equation (3) shows that Michelson interferometers are capable of attaining extraordinarily fine resolutions. Resolutions extending down to 0.1 nm are attainable, even over large displacement ranges, using precision interferometers and the current state of the art in electronic signal-processing equipment.

The improved interpolation method of homodyne interferometers allows attaining resolutions of < 0.1 nm. For a displacement range of 1 m, relative resolutions of $\leq 10^{-10}$ are attainable. The total number of length increments (pulse count) is determined by the order of interference, δ , and the electronic interpolation factor, e , which defines the number of pulses, into which a signal period is subdivided. Various factors that influence the limits of the laser-interferometric method must be taken into account when determining metrological precisions or measurement errors. Equation (2) defines the effects of such factors on measured displacements, s . The refractive index, n , of air is a function of air temperature, barometric pressure, humidity, and other factors. Measurements of those factors will allow making computational corrections for them using the Edlén formula.

The stability of the wavelength, λ_0 , of the laser light source employed is another influencing factor. The HeNe lasers employed on homodyne interferometers are noted for their long-term frequency stabilities and particularly well suited to use in high-precision length measurements. Determinations of their absolute mode wavelengths and frequency stabilities involve interfacing them to an iodine-vapor-stabilized HeNe laser.

The frequency stabilities of iodine-vapor-stabilized HeNe lasers approach 10^{-11} . The frequency-stabilized HeNe lasers employed on homodyne interferometers attain long-term frequency stabilities of $\leq 2 \times 10^{-8}$.

2 Fiber-Coupled Homodyne Interferometers

The homodyne interferometers presented here are Michelson interferometers. Figure 1 depicts such an interferometer, configured in the form of a plane-mirror interferometer.

Both the laser light source and power-supply/signal-processing unit are separated from the measurement head. Light from the frequency-stabilized HeNe laser is transmitted to the measurement head on a single-mode fiberoptic lightguide, which allows keeping heat sources well away from the location where measurements are conducted. The advantage of the metrological method

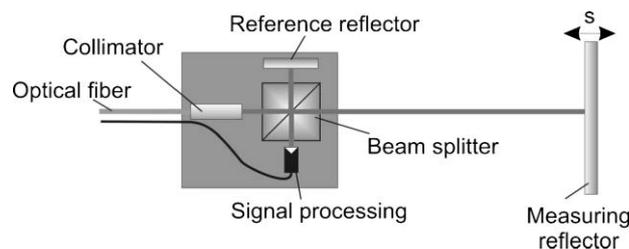


Figure 1 The layout of a miniature plane-mirror interferometer.

presented here is based on transmitting just a single beam that is retroreflected by the moving mirror per measurement axis, which allows configuring the metrological setup such that there will be a well-defined point of contact with the object being measured and that the laser beam will remain accurately aligned on the measurement axis, which, in turn, means that the configuration of an Abbé comparator will be maintained. Abbé errors, a typical error source, will thus be minimized or totally eliminated. A plane mirror, or an arbitrary optical surface, is utilized as the moving mirror, where surfaces having reflectances of less than 1% will be sufficient. Such interferometers have nanometer precisions and excellent linearities over displacements of up to 2 m.

Figures 2 and 3 depict modifications of the miniature plane-mirror interferometer in the forms of differential interferometers.

All of those interferometers have length resolutions of 0.1 nm over displacements of up to 2 m. Plane-mirror

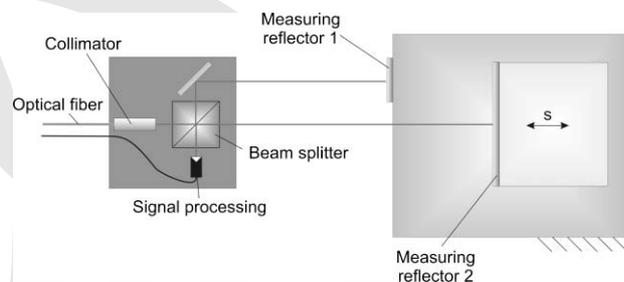


Figure 2 A miniature differential-plane-mirror interferometer employing parallel beams.

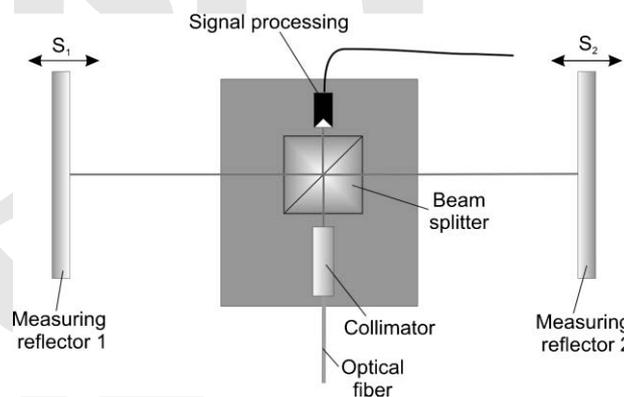


Figure 3 A miniature differential-plane-mirror interferometer employing antiparallel beams.

interferometers may also be configured in the form of double-beam or triple-beam interferometers. The layout of such a double-beam interferometer is depicted in Fig. 4.

