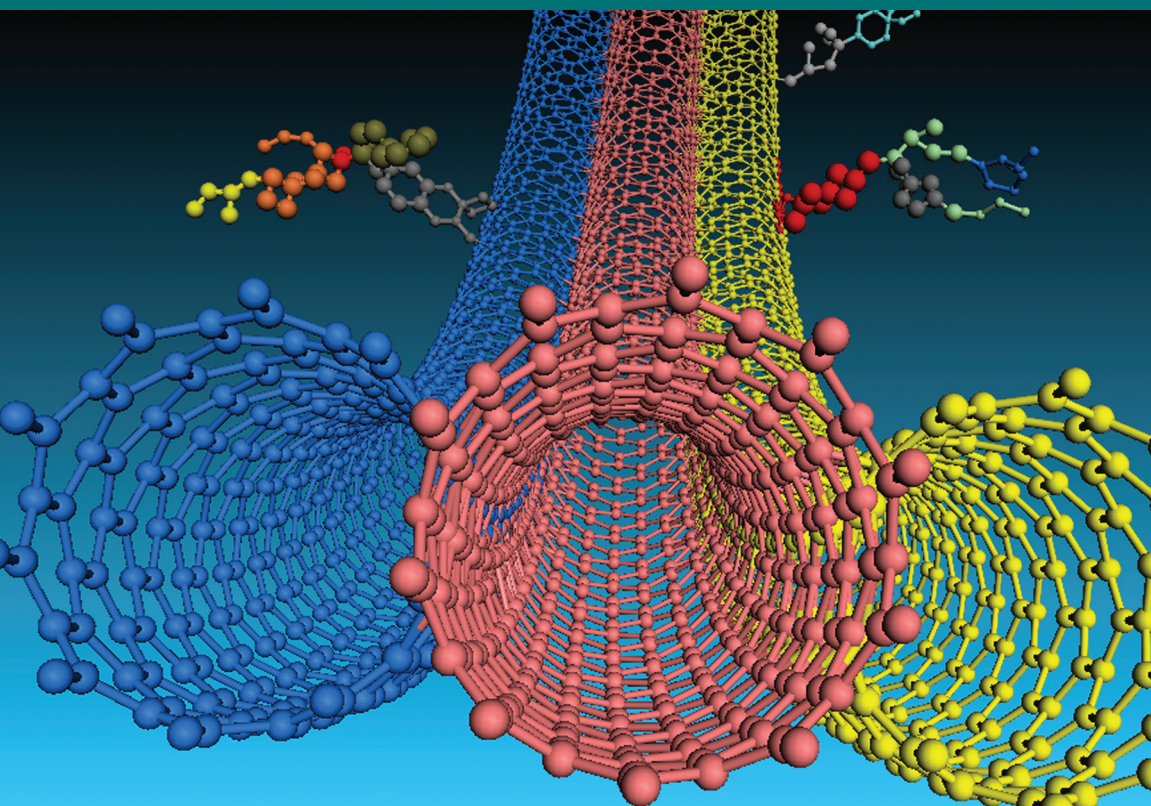


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Carbon-Based Nanomaterials — Volume 1



Carbon Nanotubes and Their Applications

edited by
Qing Zhang



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Preface

Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) are a fantastic member of the carbon family. Their crystal structures are very close to graphite, belonging to sp^2 -bonded carbon, rather than sp^3 -hybridized carbon in diamond. Topologically, a single-wall CNT (SWCNT) can be constructed by rolling up a single layer of graphite or graphene along a certain direction into a tiny cylinder with a possible diameter from subnanometer to a few nanometers. Interestingly, the rolling-up direction and diameter or the chirality of an SWCNT determine its fundamental properties. Some SWCNTs have small energy bandgaps, showing semiconducting characteristics, whereas others do not have the bandgap and they are metallic ones. For CNTs with more than one cylindrical shell, the interactions between the shells must be taken into account. Indeed, different CNTs have different properties and application potentials. Until now, CNTs have not only attracted enormous research interest but also stimulated CNT-related applications and industrial development. This can be seen through the facts that more than 77,000 articles about CNTs have been published (ISI database, February 2012) and many CNT-relevant products are available on the market.

