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THORLABS

1500M-GE - July 13, 2016
Item # 1500M-GE was discontinued on July 13, 2016. For informational purposes, this is a copy of the website content at that time and is valid only for the stated product.

► **1.4 Megapixel Monochrome and Color CCD Cameras**
► **Scientific-Grade Cameras with Low Read Noise**
► **Up to 23 Frames per Second for the Full Sensor**
► **Third-Party Software Support for LabVIEW, Matlab, µManager/ImageJ, and MetaMorph**

Application Idea
1500M-GE-TE Scientific CCD Camera in a Microscope Imaging System

Our Cameras are also Directly Compatible with our XY and Z Scanning Stages

1501C-CL-TE
Hermetically Sealed
Two-Stage Cooled Color Camera

Application Idea
1500M-GE Non-Cooled Monochrome Camera with C-Mount Camera Lens

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OVERVIEW&NBSP;

High Quantum Efficiency, Low-Noise, 1.4 Megapixel Cameras

- High Quantum Efficiency Maximizes Signal and SNR (60% Peak Quantum Efficiency in Monochrome Versions)
- Low Read Noise Improves the Threshold of Detectability Under Low Light Conditions
- Software-Selectable 20 MHz or 40 MHz Readout: Maximize Frame Rate (40 MHz) or Minimize Noise (20 MHz)
- Asynchronous Reset, Triggered, and Bulb Exposure Modes (See *Triggering* Tab for Details)
- 2/3" Format, 1392 x 1040 Monochrome or Color CCD Sensor with 6.45 µm Square Pixels (Sony ICX285AL or ICX285AQ)
- ThorCam GUI with 32- and 64-Bit Windows® 7 Support
- Third-Party Software Support for LabVIEW, MATLAB, µManager / ImageJ, C++, and MetaMorph
- Full-Featured, Well-Documented API for Software Developers

Applications

- Fluorescence Microscopy
- VIS/NIR Imaging
- Quantum Dots
- Multispectral Imaging
- Immunohistochemistry (IHC)
- Histopathology
- Retinal Imaging
- Fluorescence *In Situ* Hybridization (FISH)
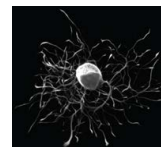
Click to Enlarge
This fluorescence image of a rat neuron was acquired using one of our 1.4 megapixel cameras. For more image samples, please see the *Applications* tab.

Scientific Camera Selection Guide
1.4 Megapixel
4 Megapixel
8 Megapixel
200 Frames Per Second, VGA Resolution

Thorlabs' 1.4 megapixel scientific CCD cameras, which offer up to 23 frames per second at 40 MHz readout of the full sensor, are specifically designed for microscopy and other demanding scientific imaging applications. These cameras are ideal for multispectral imaging, fluorescence microscopy, and other techniques that would benefit from high quantum efficiency and low noise.

Click to Enlarge
1500M-GE Camera Integrated into 60 mm Cage System

Standard Package or Hermetically Sealed TE-Cooled Camera

Our cameras are available in two package styles: a compact, non-cooled standard package and a hermetically sealed package with a two-stage thermoelectric cooler that cools the CCD. The fan-free design minimizes image blur from vibrations. Cooling the camera will reduce the dark current; however, the total dark current is also a function of exposure time. For high light levels requiring short exposure times (less than 1 second), a non-cooled camera is generally sufficient. A cooled camera is recommended for applications with low light levels requiring an exposure greater than 1 second. Please see the *Camera Noise* tab for more details on the various sources of camera noise and how they impact the choice between a standard and cooled camera.

Jason Mills,
TSI General Manager
Thorlabs recognizes the unique imaging requirements of each application. If you have any feedback, questions, or need a quote, please contact us.

Gigabit Ethernet or Camera Link Industry-Standard Interfaces

Thorlabs' scientific cameras are offered with a choice of Gigabit Ethernet (GigE) or Camera Link interface. GigE is ideal for situations where the camera must be far from the PC or there are multiple cameras that need to be controlled by the same PC. Each of these scientific cameras is provided with either a GigE or Camera Link frame grabber card and cables, a power supply, and software; more information on what's included is on the *Shipping List* tab. Your computer must have a free PCI Express slot to install the GigE or Camera Link interface. For more information on these two interface options, please see the *Interface* tab.

Contact Us

Click to Enlarge
1500M-GE Camera with MVL25M23 C-Mount Camera Lens

Our cameras have triggering options that enable custom timing and system control; for more details, please see the *Triggering* tab. External triggering requires

a connection to the auxiliary port of the camera. Accessory cables and boards to "break out" the individual signals are available below.

Each camera comes with a user-removable IR filter; for details on the transmission please see the *Specs* tab. If the filter is removed, it can be replaced with a user-supplied Ø1" (Ø25 mm) filter or another optic up to 4 mm thick; please see the camera manual (found under the red *Docs* icon below) for details.

The cameras feature standard C-Mount (1.000"-32) threading, and Thorlabs provides a full line of thread-to-thread adapters for compatibility with other thread standards, including the SM1 (1.035"-40) threading used on our Ø1" Lens Tubes. The front face also has 4-40 tapped holes for compatibility with our 60 mm Cage System. Four 1/4"-20 tapped holes, one on each side of the housing, are compatible with our Ø1" posts. These flexible mounting options make Thorlabs' scientific cameras the ideal choice for integrating into home-built imaging systems as well as those based on commercial microscopes.
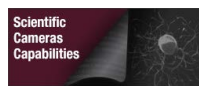
SPECS
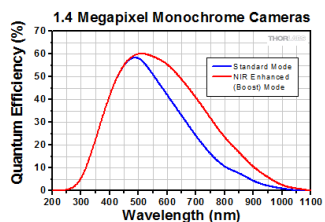
Click to Enlarge
Click for Raw Data
These curves show the quantum efficiency for the monochrome camera sensor. The NIR Enhanced (Boost) Mode can be selected via the software. The IR blocking filter should also be removed for maximum NIR sensitivity. Please note that the NIR Boost mode will reduce the antiblooming performance. Antiblooming reduces the effect of one overexposed pixel on neighboring pixels.
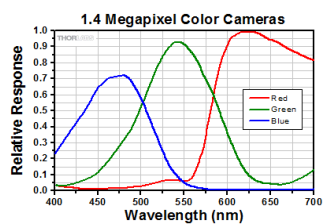
Click to Enlarge
These curves show the relative response for the color camera sensor's red, green, and blue pixels.
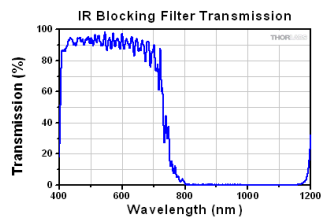
Click to Enlarge
Click for Raw Data
The IR blocking filter can be removed from the camera; instructions are provided in the manual. If the filter is removed, it can be replaced with a user-supplied Ø1" (Ø25 mm) filter or another optic up to 4 mm thick.