The double-beam miniature interferometer shown has a pair of independent interferometer channels and a length resolution of 0.1 nm over an angular resolution of 0.001 arcsec or better, for a baseline beam separation of 25.4 mm.

Employment of a pair of parallel measurement beams allows accurately acquiring two pathlengths simultaneously. The tilt angle is determined from the difference in the two pathlengths and the calibrated lateral separation of the pair of beams. The mathematical relation involved is

$$\tan \alpha = \frac{\Delta s}{a}, \tag{4}$$

where α is the angle to be determined, Δs is the pathlength difference, and a is the baseline, lateral separation of the pair of measurement beams (cf. Fig. 5).

The application areas of double-beam interferometers range from laser-interferometric measurements on measurement, microscope, or translation stages, coordinate-measuring machines, or machine tools, to bending or strength-of-materials studies or calibration of angle-measurement instrumentation.

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate some of their typical applications.

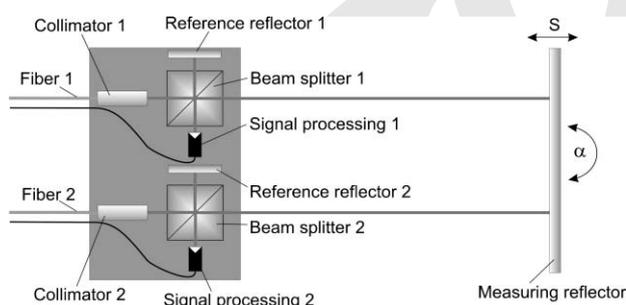


Figure 4 A miniature double-beam plane-mirror interferometer.

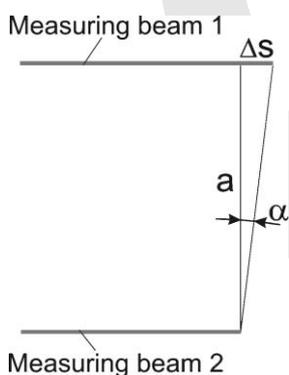


Figure 5 Determining angles from pathlength differences and beam lateral separations.

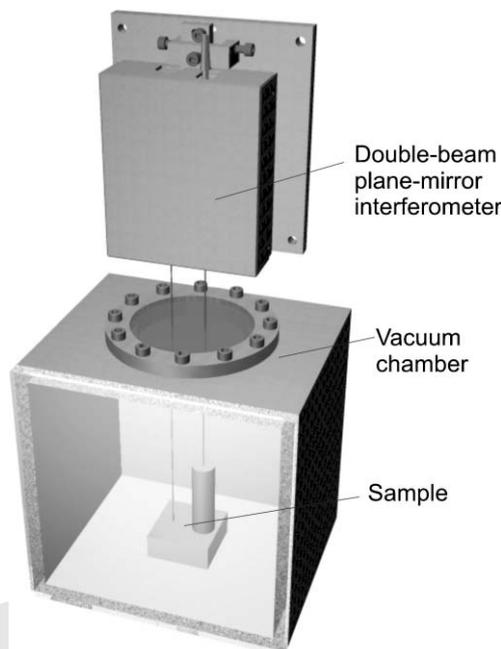


Figure 6 Dilatometric measurements using a double-beam interferometer.

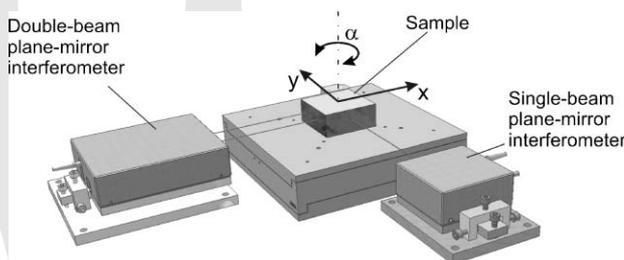


Figure 7 Interferometric measurements on a plane table.