Extensive study of CNTs began in 1991 when very thin CNTs were observed by S. Iijima. Although tremendous progress has been made in understanding the fundamental properties of CNTs, optimizing CNT synthesis conditions and post-treatment processes, and exploring various potential applications, etc., are still very hot and active topics nowadays. The electrical and optical properties of SWCNTs are dominated by their chiralities. To obtain chirality-pure SWCNTs has been a dream for a long time. Precisely controlling CNT synthesis parameters and carefully selecting the catalysts used are confirmed to be the key factors that affect the chirality distribution of the grown CNTs. A large number of post-treatment processes have been reported to sort CNTs in terms of their semiconducting or metallic properties, their thickness and lengths, etc. The assembly of CNTs in desirable and controllable ways is another technical challenge. Many unique superior properties, say high electron

mobility in electronic applications, high Young's modulus and yield strength in mechanic applications, etc., can be brought into play only when CNTs are uniformly oriented. Major advances in handling CNTs have been propelled by enormous interest in assembling CNTs. In contrast, when the orientation of CNTs is not a critical factor to be considered, CNT random network can be directly incorporated into the devices that could be printed on a soft substrate in a large scale at a low fabrication cost. SWCNTs can be regarded as a one-dimensional material that forms a perfect platform on which experimentalists could explore the mystery of physical puzzles observed only in a low-dimensional object. Super high sensitivity of CNTs, plus their high stability in most chemical environments and high compatibility to most biological materials, promotes CNTs to be utilized as the sensing elements in a wide variety of sensors for chemical and biological detections. Typically, CNT sensors are of much higher sensitivities than their counterparts made from other materials. However, how to improve the selectivity of CNT sensors is a big concern. CNT/polymers and CNT/metal composites have emerged as a class of new functional materials that are reinforced through embedded CNT network in favor of not only the composites' mechanical properties but also electrical properties. Besides, the study of CNTs and their composites in damping and viscoelastic properties is attracting more research attention. The investigation of these properties could lead to a feasible solution to dealing with the vibration damping in micro-/nanodevices. CNTs are not totally "black." Semiconducting CNTs are of direct bandgaps, and this greatly facilitates CNT-based optical and optoelectronic applications and opens the field of CNT nanophotonics.

This book collects 16 state-of-the-art chapters that cover the fundamental properties, relevant technologies and potential applications of CNTs. It gives an overview of the current status of the research and development activities of CNTs. It will be a valuable reference for scientists, researchers, engineers and students who wish to know more about CNTs. It will appeal to anyone involved in nanodevices, nanomaterials and nanofabrication.

Chapter 1 addresses the crystal structure and electronic band structure of SWCNTs. The density of states and singularities are presented to facilitate the discussion on the electronic and optical properties and basic phonon features of SWCNTs. Chapter 2 reviews

various CNT synthesis techniques, especially chemical vapor deposition techniques, by which CNTs could grow at much lower temperatures compared with other commonly used methods. New approaches to efficiently growing high-quality CNTs at a large scale, macroscopically long CNTs, directed-grown CNTs, and chirality-pure CNTs are reviewed. The state-of-the-art synthetic assembly and post-synthetic assembly of CNTs are summarized in Chapter 3. It covers not only the assembly/alignment processes at a small scale for laboratory research purposes, but those for industrial production. Orientated CNTs are achievable in several post-synthetic treatments through electrical force, dielectrophoretic force, shear adhesion force, etc. Chapter 4 focuses on separating semiconducting CNTs from metallic ones. Several separation approaches with remarkably high capabilities are introduced in terms of the separation mechanisms and technical details. The electron transport properties and the electrical conductance of CNTs in response to electrical fields in the geometries of single-electron transistors, field-effect transistors, etc., are reviewed in Chapter 5. High carrier mobility is one of the key merits for CNT high frequency/speed electronic applications. The fabrication and high-frequency characterization of CNT field-effect transistors are summarized in Chapter 6. It has been demonstrated that tunneling field-effect transistors are capable of breaking through the smallest possible subthreshold swing for conventional metal-oxide-semiconductor field-effect transistors. In Chapter 7, the recent developments in CNT-based tunneling field-effect transistors are highlighted. High degree of CNT orientation may not be critical for some applications. A large category of CNT electronic devices are directly built on CNT random networks. Chapter 8 introduces several main techniques, including selective elimination or destruction of metallic CNTs and photolithography-assisted stripping to enhance the semiconducting behaviors of CNT networks. Metallic and multiwall CNTs have high electrical conductivities, and they also have extremely high aspect ratios. These make CNTs a very good material for electron field emitters. A comprehensive review on the recent development of CNT field emission technology for vacuum electronic applications in medical x-ray imaging and radiotherapy is presented in Chapter 9. There have been some arguments on ultrahigh temperature superconductivity of multiwall CNTs (MWCNTs). Chapter 10 presents several unusual