Monochrome Item #	1500M-GE	1500M-GE-TE	1500M-CL	1500M-CL-TE
Color Item #	1501C-GE	1501C-GE-TE	1501C-CL	1501C-CL-TE
Sensor Type	Monochrome: Sony ICX285AL Monochrome CCD (Grade 0) Color: Sony ICX285AQ Color CCD (Grade 0)			
Effective Number of Pixels (Horizontal x Vertical)	1392 x 1040			
Imaging Area (Horizontal x Vertical)	8.98 mm x 6.71 mm			
Pixel Size	6.45 µm x 6.45 µm			
Optical Format	2/3" Format (11 mm Diagonal)			
Peak Quantum Efficiency	Monochrome: 60% at 500 nm Color: See Graph to the Right			
Exposure Time	0 to 1000 seconds in 1 ms Increments[a]			
CCD Pixel Clock Speed	20 MHz or 40 MHz			
ADC[b] Gain	0 to 1023 Steps (0.036 dB/Step)			
Optical Black Clamp	0 to 1023 Steps (0.25 ADU/Step)[c]			
Vertical Hardware Binning[d]	Continuous Integer Values from 1 to 24			
Horizontal Software Binning	Continuous Integer Values from 1 to 24			

| Region of Interest	1 x 1 Pixel to 1392 x 1040 Pixels, Rectangular			
Read Noise[e]	Monochrome: <10 e- at 20 MHz Color: <6 e- at 20 MHz			
Digital Output	Monochrome: 12 Bit Color: 14 Bit			
Cooling	None	-20 °C at Ambient Room Temperature	None	-20 °C at Ambient Room Temperature
Host PC Interface	Gigabit Ethernet		Camera Link	
Lens Mount	C-Mount (1.000"-32)			

- Exposure time varies with operating mode.
- ADC = Analog-to-Digital Converter
- ADU = Analog to Digital Unit
- Camera Frame Rate is impacted by the Vertical Hardware Binning parameter.
- If your application is read-noise limited, we recommend using the lower CCD pixel clock speed of 20 MHz. For more information about read noise, and for examples of how to calculate the limiting factor of total camera noise, please see the *Camera Noise* tab.
- For more information on these two interface options, please see the *Camera Interface* tab.

Example Frame Rates at 1 ms Exposure Time[a]	20 MHz	40 MHz
Full Sensor (1392 x 1040)	12 fps	23 fps
Full Sensor, Bin by 2 (696 x 520)	23 fps	41 fps
Full Sensor, Bin by 10 (139 x 104)	77 fps	112 fps

- Camera Frame Rate is impacted by the Vertical Hardware Binning parameter.

Click to Enlarge
Non-Cooled
Camera
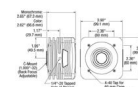
Click to Enlarge
Hermetically Sealed
Cooled Camera

APPLICATIONS

Thorlabs' Scientific-Grade CCD Cameras are ideal for a variety of applications. The photo gallery below contains images acquired with our 1.4 megapixel, 4 megapixel, 8 megapixel, and fast frame rate cameras.

To download some of these images as high-resolution, 16-bit TIFF files, please click here. It may be necessary to use an alternative image viewer to view the 16-bit files. We recommend ImageJ, which is a free download.

Thorlabs' Scientific Camera Applications (Click Images for Details)						
Intracellular Dynamics	Brightfield Microscopy	Ophthalmology (NIR)	Fluorescence Microscopy	Multispectral Imaging	Neuroscience	SEM/TEM
Thorlabs' Scientific Camera Recommended for Above Application						
1.4 Megapixel Fast Frame Rate	4 Megapixel 8 Megapixel	1.4 Megapixel	4 Megapixel 1.4 Megapixel	4 Megapixel 1.4 Megapixel	1.4 Megapixel	1.4 Megapixel 4 Megapixel Fast Frame Rate

Multispectral Imaging

The video to the right is an example of a multispectral image acquisition using a liquid crystal tunable filter (LCTF) in front of a monochrome camera. With a sample slide exposed to broadband light, the LCTF passes narrow bands of light that are transmitted from the sample. The monochromatic images are captured using a monochrome scientific camera, resulting in a datacube – a stack of spectrally separated two-dimensional images which can be used for quantitative analysis, such as finding ratios or thresholds and spectral unmixing.

In the example shown, a mature *capsella bursa-pastoris* embryo, also known as Shepherd's-Purse, is rapidly scanned across the 420 nm - 730 nm wavelength range using Thorlabs' KURIOS-WB1 Liquid Crystal Tunable Filter. The images are captured using our 1500M-GE Scientific Camera, which is connected, with the liquid crystal filter, to a T-Scope Microscope System. The overall system magnification is 10X. The final stacked/recovered image is shown below.

Click to Enlarge
Final
Stacked/Recovered
Image

Thrombosis Studies

Thrombosis is the formation of a blood clot within a blood vessel that will impede the flow of blood in the circulatory system. The videos below are from experimental studies on the large-vessel thrombosis in Mice performed by Dr. Brian Cooley at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Three lasers (532 nm, 594 nm, and 650 nm) were expanded and then focused on a microsurgical field of an exposed surgical site in an anesthenized mouse. A custom 1.4 Megapixel Camera with integrated filter wheel were attached to a Leica Microscope to capture the low-light fluorescence emitted from the surgical site. See the videos below with their associated descriptions for further infromation.

