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Highlights from the February 2013 issue of Photonics Spectra

Photonics Accelerates Bandwidth Race
 Technological developments in photonics are the future of mobile communications, from speedy interconnects to novel types of fibers and lasers. How remarkable that the first iPhone was released just over five years ago, back in the “dinosaur-phone era” of 2007. It was only 10 years ago that PDAs (personal digital assistants) were the hottest tool to organize a busy life, even though accessing the Internet with one, much less a phone, was limited and remarkably expensive. Now, thanks to the phenomenal growth of smartphones and tablets, the demand for bandwidth is greater than ever.

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Data Demands Drive Free-Space Optics
 Light-based options promise to pick up where radio-frequency technology leaves off. In wireless communications, things are getting crowded. Growing data demands are bumping up against radio frequency capacity. In response, researchers and companies are looking into using infrared, visible and ultraviolet light to provide point-to-point communication through air, space and water.

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QDs Are Entering the Mainstream
 Unique and versatile, quantum dots are no longer confined to the fringes of abstract research. They are finding their way into televisions, computer screens, lighting devices and even our bodies. With the promise of better light quality and unparalleled color performance, these minute particles also are popping up in some surprising places.

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Thermoelectric Cooler Controller Design Made Simpler
 TEC controller design experts offer tips to lower the cost and simplify the design of the devices, and to increase their ease of use. Thermoelectric cooler controllers are becoming more prevalent in thermal management designs because they can drive a thermoelectric cooler to stabilize the temperature of laser diodes or passive components used in communications equipment.

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Fast Camera Improves Surveillance on the Seas
 For the purposes of maritime surveillance, including coastal water inspection and intervention in dangerous situations, images must be available quickly - ideally, in real time. Ground personnel and decision makers have to know immediately when water contamination is an issue or when objects such as lost loads are drifting in the water; the information is hardly useful when the detected objects have already drifted somewhere else.

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