
Soft Matter Characterization

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Preface

Soft matter (or soft condensed matter) refers to a group of systems that includes polymers, colloids, amphiphiles, membranes, micelles, emulsions, dendrimers, liquid crystals, polyelectrolytes, and their mixtures. Soft matter systems usually have structural length scales in the region from a nanometer to several hundred nanometers and thus fall within the domain of “nanotechnology.” The soft matter length scales are often characterized by interactions that are of the order of thermal energies so that relatively small perturbations can cause dramatic structural changes in them. Relaxation on such long distance scales is often relatively slow so that such systems may, in many cases, not be in thermal equilibrium.

Soft matter is important industrially and in biology (paints, surfactants, porous media, plastics, pharmaceuticals, ceramic precursors, textiles, proteins, polysaccharides, blood, etc.). Many of these systems have formerly been grouped together under the more foreboding term “complex liquids.” A field this diverse must be interdisciplinary. It includes, among others, condensed matter physicists, synthetic and physical chemists, biologists, medical doctors, and chemical engineers. Communication among researchers with such heterogeneous training and approaches to problem solving is essential for the advancement of this field.

Progress in basic soft matter research is driven largely by the experimental techniques available. Much of the work is concerned with understanding them at the microscopic level, especially at the nanometer length scales that give soft matter studies a wide overlap with nanotechnology.

These volumes present detailed discussions of many of the major techniques commonly used as well as some of those in current development for studying and manipulating soft matter. The articles are intended to be accessible to the interdisciplinary audience (at the graduate student level and above) that is or will be engaged in soft matter studies or those in other disciplines who wish to view some of the research methods in this fascinating field.

The books have extensive discussions of scattering techniques (light, neutron, and X-ray) and related fluctuation and optical grating techniques that are at the forefront of soft matter research. Most of the scattering techniques are Fourier space techniques. In addition to the enhancement and widespread use in soft matter research of electron microscopy, and the dramatic advances

in fluorescence imaging, recent years have seen the development of a class of powerful new imaging methods known as scanning probe microscopies. Atomic force microscopy is one of the most widely used of these methods. In addition, techniques that can be used to manipulate soft matter on the nanometer scale are also in rapid development. These include the aforementioned scanning probe microscopies as well as methods utilizing optical and magnetic tweezers. The articles cover the fundamental theory and practice of many of these techniques and discuss applications to some important soft matter systems. Complete in-depth coverage of techniques and systems would, of course, not be practical in such an enormous and diverse field and we apologize to those working with techniques and in areas that are not included.

Part 1 contains articles with a largely (but, in most cases, not exclusively) theoretical content and/or that cover material relevant to more than one of the techniques covered in subsequent volumes. It includes an introductory chapter on some of the time and space-time correlation functions that are extensively employed in other articles in the series, a comprehensive treatment of integrated intensity (static) light scattering from macromolecular solutions, as well as articles on small angle scattering from micelles and scattering from brush copolymers. A chapter on block copolymers reviews the theory (random phase approximation) of these systems, and surveys experiments on them (including static and dynamic light scattering, small-angle X-ray and neutron scattering as well as neutron spin echo (NSE) experiments). This chapter describes block copolymer behavior in the “disordered phase” and also their self-organization. The volume concludes with a review of the theory and computer simulations of polyelectrolyte solutions.

Part 2 contains material on dynamic light scattering, light scattering in shear fields and the related techniques of fluorescence recovery after photo bleaching (also called fluorescence photo bleaching recovery to avoid the unappealing acronym of the usual name), fluorescence fluctuation spectroscopy, and forced Rayleigh scattering. Part 2 concludes with an extensive treatment of light scattering from dispersions of polysaccharides.

Part 3 presents articles devoted to the use of X-rays and neutrons to study soft matter systems. It contains survey articles on both neutron and X-ray methods and more detailed articles on the study of specific systems - gels, melts, surfaces, polyelectrolytes, proteins, nucleic acids, block copolymers. It includes an article on the emerging X-ray photon correlation technique, the X-ray analog to dynamic light scattering (photon correlation spectroscopy).