Arterial Thrombosis

In the video above, a gentle 30-second electrolytic injury is generated on the surface of a carotid artery in an atherogenic mouse (ApoE-null on a high-fat, "Western" diet), using a 100-micron-diameter iron wire (creating a free-radical injury). The site (arrowhead) and the vessel are imaged by time-lapse fluorescence-capture, low-light camera over 60 minutes (timer is shown in upper left corner – hours:minutes:seconds). Platelets were labeled with a green fluorophore (rhodamine 6G) and anti-fibrin antibodies with a red fluorophore (Alexa-647) and injected prior to electrolytic injury to identify the development of platelets and fibrin in the developing thrombus. Flow is from left to right; the artery is approximately 500 microns in diameter (bar at lower right, 350 microns).
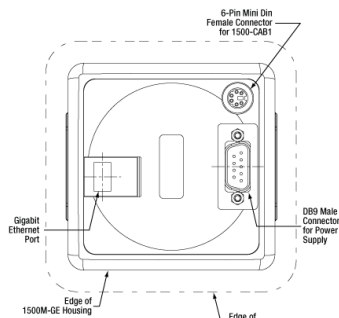
Venous Thrombosis

In the video above, a gentle 30-second electrolytic injury is generated on the surface of a murine femoral vein, using a 100-micron-diameter iron wire (creating a free-radical injury). The site (arrowhead) and the vessel are imaged by time-lapse fluorescence-capture, low-light camera over 60 minutes (timer is shown in upper left corner – hours:minutes:seconds). Platelets were labeled with a green fluorophore (rhodamine 6G) and anti-fibrin antibodies with a red fluorophore (Alexa-647) and injected prior to electrolytic injury to identify the development of platelets and fibrin in the developing thrombus. Flow is from left to right; the vein is approximately 500 microns in diameter (bar at lower right, 350 microns).
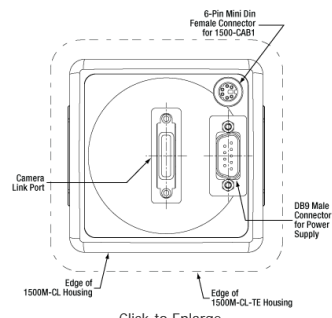
Reference: Cooley BC. In vivo fluorescence imaging of large-vessel thrombosis in mice. Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol 31, 1351-1356, 2011. All animal studies were done under protocols approved by the Medical College of Wisconsin Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.
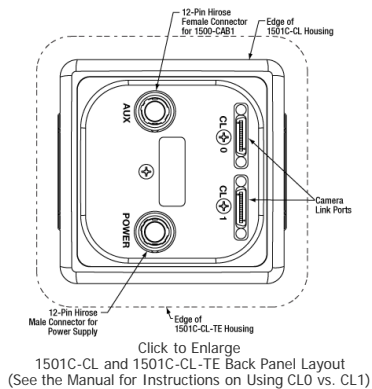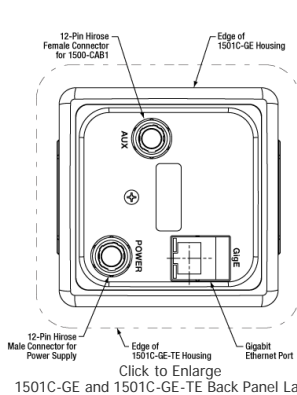
PIN DIAGRAMS
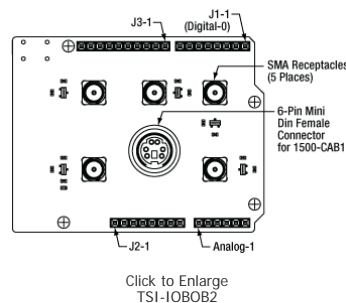
Camera Back Panel Connector Locations

6-Pin Mini Din
Female Connector
for 1500-CAB1

Gigabit
Ethernet
Port

DB9 Male
Connector
for Power
Supply

Edge of
1500M-GE Housing

Edge of
1500M-GE-TE Housing

Click to Enlarge
1500M-GE and 1500M-GE-TE Back Panel Layout

6-Pin Mini Din
Female Connector
for 1500-CAB1

Camera
Link Port

DB9 Male
Connector
for Power
Supply

Edge of
1500M-CL Housing

Edge of
1500M-CL-TE Housing

Click to Enlarge
1500M-CL and 1500M-CL-TE Back Panel Layout

Click to Enlarge
1501C-GE and 1501C-GE-TE Back Panel Layout

Click to Enlarge
1501C-CL and 1501C-CL-TE Back Panel Layout
(See the Manual for Instructions on Using CL0 vs. CL1)

BOB and TSI-IOBOB2 Break-Out Board Connector Locations

Click to Enlarge
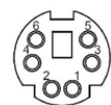TSI-IOBOB

Click to Enlarge
TSI-IOBOB2
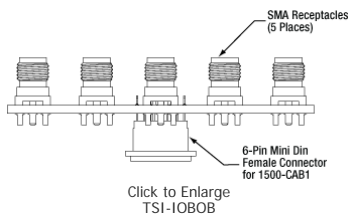
Auxiliary Connector: 6-Pin Mini Din Connector

The cameras and the break-out boards both feature female connectors, while the 1500-CAB1 cable features male connectors on both ends. Pins 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 are each connected to the center pin of an SMA connector on the break-out boards, while pin 4 (ground) is connected to each SMA connector housing.

Pin Number[a]	Signal	Description
1	LVAL (Output)	Refers to "Line Valid." It is an active-high TTL signal and is asserted during the valid period on each line. It returns low during the inter-line period between each line and during the inter-frame period between each frame.
2	CC1_OUT (Output)	An active-low TTL signal that is the buffered version of the Camera Link CC1 signal. The CC1 signal is driven from the host and is one of the software control signals for the camera. CC1_OUT allows triggering of other devices.
3	TRIGGER_IN (Input)	A TTL input used to trigger exposures on the transition from the high to low state.
4	GND	The electrical ground for the camera signals.
5	FVAL (Output)	Refers to "Frame Valid." It is a TTL output that is high during active readout lines and returns low between frames.
6	STROBE (Output)	A TTL output that is high during the actual sensor exposure time when in continuous, overlapped exposure mode. It is typically used to synchronize an external flash lamp or other device with the camera.

- The same pin numbers are used on the camera and the TSI-IOBOB and TSI-IOBOB2 break-out boards.

