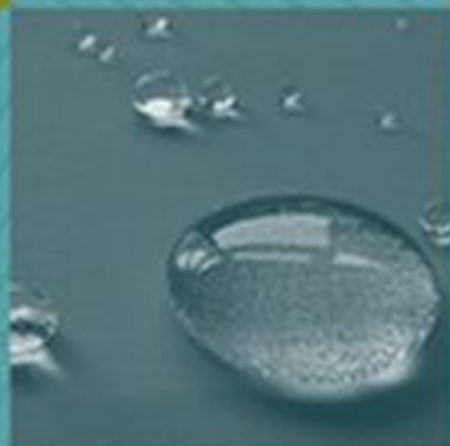


WOODHEAD PUBLISHING IN TEXTILES



Biologically inspired textiles

Edited by A. Abbott
and M. Ellison



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Biologically inspired textiles

(This book is collected by Kazi Md. Yakub,
student of Bangladesh College of Textile Engineering and Technology,
34th batch, email-kyakub88@gmail.com)

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<i>Contributor contact details</i>	xii
<i>Woodhead Publishing in Textiles</i>	xiii
<i>Introduction</i>	xix
Part I Biomimetic principles, production and properties	
1 Recombinant DNA methods applied to the production of protein-based fibers as biomaterials	3
F. TEULÉ and R. LEWIS, University of Wyoming, USA; W. MARCOTTE JR and A. ABBOTT, Clemson University, USA	
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Biomimetics and protein-based biomaterials	4
1.3 Characteristics of some natural protein-based materials	5
1.4 Experimental characterization of model fibrous proteins	9
1.5 Expression systems available for recombinant fibrous protein production	15
1.6 Artificial material production, properties and performance	20
1.7 Conclusions	20
1.8 References	21
2 Purification of protein solutions	26
S. HARCUM, Clemson University, USA	
2.1 Introduction	26
2.2 Insoluble removal	28
2.3 Cell disruption	31
2.4 Soluble protein separations	34
2.5 Finishing steps	42
2.6 Conclusions and sources of further information and advice	43
2.7 References	43

3	Spinning of fibers from protein solutions	44
	F. TEULÉ, University of Wyoming, USA	
3.1	Introduction	44
3.2	<i>In vivo</i> or natural spinning of protein-based fibers	45
3.3	Protein-based fibrous materials	45
3.4	Silk production in spiders and insects: a natural spinning process	47
3.5	Elements to consider for the <i>in vitro</i> or ‘artificial’ spinning of protein-based fibers	51
3.6	Factors involved in native self-assembly processes	52
3.7	‘Mimicking nature’	53
3.8	Examples of protein-based fibers produced through artificial spinning technologies	55
3.9	Wet-spinning of fibrous proteins	55
3.10	Electrospinning of fibrous proteins	60
3.11	Applications	65
3.12	Future trends and conclusions	65
3.13	References	66
4	Biomimetic principles of spider silk for high-performance fibres	74
	C. HOLLAND and F. VOLLRATH, University of Oxford, UK	
4.1	Introduction	74
4.2	Unravelling structure–function relationships	77
4.3	Spider and worm spinning <i>in vivo</i>	81
4.4	Spinning <i>in vitro</i>	84
4.5	Future trends and applications	86
4.6	Conclusions	87
4.7	Sources of further information and advice	87
4.8	Acknowledgements	88
4.9	References	88
5	A biomimetic approach to the production of sustainable structural composites using plant fibres	95
	C. SANTULLI, University of Reading, UK	
5.1	Biomimetic design of composite materials	95
5.2	Characteristics of biological materials in biocomposites	97

5.3	Fibre extraction, fibre treatment and matrix compatibility in a biomimetic composite	99
5.4	Approaches to the realisation of plant fibre composites	101
5.5	Conclusions: plant fibre selection for composites reinforcement	108
5.6	References	109

