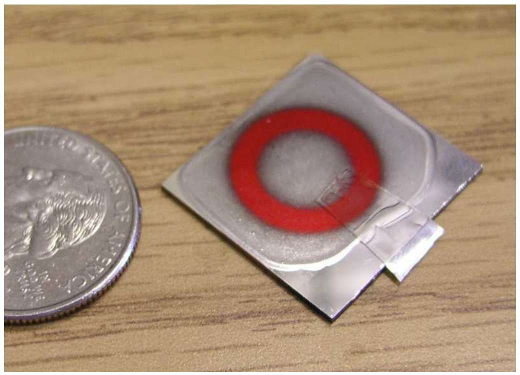
SAND2007-0239C

Microscale Nuclear Batteries: from Heterojunctions to Fuel Cells



Jeff Crowell

Sandia National Laboratories
Livermore, California

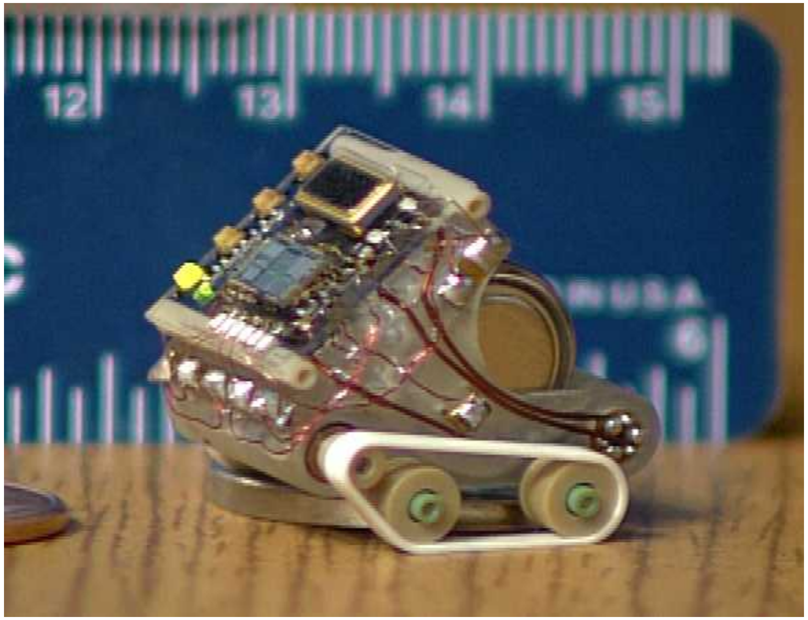
Doug Chinn
Patrick Doty

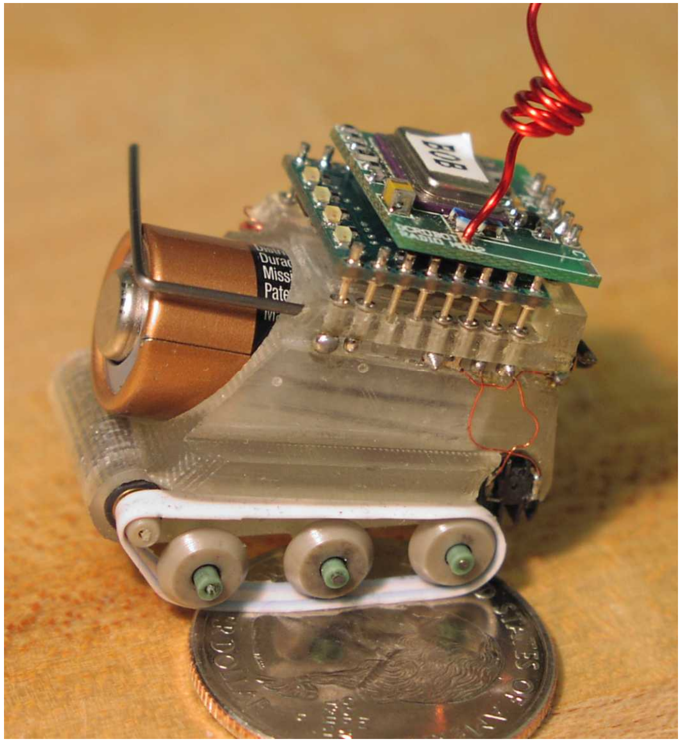
Christine Cuppoletti
Paul Dentinger

IMAPS Alternative Energy Conference
January 17, 2007

Batteries Limit Independent MEMS Devices

Batteries have not shrunk as fast as the systems they support.





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New MEMS Applications Call for On-Board Power

- Sensor arrays using wireless communications
- Mobile microsystems
- Isolated microsystems (space exploration)

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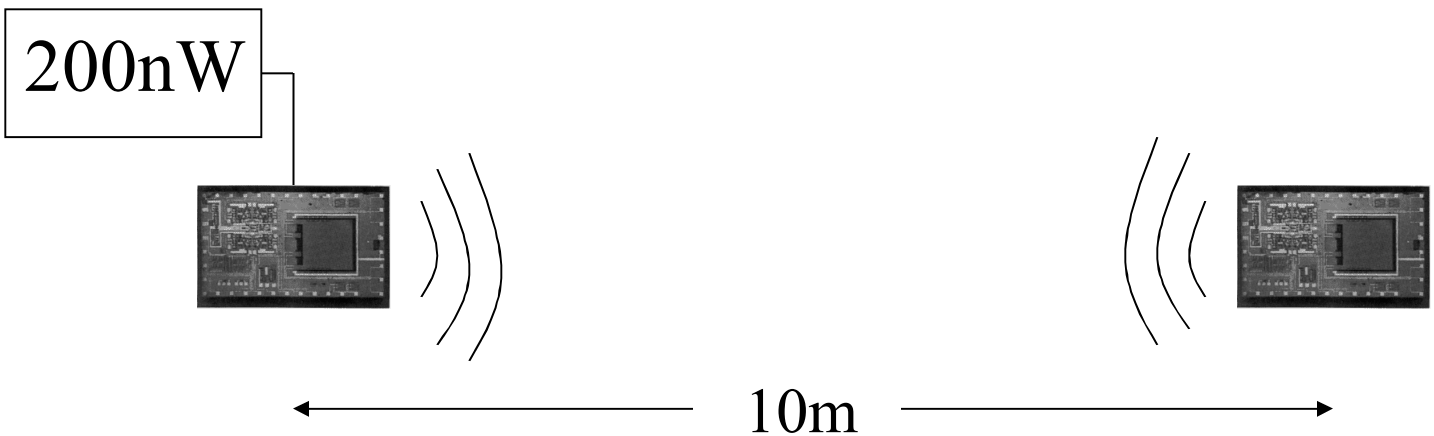
Power Requirements of MEMS Devices

- MEMS devices require 100's nW to mW



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Chemical Batteries Perform Poorly When Scaled Down

- silver oxide watch batteries (mm thick)

  energy density: 2000 J/cm^3

- Ni/Zn batteries (100μm thick)

  energy density: 44 J/cm^3

- 2mm x 2mm Ni/Zn battery would provide 200nW for **1 day**

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Energy from Nuclear Decay

for example, several beta emitters:

	energy density	half-life
^{3}H (tritium stored in MgT_2)	55 MJ/cm^3	12 years
^{63}Ni	281 MJ/cm^3	100 years
^{35}S	277 MJ/cm^3	88 days

- many orders of magnitude greater energy density than chemical batteries

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Power from Nuclear Decay

for example:

	maximum power density	half-life
^{3}H (tritium stored in MgT_2)	0.098 W/cm^3	12 years
^{63}Ni	0.062 W/cm^3	100 years
^{35}S	25.3 W/cm^3	88 days

- comparable to chemical batteries

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Power of Radionuclide Batteries is Comparable to Chemical Batteries

To produce 200nW:

	Ni/Zn battery	Ni-63 battery (5% eff) (15% fuel)
footprint	2mm x 2mm	2mm x 2mm
height	100µm	100µm
useful life	**1 day**	**decades**

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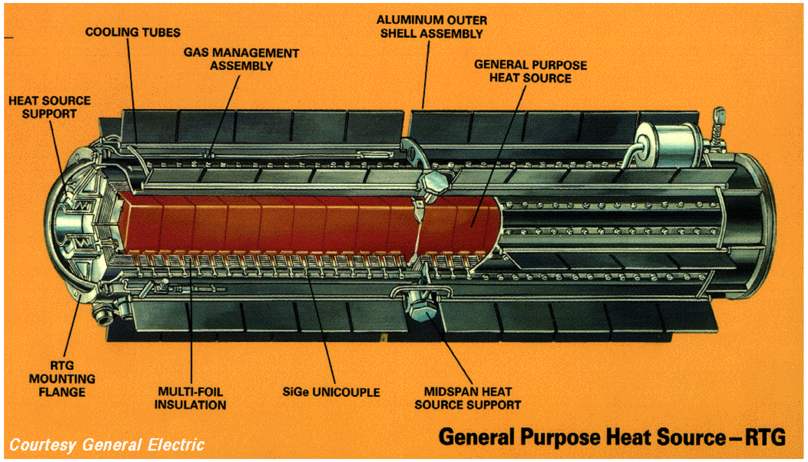
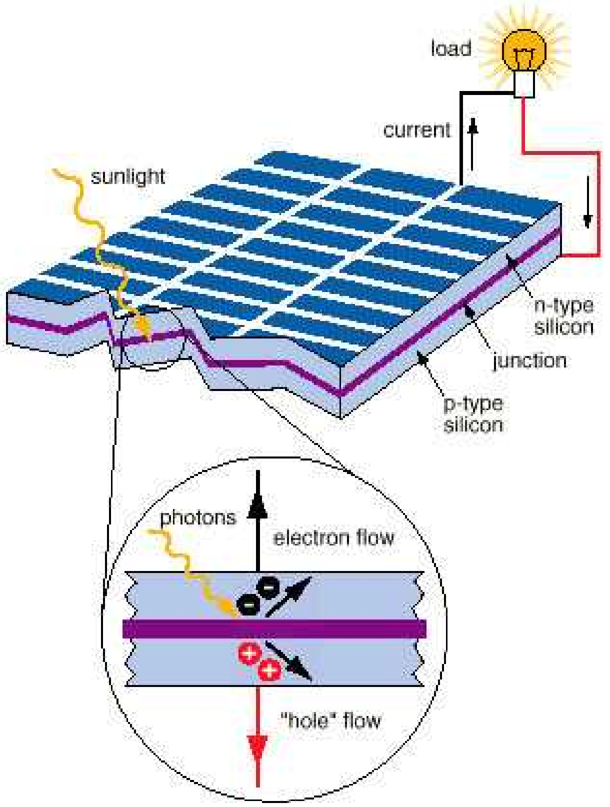
Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generators (RTGs)

