A picture transmission system for transmitting a video signal of compressed bandwidth in which the transmitting station is provided with circuitry for dividing a picture to be transmitted into a plurality of blocks containing a checkerboard pattern of picture elements and regularly sampling video signals along corresponding diagonal rows of picture elements in the respective blocks, and a transmitter responsive to the output of the sampling circuitry for transmitting the sampled video signals along corresponding diagonal rows of picture elements in the respective blocks, and a transmitter responsive to the output of the sampling circuitry for transmitting the sampled video signals along corresponding diagonal rows of picture elements in the respective blocks, and a transmitting station is provided with circuitry for temporarily storing transmitted video signals of one frame, and circuitry for playing back the video signals of the frame at the original high bandwidth frequency.

9 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures
CRYSTAL OSCILLATOR 17

DIVIDER 19

SYNC PULSE GENERATOR 23

LINE COUNTER 27

DECODER 29

CLOCK GENERATOR 21

CLOCK SELECTOR 31

ANALOG TO DIGITAL CONVERTER 11

MODEM 13

RADIO TRANSMITTER 15

COMPOSITE SYNC TO VIDEO CAMERA
SAMPLING VIDEO COMPRESSION SYSTEM

ORIGIN OF THE INVENTION

The invention described herein was made by employees of the United States Government and may be manufactured and used by or for the Government for governmental purposes with out the payment of any royalties thereon or therefor.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention:

The present invention relates generally to a picture transmission system, and more particularly to such a system for transmitting a video signal of compressed bandwidth over a communication channel and for receiving and processing the transmitted video signal.

2. Description of the Prior Art:

Transmission of video data at reduced bandwidths has been the aim of many researchers in Government and private industry. Ideally, this reduction would come from the discovery and elimination of redundancy in the image. Practically, the data rate reduction comes at the expense of picture quality since identifying and coding the redundant parts of an image are rather complex tasks. This invention is primarily involved with the transmission of video data at a reduced data rate by first dividing the picture into discrete picture elements and then sending these picture elements at a reduced data rate. This method of sending specific picture elements at a reduced data rate has been investigated by other researchers. U.S. Pat. No. 3,309,461 issued on Mar. 14, 1967 to S. Deutsch and U.S. Pat. No. 3,342,937 issued on Sept. 19, 1967 to S. Deutsch use a pseudorandom sampling technique that allows the use of slow frame rates without the flicker effect one would ordinarily get with slow frame rates. More recently U.S. Pat. No. 3,769,452 issued on Oct. 30, 1973 to R. Stone expands on the Deutsch patent by making the pseudo-random technique compatible with normal fast scan television such as the NTSC standard television signal.

The principal disadvantages of the pseudo-random sampling technique are the poor resolution and intensity of the picture resulting from the small pinpoint samples that are projected onto the video screen. Additionally, the pseudo-random sampling pattern appears to crawl down the screen and detracts from the picture being displayed. Also, the picture quality is noticeably poorer than that of normal broadcast television and thus is unsuitable for use as its replacement.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore one object of the present invention to provide an improved system of video data transmission at reduced bandwidths.

It is another object of the present invention to provide such an improved system wherein it is unnecessary to resort to any type of pseudo-random sampling.

It is further object of the present invention to provide such an improved system in which the quality and resolution of the transmitted picture can be made indistinguishable from that of standard television pictures.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide such an improved system in which the implementation of the sampling circuitry is simple and straightforward.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide such an improved system in which different temporal data compression ratios can be selected at will.

The objects of the present invention are achieved by a picture transmission system for transmitting a video signal of compressed bandwidth in which the transmitting station is provided with sampling means for dividing a picture to be transmitted into a plurality of blocks containing a checkerboard pattern of picture elements and regularly sampling video signals along corresponding diagonal rows of picture elements in the respective blocks, and means responsive to the output of the sampling circuitry for transmitting the sampled video signals of one frame at a reduced bandwidth over a communication channel; and in which the receiving station is provided with a frame memory for temporarily storing transmitted video signals of one frame, and means for playing back the video signals of one frame at the original high bandwidth frequency.

The picture transmission system of this invention is characterized in that a video signal such as the standard television signal is sampled at a rate that will determine the new data rate. Each sample is held until the next sample is taken. Since the sampling rate is well below the video information rate, the sampled data can be transmitted over a much narrower bandwidth channel. For digital data transmission, the transmission bandwidth can be made equal to the digital data rate. Since this invention is not limited to digital transmission, the data can be transmitted in analog at a bandwidth that is approximately one-half the sampling rate. The receiver is so designed that it is synchronized with the sampling rate at the transmitter. The received samples are stored in a memory that has a capacity to store one full frame of video information. The memory is designed to store each sample and display it on a video monitor with the exact time relationship it had with the other samples taken at the transmitter. The sampling at the transmitter is done in such manner that all picture elements in the picture are sampled before a re-sampling of the picture takes place.

The foregoing as well as other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the appended drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing the transmitting station of this invention.