magnetic experimental findings from Ni magnetic nanoparticles embedded in MWCNTs. The arguments on ultrahigh-temperature superconductivity of MWCNTs are revisited. The properties of CNTs are highly sensitive to the details how they interact with their surroundings. Based on these, a variety of CNT sensors have been developed. In Chapter 11, the electrocatalytic properties of CNTs and recent advances in CNT-based electrochemical biosensors are presented. In addition, CNT-based gas sensors and their sensing mechanisms are discussed in Chapter 12. Several measures to enhance the selectivity of CNT sensors are also highlighted. CNTs have excellent mechanical properties. The strength and weaknesses of applying CNTs and their composites to damping and viscoelastic applications are addressed in Chapter 13. Recent efforts have been devoted to spin and assemble CNTs into continuous lightweight and high-performance fibers. Various spinning methods, accompanied with different functionalities during spinning, are described in Chapter 14. The current status, future research focuses and challenges of several major CNT mechanical applications, including CNT nanomechanics and CNT actuators, are presented in Chapter 15. Finally, the origin of the optical nonlinearity of CNTs, the nonlinear effects, and potential CNT nonlinear applications are presented in Chapter 16.

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Qing Zhang
Singapore, February 2012

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
1. Fundamental Properties of Carbon Nanotubes	1
<i>Jianping Zou and Qing Zhang</i>	
1.1 Bonding Between Carbon Atoms	2
1.2 Structure of a Single-Wall Carbon Nanotube	3
1.3 Electronic Structure of Single-Wall Carbon Nanotubes	5
1.3.1 Graphene Electronic Structure	6
1.3.2 Band Structure of SWCNTs from Graphene	10
1.3.3 Effect of Curvature on Nanotube Bandgap	13
1.3.4 Density of States (DOS) in SWCNTs	14
1.4 Phonon Modes of Carbon Nanotubes	15
1.4.1 Phonon Dispersion Relations for Graphene	15
1.4.2 Phonon Dispersion Relations for Carbon Nanotubes	18
1.5 Optical Properties of Carbon Nanotubes	20
1.5.1 Selection Rules	20
1.5.2 Excitons	23
1.6 Summary	27
2. Synthesis of Carbon Nanotubes	31
<i>San Hua Lim and Jianyi Lin</i>	
2.1 Introduction	31
2.2 Arc Discharge	33
2.3 Laser Ablation	34
2.4 Chemical Vapor Deposition	34
2.4.1 Scalable Production of Carbon Nanotubes	34
2.4.1.1 Nano agglomerate fluidized (NAF) Process	34
2.4.1.2 HiPco process	39
2.4.1.3 CoMoCat process	40
2.4.1.4 Floating catalyst CVD method	42
2.4.2 Macroscopic Assembly of CNTs	42