Part 4 describes direct imaging techniques and methods for manipulating soft matter systems. It includes discussions of electron microscopy techniques, atomic force microscopy, single molecule microscopy, optical tweezers (with

applications to the study of DNA, myosin motors, etc.), visualizing molecules at interfaces, advances in high contrast optical microscopy (with applications to imaging giant vesicles and motile cells), and methods for synthesizing and atomic force microscopy imaging of novel highly branched polymers.

Soft matter research is, like most modern scientific work, an international endeavor. This is reflected by the contributions to these volumes by leaders in the field from laboratories in nine different countries. An important contribution to the international flavor of the field comes, in particular, from X-ray and neutron experiments that commonly involve the use of a few large facilities that are multinational in their staff and user base. We thank the authors for taking time from their busy schedules to write these articles as well as for enduring the entreaties of the editors with patience and good (usually) humor.

R. Borsali

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September 2007



Editors-in-Chief



Dr Redouane Borsali is a CNRS Director of Research and since 2007 the Director of CERMAV, Centre de Recherche sur les Macromolécules Végétales, CNRS-UPR 5301, located on the Campus University of Grenoble, France. He studied physics at the University of Tlemcen, Algeria and received his Master and Ph.D. in polymer physics at the Institute Charles Sadron (Louis Pasteur University, Strasbourg, France) in 1988. After his postdoctoral research position at the Max-Planck-Institute for Polymer Research (MPI-P) at Mainz, Germany, he joined, in 1990, the CNRS (Grenoble, France) as a researcher. In 1995/1997, he spent a sabbatical leave at Stanford University and at IBM Almaden Research Center, CA, USA as a visiting scientist. In 2000, he joined the LCPO, a Polymer Research CNRS Laboratory, as the Polymer Physical-Chemistry Group Leader till 2006 and back to Grenoble in 2007 as the Director of CERMAV. His main research activities are focused on the study of the physical-chemistry properties: the structure, the dynamics, and the self-assemblies of “soft matter” and particularly of controlled architecture polymers such as block copolymers, polymer mixtures, polyelectrolytes including polysaccharides, nanoparticles such as micelles, vesicles, and rod-like morphologies, using scattering techniques. He has organized three international meeting on polymers and colloids, and he is the author or co-author of over 140 research articles and two books.



Robert Pecora is a professor of chemistry at Stanford University. He received his A.B., A.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Columbia University. After postdoctoral work at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and Columbia University, he joined the Stanford University faculty in 1964. His research interests are in the areas of condensed phase dynamics of small molecules, macromolecules, and colloids of both materials and biological interest. He is one of the developers of the dynamic light scattering technique and has utilized this and many of the other techniques described in these volumes in his research. His recent work emphasizes dynamics in dispersions of rodlike polymers, polyelectrolytes, and composite liquids. He is the author or coauthor of over 134 research articles and five books.