Female 6-Pin Mini Din Female Connector Pin Layout (Camera Auxiliary (AUX) Port, TSI-IOBOB, and TSI-IOBOB2)
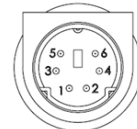
Male 6-Pin Mini Din MaleConnector Pin Layout(Both Ends of 1500-CAB1)

SOFTWARE

ThorCam™

Recommended System Requirements	
Operating System	Windows® 7 (32/64 Bit)
Processor (CPU)[a]	≥2.0 GHz Intel Core i5 or Core i7
Memory (RAM)	≥8 GB
Hard Drive	≥500 GB (SATA)[b]
Graphics Card	Dedicated[c] Adapter with ≥256 MB RAM
Power Supply	≥600 W
Motherboard	Camera Link (-CL) Cameras: One Unused PCIe x4/x8/x16 Slot GigE (-GE) Cameras: One Unused PCIe x1 Slot
Connectivity	USB or Internet Connectivity for Driver Installation

- Intel Core i3 processors and mobile versions of Intel processors may not satisfy the requirements.
- On-board/integrated graphics solutions present on Intel Core i5 and i7 processors are also acceptable.
- We recommend a solid state drive (SSD) for reliable streaming to disk during image sequence storage.

Software
Version 2.6

Click the button below to visit the ThorCam software page.

[Software ⬇]

ThorCam is a powerful image acquisition software package that is designed for use with our cameras on 32- and 64-bit Windows® 7 systems. This intuitive, easy-to-use graphical interface provides camera control as well as the ability to acquire and play back images. Third-party software support for packages such as LabVIEW, MATLAB, Metamorph, and µManager/ImageJ are included along with a development kit and application programming interfaces for the development of custom applications by OEMs and developers.

Click the Highlighted Regions to Explore ThorCam Features
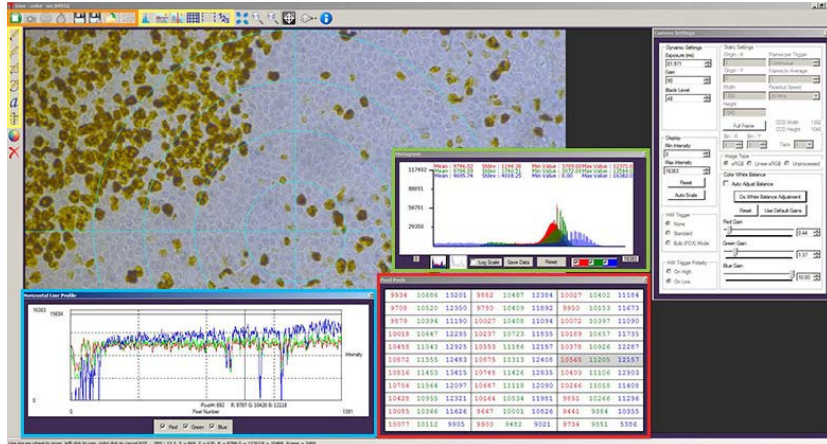
Camera Control and Image Acquisition

Camera Control and Image Acquisition functions are carried out through the icons along the top of the window, highlighted in orange in the image above. Camera parameters may be set in the popup window that appears upon clicking on the Tools icon. The Snapshot button allows a single image to be acquired using the current camera settings.

The Start and Stop capture buttons begin image capture according to the camera settings, including triggered imaging.

## Timed Series and Review of Image Series

The Timed Series control, shown in Figure 1, allows time-lapse images to be recorded. Simply set the total number of images and the time delay in between captures. The output will be saved in a multi-page TIFF file in order to preserve the high-precision, unaltered image data. Controls within ThorCam allow the user to play the sequence of images or step through them frame by frame.

Measurement and Annotation

As shown in the yellow highlighted regions in the image above, ThorCam has a number of built-in annotation and measurement functions to help analyze images after they have been acquired. Lines, rectangles, circles, and freehand shapes can be drawn on the image. Text can be entered to annotate marked locations. A measurement mode allows the user to determine the distance between points of interest.

The features in the red, green, and blue highlighted regions of the image above can be used to display information about both live and captured images.

ThorCam also features a tally counter that allows the user to mark points of interest in the image and tally the number of points marked (see Figure 2). A crosshair target that is locked to the center of the image can be enabled to provide a point of reference.
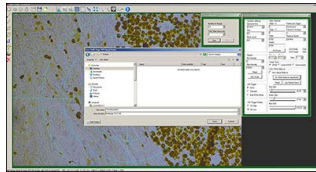
Click to Enlarge
Figure 1: A timed series of 10 images taken at 1 second intervals is saved as a multipage TIFF.
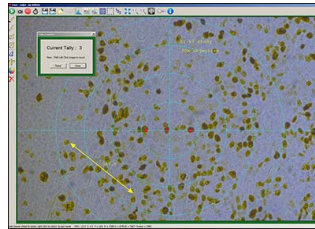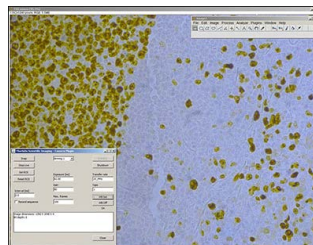

Click to Enlarge
Figure 2: A screenshot of the ThorCam Software. The tally function was used to mark three locations in the image. The line to the lower left was added using the measurement function, with the distance between the points in pixels displayed just above it.

Third-Party Applications and Support

ThorCam is bundled with support for third-party software packages such as LabVIEW, MATLAB, Metamorph, and µManager/ImageJ (see Figure 3). Both 32- and 64-bit versions of LabVIEW and MATLAB are supported. A full-featured and well-documented API, included with our cameras, makes it convenient to develop fully customized applications in an efficient manner, while also providing the ability to migrate through our product line without having to rewrite an application.

Click to Enlarge
Figure 3: The ImageJ plug-in for our scientific cameras supports live viewing directly in ImageJ.

