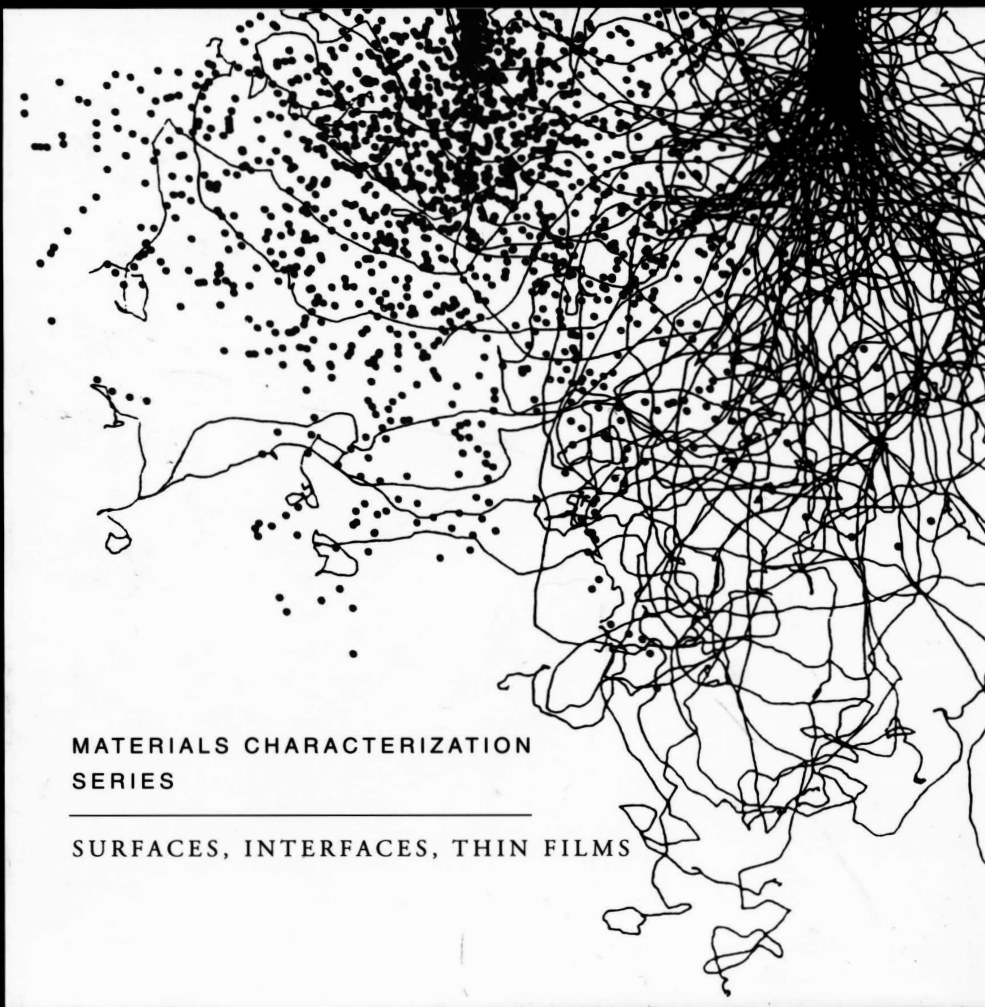


CHARACTERIZATION OF CERAMICS

Ronald E. Loehman



MATERIALS CHARACTERIZATION
SERIES

SURFACES, INTERFACES, THIN FILMS

CHARACTERIZATION OF CERAMICS

EDITOR

Ronald E. Loehman

MANAGING EDITOR

Lee E. Fitzpatrick

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Preface to Series

This Materials Characterization Series attempts to address the needs of the practical materials user, with an emphasis on the newer areas of surface, interface, and thin film microcharacterization. The Series is composed of the leading volume, *Encyclopedia of Materials Characterization*, and a set of about 10 subsequent volumes concentrating on characterization of individual materials classes.

In the *Encyclopedia*, 50 brief articles (each 10 to 18 pages in length) are presented in a standard format designed for ease of reader access, with straightforward technique descriptions and examples of their practical use. In addition to the articles, there are one-page summaries for every technique, introductory summaries to groupings of related techniques, a complete glossary of acronyms, and a tabular comparison of the major features of all 50 techniques.

