Carbon Cryogel and Carbon Paper-Based Silicon Composite Anode Materials for Lithium-Ion Batteries

A variety of materials are under investigation for use as anode materials in lithium-ion batteries, of which, the most promising are those containing silicon. One such material is a composite formed via the dispersion of silicon in a resorcinol-formaldehyde (RF) gel followed by pyrolysis. Two silicon-carbon composite materials, carbon microspheres and nanofoams produced from nano-phase silicon impregnated RF gel precursors have been synthesized and investigated. Carbon microspheres are produced by forming the silicon-containing RF gel into microspheres whereas carbon nanofoams are produced by impregnating carbon fiber paper with the silicon containing RF gel to create a free standing electrode. Both materials have demonstrated their ability to function as anodes and utilize the silicon present in the material. Stable reversible capacities above 400 mAh/g for the bulk material and above 1000 mAh/g of Si have been observed.

References

Carbon Cryogel and Carbon Paper-Based Silicon Composite Anode Materials for Lithium-Ion Batteries

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Electrochemistry Branch Glenn Research Center

Richard Baldwin and William Bennett
Electrochemistry Branch Glenn Research Center
Introduction

• Future missions of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) require advanced energy storage systems
  – High specific energies (Wh/kg)
  – High energy densities (Wh/l)
• Develop advanced lithium ion cells
• Anode development is a key component
• the anode represents 24% of cell mass and additional opportunity for cell mass reduction
• Key performance parameters
  – Threshold value of 600 mAh/g
  – Goal of 1000 mAh/g

Estimates for component weight fraction in 30 Ah cell
Anode Materials

- **Graphite**
  - Excellent cycling characteristics
  - Theoretical capacity of 372 mAh/g

- **Silicon**
  - Theoretical capacity of 4200 mAh/g
  - Expands 400% upon lithiation
  - High irreversible capacity loss
  - High fade rate
  - Poor coulombic efficiency

- **Silicon carbon composites**
  - Carbon matrix absorbs expansion of the silicon and maintains electrical contact
  - Carbon matrix prevents direct electrolyte contact

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**Estimates for cell specific energy and energy density**
In-House Anode Synthesis

• Silicon containing carbon gel microbeads
• Carbon fiber paper supported silicon containing carbon nanofoam
• Based on resorcinol-formaldehyde gel precursors containing nano-silicon
• Porous carbon matrix will absorb the expansion of the silicon and prevent direct silicon-electrolyte contact
• Makes use of traditional cost-effective laboratory techniques
Carbon Cryogel Anode Materials

Carbon-Silicon Microbeads

Carbon Nanofoam with Nano-Silicon Supported on Carbon Paper

Originally investigated by Hasegawa, Mukkai, Shiratu and Tamon *Carbon* 42, 2004 pp. 2573-2579

Carbon nanofoams are currently under investigation by J. Long at NRL for use in electrochemical capacitors and as electrode support materials.
Carbon-Silicon Microbeads

Mix microbeads with binder and cast onto copper foil current collector

• **Advantage**: Uses conventional manufacturing techniques
• **Disadvantage**: Requires heavy copper current collector

Carbon Nanofoam with Nano-Silicon Supported on Carbon Paper

• **Advantage**: “Stand Alone” electrode that does not require the use of a current collector (Lighter)
• **Disadvantage**: Would require development of new electrode and cell manufacturing techniques

Estimates for Component Weight Fraction in 30 Ah Cell

Anode copper current collector represents a significant weight fraction (8%)
**Copper Vs. Carbon**

Copper Foil  2g  
- Not electrochemically active towards lithium

Carbon Paper  0.2 g  
- Electrochemically active towards Li (250 mAh/g)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electrode</th>
<th>mAh/g Active Material</th>
<th>mAh/g Electrode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nanofoam</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graphite with Cu</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si with Cu</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>312</td>
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**Theoretical Specific Capacities at the Active Material and Electrode Levels**
Carbon Microbead Testing

- Carbon microbeads were slurried with NaCMC
- 0.005” film cast onto copper foil
- Anodes placed in coin cells using lithium as the counter electrode
- Electrolyte: 1M LiPF$_6$ 1:1:1 ethylene carbonate, diethyl carbonate and dimethyl carbonate
- Cells formed at C/10 and cycled from 10mV to 1.5 V
Electrochemical Cycling of Carbon Microbeads

