

High-Performance YBCO-Coated Superconductor Wires

M. Parans Paranthaman and Teruo Izumi,
Guest Editors

Abstract

This issue of *MRS Bulletin* provides an overview of the current status of research and development in the area of high-temperature superconductor (HTS) wires. High-temperature oxide superconductors, discovered in the late 1980s, are moving into the second generation of their development. The first generation relied on bismuth strontium calcium copper oxide, and the second generation is based on yttrium barium copper oxide, which has the potential to be less expensive and to perform better. The potential uses of HTS wires for electric power applications include underground transmission cables, oil-free transformers, superconducting magnetic-energy storage units, fault-current limiters, high-efficiency motors, and compact generators. Wires of 10–100 m in length can now be made, but material and processing issues must be solved before an optimized production scheme can be achieved. This issue covers a range of processing techniques using energetic beams, rolling, and laser and chemical methods to form wires with good superconducting properties.

Keywords: coated conductors, high-temperature superconductors, YBCO, $YBa_2Cu_3O_{7-\delta}$.

Since the discovery of high-temperature superconductors (HTSs) in the late 1980s, notably $(Bi,Pb)_2Sr_2Ca_2Cu_3O_{10}$ (known as BSCCO or 2223) and $YBa_2Cu_3O_{7-\delta}$ (known as YBCO or Y-123), researchers all around the world have searched for ways to produce affordable flexible conducting wires with high current density. The U.S. Department of Energy's target price for these conductors is close to the current cost of copper wire at \$10/kA m USD.

The strategic goal is to achieve HTS wire with a current capacity 100 times that of copper. Robust, high-performance HTS wire would certainly revolutionize the electric power grid and various other electric power applications as well. One company, American Superconductor Corp. (AMSC), has been widely recognized as a world leader in manufacturing first-generation (1G) HTS wires based on BSCCO materials using the oxide-powder-in-tube (OPIT) process. AMSC has achieved electrical criti-

cal current (I_c), defined as the maximum current a superconductor can transport, of more than 125 A/cm-width in piece lengths of several hundred meters, and a "champion" current (the highest current achieved to date for this superconductor) of 170 A at 77 K and self-field in a wire at the standard 4.1 mm width and 210 μm thickness.¹ However, due to the higher cost—approximately \$300/kA m—of 1G wire, researchers worldwide shifted their efforts toward the development of second-generation (2G) YBCO wires.

One of the main obstacles to the manufacture of commercial lengths of YBCO wire has been the phenomenon of weak links: grain boundaries formed by the misalignment of neighboring YBCO grains are known to form obstacles to current flow. By carefully aligning the grains, low-angle boundaries between superconducting YBCO grains allow more current to flow. In fact, below a critical misalignment angle

of 4°, the critical current density approaches that of YBCO films grown on single crystals.²

The schematics of 1G and 2G HTS wire architectures are shown in Figure 1. Several methods have been developed to obtain biaxially textured substrates suitable for high-performance YBCO films. They are ion-beam-assisted deposition (IBAD), the rolling-assisted biaxially textured substrate (RABiTS) process, and inclined substrate deposition (ISD). The industry standard for characterizing 2G wire is to divide the current by the width of the wire. With either a 3- μm -thick YBCO layer carrying a critical current density J_c of 1 MA/cm², or a 1- μm -thick YBCO layer carrying a J_c of 3 MA/cm², the electrical performance translates to 300 A/cm-width. (Critical current density is the maximum current density a superconductor can carry; beyond this value, it becomes non-superconducting.) Converting these numbers to the industry standard of 0.4-cm-wide HTS wire would correspond to 120 A in a 0.4-cm-wide tape, or 300A/cm-width. This performance level is comparable to that of the commercial 1G wire manufactured by AMSC. Further increases in thickness or critical current density, or finding a way to incorporate two layers of YBCO (either a double-sided coating or joining two YBCO tapes face to face) in a single-wire architecture would result in a performance exceeding 1G wires: a high overall engineering critical current density, J_E , at 77 K. "Engineering" critical current density includes the effects of non-superconducting substrates and buffers, whereas J_c is the critical current density of the superconductor layer only. The other important advantages of 2G YBCO wire over 1G wire include better in-field electrical performance at higher temperatures, potentially lower processing costs, and low ac losses.

The six articles in this issue provide an overview of the current status and future prospects for methods of producing YBCO-coated superconducting composite wires. The first three articles discuss detailed methods of fabricating oriented templates for growing high-performance YBCO-coated wires. The last three articles review high-rate YBCO deposition processes.

The early history of ion-beam texturing and the importance of different IBAD templates are reviewed in the article by Arendt and Foltyn. A schematic illustration of the IBAD process is shown in Figure 2. The ion beam is used to grow textured buffer layers onto a flexible but untextured metal, typically a nickel alloy. After the initial development of an IBAD process using yttrium-stabilized zirconia (YSZ) by Iijima et al.,³ researchers at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) improved the process

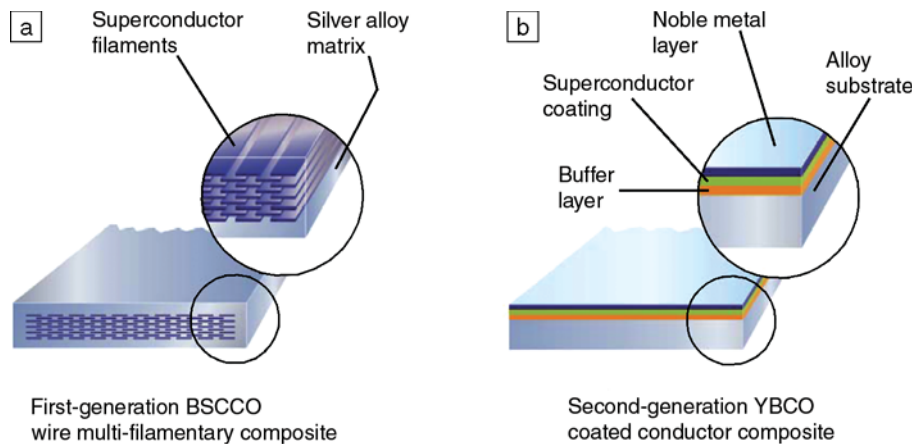


Figure 1. Schematic illustrations of (a) first-generation and (b) second-generation high-temperature superconducting (HTS) wire architectures.

and achieved high-performance YBCO films on IBAD-YSZ templates.⁴ To date, IBAD templates of YSZ, gadolinium zirconium oxide ($Gd_2Zr_2O_7$, or GZO), and magnesium oxide (MgO) are being used to make YBCO tapes.

