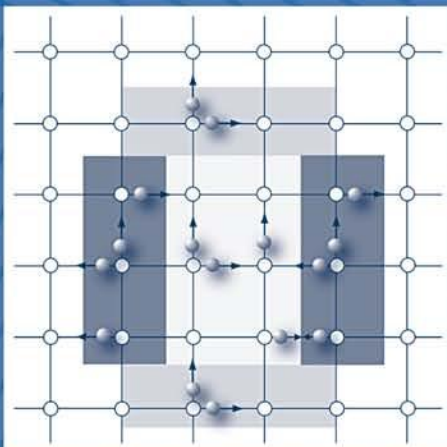


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# Thermal and moisture transport in fibrous materials

Edited by N. Pan and P. Gibson



The Textile Institute

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# Thermal and moisture transport in fibrous materials

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N. Pan and P. Gibson



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# Contents

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<i>Contributor contact details</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xiv</i>
Part I Textile structure and moisture transport	
1	Characterizing the structure and geometry of fibrous materials 3
	N. PAN and Z. SUN, University of California, USA
1.1	Geometrical characterization of single fibers 3
1.2	Basic parameters for porous media 4
1.3	Characterization of fibrous materials 6
1.4	Mathematical descriptions of the anisotropy of a fibrous material 11
1.5	Pore distribution in a fibrous material 14
1.6	Tortuosity distributions in a fibrous material 17
1.7	Structural analysis of fibrous materials with special fiber orientations 19
1.8	Determination of the fiber orientation 33
1.9	The packing problem 37
1.10	References 38
2	Understanding the three-dimensional structure of fibrous materials using stereology 42
	D. LUKAS and J. CHALOUPEK, Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic
2.1	Introduction 42
2.2	Basic stereological principles 54
2.3	Stereology of a two-dimensional fibrous mass 64
2.4	Stereology of a three-dimensional fibrous mass 82
2.5	Sources of further information and advice 98
2.6	References 98

vi	Contents	
3	Essentials of psychrometry and capillary hydrostatics	102
	N. PAN and Z. SUN, University of California, USA	
3.1	Introduction	102
3.2	Essentials of psychrometry	103
3.3	Moisture in a medium and the moisture sorption isotherm	106
3.4	Wettability of different material types	115
3.5	Mathematical description of moisture sorption isotherms	119
3.6	References	132
4	Surface tension, wetting and wicking	136
	W. ZHONG, University of Manitoba, Canada	
4.1	Introduction	136
4.2	Wetting and wicking	136
4.3	Adhesive forces and interactions across interfaces	138
4.4	Surface tension, curvature, roughness and their effects on wetting phenomena	143
4.5	Summary	152
4.6	References	153
5	Wetting phenomena in fibrous materials	156
	R. S. RENGASAMY, Indian Institute of Technology, India	
5.1	Introduction	156
5.2	Surface tension	156
5.3	Curvature effect of surfaces	158
5.4	Capillarity	160
5.5	Surface roughness of solids	167
5.6	Hysteresis effects	176
5.7	Meniscus	178
5.8	Instability of liquid flow	180
5.9	Morphological transitions of liquid bodies in parallel fiber bundles	183
5.10	Sources of further information and advice	184
5.11	References	184
6	Interactions between liquid and fibrous materials	188
	N. PAN and Z. SUN, University of California, USA	
6.1	Introduction	188
6.2	Fundamentals	188
6.3	Complete wetting of curved surfaces	193
6.4	Liquid spreading dynamics on a solid surface	195
6.5	Rayleigh instability	199

6.6	Lucas–Washburn theory and wetting of fibrous media	203
6.7	Understanding wetting and liquid spreading	214
6.8	References	219
Part II Heat–moisture interactions in textile materials		
7	Thermal conduction and moisture diffusion in fibrous materials	225
	Z. SUN and N. PAN, University of California, USA	
7.1	Introduction	225
7.2	Thermal conduction analysis	226
7.3	Effective thermal conductivity for fibrous materials	233
7.4	Prediction of ETC by thermal resistance networks	237
7.5	Structure of plain weave woven fabric composites and the corresponding unit cell	241
7.6	Prediction of ETC by the volume averaging method	249
7.7	The homogenization method	259
7.8	Moisture diffusion	262
7.9	Sensory contact thermal conduction of porous materials	265
7.10	Future research	266
7.11	References	266
8	Convection and ventilation in fabric layers	271
	N. GHADDAR, American University of Beirut, Lebanon; K. GHALLI, Beirut Arab University, Lebanon; and B. JONES, Kansas State University, USA.	
8.1	Introduction	271
8.2	Estimation of ventilation rates	275
8.3	Heat and moisture transport modelling in clothing by ventilation	283
8.4	Heat and moisture transport results of the periodic ventilation model	298
8.5	Extension of model to real limb motion	301
8.6	Nomenclature	302
8.7	References	305
9	Multiphase flow through porous media	308
	P. GIBSON, U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center, USA	
9.1	Introduction	308
9.2	Mass and energy transport equations	308
9.3	Total thermal energy equation	328
9.4	Thermodynamic relations	336