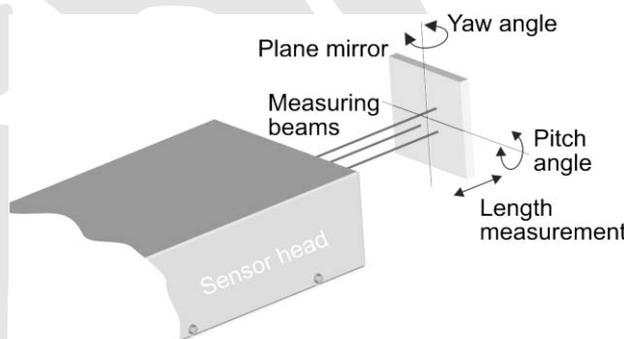


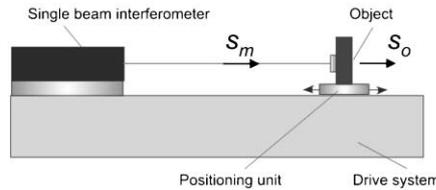
Figure 8 Layout of a triple-beam interferometer.

Triple-beam interferometers are metrological instruments intended for incorporation into systems that are supplied by a single laser and process three separate interferometer channels. Particular attention is devoted to providing a totally symmetric optical configuration. Three pathlengths may be simultaneously determined with nanometer precisions. The associated angles may be extremely accurately determined from the respective

a) Measuring axis aligned with object axis:

Complied with Abbe principle

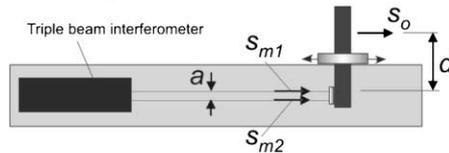
$$S_m = S_o$$



b) Measuring axis misaligned with object axis:

Violation of the Abbe principle

$$S_m \neq S_o$$



Simultaneous measurement of the position and tilt!

Figure 9 Example of a measurement on linear guides.

differences, Δs , in pairs of pathlengths and the associated beam separations. All systems feature synchronous data transfers on all metrological channels.

Thanks to their extremely compact designs, triple-beam interferometers used for ultraprecise length and angle measurements may be readily adapted to suit widely varying types of metrological tasks. Their employment of fiberoptic lightguides for transmitting light from their laser source eliminates heat sources in their sensor head and allows their flexible arrangement and simple, rapid alignment. Angular resolutions of 0.002 arcsec may be achieved for length resolutions of 0.1 nm.

The major metrological characteristics of triple-beam interferometers may be summarized as follows:

- pathlength range on each axis: 2 m,
- best length resolution attainable: 0.1 nm,
- range of pitch and yaw angles measurable: ± 2 arcmin,
- best angular resolution attainable: 0.002 arcsec,

- vertical and horizontal beam separations: 12 mm is standard.
- moving-mirror translation rate: 800 mm/s,
- operating temperature range: 15 °C to 30 °C.

3 Laser-Interferometric Vibrometers

The metrological system to be described here is a Michelson interferometer, modified for conducting noncontacting measurements of vibrations. Reflection of its measuring beam at an industrially rough surface causes multiple diffractions that form a speckle pattern. Superimposing that speckle pattern on the reference beam generates the same interference pattern for every speckle that would result from superimposing a pair of plane waves. The best signal/noise ratios will thus be obtained using an interferometer configuration, for which just one speckle will be analyzed, which may be achieved by suitably designing its sensor head. The intensity distribution

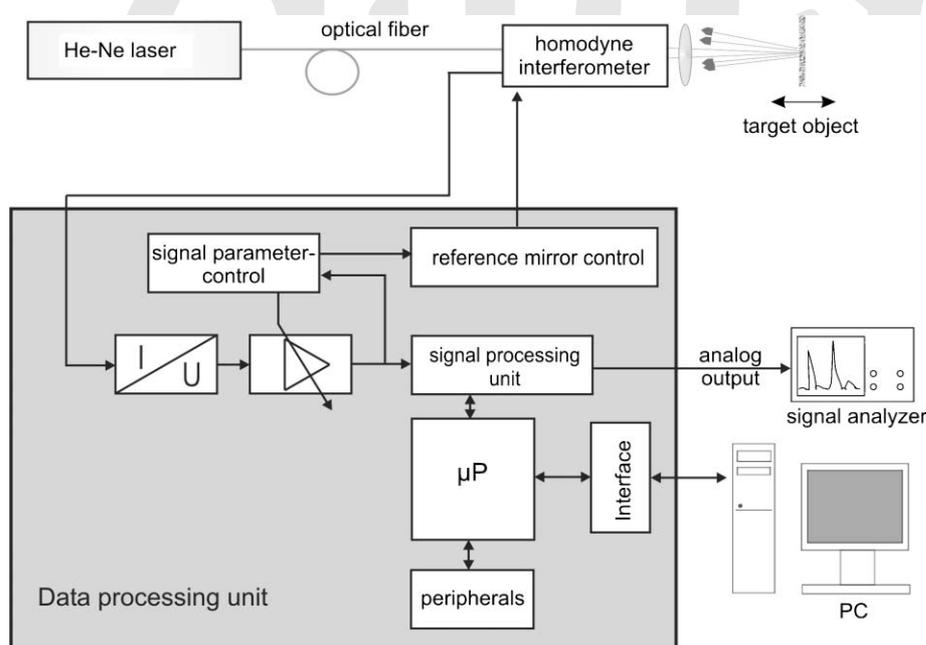


Figure 10 Layout of a homodyne vibrometer.