Example Arduino Code for the TSI-IOBOB2 Shield for Arduino

Example Arduino Code

Click the button below to visit the download page for the sample Arduino programs for the TSI-IOBOB2 Shield for Arduino. Three sample programs are offered:

- Trigger the Camera at a Rate of 1 Hz
- Trigger the Camera at the Fastest Possible Rate
- Use the Direct AVR Port Mappings from the Arduino to Monitor Camera State and Trigger Acquisition

[Software ⬇]

SHIPPING LIST

In Addition to the Camera, Each Item Includes the Following:

- PCI Express Card (Either Gigabit Ethernet or Camera Link, Depending on the Item #)
- Cable (Either Gigabit Ethernet or Camera Link, Depending on the Item #)
- Power Supply, with Region-Specific Power Cord
- Wrench to Loosen Optical Assembly
- Lens Mount Dust Cap (Also Functions as IR Filter Removal Tool)
- CD with ThorCam Software
- Quick-Start and User Guides

Camera Link Contents Example

Click to Enlarge
Item # Shown: 1500M-CL

Gigabit Ethernet Contents Example

Click to Enlarge
Item # shown: 1500M-GE

CAMERA NOISE

Camera Noise and Temperature

Overview

When purchasing a camera, an important consideration is whether or not the application will require a cooled sensor. Generally, most applications have high signal levels and do not require cooling. However, for certain situations, generally under low light levels where long exposures are necessary, cooling will provide a benefit. In the tutorial below, we derive the following "rule of thumb": for exposures less than 1 second, a standard camera is generally sufficient; for exposures greater than 1 second, cooling could be beneficial; for exposures greater than 5 seconds, cooling is generally recommended; and for exposures above 10 seconds, cooling is usually required. If you have questions about which domain your application will fall, you might consider estimating the signal levels and noise sources by following the steps detailed in the tutorial below. Alternatively you can contact us, and one of our scientific camera specialists will help you decide which camera is right for you.

Sources of Noise

Noise in a camera image is the aggregate spatial and temporal variation in the measured signal, assuming constant, uniform illumination. There are several components of noise:

- **Dark Shot Noise (σ_D):** Dark current is a current that flows even when no photons are incident on the camera. It is a thermal phenomenon resulting from electrons spontaneously generated within the silicon chip (valence electrons are thermally excited into the conduction band). The variation in the amount of dark electrons collected during the exposure is the dark shot noise. It is independent of the signal level but is dependent on the temperature of the sensor as shown in Table 1.
- **Read Noise (σ_R):** This is the noise generated in producing the electronic signal. This results from the sensor design but can also be impacted by the design of the camera electronics. It is independent of signal level and temperature of the sensor, and is larger for faster CCD pixel clock rates.
- **Photon Shot Noise (σ_S):** This is the statistical noise associated with the arrival of photons at the pixel. Since photon measurement obeys Poisson statistics, the photon shot noise is dependent on the signal level measured. It is independent of sensor temperature.
- **Fixed Pattern Noise (σ_F):** This is caused by spatial non-uniformities of the pixels and is independent of signal level and temperature of the sensor. Note that fixed pattern noise will be ignored in the discussion below; this is a valid assumption for the CCD cameras sold here but may need to be included for other non-scientific-grade sensors.

Total Effective Noise

The total effective noise per pixel is the quadrature sum of each of the noise sources listed above:

$$\sigma_{eff} = \sqrt{\sigma_D^2 + \sigma_R^2 + \sigma_S^2}$$ (1)

Here, σ_D is the dark shot noise, σ_R is the read noise (typically less than 10 e- for scientific-grade cameras using the ICX285AL CCD; we will assume a value of 10 e- in this tutorial), and σ_S is the photon shot noise. If $\sigma_S >> \sigma_D$ and $\sigma_S >> \sigma_R$, then σ_{eff} is approximately given by the following:

$$\sigma_{eff} = \sqrt{\sigma_S^2} = \sigma_S$$ (2)

Again, fixed pattern noise is ignored, which is a good approximation for scientific-grade CCDs but may need to be considered for non-scientific-grade sensors.

Dark Shot Noise and Sensor Temperature

As mentioned above, the dark current is a thermal effect and can therefore be reduced by cooling the sensor. Table 1 lists typical dark current values for the Sony ICX285AL CCD sensor used in our 1.4 megapixel monochrome cameras. As the dark current results from spontaneously generated electrons, the dark current is measured by simply "counting" these electrons. Since counting electrons obeys Poisson statistics, the noise associated with the dark current I_D is proportional to the square root of the number of dark electrons that accumulate during the exposure. For a given exposure, the dark shot noise, σ_D, is therefore the square root of the I_D value from Table 1 (for a given sensor temperature) multiplied by the exposure time t in seconds:

$$\sigma_D = \sqrt{I_D t}$$ (3)

Since the dark current decreases with decreasing temperature, the associated noise can be decreased by cooling the camera. For example, assuming an exposure of 5 seconds, the dark shot noise levels for the three sensor temperatures listed in the table are

$$\sigma_D(25\ ^\circ\text{C}) = \sqrt{5 * 5} = 5\ \text{e-}$$

$$\sigma_D(0\ ^\circ\text{C}) = \sqrt{5 * 1} = 2.2\ \text{e-}$$ (4)

$$\sigma_D(-20\ ^\circ\text{C}) = \sqrt{5 * 0.1} = 0.7\ \text{e-}$$

Temperature	Dark Current (I_D)
-20 °C	0.1 e-/(s•pixel)
0 °C	1 e-/(s•pixel)
25 °C	5 e-/(s•pixel)

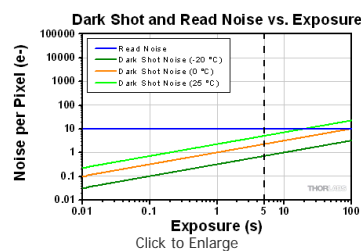**Table 1**: Nominal dark current values at several temperatures for the Sony ICX285AL CCD sensor.

Figure 1: Plot of dark shot noise and read noise as a function of exposure for three sensor temperatures. This plot uses logarithmic scales for both axes. The dotted vertical line at 5 s indicates the values calculated as the example in the text.

Figure 1, which is a plot of the dark shot noise as a function of exposure for the three temperatures listed in Table 1, illustrates how the dark shot noise increases with increasing exposure. Figure 1 also includes a plot of the upper limit of the read noise.

If the photon shot noise is significantly larger than the dark shot noise, then cooling provides a negligible benefit in terms of the noise, and our standard package cameras will work well.