The 10 volumes in the Series on characterization of particular materials classes include volumes on silicon processing, metals and alloys, catalytic materials, integrated circuit packaging, etc. Characterization is approached from the materials user's point of view. Thus, in general, the format is based on properties, processing steps, materials classification, etc., rather than on a technique. The emphasis of all volumes is on surfaces, interfaces, and thin films, but the emphasis varies depending on the relative importance of these areas for the materials class concerned. Appendixes in each volume reproduce the relevant one-page summaries from the *Encyclopedia* and provide longer summaries for any techniques referred to that are not covered in the *Encyclopedia*.

The concept for the Series came from discussion with Marjan Bace of Manning Publications Company. A gap exists between the way materials characterization is often presented and the needs of a large segment of the audience—the materials user, process engineer, manager, or student. In our experience, when, at the end of talks or courses on analytical techniques, a question is asked on how a particular material (or processing) characterization problem can be addressed the answer often is that the speaker is “an expert on the technique, not the materials aspects, and does not have experience with that particular situation.” This Series is an attempt to bridge this gap by approaching characterization problems from the side of the materials user rather than from that of the analytical techniques expert.

We would like to thank Marjan Bace for putting forward the original concept, Shaun Wilson of Charles Evans and Associates and Yale Strausser of Surface Science Laboratories for help in further defining the Series, and the Editors of all the individual volumes for their efforts to produce practical, materials user based volumes.

C. R. Brundle C. A. Evans, Jr.

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Preface

Most ceramics are ionically bonded compounds found in complex crystal structures that are strong, stiff, lightweight, hard, and corrosion-resistant. Typically, they maintain their properties to high temperatures. In a broad sense, a ceramic is any man-made, inorganic, nonmetallic, solid material. Glass, usually considered a subset of ceramics, is any solid that lacks crystalline order. Traditionally, ceramics have been considered polycrystalline, although most ceramists today do not accept that restriction. Also traditional is the idea that high temperatures are required for the synthesis or processing of ceramics and glasses; but that limitation is no longer valid—new materials such as aerogels and tin fluorophosphate glasses are synthesized at room temperature or at a few hundred degrees above ambient.

Raw materials for ceramic and glass manufacture traditionally are earthy, oxide materials that are mined in high volume at low cost and are subjected to relatively little processing. The products made from them are commodity items such as brick, tile, bottles, and windows. Modern technical or engineering ceramics are higher-value materials that have superior properties as a result of more sophisticated processing and tighter control over raw materials. These advanced ceramics are much more varied in composition than simple oxides and include, for example, carbides, nitrides, and borides. The development of ceramic composites that are heterogeneous on the micrometer or nanometer scale is a rapidly expanding area of materials science and engineering. The need for better control of final properties requires increased use of modern characterization techniques at all stages of ceramic synthesis and processing. This volume describes characterization techniques and how they can be used to obtain that greater control.

This book is written in a time of changing priorities in materials science and engineering. Responding to a perception that research results in the United States were not being reliably translated into marketable products, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences conducted an influential study—the results of which were reported in a widely read book, *Materials Science in the 1990s: Maintaining Competitiveness in the Age of Materials*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1989—that recommended increased emphasis on materials synthesis and processing. These recommendations include

- interactive research on new materials synthesis that is linked with characterization and analysis of the product
- basic research on synthetic solid-state inorganic chemistry to produce new compounds

- synthesis of ultra pure materials, for example, fibers with low oxygen or carbon impurity levels
- research on techniques for synthesis to net-shape; that is, learning how to do synthesis, processing, and forming in a single step
- research on methods for processing ceramic materials far from equilibrium
- research on processing artificially structured or, as they are sometimes called, functionally gradient materials.

Characterization of Ceramics addresses these concerns and recommendations in two ways. First, the book stresses advanced synthesis and processing. Second, the central theme of the book, the application of characterization techniques, is a specific recommendation of the NAS study. The 13 chapters of this volume present a broad overview of ceramics and glasses. Each of the topics provides enough information for the reader to make intelligent choices among the myriad available characterization and analysis techniques. Many of the chapters are organized as case studies taken from the authors' own research, which help to illustrate how different methods can be integrated to give a more complete picture of a given process or phenomenon.