For IBAD-YSZ templating, a thick ($\sim 1.0 \mu\text{m}$) YSZ buffer layer is needed to achieve the proper texture that will result in high J_c values in the subsequent YBCO films, but this requirement may limit the economical fabrication of long-length coated conductors. However, IBAD-MgO substrates exhibit good texture soon after nucleation, and only a $\sim 10\text{-nm}$ -thick MgO film is needed to optimize the texture. But the texture development in an IBAD-MgO template depends strongly on the smoothness of the starting nickel alloy tapes. However, in collaboration with SuperPower Inc., LANL has already optimized reel-to-reel electropolishing of the Ni alloy substrates and has achieved substrates with a surface roughness of $< 1 \text{ nm}$. Perovskite buffers such as $LaMnO_3$, $SrTiO_3$, and $SrRuO_3$

have been found to be compatible with IBAD-MgO substrates. In a typical IBAD-MgO template, a total of five buffer layers are involved: an Al_2O_3 barrier; amorphous Y_2O_3 as the nucleation layer; an IBAD-MgO layer; and a homoepitaxial-MgO layer, involving the growth of MgO without ion-beam assist, followed by either $SrTiO_3$ or $LaMnO_3$. On IBAD-MgO templates, $1.4\text{-}\mu\text{m}$ -thick YBCO films with J_c values of 109 A (3.8 m length) and 144 A (1.6 m length) have been achieved.

The current status of the rolling-assisted biaxially textured substrates (RABiTS) process (see Figure 3) developed at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and the baseline architecture used are reviewed in the article by Goyal et al. The RABiTS process utilizes thermomechanical processing to obtain flexible, biaxially oriented nickel or nickel alloy substrates.⁵ Buffers that transfer the texture of the metal substrate to the superconductor and prevent reaction between the substrate and the superconductor are deposited on the substrate. YBCO super-

conductors are then deposited epitaxially on the buffer layer. The starting substrate serves as a structural template for the YBCO layer, which has substantially fewer weak links than the substrate. For comparison, wires made by the OPIT process (1G wire) are expensive, since the major component is high-purity silver. In the RABiTS process, silver is replaced by low-cost nickel or a nickel alloy, which allows the fabrication of HTS wires at a lower cost.

The RABiTS architecture most commonly used consists of a starting template of biaxially textured Ni-W (3 at.% or 5 at.%) with a seed layer of 75 nm Y_2O_3 , a barrier layer of 75 nm YSZ, and a cap layer of 75 nm CeO_2 . In this architecture, all the buffers have been deposited by physical vapor deposition processes. However, efforts are being made to replace these layers with alternative architectures comprising multifunctional buffers deposited by industrially scalable methods. In addition, various thin-film deposition processes are explained in detail in Goyal et al.'s article. Recently, a high J_c of $250\text{--}270 \text{ A/cm-width}$ with a standard deviation of $2.0\text{--}4.0\%$ was achieved. For certain applications, it is necessary to start with completely nonmagnetic substrates such as Ni-9at.%W or Ni-Cr-W. Efforts are already under way to address these issues.

In a third template fabrication process, inclined substrate deposition, the textured buffer layers are produced by vacuum-depositing material at a particular angle on an untextured nickel alloy substrate. After the discovery of the ISD-YSZ process by Hasegawa et al. in 1996,⁶ both Argonne National Laboratory (ANL)⁷ and THEVA/Technical University of Munich, Germany,⁸ improved reel-to-reel MgO buffer-layer texturing by ISD on Hastelloy tape. Ma et al.⁷ have grown YBCO with a J_c of 1.2 MA/cm^2 at 77 K and self-field on short ISD-MgO templates with YSZ/ CeO_2 buffers using pulsed laser deposition of YBCO. Recently, the THEVA group⁸ has achieved $7\text{--}8^\circ$ grain alignment in MgO-ISD tapes. By growing dysprosium barium copper oxide (DyBCO) films, they have achieved an improvement of $1\text{--}2^\circ$ from the MgO layer using *in situ* electron-beam co-evaporation. A typical HTS coating thickness is $1.5\text{--}2.0 \mu\text{m}$. They have also reported a critical current density of 2.3 MA/cm^2 in 20-cm -long tapes with an J_c level of more than 400 A/cm-width . Several-meter-long tapes exhibited J_c values of around $1.4\text{--}1.5 \text{ MA/cm}^2$ at 77 K and self-field.

Even though encouraging results have been obtained on ISD templates in short lengths, the basis for comparison in this review is the ability to produce long lengths of high-performance wire in a continuous process; thus, ISD is not discussed in-depth

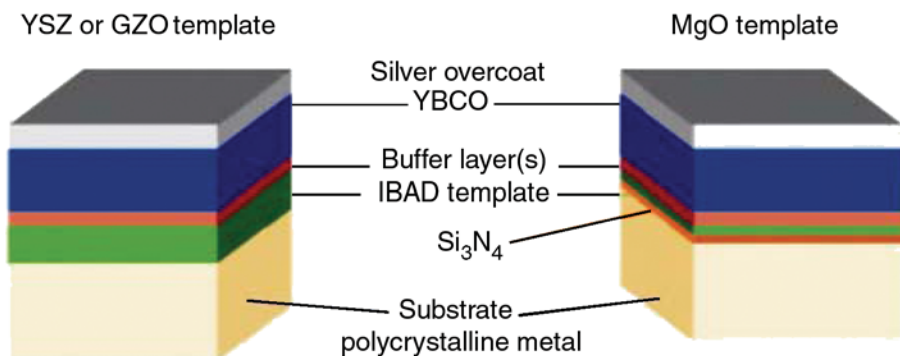


Figure 2. Schematic illustration of the ion-beam-assisted deposition (IBAD) process for fabricating YBCO superconducting wires using yttrium-stabilized zirconia (YSZ), $Gd_2Zr_2O_7$ (GZO), or MgO template architectures.

