Backlit displays (the right half of the diagram) provide fine sub-pixel modulation by varying the extinction of the polarized light source with an array of **liquid crystal** cells that rotate the polarization proportional to an alternating drive voltage. The **backlight** itself can be constant luminance, globally dimmed to improve sequential contrast, or locally dimmed to improve simultaneous contrast.

Emissive displays (the left half of the diagram) provide an array of **active emitters** (historically plasma cells, but now light-emitting diodes) that produce the light for each sub-pixel, proportional to a drive current. Imagery is provided through the **input ports**, converted into the native color space of the display, and fed to the drive circuitry. The **active matrix** provides a transistor at each sub-pixel to maintain the electrical drive for both liquid crystal cells and active emitters while the rest of the display is being refreshed.