Photon Shot Noise

If S is the number of "signal" electrons generated when a photon flux of N photons/second is incident on each pixel of a sensor with a quantum efficiency QE and an exposure duration of t seconds, then

$$S = (QE)Nt$$ (5)

From S, the photon shot noise, σ_S, is given by:

$$\sigma_S = \sqrt{(QE)Nt}$$ (6)

Example Calculations

If we assume that there is a sufficiently high photon flux and quantum efficiency to allow for a signal S of 10,000 e- to accumulate in a pixel with an exposure of 5 seconds, then the estimated shot noise, σ_S, would be the square root of 10,000, or 100 e-. The read noise is 10 e- (independent of exposure time). For an exposure of 5 seconds and sensor temperatures of 25, 0, and -25 °C, the dark shot noise is given in equation (4). The effective noise is:

$$\sigma_{eff} = \sqrt{\sigma_D^2 + \sigma_R^2 + \sigma_S^2}$$

$$\sigma_{eff}(25\ ^\circ\text{C}) = \sqrt{5^2 + 10^2 + 100^2} = 100.6\ \text{e-}$$ (7)

$$\sigma_{eff}(0\ °C) = \sqrt{2.2^2 + 10^2 + 100^2} = 100.5 \text{ e-}$$

$$\sigma_{eff}(-20\ °C) = \sqrt{0.7^2 + 10^2 + 100^2} = 100.5 \text{ e-}$$

The signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) is a useful figure of merit for image quality and is estimated as:

$$SNR = \frac{S}{\sigma_{eff}} \tag{8}$$

From Equation 7, the SNR values for the three sensor temperatures are:

$$SNR(25\ °C) = \frac{10000}{100.6} = 99.4 \tag{9}$$

$$SNR(0\ °C, -20\ °C) = \frac{10000}{100.5} = 99.5$$

As the example shows, there is a negligible benefit to using a cooled camera compared to a non-cooled camera operating at room temperature, and the photon shot noise is the dominant noise source in this example. In this case our standard package cameras should therefore work quite well.

However, if the light levels were lower such that a 100 second exposure was required to achieve 900 e- per pixel, then the shot noise would be 30 e-. The estimated dark shot noise would be 22.4 e- at 25 °C, while at -20 °C the dark shot noise would be 3.2 e-. The total effective noise would be

$$\sigma_{eff}(25\ °C) = \sqrt{22.4^2 + 10^2 + 30^2} = 38.7 \text{ e-}$$

$$\sigma_{eff}(-20\ °C) = \sqrt{3.2^2 + 10^2 + 30^2} = 31.8 \text{ e-} \tag{10}$$

From Equation 8, the SNR values are

$$SNR(25\ °C) = \frac{900}{38.7} = 23.3 \tag{11}$$

$$SNR(-20\ °C) = \frac{900}{31.8} = 28.3$$

In this example, the dark shot noise is a more significant contributor to the total noise for the 25 °C sensor than for the -25 °C sensor. Depending on the application's noise budget, a cooled camera may be beneficial.

Figure 2 shows plots of the different noise components, including dark shot noise at three sensor temperatures, as a function of exposure time for three photon fluxes. The plots show that dark shot noise is not a significant contributor to total noise except for low signal (and consequently long exposure) situations. While the photon flux levels used for the calculations are given in the figure, it is not necessary to know the exact photon flux level for your application. Figure 2 suggests a general metric based on exposure time that can be used to determine whether a cooled camera is required if the exposure time can be estimated, and these results are summarized in Table 2. If you find that your dominant source of noise is due to the read noise, then we recommend running the camera at a lower CCD pixel clock rate of 20 MHz, since that will offer a lower read noise.

Exposure	Camera Recommendation
<1 s	Standard Non-Cooled Camera Generally Sufficient
1 s to 5 s	Cooled Camera Could Be Helpful
5 s to 10 s	Cooled Camera Recommended
>10 s	Cooled Camera Usually Required

Table 2: From the results shown in Figure 1, these are the general "rule of thumb" recommendations related to cooling considerations based on the exposure requirements of an application. Please keep in mind that some applications are more sensitive to noise than others.
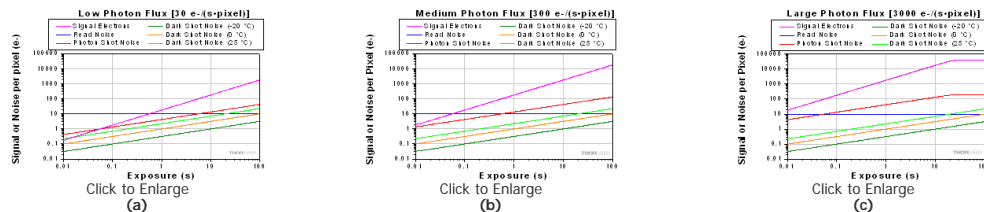

(a) Click to Enlarge

(b) Click to Enlarge

(c) Click to Enlarge

Figure 2: Noise from all sources as a function of exposure for three different photon fluxes: (a) low, (b) medium, and (c) high. In (c) the signal and photon shot noise saturate above approximately 20 seconds because the pixel becomes saturated at the corresponding incident photon levels. A quantum efficiency of 60% was used for the calculations. Note that these plots use logarithmic scales for both axes.

Other Considerations

Thermoelectric cooling should also be considered for long exposures even where the dark shot noise is not a significant contributor to total noise because cooling also helps to reduce the effects of hot pixels. Hot pixels cause a "star field" pattern that appears under long exposures. Figure 3 shows an example of this star field pattern for images taken using cameras with and without TEC cooling with an exposure of 10 seconds.

(a)   (b)

Figure 3: Images of the "star field" pattern that results from hot pixels using our (a) standard non-cooled camera and (b) our camera cooled to -20 °C. Both images were taken with an exposure of 10 seconds and with a gain of 32 dB (to make the hot pixels more visible). Please note that in order to show the pattern the images displayed here were cropped from the full-resolution 16 bit images. The full size 16 bit images may be downloaded here and viewed with software such as ImageJ, which is a free download.

INTERFACE

Thorlabs offers two interface options across our scientific camera product line: Gigabit Ethernet (GigE) and Camera Link. Once other camera decisions, such as field of view and frame rates, have been made, for many of our camera types it is necessary to choose one of these interfaces. It is also important to consider PC requirements, the table to the right lists our recommended computer configuration for using our scientific cameras with ThorCam software.

Definitions

- **Maximum Bandwidth:** The maximum speed at which data can be transferred from the camera to the host PC over an interface. This maximum data transfer rate does not impact the frame rate of the camera in any way; the frame rate of the camera is a function of the sensor, clock speed, and the number of taps. For cameras that have a data rate less than the interface's maximum bandwidth, the camera will be able to operate up to the maximum frame rate.