Specific Capacity:
- Cell 1
- Cell 2
- Cell 3

C/10  C/5

Coulombic Efficiency:
- Cell 1
- Cell 2
- Cell 3

Silicon Contribution to Specific Capacity:
- Cell 2
- Bulk Capacity
- Si Contribution
- Si Only

C/10  C/5

www.nasa.gov
Carbon-Silicon Microbead Electrodes

As Cast Nano-Silicon Carbon Gel Microbead Electrode

Cast Nano-Silicon Carbon Gel Microbead Electrode After Cycling
Carbon Nanofoam Half Cells

- Pouch cells
- Nanofoam material placed on copper foil current collectors
- Nickel tab spot-welded instead of the copper foil
- Lithium counter electrode
- First formation at approximately C/5
- Second formation at C/20
Electrochemical Cycling of Carbon Nanofaom Electrodes

Specific Capacity

C-Si Nanofoam RT A
C-Si Nanofoam RT-Ni Tab
C-Si Nanofoam-R1-H
C-Si Nanofoam-50

Coulombic Efficiency

Carbon Nanofoam
C-Si Nanofoam-RT-A
C-Si Nanofoam-RT Ni Tab
C-Si Nanofoam-R1-B
C-Si Nanofoam-50
Si-Carbon Microbeads Cell 1

**Specific Capacity**

![Graph showing specific capacity over cycle number.](image)

**Voltage and Current Vs. Test Time**

![Graph showing voltage and current over test time.](image)

**dQ/dV**

![Graph showing dQ/dV vs. volts vs Li.](image)
Formation of Lithium Ion Diffusion Pathways

- Pre-Formation
- Full Intercalation of Li⁺ Ions into Carbon Matrix and Si
- Establishment of Diffusion Pathways into Carbon Matrix
- Intercalation of Li⁺ Ions into Carbon Matrix and Surface Si
- Establishment of Diffusion Pathways through Carbon Matrix to Si

Graph showing dQ/dV vs Volts vs Li for cycles 1 to 9.
Initial Results

- **Microbeads**
  - 425 mAh/g
  - Short of threshold value of 600 mAh/g and goal of 1000 mAh/g

- **Nanofoam**
  - Initial results showed 400 mAh/g at the electrode level
  - “Stand Alone” anode 100% active material
  - Determined to have a higher potential to meet or exceed goals
  - Decided to focus on development of the carbon nanofoam anodes

Theoretical Specific Capacities at the Active Material and Electrode Levels

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<th>Electrode</th>
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New Experiments

• Improve the performance of the Si-carbon nanofoams by addition of conductive additives or binders
  – Addition of graphite to resorcinol formaldehyde gel
  – Coat with polyaniline doped with LiPF$_6$

• New formation procedure
New Formation Procedure

- Very slow initial formation to 10 mV
- Replace taper charge with very low constant current to 10 mV
Carbon-Silicon Nanofoam Electrodes

Carbon-Silicon-Graphite Nanofoam

Carbon-Silicon Nanofoam
Poylaniline Coated Carbon-Silicon Nanofoam

Carbon-Silicon-Graphite Nanofoam

Volts Vs. Li

Carbon-Silicon Nanofoam

Volts Vs. Li
• The nanofaom containing graphite has a lower impedance than the nanofoam which does not contain graphite
• Samples coated with polyaniline/LiPF$_6$ show drastically lower impedances than those without the coating
• The presence of graphite in combination with the polyaniline coating resulted in a higher impedance than that of a coated sample not containing graphite
Conclusions

• A “Stand Alone” anode has been synthesized with specific capacities that meet and/or exceed the ETDP threshold value of 600 mAh/g and would likely compare favorably, with regard to specific capacity, at the electrode level to conventional coated anode materials.

• “Stand Alone” carbon-silicon nanofoam anodes have the greater potential to address NASA goals.

• Stand Alone” carbon-silicon nanofoam anodes have the potential to significantly increase the specific energies (Wh/kg) for lithium-ion cells.

• Addition of graphite to the silicon containing carbon nanofoam dramatically increases capacity.