- used in 41 NASA missions
- Pu-238 generates heat from alpha decay
- 114 cm long, 42 cm in diameter
- 276 W
- does not scale down well (insulation)



Generating Power in a Semiconductor Junction

- In photovoltaics (solar cells), each photon creates an electron-hole pair in a semiconductor junction, producing electrical power.
- A charged particle from a radionuclide can produce many electron-hole pairs.



silicon photovoltaic

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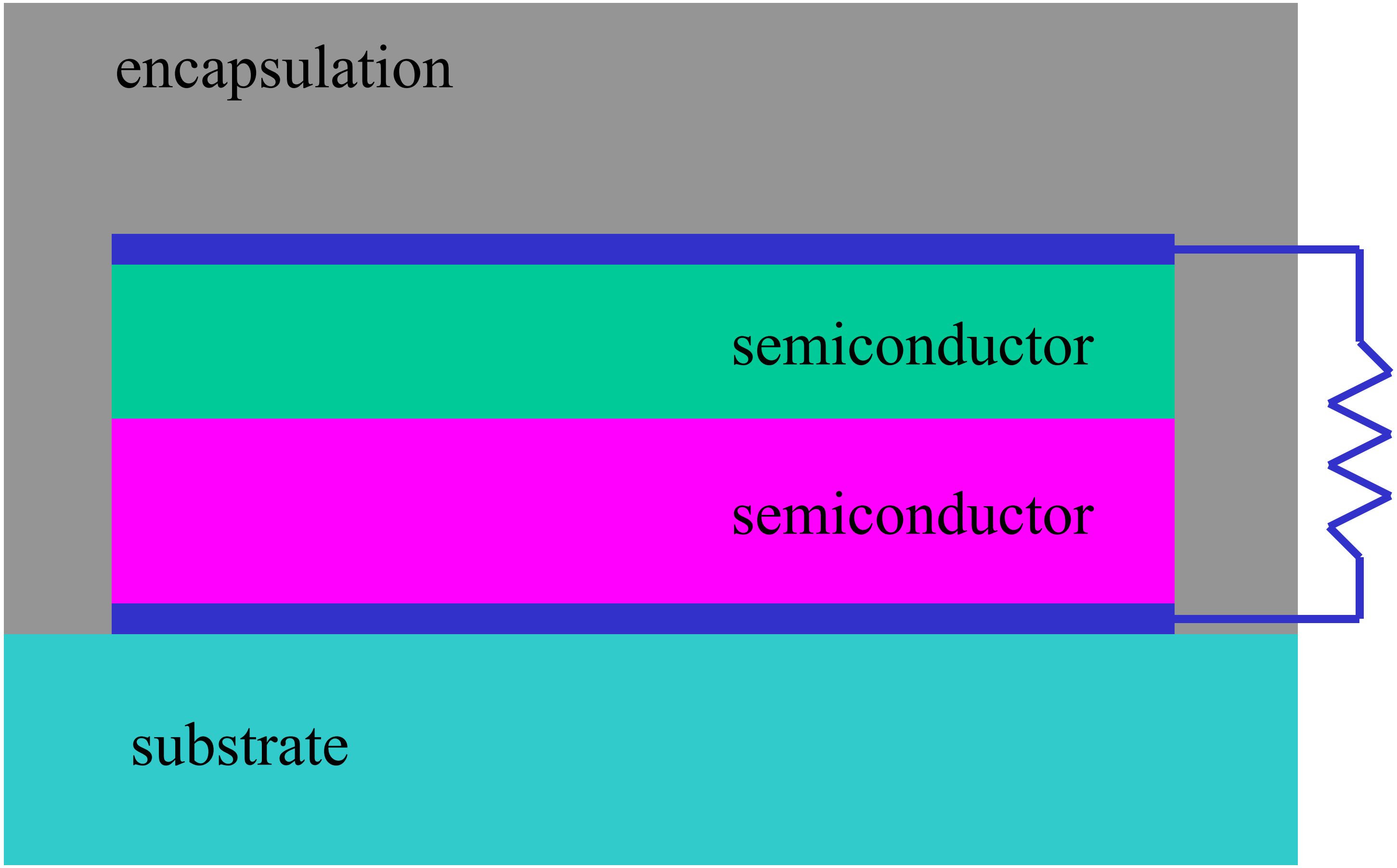
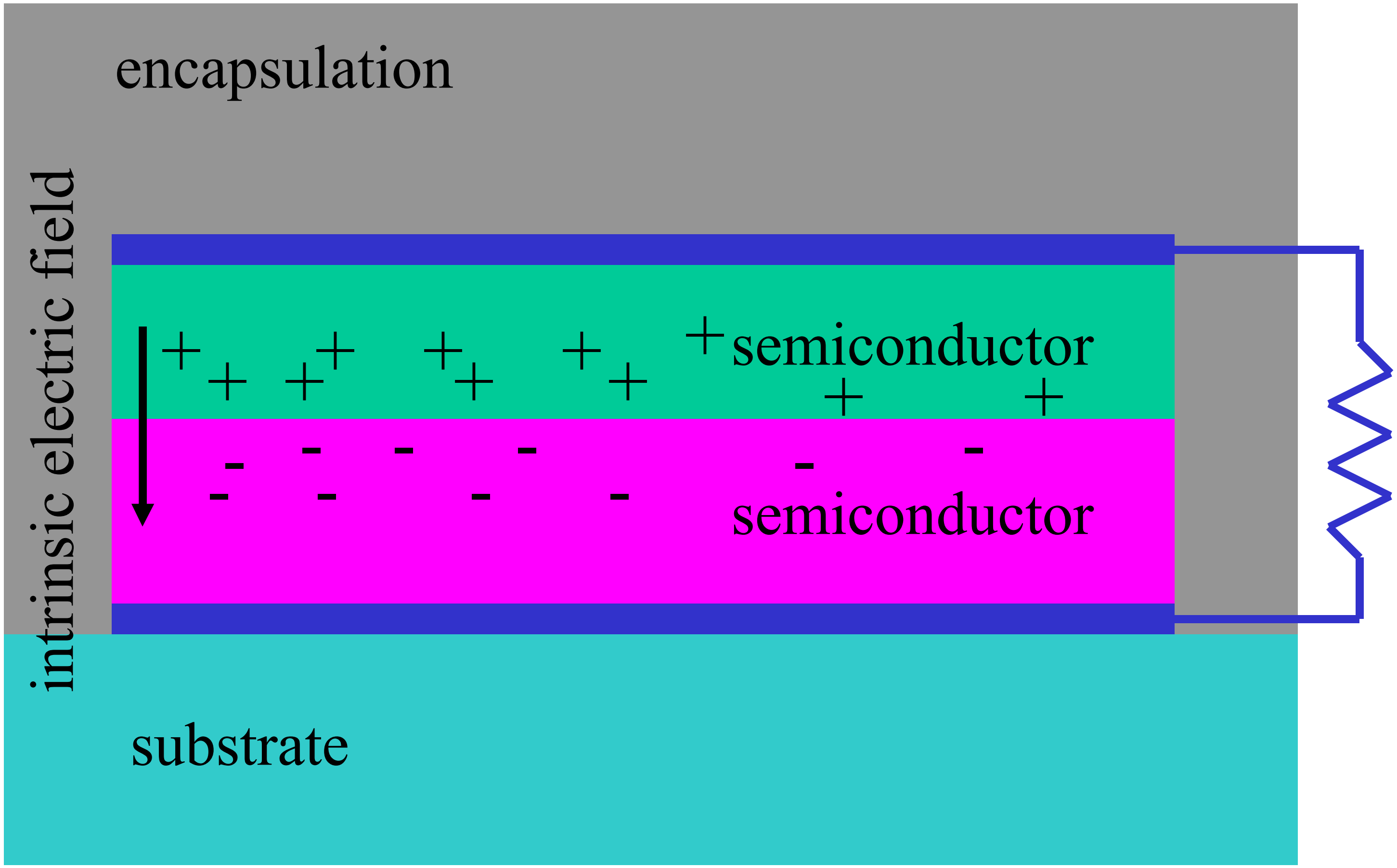
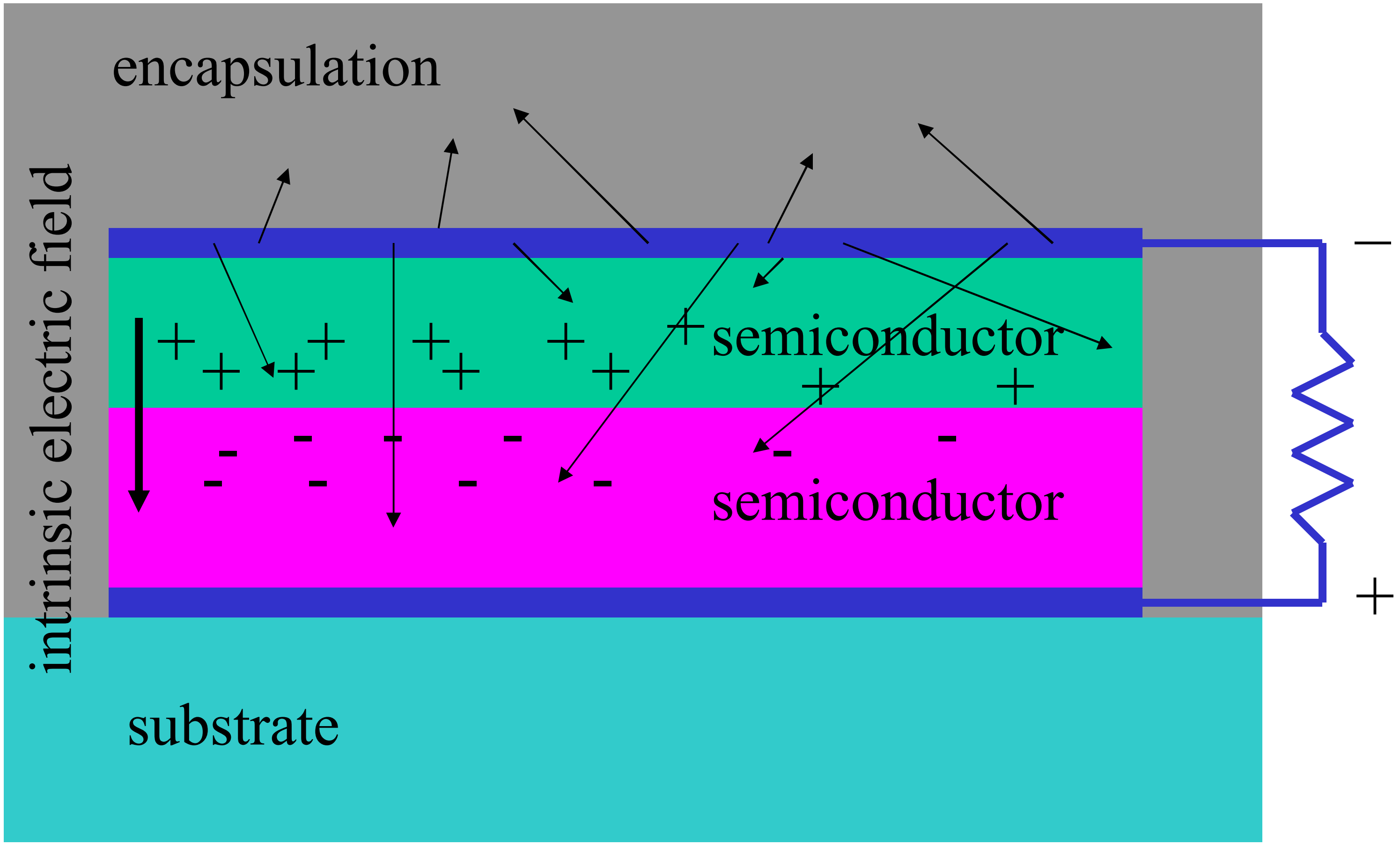
Device Layout