Part II Biomimetic applications in textiles

6	Biomimetic principles in clothing technology	117
	V. KAPSALI and P. DUNAMORE, London College of Fashion, UK	
6.1	Introduction	117
6.2	The technology of clothing	118
6.3	Overview of biomimetic design and development	122
6.4	Biomimetic principles and the clothing industry	126
6.5	Key issues	133
6.6	Future trends	133
6.7	Conclusions	134
6.8	Sources of further information and advice	135
6.9	Acknowledgements	135
6.10	References	135
7	Self-cleaning textiles using the Lotus Effect	137
	T. STEGMAIER, V. VON ARNIM, A. SCHERRIEBLE and H. PLANCK, Institute of Textile Technology and Process Engineering Denkendorf (ITV), Germany	
7.1	Introduction: basics of self-cleaning textiles	137
7.2	Learning from the Lotus Effect: superhydrophobicity and self-cleaning	138
7.3	Measuring techniques for the characteristic Lotus Effect properties	142
7.4	Technical transfer	143
7.5	Applications	145
7.6	Future trends	148
7.7	Sources of further information and advice	148
7.8	References	149

8	Analysing the thermal properties of animal furs for the production of artificial furs	150
	L. HES, Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic	
8.1	Introduction	150
8.2	Brief survey of the manufacture of artificial furs	151
8.3	Experimental study	152
8.4	Water-vapour permeability of furs	164
8.5	Conclusions	166
8.6	References	167
9	The role of plant stems in providing biomimetic solutions for innovative textiles in composites	168
	M. MILWICH and H. PLANCK, Institute of Textile Technology and Process Engineering, Denkendorf (ITV), Germany;	
	T. SPECK and O. SPECK, Universitaet Freiburg, Germany	
9.1	Introduction	168
9.2	Composites under development: ‘smart composites’	172
9.3	Using biomimetics to boost the performance of composites	173
9.4	Learning from a role model: horsetail (<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>)	175
9.5	Learning from a role model: giant reed (<i>Arundo donax</i>)	179
9.6	Learning from a role model: wood	182
9.7	Combination of different principles of role models into the ‘technical plant stem’	183
9.8	Production methods and machinery equipment for the ‘technical plant stem’	183
9.9	Applications of the ‘technical plant stem’	188
9.10	Conclusions and future trends	189
9.11	Acknowledgement	190
9.12	References	190
10	Bionic developments based on textile materials for technical applications	193
	T. STEGMAIER, V. VON ARNIM, M. LINKE, M. MILWICH, J. SARSOOR, A. SCHERRIEBLE, P. SCHNEIDER and H. PLANCK, Institute of Textile Technology and Process Engineering Denkendorf (ITV), Germany	
10.1	Introduction	193
10.2	Potential of fiber-based materials in bionics	194
10.3	Research activities in the field of surfaces	195

10.4	Research activities in environmental technology	196
10.5	Research activities in energy technology/management	203
10.6	Research activities in the field of lightweight construction	209
10.7	Future trends	210
10.8	Conclusions	210
10.9	Sources of further information and advice	211
10.10	Acknowledgements	211
10.11	References	211

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Y. E. El-Mogahzy

Textiles have one of the longest histories of all human activities. Beginning with prehistoric humans who fashioned clothing with available biological materials, such as animal skins and furs, the industry evolved to the eventual use of plant stalk derived fibers and seed hairs (flax and cotton). Depending on the geographic location, animal skins such as those from wolves, bears, deer, moose, and leopard were used as prized garment materials. In [Chapter 8](#), the use of biomimetic principles applied to the structure and properties of animal furs in the fashioning of synthetic alternative textiles is discussed.

The use of animal skins did not require development of technology for conversion of fiber materials to fabrics; eventually, methods for construction of yarns from fiber were developed, and this led on to methods of basket weaving and conversion of yarns into fabrics. Concomitant with the rise in animal husbandry, significant amounts of animal hairs could be harvested from sheep (wool), goat, camel, and even rabbit and used as the feedstock for yarn and fabric. Similarly, with the increase in cultivation of plants, agrarian societies could produce substantial amounts of plant fibers to be used in textile manufacture. Thus, the fibers in the stalks of plants, leading to ramie, jute and hemp fibers, and seed hair of the cotton plant (perhaps viewed as advanced materials during that era) were relatively quickly incorporated into textiles.