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Table of Contents

VOLUME 1

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 Basic Concepts – Scattering and Time Correlation Functions | 1 |
| <i>R. Pecora</i> | |
| 1 Introduction | 3 |
| 2 Basic Scattering Theory – Interference | 3 |
| 3 Fundamentals of Time Correlation Functions | 7 |
| 3.1 Stochastic (Random) Functions or “Signals” | 8 |
| 3.2 Time Averages | 8 |
| 3.3 Some Properties of Time Autocorrelation Functions | 10 |
| 3.4 Ensemble-Averaged Time Correlation Functions | 12 |
| 3.5 Spectral Densities of Time Correlation Functions | 14 |
| 4 Correlation Functions for Number Densities in Fluids | 15 |
| 4.1 Spatial Fourier Transforms | 15 |
| 4.2 Local Density and Its Fourier Transform | 16 |
| 4.3 Space Time Correlation Function of the Local Density | 16 |
| 4.4 The Van Hove Space Time Correlation Function | 17 |
| 4.5 The Self Correlation Function | 18 |
| 4.6 Physical Interpretation, Limiting Values and the Radial Distribution Function | 18 |
| 4.7 The Structure Factor | 19 |
| 4.8 Dynamic Scattering Experiments | 20 |
| 4.9 Space Time Correlation Functions for Perfect Gases | 20 |
| 5 The Translational Self-Diffusion Model | 23 |
| 5.1 Derivation of the Diffusion Equation | 23 |
| 5.2 Random Walk | 25 |
| 5.3 Solution of the Diffusion Equation for $G_s(\vec{r}, t)$ | 26 |
| 5.4 Solution of Partial Differential Equations | 26 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 5.5 | Expression for the Diffusion Coefficient | 28 |
| 5.6 | The Langevin Equation | 29 |
| 5.7 | The Stokes-Einstein Relation | 30 |
| 6 | <i>More Refined Models for Motions in Liquid</i> | 31 |
| 6.1 | Translational Motion of Small Molecules in Liquids – The Gaussian Approximation | 31 |
| 6.2 | Molecular Dynamics Simulations | 32 |
| 6.3 | Molecular Dynamics Test of the Gaussian Approximation | 33 |
| 6.4 | Molecular Dynamics Tests of the Stokes – Einstein Relation for Hard Sphere Fluids | 33 |
| 6.5 | Long-Time Tails in the Velocity Autocorrelation Function | 34 |
| 6.6 | Diffusion in Quasi-Two Dimensional Systems | 34 |
| 7 | <i>Macromolecular and Colloidal Dispersions</i> | 35 |
| 7.1 | The Hydrodynamic Radius | 35 |
| 7.2 | Relations between D and Molecular Dimensions for Nonspherical Particles | 36 |
| 7.3 | Non-Dilute Dispersions | 37 |
| 8 | <i>Conclusion</i> | 38 |
| 2 | Total Intensity Light Scattering from Solutions of Macromolecules | 41 |
| | <i>G. C. Berry</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 43 |
| 2 | <i>General Relations</i> | 46 |
| 3 | <i>Scattering at Infinite Dilution and Zero Scattering Angle</i> | 49 |
| 3.1 | The Basic Relation | 49 |
| 3.2 | Identical Scattering Elements | 50 |
| 3.3 | Optically Diverse Scattering Elements | 51 |
| 3.4 | Optically Anisotropic Scattering Elements | 53 |
| 3.5 | Scattering Beyond the RGD Regime | 55 |
| 4 | <i>Scattering at Infinite Dilution and Small q</i> | 57 |
| 4.1 | The Basic Relation | 57 |
| 4.2 | Identical Scattering Elements | 57 |
| 4.3 | Optically Diverse Scattering Elements | 62 |
| 4.4 | Optically Anisotropic Scattering Elements | 64 |
| 4.5 | Scattering Beyond the RGD Regime | 66 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 5 | <i>Scattering at Infinite Dilution and Arbitrary q</i> | 68 |
| 5.1 | The Basic Relation | 68 |
| 5.2 | Identical Scattering Elements | 68 |
| 5.3 | Optically Diverse Scattering Elements | 79 |
| 5.4 | Optically Anisotropic Scattering Elements | 81 |
| 5.5 | Scattering Beyond the RGD Regime | 82 |
| 6 | <i>Scattering from a Dilute Solution at Zero Scattering Angle</i> | 85 |
| 6.1 | The Basic Relation | 85 |
| 6.2 | Monodisperse Solute, Identical Optically Isotropic Scattering Elements | 87 |
| 6.3 | Heterodisperse Solute, Identical Optically Isotropic Scattering Elements | 89 |
| 6.4 | Optically Diverse, Isotropic Scattering Elements | 92 |
| 6.5 | Optically Anisotropic Scattering Elements | 94 |
| 7 | <i>Scattering from Non Dilute Solution at Zero Scattering Angle</i> | 94 |