Doped Semiconductors Create Intrinsic Electric Field



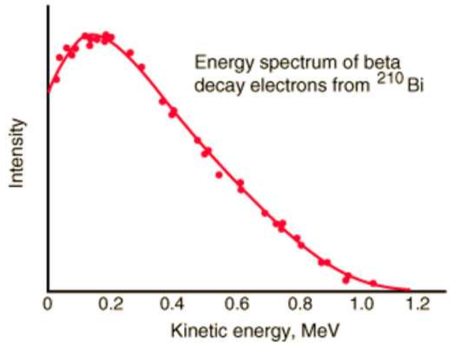
Radioactive Source of Energetic Charged Particles



Radionuclide Selection

- Most beta emitters also release a gamma
- A few are pure beta emitters (^{3}H, ^{63}Ni, ...)
- Low-energy betas: no Bremsstrahlung can escape device
- Stable daughter ($^{3}H \rightarrow {}^{3}He$, $^{63}Ni \rightarrow {}^{63}Cu$, ...)

	half-life	max energy	average energy	max range (in polymer)
^{3}H	12 yr	19 keV	6 keV	5 µm
^{63}Ni	100 yr	67 keV	18 keV	64 µm



Not an external radiation hazard

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Safety and Licensing

- Not external radiation hazard
- Betas stopped in outer layer of dead skin cells
- Internal radiation hazard (following ingestion or inhalation)
- 200nW ^{63}Ni battery, 5% efficient → 30 mCi
- Exceeds 200 μCi ingestion limit for non-radiation workers
- NRC license? (gun sights have 12 mCi tritium, exit signs have 20 Ci tritium)

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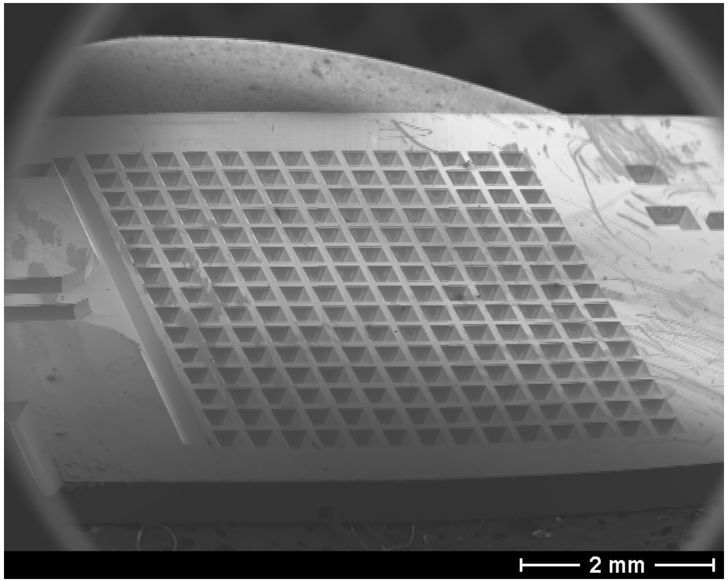
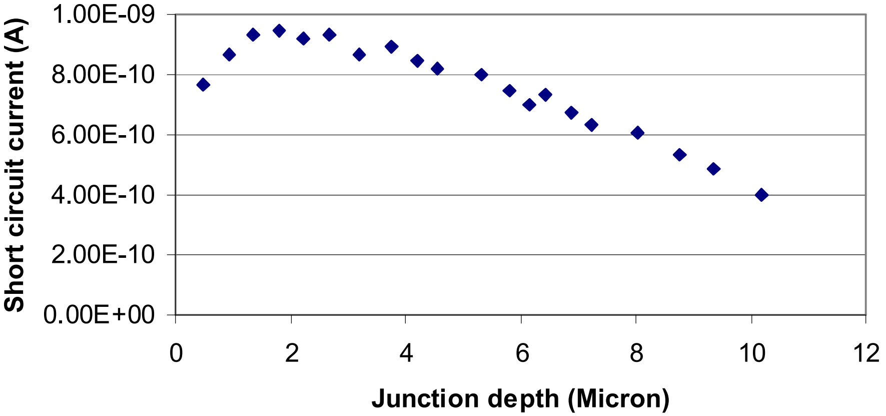
Silicon Radionuclide Battery

- work by Blanchard, et. al.
- Ni-63 source



optimal depth of junction: 2 μm



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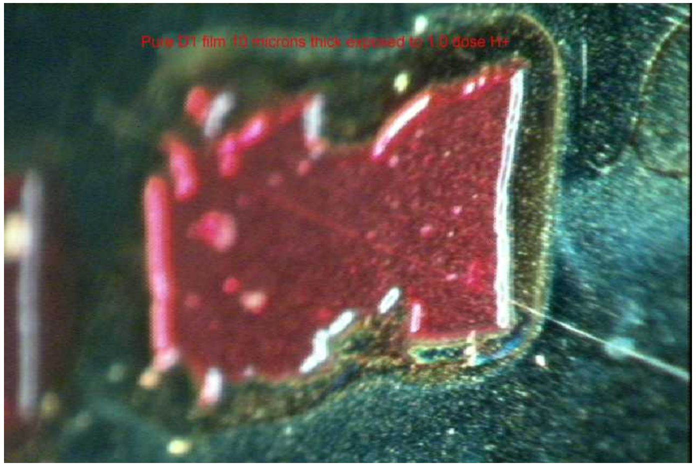
Pi-Conjugated Materials

Polymeric semiconductors have advantages over silicon

- radiation damage resistance
- thousands of different materials available
- easily fabricated (amorphous)
- flexible & robust
- light weight



