

Nanotechnology opportunities for Flexible Electronics

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The field of flexible electronics has expanded tremendously over the past few years. Similar to what happened in silicon integrated circuit technology 40 years ago; flexible electronics are now at a point where system design and process integration will drive the technology. Flexible electronics will likely push the limits of material performance, process integration, circuit design, and system integration to demonstrate the full potential of flexible electronics. In general, key components for any flexible electronic application include thin film transistors. In order to be competitive with state-of-the-art a:Si:H thin film transistors, any other thin film transistor technology must show reproducible transistor parameters such as mobility, threshold voltage, drive current and reliability.

A grand challenge in flexible, thin-film-transistor (TFT) circuitry is the development of complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) circuits. Although flexible digital circuits, flexible sensors, flexible batteries and solar cells have already been demonstrated, the missing technology piece that must be developed is flexible analog circuitry. For example, an operational amplifier will enable the interface to most sensors and actuators, significantly expanding the functionality of flexible electronic systems. In this paper, we will present the current status of flexible electronics and identify opportunities where nanotechnology can be a key enabler of this technology