Gigabit Ethernet

GigE is ideal for situations requiring longer cable lengths, as well as for systems that require using multiple cameras with one computer. GigE supports a speed up to 100 MB/s and cable lengths up to 100 m. It also uses fairly inexpensive cables, but does require the use of a computer with a GigE card installed. Support for multiple cameras is easily achieved using a Gigabit Ethernet switch. However, the GigE card supplied with the camera is recognized as a public connection to the network; institutions with strict policies only allow registered devices and trusted connections. For any questions regarding using our GigE card at your institution, please contact your IT department.

Recommended System Requirements	
Operating System	Windows® 7 (32/64 bit)
Processor (CPU)[a]	≥2.0 GHz Intel Core i5 or Core i7
Memory (RAM)	≥8 GB
Hard Drive	≥500 GB (SATA)[b]
Graphics Card	Dedicated[c] Adapter with ≥256 MB RAM
Power Supply	≥600 W
Motherboard	Camera Link (-CL) Cameras: One Unused PCIe x4/x8/x16 Slot GigE (-GE) Cameras: One Unused PCIe x1 Slot
Connectivity	USB or Internet Connectivity for Driver Installation

- Intel Core i3 processors and mobile versions of Intel processors may not satisfy the requirements.
- On-board/integrated graphics solutions present on Intel Core i5 and i7 processors are also acceptable.
- We recommend a solid state drive (SSD) for reliable streaming to disk during image sequence storage.

Camera Link

Camera Link is ideal for applications requiring cameras with a very high data transfer rates of up to 850 MB/s. However, the maximum cable length is 10 m. Camera Link requires the use of the supplied Camera Link card and cables for connecting to a computer, which makes it difficult to connect more than one camera to a single computer. To operate our 4 and 8 megapixel cameras in quad-tap mode a Camera Link interface is required.

Scientific Camera Interface Summary

Interface	Gigabit Ethernet	Camera Link
Interface Image (Click to Enlarge)		
Maximum Cable Length	100 m	10 m
Maximum Bandwidth	100 MB/s	850 MB/s
Support for Multiple Cameras	Via Switch Topology (Click for Details)	Typically One Camera per Camera Link Card
Available Cameras	200 Frames per Second Scientific-Grade CCD Cameras 1.4 Megapixel Scientific-Grade CCD Cameras 4 Megapixel Scientific-Grade CCD Cameras 8 Megapixel Scientific-Grade CCD Cameras	

TRIGGERING

Triggered Camera Operation

Our scientific cameras have three externally triggered operating modes: streaming overlapped exposure, asynchronous triggered acquisition, and bulb exposure driven by an externally generated trigger pulse. The trigger modes operate independently of the readout (e.g., 20 or 40 MHz; binning) settings as well as gain and offset. Figures 1 through 3 show the timing diagrams for these trigger modes, assuming an active low external TTL trigger.
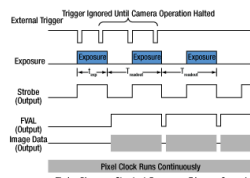
Click to Enlarge

Figure 1: Streaming overlapped exposure mode. When the external trigger goes low, the exposure begins, and continues for the software-selected exposure time, followed by the readout. This sequence then repeats at the set time interval. Subsequent external triggers are ignored until the camera operation is halted.
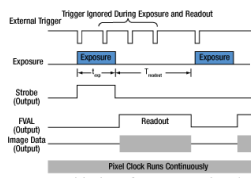
Click to Enlarge

Figure 2: Asynchronous triggered acquisition mode. When the external trigger signal goes low, an exposure begins for the preset time, and then the exposure is read out of the camera. During the readout time, the external trigger is ignored. Once a single readout is complete, the camera will begin the next exposure only when the external trigger signal goes low.
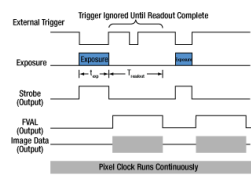
Click to Enlarge

Figure 3: Bulb exposure mode. The exposure begins when the external trigger signal goes low and ends when the external trigger signal goes high. Trigger signals during camera readout are ignored.

External triggering enables these cameras to be easily integrated into systems that require the camera to be synchronized to external events. The Strobe Output goes high to indicate exposure; the strobe signal may be used in designing a system to synchronize external devices to the camera exposure. External triggering requires a connection to the auxiliary port of the camera. We offer the 1500-CAB1 auxiliary cable as an optional accessory. Two options are provided to "break out" individual signals. The TSI-IOBOB provides SMA connectors for each individual signal. Alternately, the TSI-IOBOB2 also provides the SMA connectors with the added functionality of a shield for Arduino boards that allows control of other peripheral equipment. More details on these three optional accessories are provided below.

Trigger settings are adjusted using the ThorCam software. Figure 4 shows the Camera Settings window, with the trigger settings highlighted with red and blue squares. Settings can be adjusted as follows:

- **"HW Trigger" (Red Highlight) Set to "None":** The camera will simply acquire the number of frames in the "Frames per Trigger" box when the capture button is pressed in ThorCam.
- **"HW Trigger" Set to "Standard":** There are Two Possible Scenarios:
    - **"Frames per Trigger" (Blue Highlight) Set to Zero or >1:** The camera will operate in streaming overlapped exposure mode (Figure 1).
    - **"Frames per Trigger" Set to 1:** Then the camera will operate in asynchronous triggered acquisition mode (Figure 2).
- **"HW Trigger" Set to "Bulb (PDX) Mode":** The camera will operate in bulb exposure mode, also known as Pulse Driven Exposure (PDX) mode (Figure 3).

In addition, the polarity of the trigger can be set to "On High" (exposure begins on the rising edge) or "On Low" (exposure begins on the falling edge) in the "HW Trigger Polarity" box (highlighted in red in Figure 4).
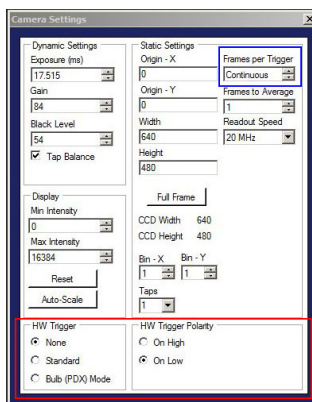

Figure 4: The ThorCam Camera Settings window. The red and blue highlighted regions indicate the trigger settings as described in the text.