2.4.2.1	Direct synthesis of long CNT strands by floating catalyst CVD	43
2.4.2.2	Spinning CNT fibers	46
2.4.2.3	Super growth of aligned carbon nanotubes	49
2.4.3	Plasma-Assisted Growth of CNTs	52
2.4.3.1	Low-temperature synthesis	52
2.4.3.2	Alignment of CNTs within plasma sheath	56
2.4.3.3	Controlled growth of CNTs on a substrate with desired patterns	59
2.5	Purification and Sorting of CNTs for Applications	60
2.5.1	Purification	60
2.5.2	Sorting of SWCNTs	61
2.5.2.1	Surfactant-assisted dispersion of SWCNTs	61
2.5.2.2	Separation of metallic from semiconducting SWCNTs	62
2.6	Conclusions	65
3.	Assembly of Carbon Nanotubes Toward Practical Applications	73
	<i>Yehai Yan, Jian Cui, and Qing Zhang</i>	
3.1	Introduction	74
3.2	Necessity of Assembling CNTs	75
3.2.1	Molecular Devices	75
3.2.2	CNT/Polymer Composites	77
3.3	Approaches to CNT Assembly	78
3.3.1	Synthetic Approaches	78
3.3.1.1	Perpendicularly aligned CNTs	78
3.3.1.2	Parallel aligned CNTs	80
3.3.1.3	Perpendicularly aligned and patterned CNTs	83
3.3.1.4	Parallel aligned and patterned CNTs	84
3.3.2	Post-Synthetic Approaches	85
3.3.2.1	Perpendicularly aligned CNTs	85
3.3.2.2	Parallel aligned CNTs	87
3.3.2.3	Perpendicularly aligned and patterned CNTs	98

3.3.2.4	Parallel aligned and patterned CNTs	99
3.4	Conclusions	108
4.	Separation of Metallic and Semiconducting Single-Wall Carbon Nanotubes	121
	<i>Yuan Chen, Andrew Keong Ng, Shihe Bai, Rongmei Si, Li Wei, and Qiang Wang</i>	
4.1	Introduction	122
4.2	SWCNT Structure and Metallicity	123
4.3	Electric Conductivity	125
4.4	Dielectrophoresis	125
4.5	Chemical Reactivity	127
4.6	Separation Techniques	131
4.7	Metallicity Abundance Evaluation	134
4.8	Summary	136
5.	Electronic Applications of Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes	149
	<i>Hong Li and Qing Zhang</i>	
5.1	Field-Effect Transistors and Logic Circuits	150
5.1.1	Schottky-Contact CNTFETs	150
5.1.2	Ohmic-Contact CNTFETs	159
5.1.3	CNTFET-Based Logic Circuits	161
5.1.4	Performance Limit of CNTFETs	167
5.2	Single-Electron Transistors and Circuits	171
5.2.1	SWCNT-Based SETs	173
5.3	Memory Devices	184
5.4	Other Electronic Devices	194
5.5	Summary Remarks	194
6.	Carbon Electronics for High-Frequency Applications	203
	<i>Henri Happy, Laurianne Nougaret, Nan Meng, Emmanuelle Pichonat, Vincent Derycke, Dominique Vignaud, and Gilles Dambrine</i>	
6.1	High-Frequency Carbon Nanotube Field Effect Transistor	204
6.1.1	Conditions for High-Frequency Performance	204

6.1.2	Device Fabrication	205
6.1.3	Device Characterization	208
6.1.3.1	Direct current (dc) characterization	208
6.1.3.2	High-frequency characterization	209
6.2	High-Frequency Graphene Field Effect Transistor	211
6.2.1	Graphene Synthesis	211
6.2.2	G NRFET Fabrication	212
6.2.3	DC Characterization of G NRFET	213
6.2.4	HF Characterization of G NRFET	215
6.2.5	Conclusion	216
7.	From Bulk TFETs to CNT-TFETs: Status and Trends	221
	<i>Chong Guan Low and Qing Zhang</i>	
7.1	Introduction	221
7.2	Basic Structure	222
7.3	Device Operation and Issues of TFETs	223
7.3.1	Working Principle	223
7.3.2	Subthreshold Swing	224
7.3.3	Off-Current, I_{off}	226
7.3.4	On-Current, I_{on}	226
7.3.5	Ambipolar Conduction	228
7.4	TFET Design Trends	229
7.4.1	Source/Drain Engineering	229
7.4.2	Channel Engineering	231
7.4.3	Double Gate (DG)/Multi-Gate (MuG)	233
7.4.4	Gate Dielectric: Dielectric Constant and Thickness	234
7.4.5	Body Thickness	237
7.5	Temperature Dependency of TFETs	239
7.6	Carbon Nanotube-Based Tunneling FETs	240
7.7	Summary	246
8.	Transistors Based on Carbon Nanotube Random Networks	251
	<i>Lain-Jong Li and Chun-Wei Lee</i>	
8.1	Introduction	252
8.2	Structure of Single-Wall Carbon Nanotubes	253
8.2.1	Geometrical Structure	253