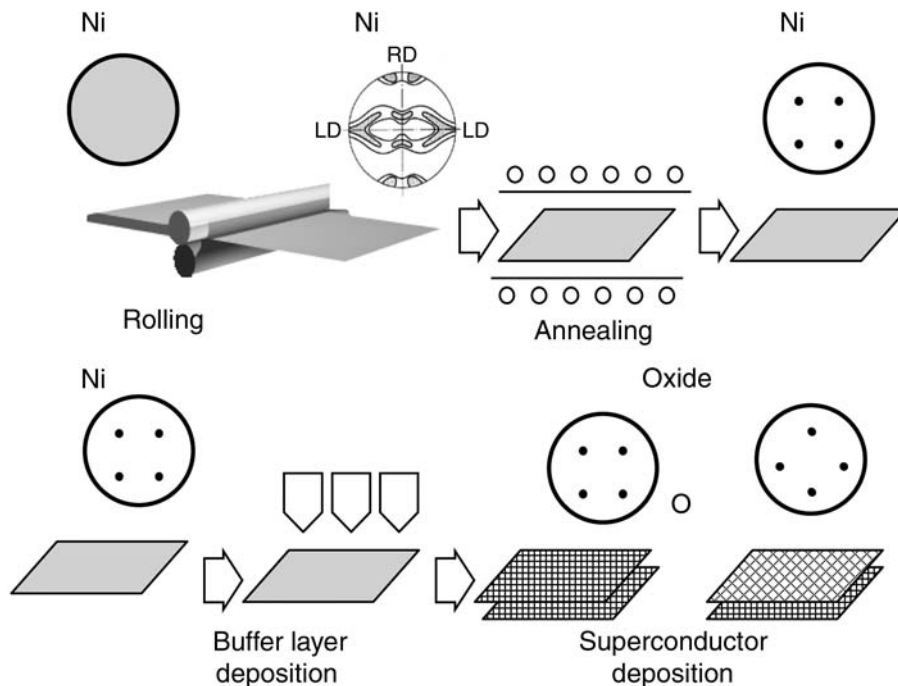


Figure 3. Schematic illustration of the rolling-assisted biaxially textured substrate (RABiTS) process. An untextured metal alloy is rolled and then annealed to produce a particular substrate texture. Epitaxial buffer layers (usually comprising a seed layer, a barrier layer, and a cap layer) are then deposited on the textured metal/alloy substrate. Epitaxial superconductors such as YBCO are then deposited onto the buffer layers. The circles labeled Ni show the pattern or orientation of the Ni grains at the various stages of the process; the wavy pattern of the Ni after rolling indicates the texture of the substrate after the first step; the dots inside the circle in later steps indicate a cubic orientation.

here. Both IBAD and RABiTS have the advantage over ISD in this regard. Recently, several organizations have demonstrated that they can produce 2G wires in 10–100 m lengths with I_c values ranging from 50 A/cm-width to 300 A/cm-width on either IBAD or RABiTS templates. Some of these results are outlined in this issue.

In the third article, Iijima et al. review the development history of the IBAD process from YSZ to GZO templates, and the related technologies for fabricating YBCO-coated conductors using IBAD, pulsed laser deposition (PLD), and trifluoroacetate-based metalorganic deposition (TFA-MOD). Pyrochlore-based GZO has a higher optimized deposition temperature of 200°C, as compared with the room-temperature deposition of YSZ (a temperature that is difficult to maintain during deposition because of the indirect heating from the source). Also, better in-plane textures were observed in GZO within a shorter time (as much as half the processing time of YSZ). Fujikura has produced 100 m lengths of YBCO tape by PLD on GZO templates with an average in-plane texture ($\Delta\phi$) of 10° at a tape speed of 0.5 m/h. In addition,

self-epitaxial CeO₂ caps were produced on IBAD-GZO templates using PLD with a much improved texture ($\Delta\phi \sim 3^\circ$) in a very short time. Self-epitaxy refers to textural improvement of the CeO₂ layer itself. Furthermore, no cracks were observed in CeO₂ layers. High- I_c YBCO films on CeO₂/IBAD-GZO templates were grown using both PLD and TFA-MOD. Especially in the TFA-MOD process, a high I_c of 292 A/cm-width was realized by the multi-coating method.

The fourth article, by Rupich et al., reviews the development of high-performance YBCO growth using TFA-MOD. The MOD process involves four steps: precursor solution synthesis, coating, decomposition, and reaction. AMSC has achieved high-performance YBCO-coated conductors using MOD-YBCO and RABiTS templates. The most commonly used MOD process involves the use of yttrium, barium, and copper trifluoroacetates in methanol. The decomposition step involves a slow (10 h) burnout to reduce the volatility of copper trifluoroacetates. In addition, the YBCO film thickness is limited in this process to <0.5 μm . Hence, new copper precursors have been developed to reduce the volatility

of the copper, reduce the fluorine content in the precursors, increase the thickness of the films, and shorten the YBCO processing time. Growth rates have been increased up to 4 nm/s for processing the YBCO films under reduced pressures. The MOD-YBCO films have a laminar microstructure, in contrast to the columnar microstructure of PLD-YBCO films. AMSC is routinely producing 10 m lengths (1 cm wide) of 2G wires using 0.8- μm -thick MOD-YBCO on RABiTS templates. However, it is a big challenge to produce $\sim 1.5\text{-}\mu\text{m}$ -thick YBCO films in a single coat. The incorporation of dispersed nanodots (nanoparticles) of yttrium oxide in the YBCO matrix has been shown to enhance critical-current retention in magnetic fields. Enhancement of flux pinning in YBCO/REBCO (RE = rare-earth element) films has been of great interest in the HTS community in recent years.