| 7.1 | The Basic Relation | 94 |
| 7.2 | Low Concentrations: the Third Virial Coefficient | 95 |
| 7.3 | Concentrated Solutions | 96 |
| 7.4 | Moderately Concentrated Solutions | 100 |
| 8 | <i>Scattering Dependence on q for Arbitrary Concentration</i> | 104 |
| 8.1 | The Basic Relation | 104 |
| 8.2 | Dilute to Low Concentrations | 105 |
| 8.3 | Concentrated Solutions | 106 |
| 8.4 | Moderately Concentrated Solutions | 107 |
| 8.5 | Behavior for a Charged Solute | 112 |
| 9 | <i>Special Topics</i> | 114 |
| 9.1 | Intermolecular Association in Polymer Solutions | 114 |
| 9.2 | Intermolecular Association in Micelle Solutions | 118 |
| 9.3 | Online Monitoring of Polymerization Systems | 119 |
| 3 | Disordered Phase and Self-Organization of Block Copolymer Systems | 133 |
| | <i>C. Giacomelli & R. Borsali</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 135 |
| 2 | <i>Disordered Phase</i> | 136 |
| 2.1 | RPA: Historical Sketch and Theoretical Developments | 136 |
| 2.2 | Experimental Evidence | 141 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 2.3 | Results and Discussion | 143 |
| 2.4 | Elastic Scattering | 147 |
| 2.5 | Dynamic Structure Factors | 154 |
| 2.6 | Extension to the Diblock Copolymer in the Melt Case | 159 |
| 3 | <i>Self-organization of Block Copolymers</i> | 160 |
| 3.1 | Self-Assembly in Bulk | 162 |
| 3.2 | Self-Assembly in Solution | 168 |
| 4 | <i>Conclusion</i> | 183 |
| | | |
| 4 | Small-Angle Scattering from Surfactants and Block Copolymer Micelles | 191 |
| | <i>J. S. Pedersen</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 192 |
| 2 | <i>Thermodynamics and Packing Parameters</i> | 194 |
| 3 | <i>Scattering from Surfactant Micelles</i> | 196 |
| 3.1 | Basic Expressions and Homogeneous Models | 196 |
| 3.2 | Globular Core-Shell Micellar Models | 203 |
| 3.3 | Cylindrical Elongated and Disk-Like Core-Shell Micelles | 207 |
| 3.4 | Long Cylindrical and Worm-Like Micelles | 208 |
| 4 | <i>Block Copolymer Micelles</i> | 217 |
| 4.1 | Models with Non-Interacting Gaussian Chains | 218 |
| 4.2 | Models with Interacting Excluded-Volume Chains | 219 |
| 4.3 | Calculation of Radial Profiles | 225 |
| 5 | <i>Summary and Outlook</i> | 227 |
| | | |
| 5 | Brush-Like Polymers | 235 |
| | <i>Y. Nakamura & T. Norisuye</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 236 |
| 2 | <i>Theoretical Models for Brush-Like Polymers</i> | 238 |
| 2.1 | Rigid Cylinders | 239 |
| 2.2 | WormLike Cylinders | 242 |
| 2.3 | Gaussian Brushes | 252 |
| 2.4 | Semi-Flexible Brushes | 256 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 3 | <i>Comparison Between Theory and Experiment</i> | 260 |
| 3.1 | Polymacromonomers | 260 |
| 3.2 | Combs and Centipedes | 279 |
| 6 | Polyelectrolytes-Theory and Simulations | 287 |
| | <i>C. Holm</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 288 |
| 2 | <i>The Cell Model</i> | 289 |
| 3 | <i>Solutions of the Cell Model</i> | 292 |
| 3.1 | Specification of the Cell Model | 292 |
| 3.2 | Poisson–Boltzmann Theory | 294 |
| 3.3 | Solution of the Poisson–Boltzmann Equation for the Cylindrical Case | 295 |
| 3.4 | Manning Condensation | 297 |
| 3.5 | Limiting Laws of the Cylindrical PB-Solution | 297 |
| 4 | <i>Additional Salt: The Donnan Equilibrium</i> | 299 |
| 5 | <i>Beyond PB</i> | 302 |
| 5.1 | Simulations of Osmotic Coefficients and Counterion Induced Attractions | 304 |
| 5.2 | Simulations of Rods of Finite Length | 307 |
| 6 | <i>Simulations of Polyelectrolyte Solutions in Good Solvent</i> | 312 |
| 7 | <i>Polyelectrolytes in Poor Solvent</i> | 314 |
| 7.1 | Introduction | 314 |
| 7.2 | Pearl-Necklace Conformation | 315 |
| 7.3 | Simulations | 317 |
| 8 | <i>Polyelectrolyte Networks</i> | 325 |
| 8.1 | Conformation in Poor Solvent | 328 |
| 9 | <i>Summary</i> | 329 |
| 7 | Dynamic Light Scattering | 335 |
| | <i>B. Chu</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 336 |
| 1.1 | Static Light Scattering | 336 |