Challenges

- poor solubility
- controlling properties

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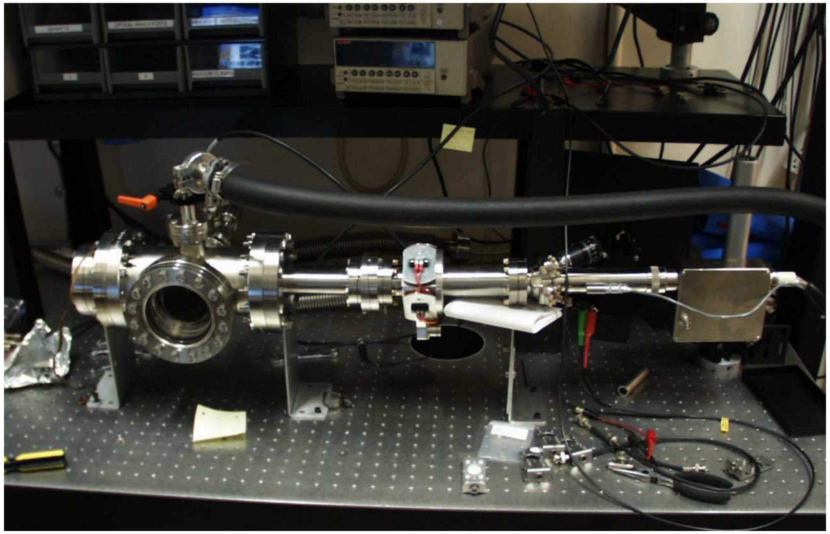
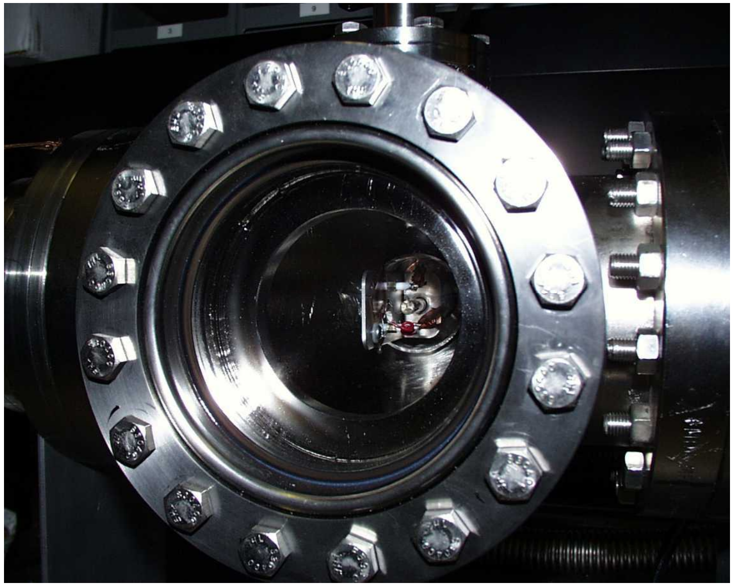
Testing with an Electron Beam

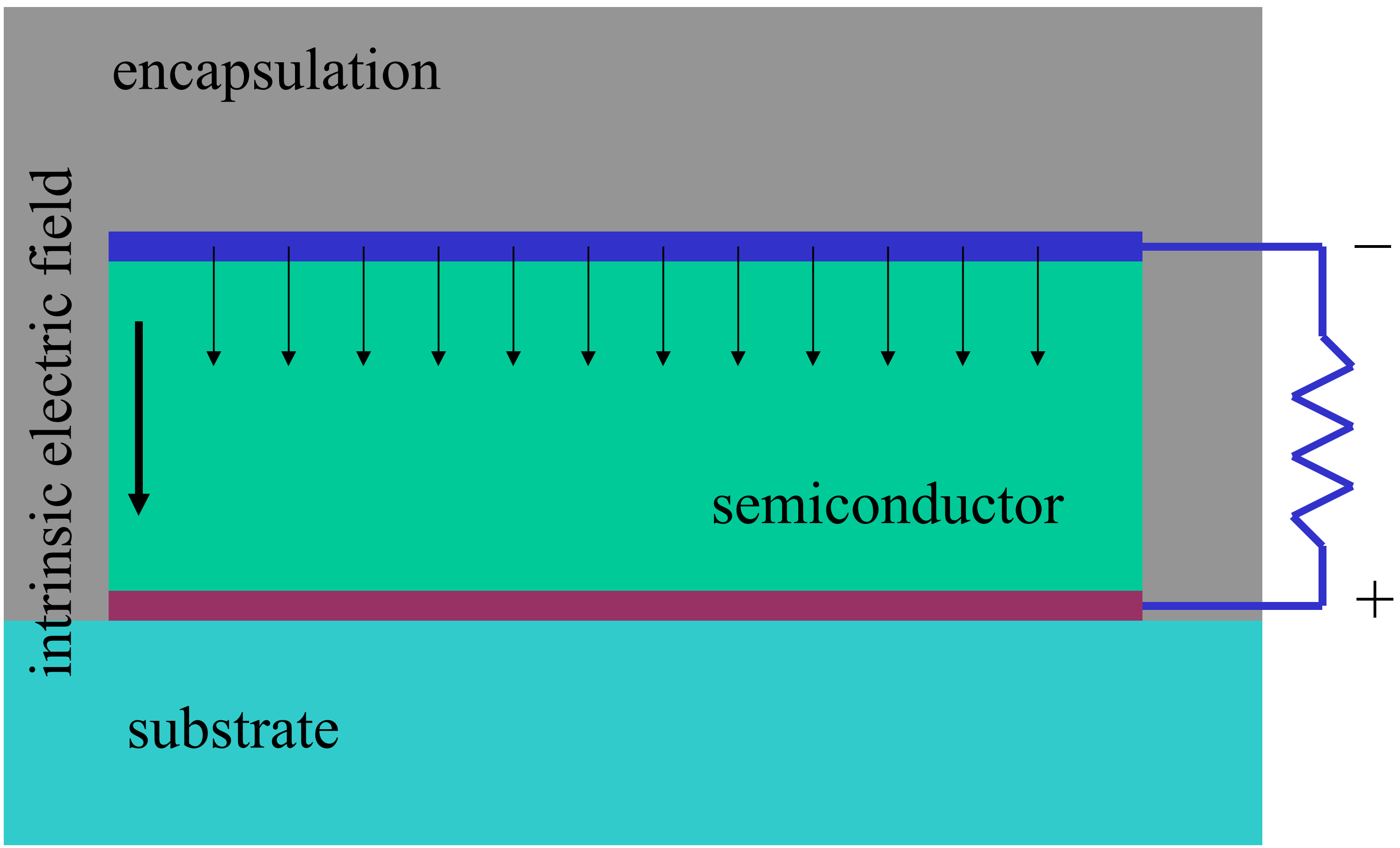
- 20 keV electron gun
- Monoenergetic
- Monodirectional





- Can adjust angle of device to beam

Bulk Heterojunctions



electrodes have different workfunctions

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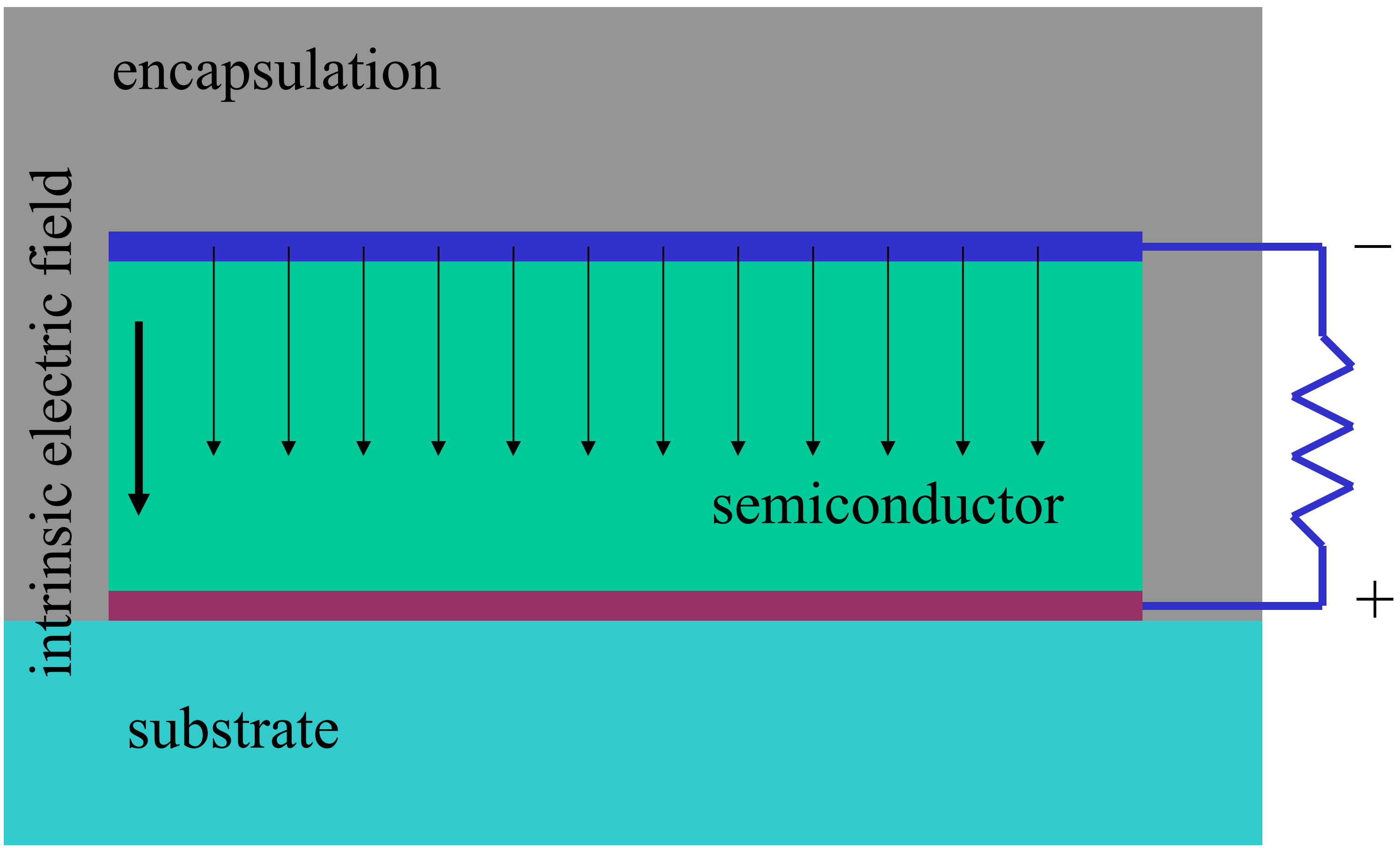
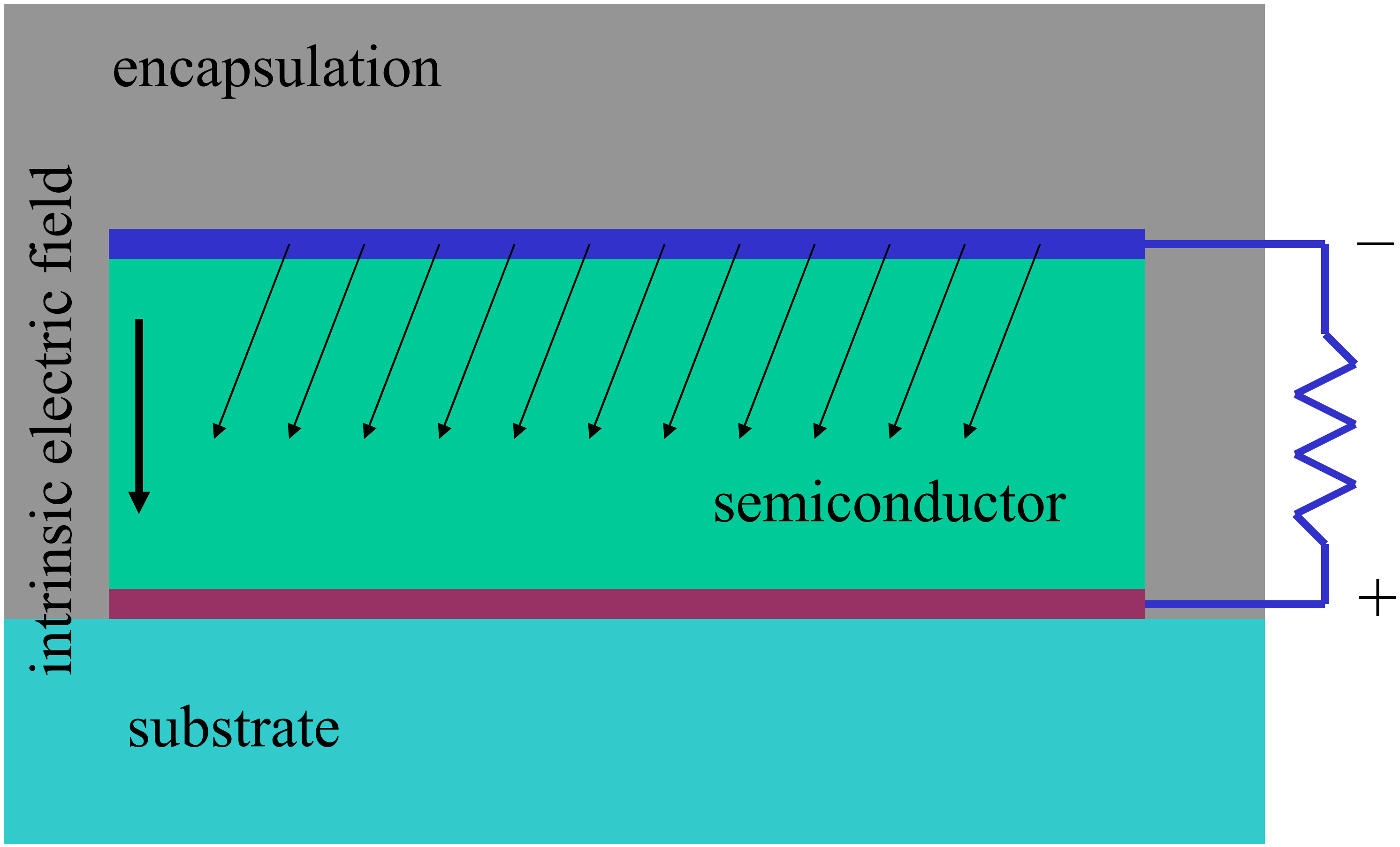
Bulk Heterojunctions