8.2.2	Electronic Structure	254
8.2.2.1	Tight binding calculation from 2-D graphite to nanotube	255
8.2.2.2	Density of states (DOS) of S WCNT	258
8.2.3	Individual Single-Wall Carbon Nanotube-Based Transistor (SWCNT-FET)	259
8.3	Sorting Carbon Nanotubes	261
8.3.1	Electrophoresis	262
8.3.2	Polymer Wrapping	263
8.3.3	DNA Wrapping	265
8.3.4	Selective Functionalization	267
8.4	Transistors Based on As-Grown SWCNT Networks	270
8.4.1	Aligned SWCNTs from CVD Growth	271
8.4.2	Random SWCNTs from CVD Growth	272
8.5	Solution Processable SWCNT Networks	274
8.5.1	Ultracentrifugation	274
8.5.2	De-Bundling	276
8.5.3	Selective Destruction of Metallic Tubes	278
8.6	Conclusions	282
9.	Carbon Nanotube Field Emission Technology for Vacuum Electronic Device Applications	289
	<i>Sigen Wang</i>	
9.1	Introduction	290
9.2	Carbon Nanotube Field Emission	290
9.3	Applications of Carbon Nanotube Field Emission in Vacuum Electronic Devices	294
9.3.1	Carbon Nanotube Field Emission x-Ray Sources for Medical Imaging and Radiotherapy Applications	294
9.3.1.1	Carbon nanotube field emission x-ray tubes	295
9.3.1.2	Carbon nanotube field emission single-beam dynamic micro-CT scanner	298
9.3.1.3	Carbon nanotube field emission multi-beam stationary micro-CT scanner	301

9.3.1.4	Carbon nanotube field emission multi-beam micro-radiotherapy system	305
9.3.2	Carbon Nanotube Field Emission High-Power Microwave Devices	310
9.3.3	Carbon Nanotube Field Emission Displays	312
9.4	Summary and Future Directions	314
10.	Novel Magnetic and Electrical Properties of Carbon Nanotubes: Consistent with Ultrahigh Temperature Superconductivity	319
	<i>Guo-meng Zhao</i>	
10.1	Introduction	320
10.2	Magnetic Properties of Nickel Nanoparticles Embedded in MWCNTs	323
10.3	Identification of the Diamagnetic Meissner Effect in Pure MWCNTs	332
10.4	Electrical Transport and Quantum Phase Slips	336
10.5	Concluding Remarks	347
11.	Carbon Nanotube-Based Biosensors	355
	<i>Liang Su, Wenzhao Jia, and Yu Lei</i>	
11.1	Introduction	355
11.2	Electrochemical Properties of CNTs	356
11.2.1	Structures and Electronic Properties of CNTs	356
11.2.2	Electrochemical Properties of CNTs	358
11.2.2.1	Edge-plane defects	358
11.2.2.2	Oxygenated species and dopant defects	361
11.2.2.3	Electrocatalysis of CNTs	361
11.3	Functionalization of CNTs	362
11.3.1	Oxidation Treatment	362
11.3.2	Covalent Functionalization	363
11.3.3	Non-Covalent Functionalization	365
11.4	Construction and Advantage of CNT-Modified Electrode for Biosensors	367
11.4.1	Non-Oriented CNT Electrode	368