9.5	Mass transport in the gas phase	338
9.6	Gas phase convective transport	340
9.7	Liquid phase convective transport	341
9.8	Summary of modified transport equations	344
9.9	Comparison with previously derived equations	347
9.10	Conclusions	351
9.11	Nomenclature	352
9.12	References	355
10	The cellular automata lattice gas approach for fluid flows in porous media	357
	D. LUKAS and L. OCHERETNA, Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic	
10.1	Introduction	357
10.2	Discrete molecular dynamics	364
10.3	Typical lattice gas automata	378
10.4	Computer simulation of fluid flows through porous materials	381
10.5	Sources of further information and advice	395
10.6	References	399
11	Phase change in fabrics	402
	K. GHALI, Beirut Arab University, Lebanon; N. GHADDAR, American University of Beirut, Lebanon; and B. JONES, Kansas State University, USA	
11.1	Introduction	402
11.2	Modelling condensation/evaporation in thin clothing layers	407
11.3	Modelling condensation/evaporation in a fibrous medium	411
11.4	Effect of fabric physical properties on the condensation/evaporation process	416
11.5	Modelling heating and moisture transfer in PCM fabrics	418
11.6	Conclusions	420
11.7	Nomenclature	421
11.8	References	422
12	Heat–moisture interactions and phase change in fibrous material	424
	B. JONES, Kansas State University, USA; K. GHALI, Beirut Arab University, Lebanon; and N. GHADDAR, American University of Beirut, Lebanon	
12.1	Introduction	424
12.2	Moisture regain and equilibrium relationships	426
12.3	Sorption and condensation	427

12.4	Mass and heat transport processes	428
12.5	Modeling of coupled heat and moisture transport	431
12.6	Consequences of interactions between heat and moisture	434
12.7	References	436

Part III Textile–body interactions and modelling issues

13	Heat and moisture transfer in fibrous clothing insulation	439
	Y.B. LI and J. FAN, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong	
13.1	Introduction	439
13.2	Experimental investigations	439
13.3	Theoretical models	448
13.4	Numerical simulation	456
13.5	Conclusions	463
13.6	Nomenclature	465
13.7	References	466
14	Computer simulation of moisture transport in fibrous materials	469
	D. LUKAS, E. KOSTAKOVA and A. SARKAR, Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic	
14.1	Introduction	470
14.2	Auto-models	478
14.3	Computer simulation	509
14.4	Sources of further information and advice	536
14.5	References	538
15	Computational modeling of clothing performance	542
	P. GIBSON, U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center, USA; J. BARRY and R. HILL, Creare Inc, USA; P. BRASSER, TNO Prins Maurits Laboratory, The Netherlands; and M. SOBERA and C. KLEIJN, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands	
15.1	Introduction	542
15.2	Material modeling	543
15.3	Material modeling example	545
15.4	Modeling of fabric-covered cylinders	546
15.5	Full-body modeling	554
15.6	Conclusions	558
15.7	References	558

x	Contents	
16	The skin's role in human thermoregulation and comfort	560
	E. ARENS and H. ZHANG, University of California, Berkeley, USA	
16.1	Introduction	560
16.2	Body–environment exchange	561
16.3	Skin	564
16.4	Heat exchange at the skin surface	578
16.5	Moisture exchange at the skin surface	584
16.6	Typical skin temperatures	585
16.7	Sensation and comfort	589
16.8	Modeling human thermal regulation and comfort	596
16.9	References	597
	<i>Index</i>	603

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In recent years, there has been a resurgence in the opportunities and challenges facing engineers, chemists, and textile scientists responsible for developing and applying new fiber-based materials. The explosive growth of manufactured nonwoven fibrous products, the continued development of textile processing technology, and the increasing applications of nanotechnology in the form of nanoparticles and nanofibers incorporated into fibrous materials have all led to the need for new approaches to characterize the behavior of these materials.

The role of heat and mass transfer is often critical to the manufacture or function of devices, structures, and engineered items incorporating fibrous materials. Two aspects of thermal and moisture transport in fibrous materials are examined in this book: the basic nature of the transport process itself and the engineering factors important to the performance of manufactured articles incorporating fibrous materials.