• Use of the conductive binder polyaniline doped with LiPF$_6$ dramatically increases capacity.

• Very slow formation cycle is required to fully lithiate silicon.
Future Work

• Investigate the use of various conductive additives
  – Graphites
  – Carbon Nanotubes
• Investigate different binders or coatings
• Investigate different gel formulations
Acknowledgements

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  – Michelle Manzo (Electrochemistry Branch Chief NASA GRC)
Supplementary Slides
Synthetic Conditions

- **Carbon-Silicon Microspheres**
  - Resorcinol-Formaldehyde containing 50 nm silicon is dispersed in a solution of cyclohexane and Span 80 surfactant
  - Sonicated
  - Stirred for two days at room temperature
  - Recovered and rinsed
  - Freeze dried in t-butanol
  - Pyrolyzed at 1000° in argon

- **Carbon-Silicon Nanofoam**
  - Carbon fiber paper impregnated with resorcinol-formaldehyde gel containing 50 nm silicon particles
  - Sealed in plastic bags and placed between glass plates
  - Cured at room temperature for 2 days
  - Freeze dried in t-butanol
  - Pyrolyzed at 1000° C in argon

# Key Performance Parameters for Battery Technology Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Need</th>
<th>Performance Parameter</th>
<th>State-of-the-Art</th>
<th>Current Value</th>
<th>Threshold Value</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe, reliable operation</td>
<td>No fire or flame</td>
<td>Instrumentation/control-izers used to prevent unsafe conditions. There is no non-</td>
<td>Preliminary results indicate a small reduction in performance using safer electrolytes and cathode coatings</td>
<td>Tolerant to electrical and thermal abuse such as over-temperature, over- charge, reversal, and short circuits with no fire or thermal runaway***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific energy</td>
<td>Battery-level</td>
<td>90 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 30°C 83 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C (MER rovers)</td>
<td>160 at C/10 &amp; 30°C (HE) 170 at C/10 &amp; 30°C (UHE) 80 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C (predicted)</td>
<td>135 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “High-Energy”** 150 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “Ultra-High Energy”***</td>
<td>150 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “High-Energy” 220 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “Ultra-High Energy”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lander: 150 – 210 Wh/kg</td>
<td>Cell-level specific energy</td>
<td>130 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 30°C 118 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C</td>
<td>199 at C/10 &amp; 23°C (HE) 213 at C/10 &amp; 23°C (UHE) 100 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C (predicted)</td>
<td>165 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “High-Energy” 180 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “Ultra-High Energy”</td>
<td>180 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “High-Energy” 260 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C “Ultra-High Energy”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rover: 160-260 Wh/kg</td>
<td>Cell-level specific energy</td>
<td>130 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 30°C 118 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C</td>
<td>199 at C/10 &amp; 23°C (HE) 213 at C/10 &amp; 23°C (UHE) 100 Wh/kg at C/10 &amp; 0°C (predicted)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000 cycles</td>
<td>Cathode-level specific capacity [mAh/g]</td>
<td>180 mAh/g</td>
<td>252 mAh/g at C/10 &amp; 25°C 190 mAh/g at C/10 &amp; 0°C</td>
<td>260 mAh/g at C/10 &amp; 0°C</td>
<td>280 mAh/g at C/10 &amp; 0°C</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVA: 270Wh/kg 100 cycles</td>
<td>Anode-level specific capacity [mAh/g]</td>
<td>280 mAh/g (MCMB)</td>
<td>330 @ C/10 &amp; 0°C (HE) 1200 mAh/g @ C/10 &amp; 0°C for 10 cycles (UHE)</td>
<td>600 mAh/g at C/10 &amp; 0°C “Ultra-High Energy”</td>
<td>1000 mAh/g at C/10 0°C “Ultra-High Energy”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rover: TBD</td>
<td>Operating environment 0°C to 30°C, Vacuum</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0°C to +30°C</td>
<td>0°C to 30°C</td>
<td>0°C to 30°C</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVA: 400 Wh/l</td>
<td>Operating Temperature</td>
<td>-20°C to +40°C</td>
<td>0°C to +30°C</td>
<td>0°C to 30°C</td>
<td>0°C to 30°C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>