FIGS. 2 and 3 are diagrams for explaining the operation of this invention.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram showing the receiving station of this invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings, and more particularly to FIG. 1, there is illustrated in block form a transmitting station of a video picture transmission system in accordance with the invention. In the transmitting station, the picture elements of a video signal from a video camera (not shown) are scanned, combined, and displayed on a video monitor with the exact time relationship it had with the other samples taken at the transmitter. The sampling at the transmitter is done in such manner that all picture elements in the picture are sampled before a re-sampling of the picture takes place.

The video camera provides a conventional relatively wide-bandwidth video signal having a given line rate (typically 15,75 KHz corresponding to the scan of a 525-line high frame at a rate of 30 frames per second).
For conventional wide-bandwidth transmission, the analog-to-digital converter 11 can be operated at a sampling rate of 8.064 MHz, which will be referred to as the video information rate, which is 512 times the line rate, to produce a re-constituted video signal having the standard 512 picture elements in each horizontal scanning line, and resulting in a complete picture frame having a total of 512 times 525 picture elements. As specified in accordance with the invention, however, the 6-bit analog-to-digital converter 11 samples the video signal at a low frequency sampling rate which is an integral fraction of the video information rate of 8.064 MHz to produce a series of digital pulses which can be transmitted at a reduced bandwidth. This latter signal embodies a temporarily compressed portion of the video signal resulting in a re-constituted video signal having a fraction of the standard 512 picture elements in each horizontal scanning line. The digital signals thus obtained are supplied to a modem 4,025,950 to provide the video information rate signal.

The video information rate signal is fed to a clock generator 17 which has its response to the selection of the nth output of the divider 19, where the above described process is reversed to play back the sampled video signal at the original high bandwidth video information rate.

A stable crystal oscillator 17 is the origin of all synchronizing and sampling signals. The output of the crystal oscillator 17 is divided to 8.064 KHz by a divider 19 to provide the video information rate signal. The video information rate signal is led to a clock generator 21 and to the convert command input of the 6-bit analog-to-digital converter 11. The divider 19 also divides the output of the crystal oscillator 17 to 15.75 KHz to provide a timing signal at the standard video line frequency. This timing signal is fed to a sync pulse generator 23. The sync pulse generator produces horizontal and vertical synchronizing pulses to control the line and frame scanning speed of the video camera. The synchronizing pulse controlling the frame scanning speed is fed to a word generator 25 for use in forming a vertical synchronization word.

The word generator output is supplied to the modem 13 by means of which they are modulated on the carrier of a radio transmitter 15 and transmitted over an appropriate communications channel to the receiving station where the above described process is reversed to play back the sampled video signal at the original high bandwidth video information rate.

In FIG. 3, the darkened squares indicate the picture elements in one of the N times N picture element blocks sampled by this method during a representative scan frame. This mode of sampling results in the regular sampling of video signals along corresponding diagonal rows of picture elements in the respective blocks. Let it be assumed that the 525 lines of the video frame is not an even multiple of N. The stepping of the line counter 27 causes this pattern to shift vertically in successive first scans so that the apparent random sampling pattern represented by FIG. 3 ultimately (that is, in N scanned frames) covers ever picture element just once.