In the fifth article, Selvamani et al. discuss the development of high-performance YBCO growth using metalorganic chemical vapor deposition (MOCVD). The MOCVD process has been widely recognized as a high-throughput method. However, the cost of starting precursors is still an important issue. SuperPower has achieved 18 m lengths of YBCO tapes with an end-to-end I_c exceeding 100 A on IBAD templates. They have also achieved high YBCO deposition rates of 12 nm/s with I_c values of 230 A/cm-width in short lengths. Rare-earth doping in HTSs has been evaluated as a method to improve flux pinning in these conductors. YBCO films with 10% samarium doping exhibit an I_c of 230 A/cm as compared with undoped YBCO films with an I_c of 193 A/cm. The observed c -axis peak, which represents the increased J_c at the zero angle at 77 K and 1 T (applied magnetic field), is also higher and broader for the doped sample than for the undoped sample. SuperPower is pursuing this MOCVD process for the commercial manufacture of coated conductors. Recently, SuperPower has also achieved 105 A/cm-width performance in a 57 m HTS YBCO wire, a result that is 60% higher than the previous high announced by Fujikura last year. In this case, the YBCO was deposited using PLD.

The last article, by Usoskin et al., discusses the development of high-performance YBCO growth using high-rate PLD (HR-PLD) on IBAD-YSZ templates. YBCO films with an I_c of 480 A/cm in short lengths and 360 A/cm in 6-m-long tapes have been achieved by using HR-PLD. Recently, it has been shown that tapes can be produced via HR-PLD at an increased film-deposition speed of 60 nm²/h (60 nm of YBCO film deposition in a square-meter area of tape in one hour). A deposition speed of 140 nm²/h is

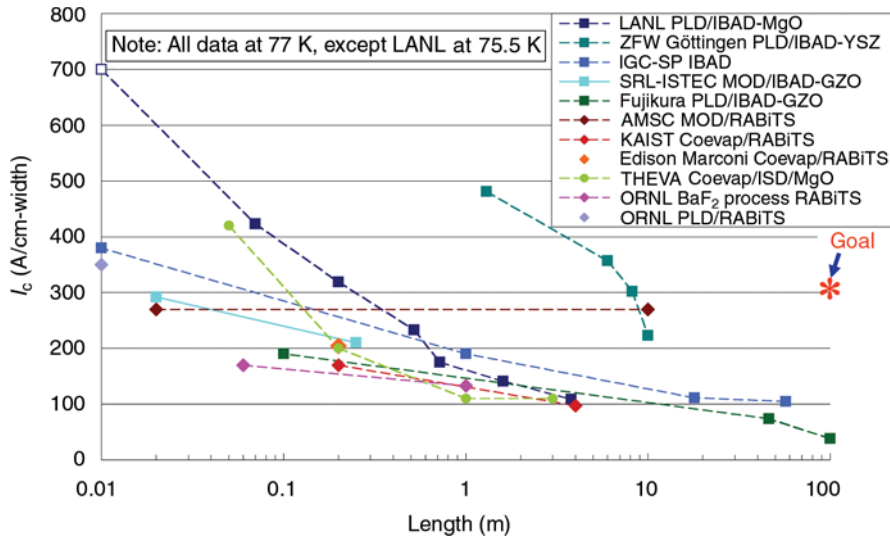


Figure 4. Electrical performance of second-generation high-temperature superconductor (HTS) wires. AMSC = American Superconductor (USA); Fujikura = Fujikura Ltd. (Japan); GZO = $Gd_2Zr_2O_7$; IBAD = ion-beam-assisted deposition; IGC-SP = IGC-SuperPower Inc. (USA); ISD = inclined substrate deposition; KAIST = Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (Daejeon, Korea); LANL = Los Alamos National Laboratory (USA); MOD = metalorganic deposition; ORNL = Oak Ridge National Laboratory (USA); PLD = pulsed laser deposition; RABITS = rolling-assisted biaxially textured substrate; SRL-ISTEC = Superconductivity Research Laboratory, International Superconductivity Technology Center (Japan); THEVA = THEVA Dünnschichttechnik (Germany); YSZ = yttrium-stabilized zirconia; ZFW = Zentrum für Funktionswerkstoffe Göttingen (Germany).

also possible. It is still a significant challenge to use the PLD process to fabricate lower-cost YBCO-coated conductors.

The electrical performance for currently available 2G HTS wires is shown in Figure 4.⁹ This figure compares the performance of YBCO wires from various groups

in the United States, Japan, Germany, and Korea. Some of the data in this plot are discussed in detail in this issue. Table I outlines the key issues related to the development of 2G YBCO superconducting wires, according to the Coated Conductor Development Roadmapping Workshop II,

Table I: Recommended Design Parameters for Second-Generation YBCO Superconducting Wires for Use in Power Applications by 2010.

Geometry Specifications	Performance and Operation Specifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Face-to-face architecture ■ Neutral axis ■ Alternate conductor designs ■ Conducting substrate ■ Two-sided coating ■ Current-carrying capacity of stabilizer ■ Multilayers for low ac loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engineering critical current density (J_E), 10,000–20,000 A/cm² at 30–65 K and 3 T ■ Critical current (I_c), 1000 A/cm-width width at 77 K and self-field ■ I_c at operation conditions, 100–200 A ■ Stabilizer design, 200 MPa stress (300 MPa) at 77 K ■ Irreversible strain limit, 0.6% tension, 1% compression (for magnets) ■ 2 cm bend diameter ■ n value $\geq 14^a$
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Multifilamentary; filament size, >10 μm ■ Substrate thickness, 25–50 μm ■ Piece length, 1000 m ■ Width, <1 cm 	

Source: Reference 10.

^a n value is the exponent $V \sim I^n$ of the current–voltage characteristic (I – V curve) at the transition from the normal to the superconducting state, measured at the industry standard value of 1 μ V/cm.

conducted last year by the U.S. Department of Energy.¹⁰

In summary, four different templates—IBAD-YSZ, IBAD-GZO, IBAD-MgO and RABITS—have been developed for fabricating second-generation high-temperature superconducting wires. Manufacturers around the world are in the process of taking the technology to the pilot scale to produce commercially viable 100 m lengths. In addition, three different deposition methods—metalorganic deposition, metalorganic chemical vapor deposition, and high-rate pulsed laser deposition—have been used to demonstrate high I_c values in YBCO-coated conductor tapes of 10 m or more in length. The articles in this issue are aimed at providing the reader with a snapshot of these developments and a sense of their significance for electric power applications.

