

# Multitechnique Surface Characterization of Organic LED Material

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Organic LED material was characterized using Thermo Scientific™ ESCALAB™ 250Xi X-ray Photoelectron Spectrometer (XPS) Microprobe, reflected electron energy loss spectroscopy (REELS) and ultraviolet photoelectron spectroscopy (UPS). XPS was used to analyze the surface composition of the material and by combining the information from REELS and UPS a full energy level diagram of the material was created using a single instrument.



ESCALAB 250Xi

### Introduction

Organic LED (OLED) displays are expected to be the future of the display industry. OLED displays typically draw less power than the displays currently available on the market. As a result, portable screens would be able to run for longer from a single battery charge. One OLED material is poly(9,9-dioctylfluorene) or PFO. PFO is a high brightness, blue-light emitting material with a low turn-on voltage. It has a large optical gap,<sup>1</sup> however, and that means that in order to make the most of its potential for OLED displays, the overall design of the OLED device has to be carefully developed and controlled to prevent any adverse interaction with charge carriers in PFO films.

To understand the interaction of PFO with charge carriers, it is necessary to understand the electronic structure of PFO itself. This requires a multitechnique analytical approach. Thermo Scientific offers XPS tools which can be configured with multitechnique options, allowing much of the electronic structure of PFO to be investigated with a single tool.

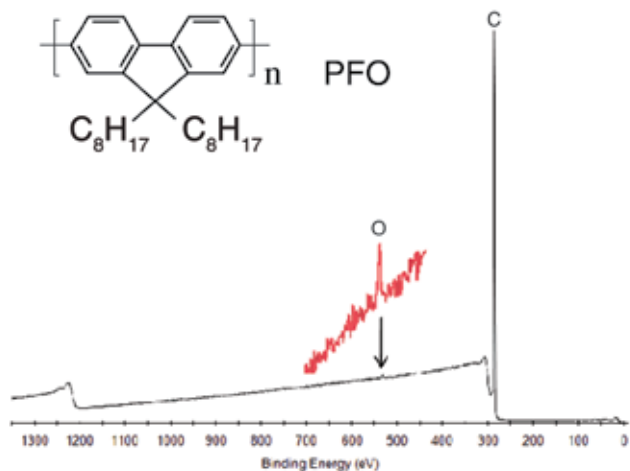


Figure 1: Elemental analysis of PFO surface

### Experimental and Results

A 30 nm PFO film was deposited onto a glass substrate and analyzed after being stored in a fluoroware container for several days. The analysis was done using the Thermo Scientific ESCALAB 250Xi which can be configured with various options for multitechnique analysis and sample preparation. XPS elemental analysis of the PFO surface (Figure 1) showed a small amount of oxygen (0.6 at%) at the film surface. PFO itself only contains carbon (hence the strong carbon peak in the spectrum) so the observed oxygen must be a contaminant deposited onto the surface during storage or transit. Detailed chemical analysis of the carbon was carried out using high energy resolution XPS (Figure 2). In this way, XPS could be used to measure the surface purity of PFO films. The strongest peak in the spectrum is due to core-level transitions in the aromatic and aliphatic carbon of the PFO polymer. Small peaks due to valence transitions in the PFO are also observed. These peaks contain information that is needed if the full electronic structure of PFO is to be understood, but the peaks are relatively weak and they are convoluted with core-level peaks. Using a multi-technique approach, however, we can analyze these valence transitions more easily.