11.4.1.1	Drop-casting electrode	368
11.4.1.2	Composite paste electrode	368
11.4.2	Oriented CNT Array Electrode	369
11.4.2.1	Vertically aligned SWCNT nanowires produced by self-assembly	370
11.4.2.2	CNT Nanoelectrode ensembles produced by <i>in situ</i> growth	373
11.5	Carbon Nanotube-Based Electrochemical Biosensors	376
11.5.1	CNT-Oxidase-Based Biosensors	377
11.5.1.1	CNT-GOx-based biosensors	377
11.5.1.2	CNT-HRP-based biosensors	383
11.5.1.3	CNT-tyrosinase-based biosensors	384
11.5.1.4	CNT-laccase-based biosensors	385
11.5.1.5	CNT-ascorbate oxidase-based biosensors	385
11.5.1.6	Other CNT-oxidase-based biosensors	388
11.5.2	CNT-Dehydrogenase-Based Biosensors	388
11.5.2.1	CNT-GDH-based biosensors	390
11.5.2.2	CNT-ADH-based biosensors	391
11.5.2.3	CNT-GLDH-based biosensors	391
11.5.2.4	CNT-LDH-based biosensors	392
11.5.3	CNT-Hydrolase-Based Biosensors	393
11.5.3.1	CNT-OPH-based biosensors	393
11.5.3.2	CNT-AChE-based biosensors	394
11.5.4	CNT-Bienzyme System-Based Biosensors	396
11.5.4.1	CNT-GOx-HRP-based biosensors	396
11.5.4.2	CNT-AChE-ChO-based biosensors	396
11.5.5	CNT-Redox Protein-Based Biosensors	397
12.	Carbon Nanotube-Based Gas Sensors: A State of the Art	415
	<i>P. Bondavalli, L. Gorintin, and P. Legagneux</i>	
12.1	Introduction	416

12.2	Gas Sensing Using CNTFET: Carbon Nanotubes Doping or Schottky Barrier Modulation?	417
12.3	CNTFET-Based Sensors Achieved Using SWCNT Networks	424
12.4	Routes to Improve the Selectivity	427
12.5	Conclusions	433
13.	Carbon Nanotubes and Their Composites for Viscoelastic Applications	441
	<i>Edwin Hang Tong Teo, Maziar Shakerzadeh, and Beng Kang Tay</i>	
13.1	Introduction	442
13.2	Pure Carbon Nanotube Films	443
13.3	Carbon Nanotube Composites	450
13.4	Conclusions	461
14.	Toward Multifunctional Carbon Nanotube Fibers	467
	<i>Xiaohua Zhang and Qingwen Li</i>	
14.1	Introduction	467
14.2	Spinning of Carbon Nanotube Fibers	469
14.2.1	Direct Spinning	469
14.2.2	Dry Spinning	473
14.2.3	Wet Spinning	476
14.3	Mechanical Properties of CNT Fibers	480
14.3.1	Comparison Between Different Nanotube Fibers	480
14.3.2	Morphological and Structural Dependences	484
14.4	Multifunctionalities of CNT Fibers	487
14.5	Conclusion	491
15.	Mechanical Applications of Carbon Nanotubes	501
	<i>Yani Zhang, Gengzhi Sun, and Lianxi Zheng</i>	
15.1	Introduction	502
15.2	CNT Nanomechanics	504
15.2.1	CNT Resonators as Mass/Force Sensors	504
15.2.2	CNT Nanomechanics in Quantum Limit	507
15.2.3	Other CNT Nanomechanics	512
15.3	Macro-Scale CNT Actuators	517
15.3.1	CNT Electrostatic Actuators	517

15.3.2	CNT Electrochemical Actuators	518
15.3.3	CNT Composite Actuators	521
15.4	High-Performance CNT Fibers	526
15.4.1	Wet-Spun CNT Fibers	527
15.4.1.1	Surfactant-based coagulation spinning	527
15.4.1.2	Liquid crystal-based solution spinning	531
15.4.2	Dry-Spun CNT Fibers	533
15.4.2.1	Spinning from vertical-aligned CNT arrays	533
15.4.2.2	Spinning from aerogel of CNTs	535
15.5	Conclusions	538
16.	Nonlinear Optical Properties of Carbon Nanotubes and Their Applications	549
	<i>Kin Kee Chow</i>	
16.1	Introduction	550
16.2	Nonlinear Optical Properties of Carbon Nanotubes	551
16.3	Design and Fabrication of CNT-Based Optical Devices	553
16.4	Nonlinear Applications of Carbon Nanotubes	557
16.5	Summary	561
	<i>Index</i>	565