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M. Parans Paranthaman, Guest Editor for this issue of *MRS Bulletin*, is a senior research staff member in the Chemical Sciences Division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He is also the task manager for high-temperature superconductor chemistry projects at ORNL. He was recently named a distinguished inventor at ORNL by the Battelle Institute of Columbus, Ohio, which partners with the University of Tennessee to form UT-Battelle, which manages ORNL for DOE.

Paranthaman is one of the co-inventors of the rolling-assisted biaxially textured substrate (RABiTS) process for fabricating high-performance superconducting wires, which earned an R&D 100 Award in 1999. His present research focus is on the development of coated conductors using vacuum and nonvacuum processing techniques, materials synthesis, and characterization of high-temperature superconductors. He has authored or co-authored more than 230 publications in his area and has over 1500 citations to his work. He has given several invited presentations at national and international conferences. He holds 17 U.S. patents related to the RABiTS technology.

Paranthaman received his PhD degree in materials science and solid-state chemistry from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras in 1988. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Texas Center for Materials Science and Engineering and a research associate in the superconductivity laboratories at the University of Colorado. He joined

Oak Ridge National Laboratory in 1993.

He has written several book chapters in the area of superconductivity. He has also edited a book on *Materials for High Temperature Superconductor Technologies*. He organized the high-temperature superconductivity symposia at the 2001 MRS Fall meeting and the 2004 ACS meeting and has chaired numerous sessions at national and international conferences. He also organized an international workshop on superconductors and applications sponsored by MRS in Gatlinburg, Tenn., in August 2002.

He was a member by invitation on the panel of judges for the 1999, 2000, and 2004 Department of Energy's university project and industry peer reviews. In addition, he has been a member by invitation on the review panels for DOE and DARPA programs.

In 2001, Paranthaman was a member of the group that earned a Federal Laboratory Consortium Award and an Energy 100 Award from DOE. He was with the group that earned the 1997 Lockheed Martin NOVA Award for technical achievement. In 1997, Paranthaman was named Lockheed Martin Scientist of the Year. He has earned numerous other awards during his career at ORNL, which began in 1993. Earlier this year, he was named to the North American editorial board of *Superconductor Science and Technology*. He is also an associate editor for the *Journal of the American Ceramic Society*.

Paranthaman can be reached by e-mail at paranthamanm@ornl.gov.

Teruo Izumi, Guest Editor of this issue of *MRS Bulletin*, is a senior research scientist in the division of superconducting tapes and wires at the Superconductivity Research Laboratory (SRL) within the International Superconductivity Technology Center (ISTEC) in Tokyo, Japan. He joined Sumitomo Metals Industries Ltd. in 1987 and received his doctoral degree in materials engineering from the University of Tokyo in 1991. Since 1998, he has worked at SRL-ISTEC on the processing of single-crystalline and coated conductors. His interests include process development for functional materials such as oxide superconductors and silicon and analysis of the growth mechanism of crystals.

He has published more than 150 papers related to superconductivity and silicon crystal research. He received the Best Paper of the Year Award from the Japan Institute of Metals in 1993. He is currently a member of the Materials Research Society, the Japan Institute of Metals, the Japan Society of Applied Physics, and the Cryogenic Society of Japan, and has been a principal editor of the *Journal of Materials Research* since 1995.

Izumi can be reached at SRL-ISTEC, 10-13 Shinonome 1-chome, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0062, Japan; tel. 81-3-3536-5711, fax 81-3-3536-5717, and e-mail izumi@istec.or.jp.

Paul N. Arendt is team leader for the Template Films Section of the Superconductivity Technology Center at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He has been at Los Alamos for 23 years



M. Parans Paranthaman



Teruo Izumi

and has been performing applied research on high-temperature superconducting films for the past 17 years. Prior to joining Los Alamos, he developed high-rate evaporation sources for an atomic vapor laser isotope separation program at Exxon Nuclear Corp.

He has a PhD degree in physics from the Ohio State University. He holds 11 U.S. patents and has authored more than 100 scientific publications in the fields of high-temperature superconductivity, rf cavities, optics, and isotope separation.

Arendt can be reached at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Superconductivity Technology Center, PO Box 1663, MS K-763, Los Alamos, NM 87545 USA; tel. 505-665-8358, fax 505-665-3164, and e-mail arendt@lanl.gov.

Yimin Chen is a senior materials scientist at SuperPower Inc. in Schenectady, N.Y. He received his MS and PhD degrees in physics from the University of Science and Technology of China in 1984 and 1989, respectively. From 1989 to 1995, he worked as a senior scientist and project leader at Changchun Institute of Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences,

on physics studies and process development of luminescent and lasing materials and devices. From 1996 to 2000, he worked as a research associate at the Space Vacuum Epitaxy Center and Texas Center for Superconductivity at the University of Houston, where he developed a high-rate MOCVD technique for YBCO superconducting films. He was a member of technical staff at Multiplex Inc. in 2001, developing epitaxy wafers for high-power laser diodes by MOCVD. From 2002 to 2003, he worked as a research associate in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Rutgers University, researching ZnO-based materials and devices. In January of 2004, he joined SuperPower, where he is responsible for the development of MOCVD processes for YBCO-coated conductors.

Yimin can be reached at SuperPower Inc., 450 Duane Ave., Schenectady, NY, 12304 USA; tel. 518-346-1414 ext. 3044 and e-mail yichen@igc.com.

Stephen R. Foltyn is the pulsed laser deposition team leader in Los Alamos National Laboratory's Superconductivity Technology Center. He has a MS



Paul N. Arendt



Yimin Chen



Stephen R. Foltyn



Herbert C. Freyhardt



Amit Goyal



Martin W. Rupich



Takashi Saitoh



Urs Schoop



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Yuh Shiohara

degree in physics from the University of Missouri–Rolla and has been at Los Alamos for 26 years, during which time he has worked in the fields of lasers, laser–material interactions, thin films, and high-temperature superconductivity.