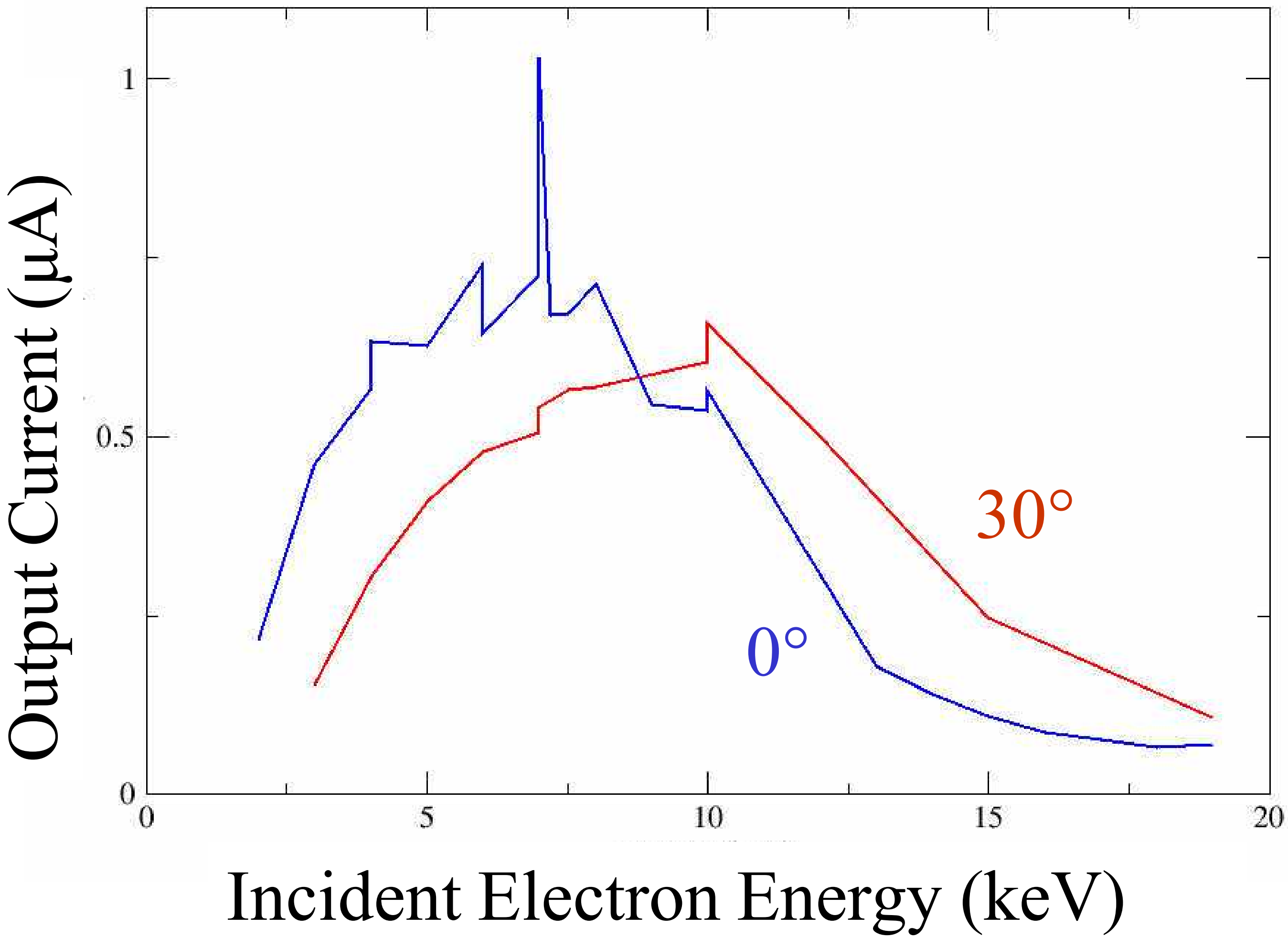
electrodes have different workfunctions

Bulk Heterojunctions

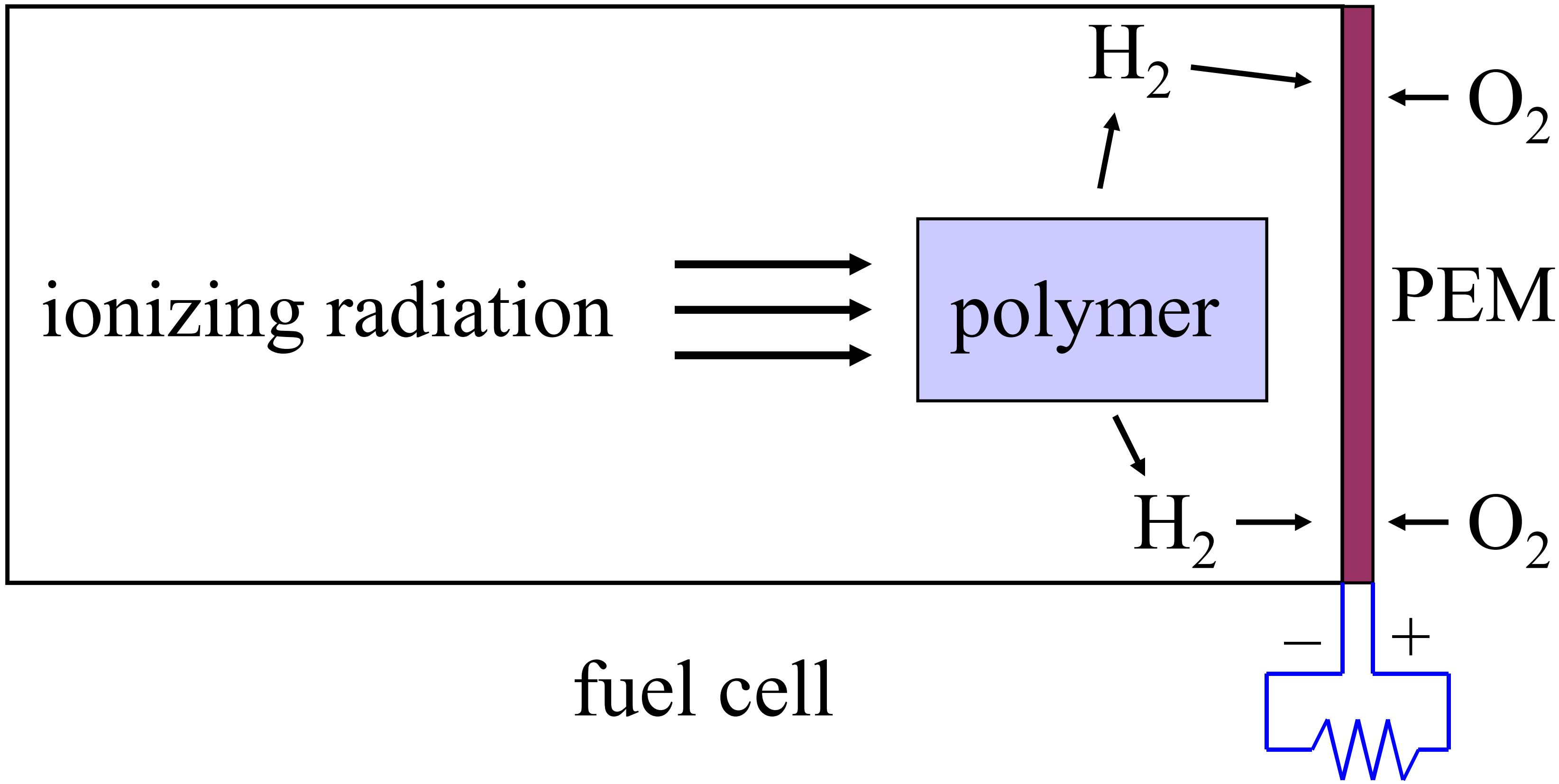


electrodes have different workfunctions

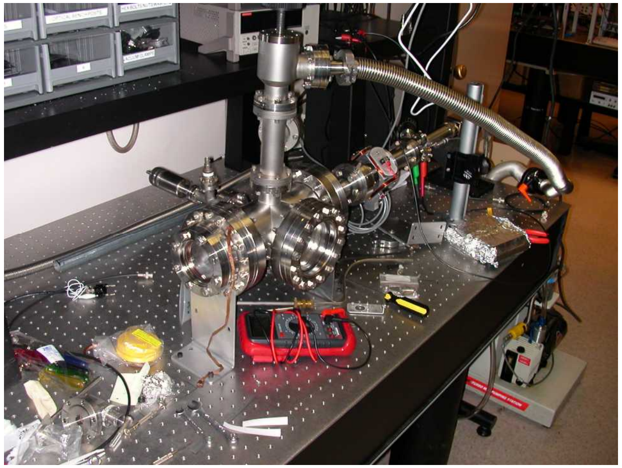
Response a Function of Incident Energy and Angle

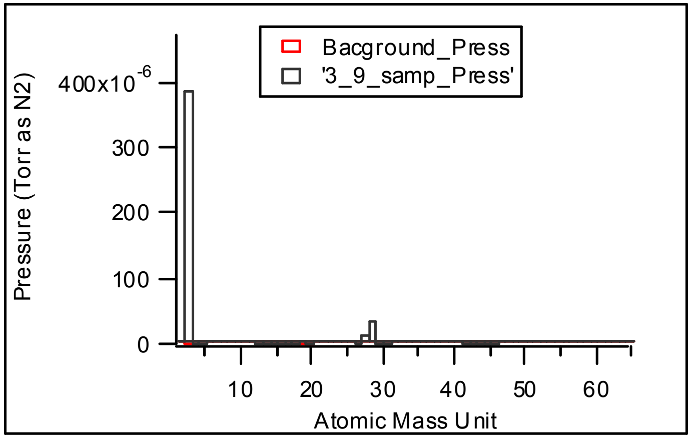


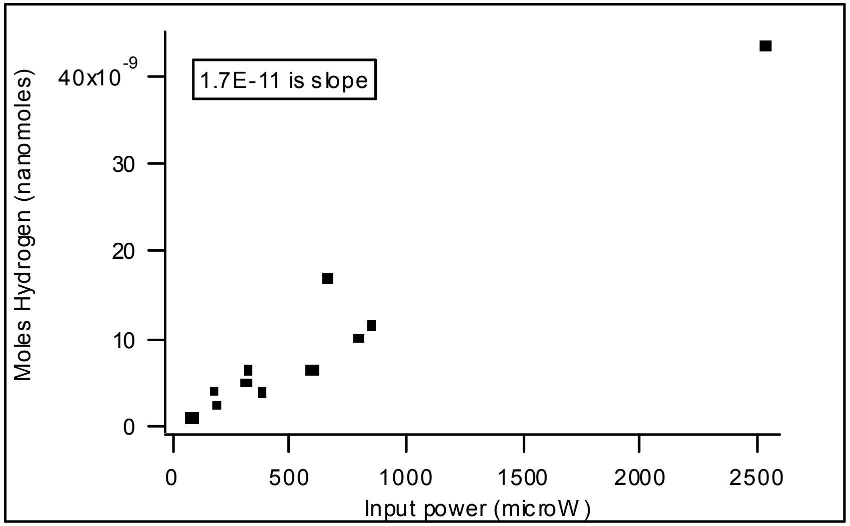
And Now for Something Completely Different...



Electron Beam Experiments







4.4% nuclear to electric
Possible to get much higher.

Practical dose rates are approx. 10^4 higher than in real device

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Beta Range Drives Physical Design