| | | |
|----------|--|------------|
| 1.2 | Dynamic Light Scattering and Laser Light Scattering | 336 |
| 1.3 | Laser Light Scattering and X-Ray/Neutron Scattering | 337 |
| 2 | <i>Single-Scattering Photon Correlation Spectroscopy</i> | 339 |
| 2.1 | Energy Transfer versus Momentum Transfer | 339 |
| 2.2 | Siegert Relation and Time Correlation Functions | 340 |
| 2.3 | Diffusions and Internal Motions | 342 |
| 2.4 | Practice of (Single-Scattering) Photon Correlation Experiments | 344 |
| 3 | <i>Photon Cross-Correlation Techniques</i> | 348 |
| 3.1 | Single Scattering versus Multiple Scattering | 348 |
| 3.2 | Photon Cross-Correlation Spectroscopy | 350 |
| 4 | <i>Practice of Photon Correlation and Cross-Correlation</i> | 355 |
| 4.1 | General Considerations [10] | 355 |
| 4.2 | Use of Optical Fibers | 356 |
| 5 | <i>Recent Developments</i> | 361 |
| 5.1 | Echo Dynamic Light Scattering | 361 |
| 5.2 | Phase Analysis Light Scattering (PALS) | 364 |
| 6 | <i>Final Remarks</i> | 369 |
| | | |
| 8 | Light Scattering from Multicomponent Polymer Systems in Shear Fields: Real-time, In Situ Studies of Dissipative Structures in Open Nonequilibrium Systems | 377 |
| | <i>T. Hashimoto</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 378 |
| 1.1 | General Background | 378 |
| 1.2 | Principles of Rheo-Optics | 379 |
| 2 | <i>Shear Rheo-Optics</i> | 380 |
| 2.1 | Background of Shear Rheo-Optics | 380 |
| 2.2 | Shear-Induced Phase Transition: Two Opposing Phenomena, Mixing and Demixing | 383 |
| 3 | <i>Dynamical Asymmetry and Stress–Diffusion Coupling in Multicomponent Systems</i> | 385 |
| 3.1 | Dynamical Asymmetry Versus Dynamical Symmetry | 385 |
| 3.2 | Some Anticipated Effects of Dynamical Asymmetry on Self-Assembly in the Quiescent State | 387 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 3.3 | Basic Time-Evolution Equation and a Theoretical Analysis of the Early Stage Self-Assembly in Dynamically Asymmetric Systems | 393 |
| 3.4 | General Background on the Effects of Shear Flow on Self-Assembly of Both Dynamically Symmetric and Asymmetric Systems | 397 |
| 4 | Methodology | 399 |
| 4.1 | Simultaneous Measurements of Stress, Optical Microscopy, Light Scattering, Transmittance, Birefringence, etc | 399 |
| 4.2 | Examples: Simultaneous Measurements of Stress, Shear-SALS, and Shear-Microscopy | 407 |
| 5 | Shear-Induced Mixing | 415 |
| 5.1 | Shear-Rate Dependence of Steady-State Structures | 416 |
| 5.2 | Uniformity of Droplet Size in Regime II | 419 |
| 5.3 | String Structure in Regime IV | 421 |
| 5.4 | Shear-Induced Phase Transition | 424 |
| 5.5 | Small Molecules Versus Polymers | 429 |
| 5.6 | Tracing Back the Growth History of Phase-Separated Structures | 432 |
| 5.7 | Further Remarks | 434 |
| 6 | Shear-Induced Demixing (Phase Separation) | 434 |
| 6.1 | Observation of Shear-Induced Dissipative Structures | 435 |
| 6.2 | Origin of Shear-Induced Formation of Dissipative Structures | 437 |
| 6.3 | Shear-Rate Dependence | 439 |
| 6.4 | Time-Evolution of Transient Dissipative Structures | 446 |
| 6.5 | Further Remarks | 450 |
| 6.6 | Shear-Induced Dissipative Structures Formed for Semidilute Crystallizable Polymer Solutions | 455 |
| 9 | Light Scattering from Polysaccharides as Soft Materials | 463 |
| | <i>W. Burchard</i> | |
| 1 | Introduction | 465 |
| 1.1 | Polysaccharides are Archetypes for Soft Materials | 465 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 2 | <i>Some General Considerations</i> | 468 |
| 2.1 | Can Static Light Scattering Shed some Light onto the Reasons for Softness? | 469 |
| 2.2 | New Insight by Dynamic Light Scattering in Combination with Static Light Scattering | 472 |
| 3 | <i>Flexibility and Rigidity</i> | 476 |
| 3.1 | Pullulan | 476 |
| 3.2 | Homoglucans of the $\alpha(1-4)$ and $\beta(1-4)$ Type | 480 |
| 4 | <i>Single- and Multiple Helices. Exocellular Polysaccharides</i> | 503 |
| 4.1 | Xanthan | 504 |
| 4.2 | Gellan and Polysaccharides from the <i>Rhizobia</i> Family | 509 |