Foltyn can be reached at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Superconductivity Technology Center, PO Box 1663, MS K-763, Los Alamos, NM 87545 USA; tel. 505-667-0358, fax 505-665-3164, and e-mail sfoltyn@lanl.gov.

Herbert C. Freyhardt is a member of the board of the Institut für Materialphysik at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and managing director of the Center for Applied Materials Research there. As a professor, he teaches materials science, physics of metals, and solid-state physics. As a physicist, he has

devoted his research to materials and solid-state science, in particular, superconductivity and superconducting materials, metastable and amorphous alloys, composite materials, thin-film oxides, magnetic materials, bulk and thin-film high-temperature superconductors, and the growth and characterization of metal and semiconducting single crystals.

Shortly after the discovery of high-temperature superconductors (HTSs), he became involved in the processing and characterization of single-crystalline and melt-textured HTSs and investigations of flux pinning in these materials.

Since the early 1990s, he has been developing second-generation HTSs based on buffer layers textured by ion-beam-assisted deposition and pulsed-laser-deposited YBCO. In 1990, he co-founded Zentrum für Funktionswerkstoffe

(ZFW). Freyhardt studied physics at the University of Göttingen and served as a visiting scientist at Argonne National Laboratory. He has published a book series and more than 250 scientific papers, edited several proceedings, contributed to handbooks and textbooks, and holds 15 patents.

Freyhardt can be reached at Institut für Materialphysik, Friedrich-Hund-Platz 1, D-37077 Göttingen, Germany; tel. 49-551-39-5011, fax 49-551-39-5000, and e-mail hfreyha@gwdg.de.

Amit Goyal is currently task manager and technical leader of Superconducting Materials Research at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. His research interests include grain-boundary design of materials, texture analysis, development and control in metals and ceramics, synthesis of superconductors, deposition of

epitaxial metal/ alloy and ceramic thin/thick films by physical and chemical vapor deposition, and the development of advanced electronic materials such as superconductors and photovoltaics.

Goyal received a BTech degree in metallurgical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology in 1986, an MS degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the University of Rochester in 1988, and a PhD in materials science and engineering from the University of Rochester in 1991.

Goyal is the lead inventor of the RABiTS process for fabricating high-performance superconducting wires. He holds 39 U.S. patents with 15 more pending, and four international patents with more pending, related to the RABiTS process. He was named a Battelle Distinguished Inventor in

2003. He has received numerous other awards, including a 2003 Exceptional Accomplishment Award from the U.S. Department of Energy, a 2001 Federal Laboratory Consortium Award, a 2001 Energy 100 Award, the 1999 MIT Technical Review TR100 Award, the 1999 ORNL Inventor of the Year Award, a 1999 R&D 100 Award, the 1997 Lockheed-Martin NOVA Award for technical achievement, and the 1996 DOE Materials Science Award for technical achievement in solid-state physics.

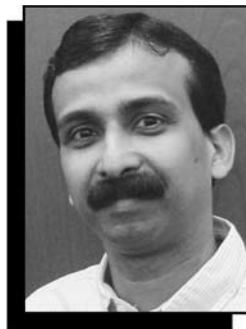
Goyal has authored or co-authored over 250 publications and conference proceedings. He has given five plenary talks, more than 90 invited presentations in national and international conferences, and has published over 30 invited papers and book chapters. He has co-edited four books on high-temperature superconductivity. His work



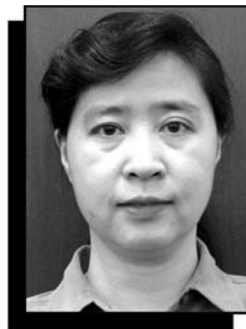
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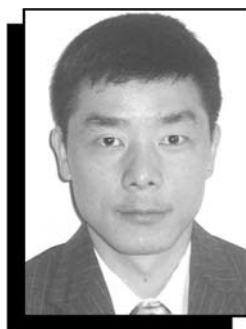
Jodi Reeves



Alexander Usoskin



Darren T. Verebelyi



Yiyuan Xie



Yutaka Yamada



Wei Zhang

has received more than 1000 citations from first- and second-author publications alone. He was a member of the advisory board for the Materials Research Science & Engineering Center of Excellence at Carnegie Mellon University during 1999 and 2000. He was a member by invitation on the panel of judges for the 2000, 2001, and 2002 R&D 100 awards. He was a member by invitation on the panel of judges for the 2000 DOE university project peer review as well as a member by invitation on the review panel for DOE, DARPA, and NSF programs. He has been a reviewer for numerous national and international technical journals. He has also organized many symposia and workshops and chaired numerous sessions in national and international conferences.

He was invited to teach/conduct a short course on superconduc-

tivity at the University of Talca in Chile in December 2000. He is a principal editor of the *Journal of Materials Research* and serves on the international advisory board of editors of the *Journal of the Korean Institute of Applied Superconductivity and Cryogenics*. He is also an associate editor for the *Journal of the American Ceramic Society*.

Goyal can be reached by e-mail at goyala@ornl.gov.

Yasuhiro Iijima is a senior research scientist in the Material Technology Laboratory at Fujikura Ltd. in Tokyo, Japan. He received his BA degree in applied physics at the University of Tokyo in 1987 and started studying the possibility of YBCO-coated conductors in Fujikura soon after the discovery of high- T_c superconductors. In 1991, he invented the concept of using the ion-beam-assisted deposition (IBAD) method to

create YSZ templates for the fabrication of high-current-density YBCO films. He has presented many invited talks and published over 30 papers. He received the Superconductivity Science and Technology Award from the Society of Non-Traditional Technology of Japan in 1998, and the Best Review Paper Award from the Japan Society of Applied Physics in 1999.

Iijima can be reached by e-mail at ijm@rd.fujikura.co.jp.

Kazuomi Kakimoto is a senior research scientist in the Material Technology Laboratory at Fujikura Ltd. in Tokyo, Japan. He received his BA degree in electrical engineering in 1988 from Kyushu University. After joining Fujikura, he was sent to the Superconductivity Research Laboratory (SRL) within the International Superconductivity Technology Center

(ISTEC) in Tokyo as a staff member in Yuh Shiohara's group from 1995 to 2000, where he studied liquid-phase epitaxy of YBCO films on technical substrates. He received his PhD degree in the field in 2000 from Kyushu University. His current research is mainly concentrated on the development of reel-to-reel pulsed laser deposition for kilometer-class continuous coating of YBCO films. He is a member of the Japan Society of Applied Physics and the Cryogenic Society of Japan.