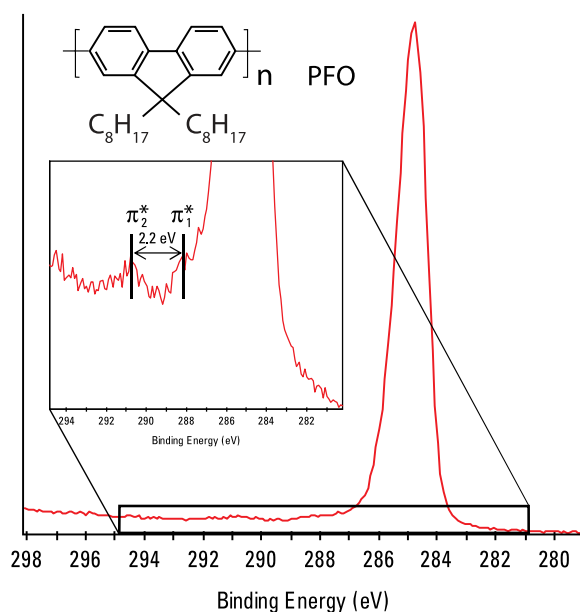


Figure 2: High resolution C1s XPS spectrum of the surface

Most Thermo Scientific XPS tools, including ESCALAB 250Xi, offer reflected electron energy loss spectroscopy (REELS) as standard. This technique, which measures the electrons from an incident beam scattered by the top surface, is the ideal technique for investigating carbon aromaticity and unsaturation. The valence levels of aromatic polymers can be studied without interference from core-level carbon transitions. Additionally, the technique is extremely surface sensitive and it is possible to obtain information from the top 1 nm of the surface.

An example of REELS data from a high quality polystyrene film is shown in Figure 3. Polystyrene has a long aliphatic polymer backbone with phenyl side groups: each phenyl group is chemically identical. The REELS spectrum shows a single sharp peak at 6.6 eV and a broad hump at around 20 eV. The broad hump is due to interaction of the primary electron beam with lattice plasmons, but of more interest in this work, the sharp peak is due to  $\pi$  to  $\pi^*$  transitions in the aromatic valence levels. A single peak reflects the single chemical environment of the phenyl groups

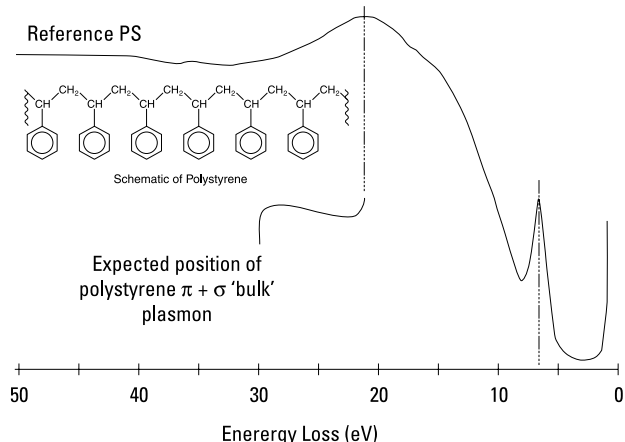


Figure 3: REELS spectrum of polystyrene film

Further information on the valence levels of the PFO was obtained with ultraviolet photoelectron spectroscopy (UPS). UPS uses a helium discharge source, which has a significantly lower energy than the monochromatic aluminium K- $\alpha$  X-rays used for XPS, making it ideally suited for investigating valance band transitions. Using UPS it is possible to measure the ionization potential of OLED films, and as well as many other valence level parameters (Figure 5). In particular, since the Fermi level position can be determined from UPS of a gold sample, it is possible to measure the energy of the highest occupied molecular orbital directly from the UPS data. This molecular orbital is identical to the p-bonding level involved in the  $\pi$ - $\pi^*$  transitions observed in REELS.