FIG. 4 depicts in block form a receiving station in accordance with the invention. In the receiving station, the low frequency demodulated signals from the radio receiver 33 are passed through a bit synchronized clock generator circuit 35. This circuit generates a 15.75 KHz timing signal (at the standard video line frequency) and an 8.064 MHz video information rate signal, both synchronized with the incoming digital data signals. A decoder circuit 37 detects the vertical synchronization word and combines it with the 15.75 KHz timing signal to produce a synchronizing signal for the video monitor 39 and for a memory section selector circuit 41. This synchronizing signal controls the line and frame scanning speed of the video monitor 39. The memory section selector circuit 41 routes the incoming 6-bit digital data embodying the extracted video signals onto one or more of the input lines of a video frame memory 43. Each section of the video frame memory comprises six simultaneously controllable recirculating shift registers to constitute a 6-bit parallel in, parallel out, recirculating picture element shift register. The number of memory sections equals the largest useful value of N, for example, 16. The 8.064 MHz video information rate signal is fed to a clock generator 45 which generates as many clock phases as memory sections, each at a frequency corresponding to that of the video information rate signal divided by the largest useful value of N and all equally shifted in phase from
each other. The clock phases thus obtained are used to
clock the video frame memory 43, one phase for each
section of memory. Each memory section recirculates
the stored picture element data at the smallest useful
sampling rate frequency for a period of one video
frame, until the stored picture element data is replaced
by incoming data corresponding to a new frame. Thus,
a complete frame of digitally encoded picture element
samples is stored in the video frame memory 43 during
the scan time of one frame. As will be discussed below,
for a temporal compression ratio corresponding to the
largest useful value of N, the memory section selector
circuit 41 routes the incoming digital data from a video
line into a single memory section, the data for consecu-
tive lines being routed into consecutive memory sec-
tions. For a temporal compression ratio which is half
that value, the memory section selector circuit 41
routes the two-fold increased digital data from each video
line obtained by sampling the picture elements at
twice the smallest useful sampling rate frequency into
two of the memory sections whose clock frequencies
are equally shifted in phase from each other. Although
two sections are enabled in this case, different data,
i.e., from alternately sampled picture elements, is
clocked into each section since each section is clocked
by a different clock phase. For a temporal compression
ratio which is one quarter of the largest useful value of
N, the memory section selector circuit 41 routes the
4-fold increased digital data from each video line into
to four of the memory sections whose clock frequencies
are equally shifted in phase from each other. The mem-
ory section selector circuit 41 can comprise a recycling
binary line counter clocked by the 15.75 KHz timing
signal and feeding the address lines of one or more
demultiplexors coupled to the input lines of the video
frame memory 43. For a temporal compression ratio
corresponding to the largest useful value of N, one
demultiplexer routes the data into consecutive sections
of the memory. For a temporal compression ratio cor-
responding to half that value, two demultiplexors, each
coupled to a separate half of the memory can be oper-
ated in parallel so that two sections are enabled for
every video line time. For a temporal compression ratio
which is one quarter of that value, four demultiplexors,
each coupled to a separate quarter of the memory, can
be operated in parallel so that four sections are enabled
for every video line time. A recycling binary counter
47, clocked by the 8.064 MHz video information rate
signal provided by the bit synchronized-clock genera-
tor circuit 35, feeds the input select line of a multi-
plexor 49 coupled to the output lines of the video frame
memory 43. The multiplexer selects consecutive sec-
tions of the memory at the video information rate and
transmits the selected picture element data to the origi-
nal high bandwidth frequency to a 6-bit digital-to-
analog converter 51. The digital-to-analog converter,
also clocked by the 8.064 MHz video information rate
signal, accepts the 6-bit encoded digital data and trans-
lates it into an analog voltage. The analog voltage is fed
to the video monitor 39 where the sampled video signal
is played back in the exact time relationship with which
it was sampled.

Obviously, numerous modifications and variations of
the present invention are possible in light of the above
teachings. It is therefore to be understood that within
the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be
practiced otherwise than as specifically described
herein.

What is claimed as new and desired to be secured by
Letters Patent of the United States is:
1. A picture transmission system for transmitting a
video signal of compressed bandwidth over a communi-
cations channel and for receiving and processing the
transmitted video signal, said picture transmission sys-
tem comprising:
a transmitting station including:
sampling means for dividing a picture frame into a
plurality of blocks containing a checkerboard
pattern of picture elements and regularly sam-
pling video signals along corresponding diagonal
rows of picture elements in the respective blocks;
means responsive to the output of said sampling
means for transmitting the sampled video signals
of one picture frame at a reduced bandwidth
over a communications channel;
a receiving station including:
a frame memory for temporarily storing transmit-
ted video signals of one picture frame; and
play-back means responsive to the output of said
frame memory for playing back the video signals
of one picture frame at the original high band-
width frequency.
2. The picture transmission system recited in claim 1
wherein said sampling means includes an analog-to-
digital converter, and said playback means includes a
digital-to-analog converter.
3. The picture transmission system recited in claim 1
wherein said transmitting means includes a modem.
4. The picture transmission system recited in claim 1
wherein said frame memory includes a plurality of
groups of simultaneously controllable re-circulating
shift registers.
5. A picture transmission system for transmitting a
video signal of compressed bandwidth over a communi-
cations channel and for receiving and processing the
transmitted video signal, said picture transmission sys-
tem comprising:
a transmitting station including:
sampling means for dividing a picture frame into a
plurality of blocks containing a checkerboard
pattern of picture elements and regularly sam-
pling video signals along corresponding diagonal
rows of picture elements in the respective blocks;
means responsive to the output of said sampling
means for transmitting the sampled video signals
of one picture frame at a reduced bandwidth
over a communications channel;
a receiving station including:
a frame memory for temporarily storing transmit-
ted video signals of one picture frame; and
play-back means responsive to the output of said
frame memory for playing back the video signals
of one picture frame at the original high band-
width frequency.
6. The picture transmission system recited in claim 5
wherein N is 16.
7. The picture transmission system recited in claim 5
wherein N is 8.
8. The picture transmission system recited in claim 5
wherein N is 4.
9. The method of transmitting a video signal of com-
pressed bandwidth over a communications channel and
receiving and processing the transmitted signal, comprising:

- dividing a picture frame into a plurality of blocks containing a checkerboard pattern of picture elements;
- sampling video signals along corresponding diagonal rows of picture elements in the respective blocks;
- transmitting the sampled video signals of one picture frame at a reduced bandwidth over a communications channel;
- receiving the transmitted video signals of one picture frame from the communications channel;
- storing temporarily the transmitted video signals of one picture frame; and
- playing back the video signals of one picture frame at the original high bandwidth frequency.