Kakimoto can be reached by e-mail at kakimoto@rd.fujikura.co.jp.

Thomas Kodenkandath is a principal scientist at American Superconductor Corporation in Westborough, Mass., where his work is concentrated on the development of new precursor chemistries

for the solution-based deposition and growth of epitaxial YBCO films. A solid-state chemist by training, his research interests include the design and synthesis of functionally graded materials and optimization of composition-structure-property relationships for practical applications.

Kodenkandath earned his PhD degree in chemistry from the Indian Institute of Technology (ITT-Madras) and was a national superconductivity fellow (India). He was a UNESCO visiting scientist at the superconductivity laboratory of ICTP-Trieste and the Italian National Research Council (CNR-Parma). After postdoctoral study at Imperial College, London, he joined the Advanced Materials Research Institute (New Orleans). He has authored or co-authored more than 35 research publications in the area of chemistry and physics of advanced materials. He

joined American Superconductor in 2000.

Kodenkandath can be reached at American Superconductor, 2 Technology Dr., Westborough, MA 01581 USA; tel. 508-621-4374, fax 508-836-4248, and e-mail tkodenkandath@amsuper.com.

Xiaoping Li is a principal scientist at American Superconductor Corporation in Westborough, Mass., where she works on the growth and characterization of superconducting films and epitaxial oxide layers on metal substrates. Prior to joining AMSC in 2000, she did postdoctoral research on ferroelectric/antiferroelectric thin-film heterostructures at the University of Pennsylvania.

She received her BS degree in physics and MS degree in materials science from Tsinghua University and her PhD degree in materials engineering from Drexel University in 1999. Her PhD research focused on the study of electro-mechanical systems based on piezoelectric ceramic materials. Li has authored or co-authored more than 20 publications in superconductivity and materials science.

Li can be reached at American Superconductor, 2 Technology Dr., Westborough, MA 01581 USA; tel. 508-621-4189, fax 508-836-4248, and e-mail xli@amsuper.com.

Jodi Reeves is the senior scientist for characterization at SuperPower Inc. in Schenectady, N.Y., investigating structure–property–process relationships in coated conductors and designing *in situ* quality-control tools. She completed her PhD degree in mate-

rials science and engineering at the University of Wisconsin, where her research involved the microstructural analysis of first- and second-generation high-temperature superconducting materials.

Reeves can be reached at SuperPower Inc., 450 Duane Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304, USA; tel. 518-346-1414 ext. 3011, fax 518-346-6080, and e-mail jreeves@igc.com.

Martin W. Rupich is a senior technical staff member at American Superconductor Corporation in Westborough, Mass., where he currently leads the chemistry group responsible for the deposition, growth, and characterization of epitaxial ceramic films for second-generation superconducting wires. His work at AMSC also includes the synthesis and characterization of Bi-2223 superconducting powders and the development and manufacture of first-generation Bi-2223/Ag composite superconducting wire. Prior to joining AMSC, Rupich spent 12 years at EIC Laboratories in Norwood, Mass., carrying out research and development on alkali metal batteries, methanol fuel cells, Raman spectroscopy, electrochemical sensors, metal oxide film growth, and conductive polymer films. Rupich received his BS degree in chemistry from John Carroll University in 1974 and his PhD degree in inorganic chemistry from Northeastern University in 1980. He has authored or co-authored more than 50 technical articles and holds 19 U.S. patents.

Rupich can be reached at American Superconductor, 2 Technology Dr., Westborough, MA 01581 USA; tel. 508-621-4217, fax 508-836-4248, and e-mail mrupich@amsuper.com.

Takashi Saitoh is the chief engineer in the Material Technology Laboratory at Fujikura Ltd. in Tokyo, Japan. He received his BA degree in metallurgical engineering from Yokohama National University in 1973. He has been engaged in the development of many kinds of metallic materials at Fujikura, including Nb₃Sn wires for forced-cooled superconductors. He started research and development on high-T_c superconductors as a staff member at the Engineering Research Association for Superconductive Generation Equipment and Materials (Super-GM) in Osaka from 1987 to 1990. Since 1995, he has been head of the superconductor research group at Fujikura. He is a member of the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan and the Cryogenic Society of Japan.

Saitoh can be reached by e-mail at tsaitoh@fujikura.co.jp.

Urs Schoop is a senior technical staff member at American Superconductor Corporation in Westborough, Mass. His work at AMSC is focused on the research, development, and manufacturing of second-generation (2G) coated conductor wire. He leads the research and development effort on epitaxial growth of oxide buffer layers on metal foils and is responsible for scale-up of this technology for the man-

ufacturing of 2G coated conductors. He joined AMSC in 2000.

Schoop received his diploma degree in physics from University of Tübingen, Germany, in 1995 and his PhD degree in physics from the University of Cologne in 2000. In Cologne, his research included processing of YBCO ramp-type junctions and characterization of bicrystal Josephson junctions. He also studied transport characteristics of low-angle grain boundaries in YBCO and other high-temperature superconductors. Throughout his career, he has developed an extensive background on the deposition of epitaxial thin films of ceramic materials by physical vapor deposition methods as well as the characterization of their structure and electrical properties.

Schoop can be reached at American Superconductor, 2 Technology Dr., Westborough, MA 01581 USA; tel. 508-621-4366, fax 508-0836-4248, and e-mail uschoop@amsuper.com.

Venkat Selvamanickam is a program manager at SuperPower Inc. (Schenectady, N.Y.), a subsidiary of Intermagnetics General Corporation, where he has been since 1994. At SuperPower, he leads the team that is scaling up second-generation high-temperature superconductor technology to manufacturing.

Selvamanickam has published 85 papers on high-temperature superconductors and authored five U.S. patents. In 1996, he received the Presidential Early Career Award from the White

House. This award is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers beginning their independent careers. He earned a PhD degree in materials engineering in 1992 from the University of Houston.