Ni-63 Betas	Average energy	Maximum Energy
	18 keV	67 keV
range in Ni	0.6 µm	8 µm
range in polymer	5 µm	64 µm

- Two potential designs
  - Ni particles in a polymer matrix
  - alternating Ni & polymer layers (with possible H_2 diffusion layer)
- To limit self-shielding, Ni particles or layers: 0.1 µm-0.5 µm
- To limit system volume, 100s of layers
- Fabricate by automated extrusion or rolling a single layer

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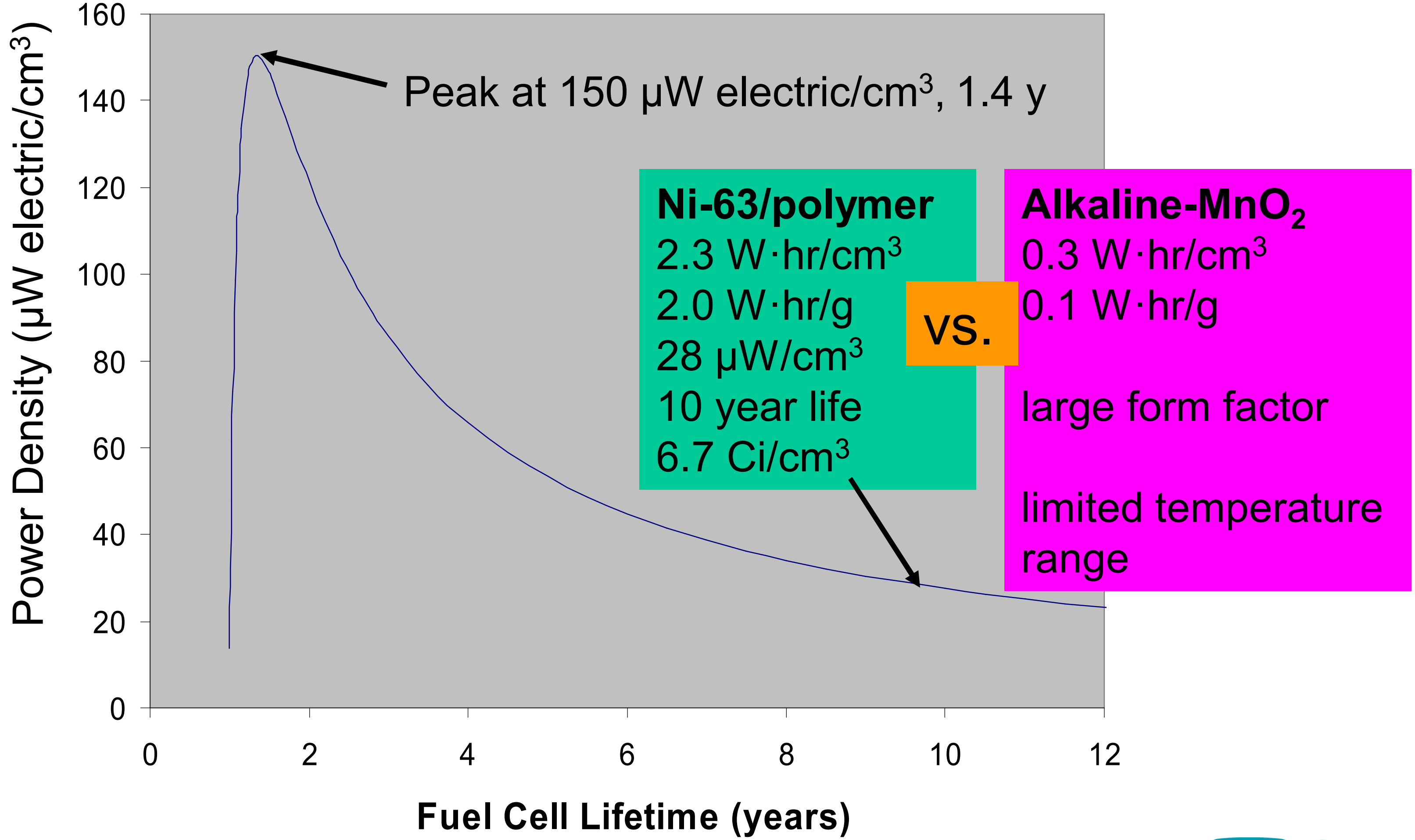
Power Density and Device Lifetime



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Questions?