The first part of the book deals with the techniques of ceramic synthesis. Increasingly, advanced ceramics are being produced from highly processed powders made by methods collectively known as chemical preparation. Some of the more promising routes to the production of advanced ceramic powders are sol-gel processing, precipitation from solution, gas-phase synthesis, and powder-surface modification. J. A. Voigt discusses recent trends in the use of near-room temperature solution techniques to make ceramic precursors. An example of this is the sol-gel method, in which organometallic reagents in solution are hydrolyzed and condensed to form an inorganic polymeric gel that, when dried and fired, gives the desired ceramic composition. These chemical methods can generate controlled-size distributions, extremely reactive precursors, unusually shaped particles, and gels. Solution methods permit the intimate mixing of components, easy dispersion of second phases, and surface modification of precursor particles. Liquid precursor solutions also can be used to make thin films by dipping or spinning; because of the high reactivity of the precursor particles, film consolidation occurs at moderate temperatures. The chapter by R. W. Schwartz on electronic ceramics shows how analytical methods such as NMR are used to guide the solution synthesis of electronic ceramic films such as PZT (lead zirconate-lead titanate). Voigt's chapter illustrates the importance of thorough characterization in the development of better synthesis methods.

Ceramic powders and films made by gas-phase techniques and their characterization are discussed by C. L. J. Adkins and D. E. Peebles. Ultrafine ceramic particles with enhanced surface reactivity, such as SiO_2 , can be synthesized through nucleation or condensation reactions in gas-phase aerosols. Ceramic films and

coatings, such as diamond and diamond-like materials, are synthesized by a variety of vapor deposition techniques.

Ceramic processing methods are extremely diverse, with new ones being constantly developed. The technique with widest application is sintering bulk ceramics, in which a powder preform is typically converted to a dense, consolidated object through solid or liquid-phase diffusion. The driving force for diffusion is the lowering of the Gibb's energy by minimizing surface area and, possibly, by reaction to more stable products. K. G. Ewsuk discusses the essential features of bulk sintering and the analytical methods used to characterize the process. By contrast, T. J. Garino's chapter is concerned with the densification of ceramic thick films and the phenomena distinctive to them. For example, ceramic films usually are deposited on substrates, and differential shrinkage in drying or firing leads to stresses and possibly warping. Garino's discussion emphasizes characterization methods applicable to those ceramic films.

Much current ceramic processing research for both bulk materials and films is directed toward eliminating flaws, thereby increasing strength and fracture toughness. L. Neergaard's chapter on nondestructive evaluation shows how to detect flaws that are frequently generated in a ceramic despite the best of processing efforts.

Other types of ceramic processing discussed in this volume are inorganic glasses and glass-ceramics by R. K. Brow, ceramic composites by S. J. Glass, and ceramic joining by A. P. Tomsia. This selection of processing methods is not exhaustive, but is broad enough for most of the applicable characterization techniques to be presented. These three chapters share a common concern with interfaces and how to characterize their reactivities, compositions, and microstructures.

Because ceramics are brittle, they are susceptible to catastrophic failure under mechanical load. The useful strength of a ceramic is determined by the flaw population: stresses are concentrated at flaws, which cause cracks to propagate to failure. The critical property for ceramics in load-bearing uses is not the strength, but the fracture toughness—the resistance of the ceramic to crack propagation. The fracture surface of a ceramic bears the evidence of its failure. One must read the features in a fracture surface to understand the origin and path of the fracture. The case study by E. K. Beauchamp shows how much practical information can be obtained from ceramic fracture analysis.

The other two chapters are basic to much of ceramics. In ceramics, microstructure determines properties; the study of that relationship has been a main theme for decades. A. H. Carim's chapter illustrates the range of microscopic and micro-analytic techniques used to determine the structures and composition of ceramic microstructures. Another foundation of ceramics is reactivity and phase behavior. Knowledge of these topics is basic to understanding all forms of thermal processing of ceramics. P. K. Gallagher's chapter on reactivity and thermal analysis is an authoritative account by one of the experts of the field.

Ronald E. Loehman