Selvamanickam can be reached by e-mail at vselva@igc.com.

Yuh Shiohara received his doctoral degree in metallurgy from Waseda University (Tokyo, Japan) in 1979 and joined the Materials Processing Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a visiting scientist in 1980. From 1983 to 1988, he was a research associate in the center, working on solidification processing of metal alloys and ceramics. Since 1988, he has been a division director of Division IV (materials, bulk, and chemical processing) and a managing director (since 1998) of coated conductor R&D at the Superconductivity Research Laboratory (SRL) within the International Superconductivity Technology Center (ISTEC) in Tokyo. His special interests include processing for the production of large, high-quality single crystals as well as coated conductors of RE-123 high-T_c superconductive oxides and the understanding of the crystal growth mechanisms in these materials. He has published more than 150 papers, including 10 invited review papers related to superconductivity. Shiohara has received several academic awards, including the Sawamura Award from the Iron and Steel Institute of Japan, two Best

Paper of the Year Awards from the Japan Institute of Metals, and the Superconductivity Science and Technology Award from the Society of Non-Traditional Technology of Japan. He is currently a member of the Materials Research Society, the Japan Institute of Metals, the Japan Society of Applied Physics, the Japanese Association for Crystal Growth, the Cryogenic Society of Japan, the Japan Society of Microgravity Application, and the Iron and Steel Institute of Japan. His activities in academic research societies include Advisory Review Board member for the Materials Research Society (1992–1994), principal editor of the *Journal of Materials Research* (1995–1999), editor for the Japan Institute of Metals (1995 to present), and committee member of the 19th and the 161st committees of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

Shiohara can be reached at SRL-ISTEC, 10-13 Shinonome 1-chome, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0062, Japan; tel. 81-3-3536-5710, fax 81-3-3536-5717, and e-mail shiohara@istec.or.jp.

Alexander Usoskin is a division head at European High Temperature Superconductors (EHTS) in Göttingen, Germany. His current research interests include the development of consistent methods for the processing of long-length YBCO-coated tapes on an industrial scale, a study of quenching behavior in coated tapes, and an investigation of the mechanisms responsible for the interchange of current

between the superconducting and normal-metal components in the conductor structure. His other interests involve studies of film growth mechanisms, mechanisms of pulsed-laser-induced surface modifications, and investigations of optics in dielectric-semiconductor composites.

Usoskin earned his PhD in solid-state optics from the State University of Charkov. Between 1971 and 1992, he was a scientist and then a head of the department of Laser Components and Thin Films at the State Institute for Single Crystals in Charkov. From 1993 to 2004, he was a scientist and then a project manager at the Center for Advanced Materials (ZFW) in Göttingen. In 2004, he began his present work at EHTS. He has authored or co-authored about 200 publications and 17 patents.

Usoskin can be reached at European High Temperature Superconductors, Windausweg 2, D-37073 Göttingen, Germany; tel. 49-551-399-789, fax 49-551-3913-403, and e-mail usoskin@ump.gwdg.de.

Darren T. Verebelyi is a senior technical staff member at American Superconductor Corporation in Westborough, Mass. He is responsible for the coordination and development of long-length YBCO processing and development of long-length YBCO wire architectures and properties.

Verebelyi received his BS degree in physics from Southern Illinois University in 1989 and his PhD in physics from Clemson University in

1997. Prior to joining the staff of AMSC, he carried out postdoctoral research at Oak Ridge National Laboratory from 1997 to 2000, studying the magnetic-field dependence of HTS single grain boundaries and growth of oxide buffer layers on textured metal substrates.

The successful development of the RABiTS technology (rolling-assisted biaxially textured substrates) at ORNL was recognized by an ORNL World Class Teamwork Award, a DOE Energy 100 Award, and an R&D 100 Award. Verebelyi has authored or co-authored more than 50 papers on the subject of high-temperature superconductors and the commercial development of coated conductors.

Verebelyi can be reached at American Superconductor, 2 Technology Dr., Westborough, MA 01581 USA; tel. 508-621-4368, fax 508-836-4248, and e-mail dverebelyi@amsuper.com.

Yiyuan Xie is a materials scientist at SuperPower Inc. in Schenectady, N.Y., where he is responsible for testing and quality control for the scale-up of second-generation high-temperature coated superconductors. He received his BS and MS degrees in physics from Wuhan University in China in 1985 and 1988, respectively, and a PhD degree in physics from the University of Kansas in 2002. From 1992 to 1996, he worked in the Changsha Research Institute of Mining and Metallurgy on the development of YBCO superconducting tapes

by MOCVD.

Xie can be reached at SuperPower Inc., 450 Duane Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304 USA; tel. 518-346-1414, fax 518-346-6080, and e-mail yxie@igc.com.

Yutaka Yamada is a senior research scientist and director of the Superconductivity Research Laboratory (SRL) at the Nagoya Coated Conductor Center (NC3). His research covers superconducting materials for wire applications and is currently concentrated on YBCO-coated conductors. He received his PhD degree in materials science in 1988 from Tokyo University while doing work on superconducting wires for high-field applications and pinning properties at Toshiba Corp. He also studied high-temperature superconducting (BiPb)SrCaCuO wire at Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe in Germany from 1989 to 1991. He joined the SRL in 2000.

Yamada can be reached by e-mail at yyamada@istec.or.jp.

Wei Zhang is a principal scientist at American Superconductor Corporation in Westborough, Mass. His primary research focus is the processing and properties of epitaxial ceramic superconducting films. He joined the coated conductor research group at AMSC in 1997.

Zhang received his bachelor's degree from Beijing Science and Technology University in China and his PhD degree in materials science from Kyoto University in Japan. He carried out postdoctoral research on high-temperature superconducting materials at the University of Wisconsin–Madison from 1992 to 1997 before joining AMSC. He has authored or co-authored more than 50 publications in superconductivity and materials science.

Zhang can be reached at American Superconductor, 2 Technology Dr., Westborough, MA 01581 USA; tel. 508-621-4288, fax 508-836-4248, and e-mail wzhang@amsuper.com. □

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