The purpose of this book is to survey the present state of the art with respect to the engineering and scientific aspects of heat and mass transfer through fibrous materials. Research on these materials is driven by the needs of industry to develop functional materials that perform well in their intended application. A welcome trend in recent years is to look outside of the textile research community to other engineering fields for insights into the properties of this unique class of engineering materials. The general treatment of fiber- and textile-based materials as a soft, porous, deformable, multi-component matrix has equivalent applications in materials and fields such as particulates (soil and sand), composites, food, and biomaterials.

The general approach of this book is to treat fibrous materials as ‘soft condensed matter’ in the jargon of physics, even though for many the term fibrous material is a little exotic already. However, this classification has many positive implications for the manufacture, use, and performance of these materials in that they will be just as rigorously studied as any other counterparts of engineering materials under the blessing of being a member of the group; something that has never happened systematically before. Many of the chapters in this book treat fibrous materials as a porous media – a solid material phase permeated by an interconnected network of pores (voids)

filled with fluids (liquid or gas). The solid matrix and the pore spaces are assumed to form two interpenetrating phases, which may be either continuous or discontinuous.

The coverage of chapters emphasizes heat and mass transfer, with mass transfer referring primarily to fluids such as gases, vapors, and liquids in continuous phases. A significant area of mass transfer that is missing from this book is particle filtration, a topic, albeit very interesting and technologically important, outside the scope of this book.

The chapters in this book comprise an eclectic mix of applied, theoretical, and engineering-oriented approaches to the problem of heat and mass transfer in fibrous materials. The varied perspectives are valuable. Some of the physics-based approaches provide a fundamental framework for understanding the interactions between the various elements of a fibrous 'system' of polymer fibers, pore spaces, liquids, and gases. Other chapters provide excellent applied examples that illuminate the factors contributing to the performance of a fiber-based product (such as a clothing system).

More specifically, the first major issue is the description or characterization of fibrous materials, and this is covered by the first couple of chapters in the book. Nearly all the new challenges in dealing with transport phenomena in fibrous materials can be traced back to the complexities of the fibrous structures: we cannot even define such a simple physical quantity as the density of fibrous materials without running into the problem of the state of the material (fiber packing, volume fraction, etc.) How can we apply PDEs to a material system for which we even cannot define where the material boundary is? How to conveniently specify the fibrous materials and consequently incorporate the information into various governing equations would be, arguably, the most challenging problem.

Another most interesting characteristic of fibrous materials is that the solid matrix is often a participating media in the overall transport process. Many treatments of transport phenomena in porous media (such as geology) treat the solid matrix as an inert space-filling substance that does not participate in mass transport other than defining the geometry of the pores. Even in heat transfer analyses, the solid matrix is often given a defined thermal conductivity, and is neglected or ignored in favor of the transport phenomena taking place in the fluid contained in the pore spaces. A deformable solid matrix composed of polymeric fibers requires that more attention be paid to the solid portion of the porous material model. Fibers can absorb the vapor or liquid phase, causing the fibers to swell or shrink. The entire porous material can be easily deformed under mechanical stress, changing such characteristics as porosity, and perhaps expelling or taking up more liquid or gas into the porous structure. Coupling phenomena between heat and mass transfer, or between mechanical stress and heat/mass transfer, can make a full analysis and simulation of the behavior of a fibrous polymeric material extremely complicated, particularly



when various liquid and vapor components are involved. Some bold and insightful attempts in tackling the problem are reported in several chapters with more detailed deliberations.

The intriguing nature of the issues in fibrous materials calls for powerful tools, and computer modeling is the most robust available: it is even able to take the structural irregularities into account. There are various ways computers can help unravel the mysteries surrounding the material, such as numerical solutions of otherwise intractable governing equations, discrete simulations using lattice or cellular automate approaches or stochastic algorithms based on thermodynamics and statistical mechanics. There are two chapters solely devoted to this topic.

A few of the chapters delve into approaches and disciplines that have not yet been applied widely to the science and technology of fibrous materials, but which may provide inspiration for extending the formalism of techniques such as stereology and lattice methods to further application in this field.

Another difficult area is dealing with the interfacing between fibrous materials (clothing in this case) and the human body, which is the main incentive in studying such a *heat-moisture–swelling fiber* complex. Our exploration in this area should not end at the manikins and we have to examine more intimately the interactions between clothing and the human body to make more sense out of this complex system. We have one whole chapter, as well as several sections spread over other individual chapters, introducing the human physiology relating to or determining skin–clothing interactions. We are in fact very pleased to have included such a component in this book, for it is very likely that nano-science, computer modeling and human physiology may revitalize textile science as a whole.

*N. Pan and P. Gibson*