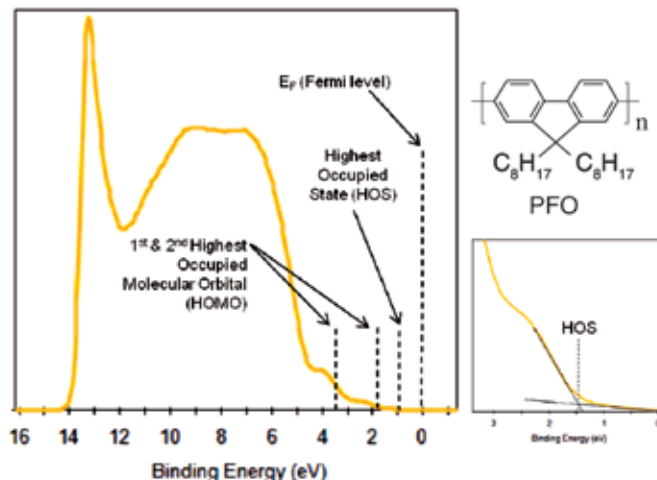


Figure 5: UPS spectrum of the valence level of PFO material

As the energy of the p-level is known from UPS and the REELS data gives the energy gap from this level to the  $p^*$  levels, the energy level diagram (or electronic structure) of PFO can be created. With this diagram, it is then straightforward to calculate a band gap of 3.3 eV for PFO which agrees with the published value<sup>1</sup>. Information about the valence electronic structure is needed if optimal PFO-based OLED devices are to be made. To make OLED devices, the PFO would be doped with other materials to adjust and control band structure, changing the light emitting characteristics of the device. Using the multi-technique approach shown for undoped PFO, the electronic structure of doped films could be analyzed and characterized.

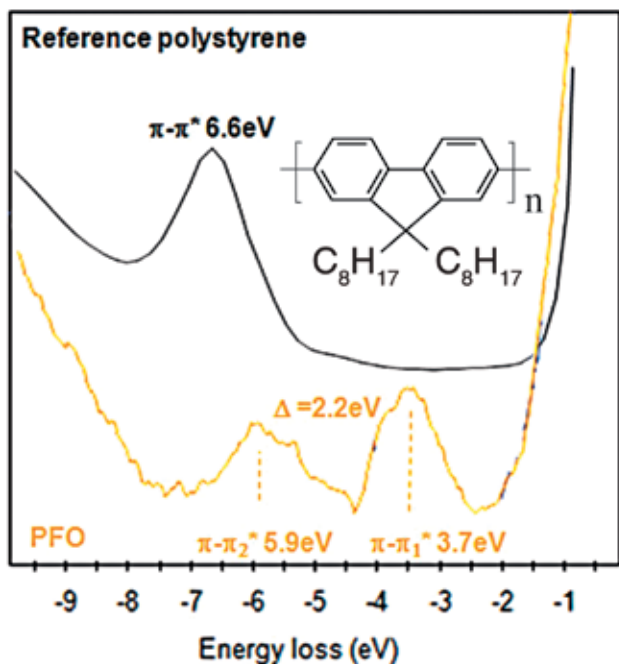
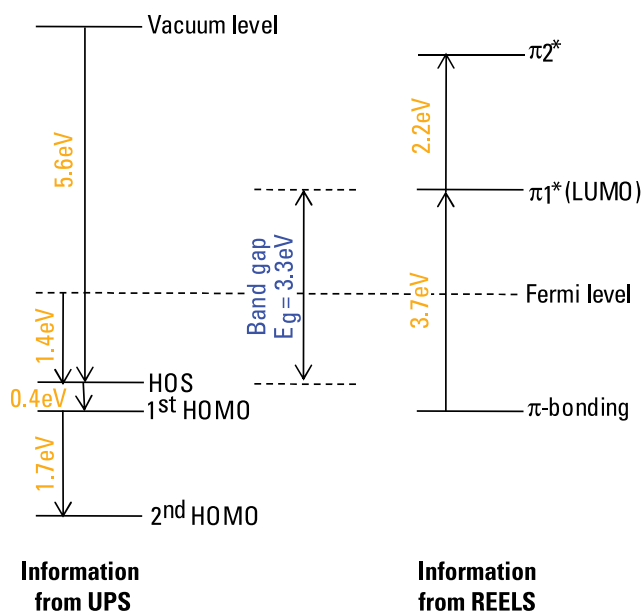


Figure 4: UPS spectra of polystyrene and PFO



### Summary

Thermo Scientific ESCALAB 250Xi is a multitechnique tool that can analyze many different aspects of the OLED material. XPS gives information about surface contaminants and film purity, whereas REELS and UPS can be used to investigate valence electronic structure. By combining the REELS and UPS data together, an energy level diagram for PFO can be created, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: By combining the information from REELS and UPS the energy level diagram of PFO surface can be created

### Keywords

ESCALAB, Band Gap, OLED, REELS, Surface Analysis, UPS, Valence Level, XPS

### References

1. L. S. Liao, *Applied Physics Letters*, Vol. 76, No. 24, 12 June 2000

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