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Standard Guide for Measuring Widths of Interfaces in Sputter Depth Profiling Using SIMS¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E 1438; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides the SIMS analyst with a method for determining the width of interfaces from SIMS sputtering data obtained from analyses of layered specimens. This guide does not apply to data obtained from analyses of specimens with thin markers or specimens without interfaces such as ion-implanted specimens.

1.2 This guide does not describe methods for the optimization of interface width or the optimization of depth resolution.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*

E 673 Terminology Relating to Surface Analysis²

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 See Terminology E 673 for definitions of terms used in SIMS.

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide will allow interface widths to be calculated from plots of SIMS secondary ion intensity versus time that are acquired during sputtering of layered specimens. It assumes that a primary ion beam with a stable current density is being used. Briefly, these plots are obtained in the following fashion: an ion beam of a particular ion species, ion energy, and angle of incidence is used to bombard a sample. The beam is rastered or defocused so as to attempt to produce uniform current density in the analyzed area, that is defined by means of mechanical or electronic gating. The intensity of one or more secondary ions is monitored with respect to time as sputtering continues.

4.2 The interface width is then determined from the secondary ion intensity versus time data according to an arithmetic model described in the Procedure section. A measurement of the thickness of the layer overlying the interface is required. This measurement may be performed by another analytical technique.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Although it would be desirable to measure the extent of profile distortion in any unknown sample by using a standard sample and this guide, measurements of interface width (profile distortion) can be unique to every sample composition (**1**, **2**, **3**).³ This guide, that describes a method that determines the unique width of a particular interface, is primarily intended to provide a method for checking on proper or consistent instrument performance, or both. Periodic analysis of the same sample followed by a measurement of the interface width, in accordance with this guide, will provide these checks.

5.2 The procedure described in this guide is adaptable to any layered sample with an interface between layers of differing compositions. It has been shown that for SIMS in particular (**4**, **5**) and for surface analysis in general (**6**, **7**), only rigorous calibration methods can determine accurate interface widths. Such procedures are prohibitively time-consuming. Therefore the interface width measurement obtained using the procedure described in this guide may contain significant systematic error (**8**). However, this does not diminish its use as a check on proper or consistent instrument performance, or both.

6. Apparatus

6.1 The procedure described in this guide can be used to determine an interface width from data obtained with virtually any SIMS instrument.

6.2 Use of the interface width measurement from a layered specimen as a check on proper or consistent instrument performance, or both, does not assume that the sample of interest contains no interface roughness. Rather, it assumes that the interface roughness is consistent from one analyzed area to

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E-42 on Surface Analysis and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E42.06 on SIMS. Current edition approved Sept. 15, 1991. Published November 1991.

² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 03.06.

³ The boldface numbers given in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this guide.