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Backup Slides

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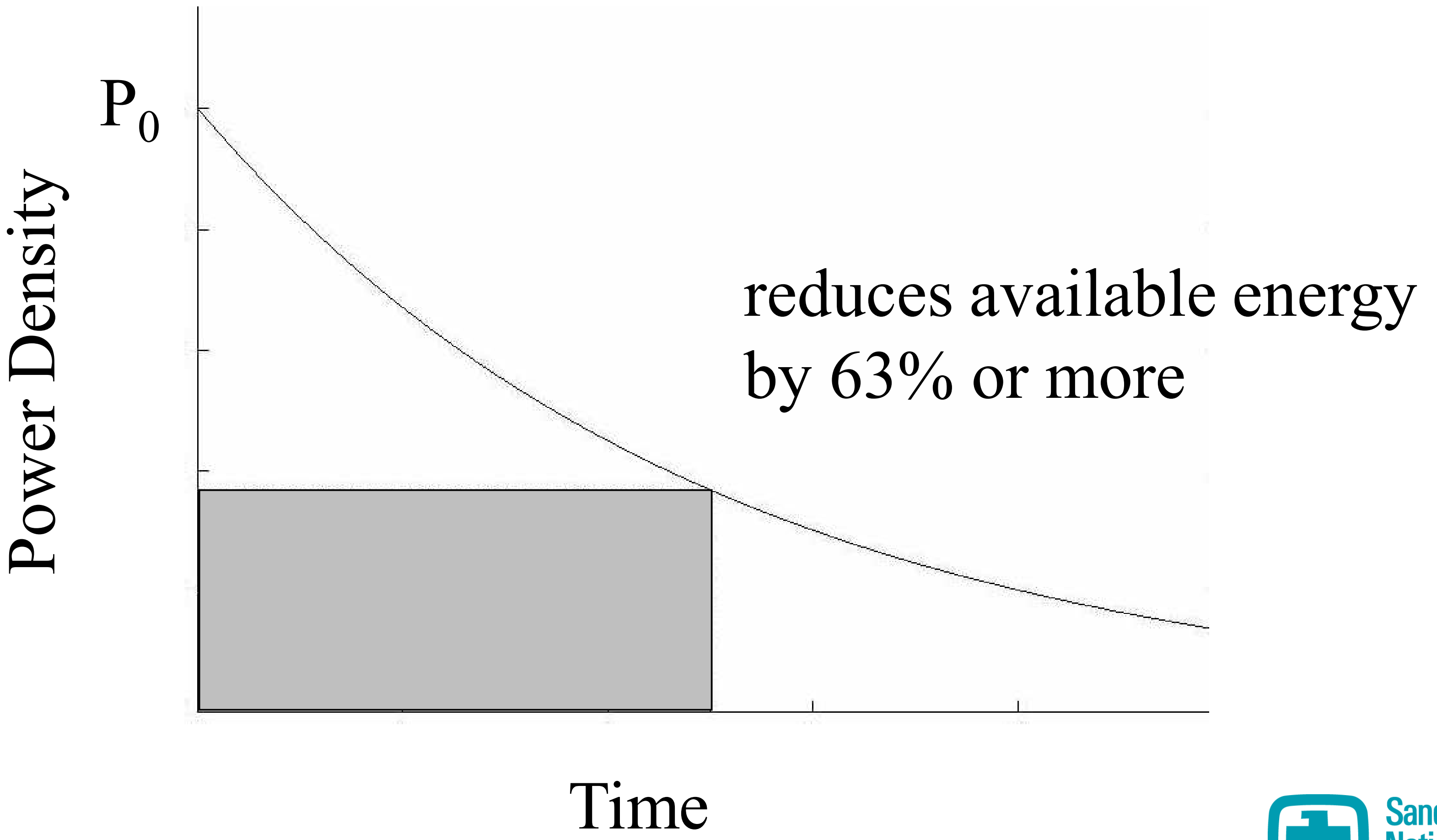
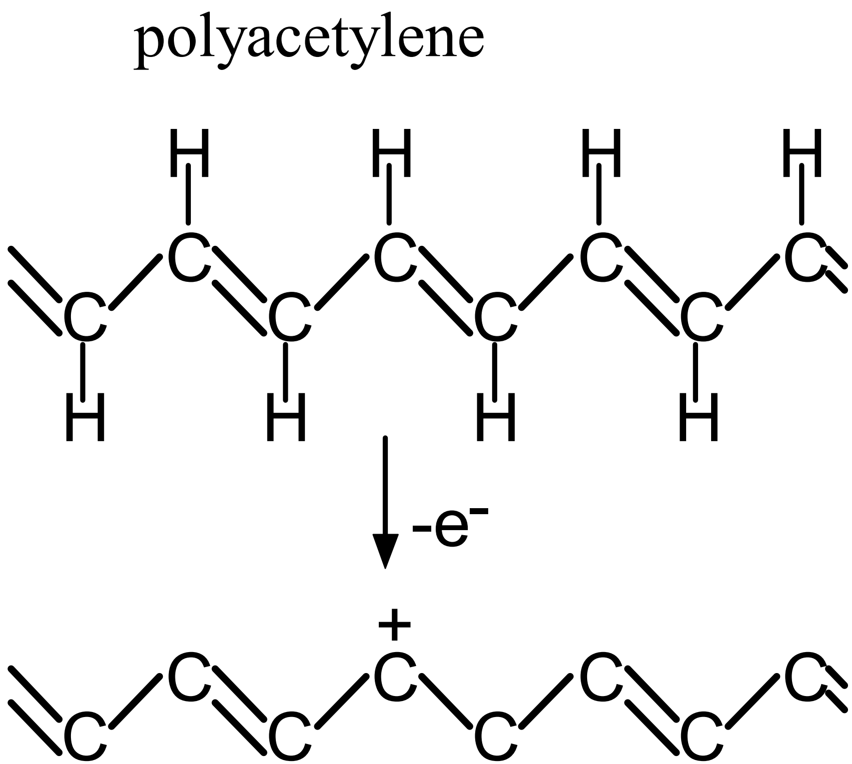
Most Applications Need Constant Power



What does π-conjugated mean?

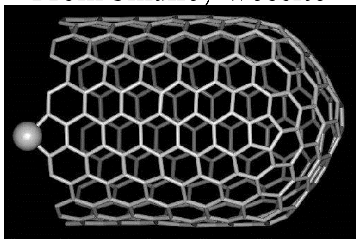
- Synthetic metals, conducting polymers, organic semiconductors, organic metals
- Alternating double-single carbon-carbon bond
- The π electrons overlap
- Materials are insulators unless doped, typically with an acid

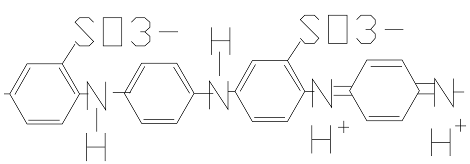


Types of π-conjugated materials

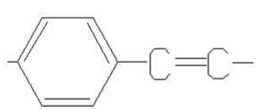
- Polymers- polyaniline, polythiophene, poly vinylene, polyacetylene, etc.
- Small molecules- anthracene, aluminum quinolate, pentacene, etc.
- Carbon nanoparticles- C_{60}, fullerenes, single walled nanotubes, multiwall nanotubes
- DNA?