| 4.3 | Schizopolyan | 515 |
| 4.4 | ρ -Parameter and Second Virial Coefficient | 517 |
| 4.5 | Effects of Coulomb Charges and of Flexible Side Chains | 518 |
| 5 | <i>Gelation Versus Crystallization</i> | 520 |
| 5.1 | Alginates: Evidence for Bundle Formation | 524 |
| 5.2 | The Carrageenans: Evidence for Double Helix Formation | 528 |
| 5.3 | Summary of the Dispute on Double or Single Helices as Unimers | 535 |
| 6 | <i>Thickeners – What Inhibits Gel Formation?</i> | 536 |
| 6.1 | Galactomannans and Xyloglucans | 537 |
| 6.2 | Properties of Nonheated Tamarind Polysaccharides | 541 |
| 6.3 | Properties of Enzymatically Oxidized Tamarind Polysaccharides | 543 |
| 7 | <i>Branched Polysaccharides</i> | 546 |
| 7.1 | Random and Hyperbranched Types of Long Chain Branching | 546 |
| 7.2 | Experimental Verification | 552 |
| 8 | <i>Chain Dynamics</i> | 564 |
| 8.1 | Effects of Segmental Concentration in the Particle | 565 |
| 8.2 | Angular Dependence of the First Cumulant | 568 |
| 8.3 | Cluster Growth and Changes in Correlation Lengths in the Sol–Gel Transition | 574 |
| 9 | <i>Basic Relationships and Models</i> | 581 |
| 9.1 | Objectives of this Section | 581 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 9.2 | Static Light Scattering | 582 |
| 9.3 | Dynamic Light Scattering | 589 |
| 10 | Fluorescence Photobleaching Recovery | 605 |
| | <i>P. S. Russo, J. Qiu, N. Edwin, Y. W. Choi, G. J. Doucet, & D. Sohn</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 607 |
| 2 | <i>When to Choose FPR</i> | 608 |
| 3 | <i>Labeling the Macromolecule</i> | 609 |
| 3.1 | General Considerations | 609 |
| 3.2 | How much Dye to Attach | 611 |
| 3.3 | Cleanup | 611 |
| 3.4 | Validating the Labeled Macromolecule | 613 |
| 3.5 | Recipes | 614 |
| 4 | <i>Different Types of FPR Instruments</i> | 615 |
| 4.1 | General Considerations | 615 |
| 4.2 | Single-Beam FPR Devices | 618 |
| 4.3 | Two-Beam Instruments | 624 |
| 5 | <i>Applications</i> | 627 |
| 5.1 | Dilute Macromolecular Solutions | 627 |
| 5.2 | Concentrated Solutions and Suspensions | 627 |
| 5.3 | Probe Diffusion | 628 |
| 5.4 | Liquid Crystals | 628 |
| 5.5 | Gels | 629 |
| 5.6 | Polyelectrolytes | 630 |
| 5.7 | Thin Films and Surfaces | 630 |
| 5.8 | Other Applications | 631 |
| 6 | <i>Expected Future Trends</i> | 632 |
| 11 | Fluorescence Correlation Spectroscopy | 637 |
| | <i>E. Haustein & P. Schwille</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 638 |
| 2 | <i>Experimental Realization</i> | 640 |
| 2.1 | One-Photon Excitation | 640 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 2.2 | Two-Photon Excitation | 642 |
| 2.3 | Fluorescent Dyes | 644 |
| 3 | <i>Theoretical Concepts</i> | 646 |
| 3.1 | Autocorrelation Analysis | 646 |
| 3.2 | Cross-Correlation Analysis | 655 |
| 4 | <i>FCS Applications</i> | 657 |
| 4.1 | Concentration and Aggregation Measurements | 657 |
| 4.2 | Consideration of Residence Times: Determining Mobility and Molecular Interactions | 658 |
| 4.3 | Consideration of Cross-Correlation Amplitudes: A Direct Way to Monitor Association/Dissociation and Enzyme Kinetics | 664 |
| 4.4 | Consideration of Fast Flickering: Intramolecular Dynamics and Probing of the Microenvironment | 671 |
| 5 | <i>Conclusions and Outlook</i> | 673 |
| 12 | Forced Rayleigh Scattering – Principles and Application (Self Diffusion of Spherical Nanoparticles and Copolymer Micelles) | 677 |
| | <i>W. Schärtl</i> | |
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 678 |
| 2 | <i>Basics of Forced Rayleigh Scattering</i> | 679 |
| 2.1 | Experimental Setup | 679 |
| 2.2 | Dynamical Processes Studied by FRS | 682 |
| 3 | <i>Applications</i> | 689 |
| 3.1 | Self Diffusion of Colloidal Particles in Highly Concentrated Colloidal Dispersions | 690 |
| 3.2 | Self Diffusion of Copolymer Micelles in a Homopolymer Melt | 693 |
| 4 | <i>Concluding Remarks</i> | 701 |
| | <i>Subject Index of Volume 1</i> | 705 |
| | <i>Author Index</i> | 721 |