An event that heralded one of the major advances of the new age of textile fibers, and which foreshadowed the work presented here in the opening chapters of this book, occurred in the mid-nineteenth century with the discovery of the solubility of nitrocellulose in simple solvents (e.g. acetone) allowing the production of synthetically derived fibers. Unfortunately, nitrocellulose, also known as guncotton, is highly flammable, so the commercial viability of these fibers was limited. Nonetheless, this concept illustrated that humankind was no longer strictly limited to the use of naturally produced material but was capable of producing novel fibers not present in nature. By the late nineteenth century, the method for production of cuprammonium rayon was discovered. This fiber, made from cellulose, was touted as being the manmade replacement for silk. During this same era, many other methods for converting cellulose from many natural sources were developed.

Another seminal event on the road to synthetic fiber production was the discovery by Carothers of the method for making nylon in the early twentieth century. This fiber is a truly synthetic material, in that the starting materials are not found in nature, albeit derived from petroleum. This discovery, and many more, was the genesis of the synthetic materials industry. As it relates to the current generation of synthetic materials, the power of human ingenuity evidenced by these developments in fibers is enormous.

Throughout this period many synthetic processes were investigated to replace natural silk production. Produced by silk moth caterpillars, and harvested through a labor-intensive process, silk was quite expensive; hence, it was deemed desirable to find a substitute process yielding a high value-added product of similar or higher quality. From the earliest guncotton fibers to present-day versions of regenerated cellulose, this quest has been followed, with varying degrees of success. Along the way, the lessons learned provided much insight into improving our capabilities for designing and producing novel materials with desired properties.

Design principles for clothing and for other applications of fiber-based textile materials are represented in several chapters in this work. In [Chapter 6](#), Kapsali presents the use of biomimetic principles in the design of clothing. It should be noted, however, that, in today's world, textiles are not just about human clothing. Development of technical textile materials founded on biological principles is the subject of the two chapters ([7](#) and [10](#)) by Stegmaier in which self-cleaning materials, energy harvesting, and novel filtration materials, and others, are discussed.

There are many other applications of textiles such as composite reinforcement materials. Inspiration taken from biology for enhancement of these materials is discussed in [Chapter 5](#) by Santulli. Although this is a relatively modern area, the use of clay-based composites in construction notwithstanding, this chapter brings the use of natural, sustainable (plant) fibers to the fore.

One of the main themes in this book is the use of molecular biology techniques for the production of fibrous materials. Chapters on these techniques form the genesis of the book. The scope and power of genetic engineering is the subject of much research, and the use of these techniques for fiber production will lead to as powerful a shift in our thinking as the early synthetic chemistry breakthroughs. In essence, the world of recombinant DNA technology has enabled us to refocus our attention on natural materials but through a distinctly new lens. In this book, we explore, via several contributions, the arena of biomaterials and the use of genetic engineering technologies as production systems to allow us not only to recreate extant materials but to create novel materials with new unexplored properties.

To realize the dream of producing designer materials from the products of simple living recombinant systems we need to understand the structure/function properties of the constituent natural ingredients of biomaterials (e.g. proteins and carbohydrates) and how natural systems process and produce biomaterials from these substrates. Thus, we present chapters on the examination of natural production systems for fibrous proteins and research into the processing steps involved in

assembly of natural protein fibers. Further chapters deal with structural protein gene mimicry and production of recombinant proteins in simple microbial systems, and plant and animal systems.

This volume tells the complete story so far of biomimetics in textile manufacturing, leaving us with very exciting prospects for the manufacture of the next generation of novel textile materials for diverse applications using environmentally friendly technologies.