that results from superimposing a single speckle on the reference beam is given by

$$I \cong I_{ref} + I_s + 2 \cdot \sqrt{I_{ref} \cdot I_s} \cdot \cos(\delta_{ref} - \delta_s), \quad (5)$$

where I_{ref} and δ_{ref} are the intensity and phase of the reference beam, respectively, and I_s and δ_s are those for the speckle involved. The phase difference is proportional to the displacement of the object being measured, and thus represents the measured quantity. Figure 10 depicts the vibrometer's layout.



Figure 11 A Series LSV homodyne vibrometer equipped with a zoom lens.

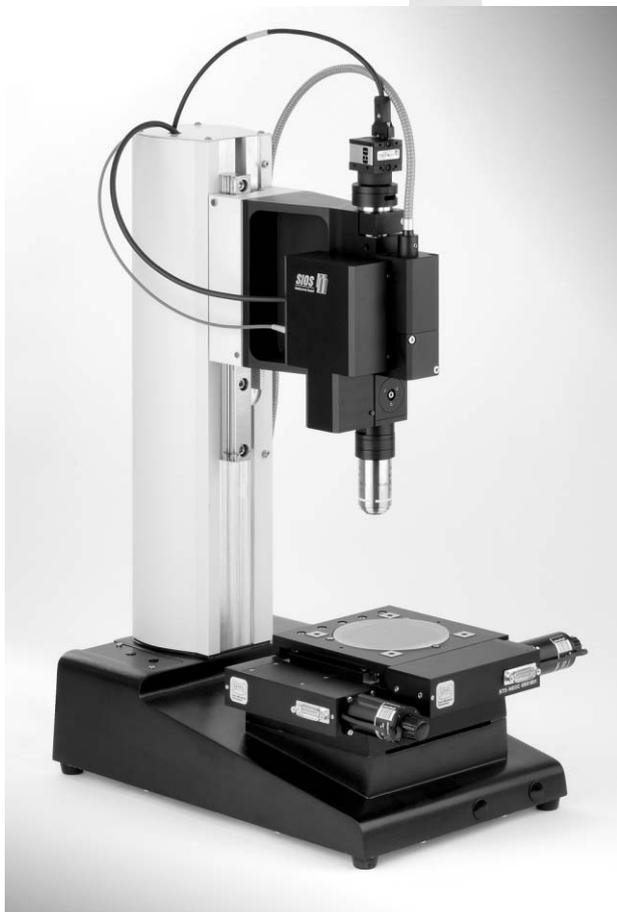


Figure 12 A homodyne vibrometer installed on a microscope.

Laser-interferometric vibrometers are ideal instruments for making accurate, noncontacting determinations of temporal changes in the positions of objects or surfaces having arbitrary roughnesses. They are capable of detecting mechanical vibrations at frequencies ranging from 0 to 2 MHz with subnanometer resolutions of better than 0.1 nm.

Homodyne vibrometers may either have a fixed focal length or be equipped with zoom lenses. Figure 11 depicts such a vibrometer equipped with a zoom lens.

Figure 12 illustrates an application of that vibrometer in combination with a microscope.

The vibrometer's measuring beam transits the microscope's optical train, yielding a spot diameter of about 2 μm . A combination of a microscope and an x - y translation stage that supports the object being measured allows extremely accurate positioning the measuring beam on small components, which allows conducting vibration measurements on MEMS, AFM-cantilevers, and other micromechanical components. Typical cantilever resonant frequencies fall in the low MHz range and may be acquired by the vibrometer, thanks to its frequency range of some MHz.

4 Summary

Recent advances in SIOS Meßtechnik GmbH's homodyne interferometers have been in two areas. One is that their metrological parameters have been improved. In addition to their reduced metrological errors, their length resolutions of ≤ 0.1 nm are demanded by many applications. The other is that further advances that significantly extend the application areas of homodyne interferometers have been developed. Homodyne interferometers are thus now capable of highly flexible covering new applications involving ultraprecise length and angle measurements in industry and research.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all those of their colleagues who contributed to the advances presented here. Special thanks are due the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Thuringian Ministry of Science, Research and Arts (ThMWFK), for promoting several projects in the field of nanometrology.

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Received: February 10, 2009, Accepted: March 2, 2009



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