VOLUME 2

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 13 | Small-Angle Neutron Scattering and Applications in Soft Condensed Matter | 723 |
| | <i>I. Grillo</i> | |
| 1 | Introduction | 725 |
| 2 | Description of SANS Instruments | 725 |
| 2.1 | The Steady-State Instrument D22 | 726 |
| 2.2 | The Time-of-Flight Instrument LOQ | 727 |
| 2.3 | Detectors for SANS Instruments | 729 |
| 2.4 | Sample Environments | 731 |
| 3 | Course of a SANS Experiment | 731 |
| 3.1 | Definition of the q-Vector | 731 |
| 3.2 | Choice of Configurations and Systematic Required Measurements | 732 |
| 3.3 | Conclusion | 735 |
| 4 | From Raw Data to Absolute Scaling | 736 |
| 4.1 | Determination of the Incident Flux Φ_0 | 737 |
| 4.2 | Normalization with a Standard Sample | 737 |
| 4.3 | Solid Angle $\Delta\Omega(Q)$ | 739 |
| 4.4 | Transmission | 740 |
| 4.5 | Multiple Scattering | 743 |
| 4.6 | Subtraction of Incoherent Background | 745 |
| 4.7 | Conclusion | 746 |
| 5 | Modeling of the Scattered Intensity | 746 |
| 5.1 | Rules of Thumb in Small-Angle Scattering | 746 |
| 5.2 | SLD, Contrast Variation, and Isotopic Labeling | 749 |
| 5.3 | Analytical Expressions of Particle Form Factors | 753 |
| 5.4 | Indirect Fourier Transform Method | 759 |
| 5.5 | Structure Factors of Colloids | 761 |
| 6 | Instrument Resolution and Polydispersity | 763 |
| 6.1 | Effect of the Beam Divergence and Size: θ Resolution | 765 |
| 6.2 | Effect of the λ Distribution | 765 |
| 6.3 | Smearing Examples | 767 |
| 6.4 | Polydispersity | 769 |
| 6.5 | Instrumental Resolution and Polydispersity | 770 |

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