Example Camera Triggering Configuration using Scientific Camera Accessories

As an example of how camera triggering can be integrated into system control is shown in Figure 5. In the schematic, the camera is connected to the TSI-IOBOB2 break-out board / shield for Arduino using a 1500-CAB1 cable. The pins on the shield can be used to deliver signals to simultaneously control other peripheral devices, such as light sources, shutters, or motion control devices. Once the control program is written to the Arduino board, the USB connection to the host PC can be removed, allowing for a stand-alone system control platform; alternately, the USB connection can be left in place to allow for two-way communication between the Arduino and the PC. Configuring the external trigger mode is done using ThorCam as described above.
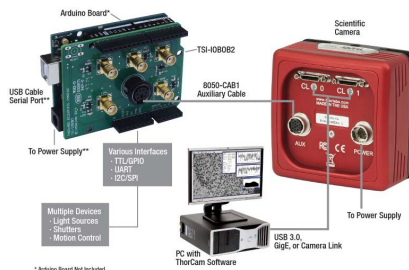

Figure 5: A schematic showing a system using the TSI-IOBOB2 to facilitate system integration and control.

Hide Monochrome 1.4 Megapixel Scientific CCD Cameras

Monochrome 1.4 Megapixel Scientific CCD Cameras

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
1500M-GE	1.4 Megapixel Monochrome Scientific CCD Camera, Standard Package, GigE Interface	$5,100.00	Today
1500M-GE-TE	1.4 Megapixel Monochrome Scientific CCD Camera, Hermetically Sealed Cooled Package, GigE Interface	$8,100.00	Today
1500M-CL	1.4 Megapixel Monochrome Scientific CCD Camera, Standard Package, Camera Link Interface	$7,000.00	Lead Time
1500M-CL-TE	1.4 Megapixel Monochrome Scientific CCD Camera, Hermetically Sealed Cooled Package, Camera Link Interface	$10,000.00	Lead Time

Hide Color 1.4 Megapixel Scientific CCD Cameras

Color 1.4 Megapixel Scientific CCD Cameras

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
1501C-GE	1.4 Megapixel Color Scientific CCD Camera, Standard Package, GigE Interface	$5,800.00	Today
1501C-GE-TE	1.4 Megapixel Color Scientific CCD Camera, Hermetically Sealed Cooled Package, GigE Interface	$8,800.00	Lead Time
1501C-CL	1.4 Megapixel Color Scientific CCD Camera, Standard Package, Camera Link Interface	$7,700.00	Today
1501C-CL-TE	1.4 Megapixel Color Scientific CCD Camera, Hermetically Sealed Cooled Package, Camera Link Interface	$10,700.00	Lead Time

[Hide Scientific Camera Optional Accessories](#)

Scientific Camera Optional Accessories

Click to Enlarge

These optional accessories allow for easy use of the auxiliary port of the scientific camera. These items should be considered when it is necessary to externally trigger the camera, to monitor camera performance with an oscilloscope, or for simultaneous control of the camera with other devices. Additional details about the cameras' triggering modes can be found on the *Triggered Operation* tab above.

Click to Enlarge
A 1500M-GE camera shown with the 1500-CAB1 cable and TSI-IOBOB break-out board. The board "breaks out" the 6-pin Mini Din connector into five SMA connectors. SMA cables can then be attached to, for example, monitor signals on an oscilloscope.

Auxiliary I/O Cable (1500-CAB1)
The 1500-CAB1 is a 10' (3 m) long cable that mates with the auxiliary connector on our 1.4 megapixel CCD cameras featured above and provides the ability to externally trigger the camera as well as monitor status output signals. Both ends of the cable feature a male 6-pin Mini Din connector. This cable is ideal for use with our interconnect break-out boards described below. For information on the pin layout, please see the *Pin Diagrams* tab above.

Interconnect Break-Out Board (TSI-IOBOB)
The TSI-IOBOB is designed to "break out" the 6-pin Mini Din auxiliary connector found on our scientific CCD cameras into five SMA connectors. The SMA connectors can then be connected using SMA cables to other devices to provide a trigger input to the camera or to monitor camera performance. A typical setup is shown in the image to the right, where a 1500M-GE camera is connected to a TSI-IOBOB using a 1500-CAB1 cable that must be purchased separately. The pin configurations are listed on the *Pin Diagrams* tab above.

Click for Details
A schematic showing a TSI-IOBOB2 connected to an Arduino in a custom camera system.

Interconnect Break-Out Board / Shield for Arduino (TSI-IOBOB2)
The TSI-IOBOB2 offers the same breakout functionality of the camera signals as the TSI-IOBOB. Additionally, it functions as a shield for Arduino, by placing the TSI-IOBOB2 shield on a Arduino board supporting the Arduino Uno Rev. 3 form factor. While the camera inputs and outputs are 5 V TTL, the TSI-IOBOB2 features bi-directional logic level converters to enable compatibility with Arduino boards operating on either 5 V or 3.3 V logic. Sample programs for controlling the scientific camera are available for download from our software page, and are also described in the manual (found by clicking on the red Docs icon below). For more information on Arduino, or for information on purchasing an Arduino board, please see www.arduino.cc.

The image to the right shows a schematic of a configuration with the TSI-IOBOB2 with an Arduino board integrated into a camera imaging system. The camera is connected to the break-out board using a 1500-CAB1 cable that must be purchased separately. The pins on the shield can be used to deliver signals to simultaneously control other peripheral devices, such as light sources, shutters, or motion control devices. Once the control program is written to the Arduino board, the USB connection to the host PC can be removed, allowing for a stand-alone system control platform; alternately, the USB connection can be left in place to allow for two-way communication between the Arduino and the PC. The compact size of 2.70" x 2.10" (68.6 mm x 53.3 mm) also aids in keeping systems based on the TSI-IOBOB2 compact.

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
1500-CAB1	I/O Cable with Ferrite Core for 1.4 Megapixel Scientific CCD Cameras	$30.00	Today
TSI-IOBOB	I/O Break-Out Board for Scientific CCD Cameras	$45.00	Today
TSI-IOBOB2	Customer Inspired!I/O Break-Out Board for Scientific CCD Cameras with Shield for Arduino (Arduino Board not Included)	$50.00	Today

Visit the *1.4 Megapixel Scientific Cameras for Microscopy* page for pricing and availability information:
https://www.thorlabs.com/newgrouppage9.cfm?objectgroup_id=6592