Carbon nanotube
From Smalley website

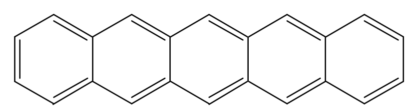




Polyaniline sulfonic acid



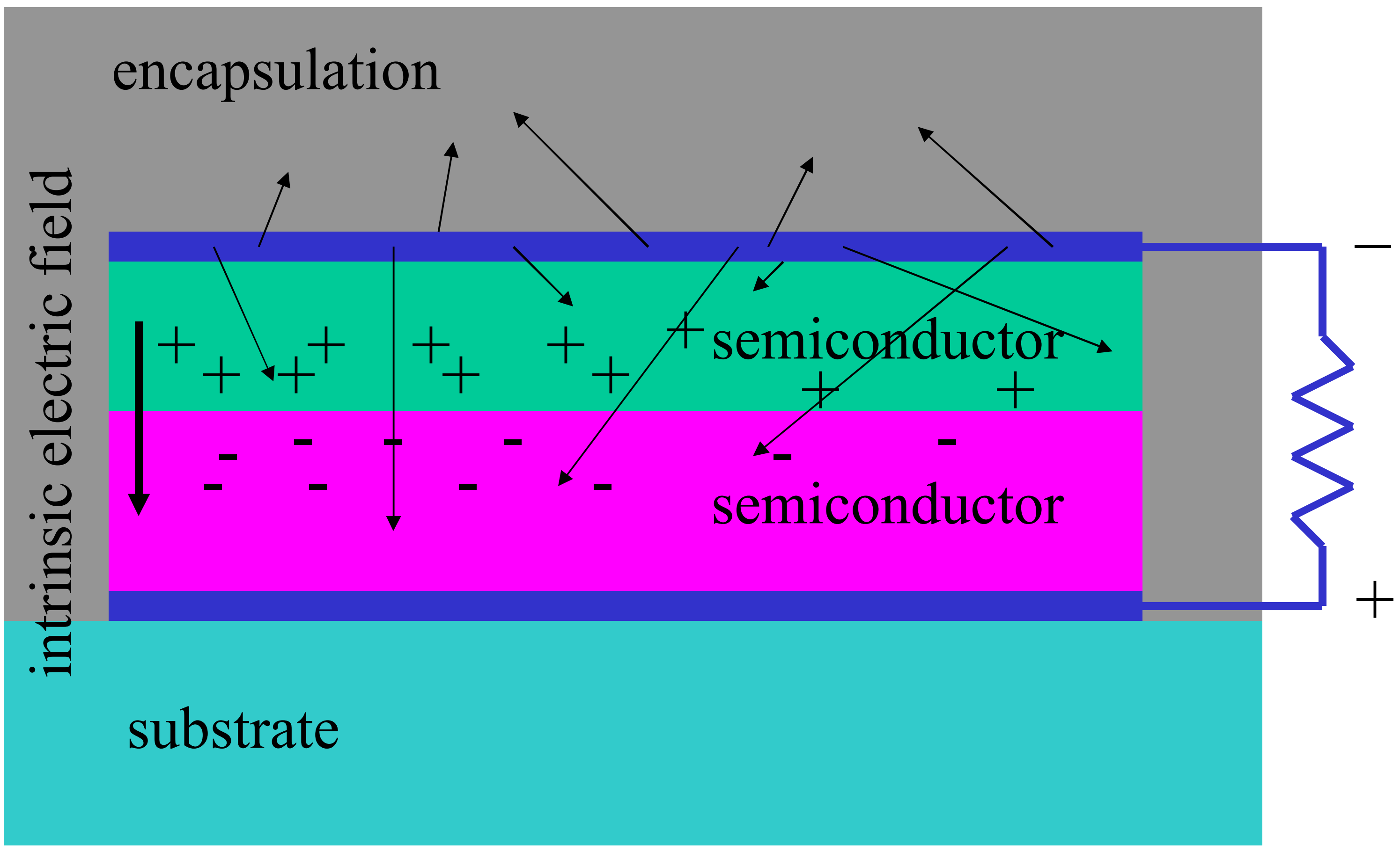
Poly para phenylene vinylene



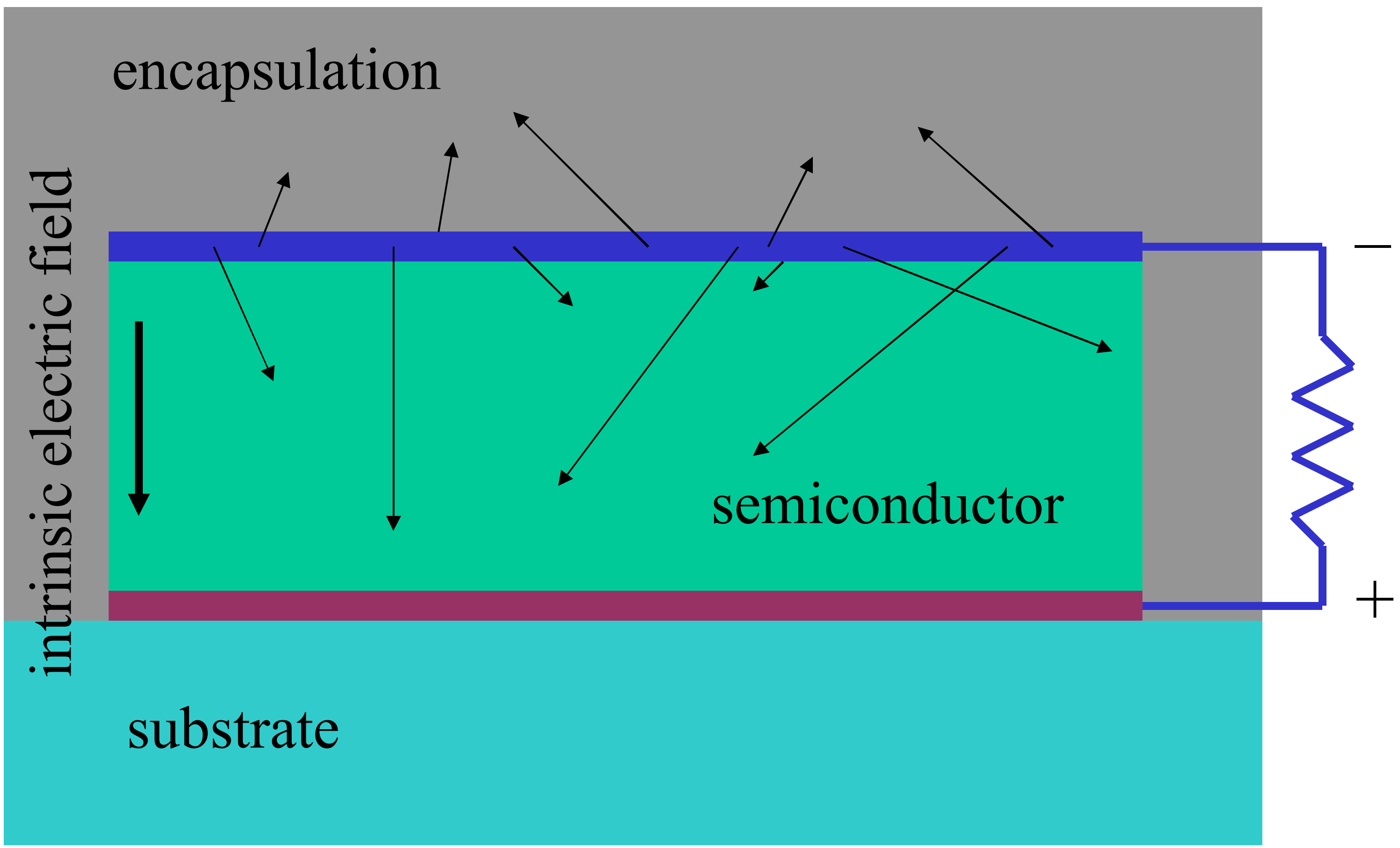
pentacene

pentacene

Bi-layer Heterojunctions

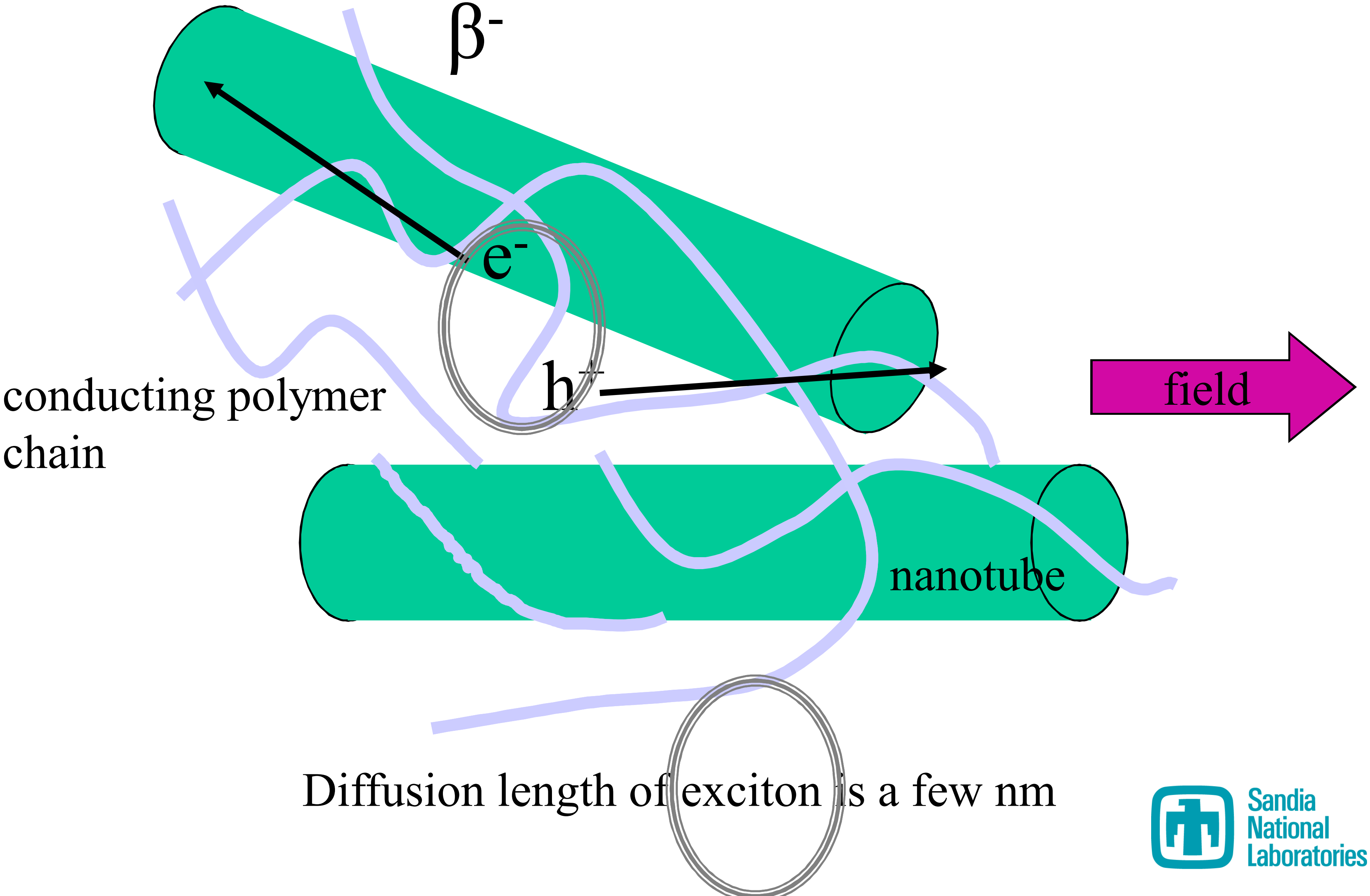


Bulk Heterojunctions



electrodes have different workfunctions

Carbon Nanotubes



Diffusion length of exciton is a few nm

Energy Density Comparisons

	Poor	Conserv.	Optimistic	Very Optimistic	Li/Mn O_2	3V CR24320	DARPA Propr. FC
Hydrogen Recovery, wt. %*	3 (21% of avail)	6 (43% of avail)	8.5% (60% of avail.)	12% (84% of Avail)			
Fuel Cell Eff. H=> electric	45%	50%	60%	60%			
Lifetime	5 yrs.	10 yrs. max.	20 yrs.	40 yrs.	8 yrs.	8 yrs.	10 yrs.
System package wt. pkg/wt. total	40%	30%	20%	15%			
Energy Density W-hr./kg	280	740	1420	2200	180	250	900
Energy Density W-hr./L**	340	880	1700	2600	650	530	950

* Metal hydrides such as LiAlH react with water to about 7% Hydrogen by mass

** Assumes 1.2 g/l system density

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