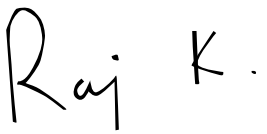
Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Alphabet Soups

The other day I was flipping through an automotive magazine when one trend caught my attention, namely, the sheer preponderance of acronyms and abbreviations in this industry. On any given page, the text would be sprinkled with SOHC or DOHC (single or double overhead cam), VCM (variable cylinder management), ABS (antilock brake system), AWD (all wheel drive) etc, etc. Some of these abbreviations are not even spelt out; I suppose they expect the readers to know what the letters stand for! The auto industry must surely feel that the expanding Gen-X and Gen-Y client base loves these alphabet soups. I decided to delve a little more into the subject and a random search of the Web for "acronyms" yielded 523,748 entries! There is a database for abbreviations and acronyms used by the U.S. Government (over 500,000 of them). The military is not far behind and it was therefore not surprising to find another website listing 368,000 acronyms and abbreviations used in the computer, telecom, and defense sectors. What about abbreviations within our Society itself? ECS has ETD, DS&T, and IE&EE, and we have even coined the acronym IF for *Interface*!

Abbreviations and acronyms are an integral part of the computer culture and it is hard to get away from RAM, ROM, or HTML these days. But they are apparently becoming popular in Internet chat rooms as well. Obviously, text shorthand is easier and quicker to do than typing a string of words but where does this end (*e.g.*, one can imagine Shakespeare squirming in his grave when he sees: '2B or not 2B')? My electronics and electrical engineering colleagues are masters at the use of acronyms (*e.g.*, FET, MISFET, MOSFET), but their chemistry brethren (of which I am one) are hardly less culpable. It is not necessary to look beyond the surface analysis community for examples. This field is strewn with acronyms and abbreviations (SIMS, SAM, XPS, AES, etc.) and the chemical instrument manufacturers are as infatuated with coining new ones for their products as are their auto industry counterparts.

Talking of surfaces, you will find in these pages, an interesting photo of our guest editor, John Stickney, indulging in his favorite occupation, viz., surface modification. Clearly, he likes to do this on a length scale ranging from nanometers in the lab to kilometer dimensions in the "field." Electrodeposition can be viewed as one technique for surface modification and this issue features the ECS Electrodeposition Division. John and his colleagues in this Division have lined up four feature articles spanning the topics of template-assisted deposition of nanostructured films, electrosynthesis of chiral surfaces, and copper interconnects on silicon chips. The Chalkboard column in this issue focuses on alloy deposition.

Another year is rolling to an end and I would like to thank the members of the Editorial Advisory Board for their active participation and input. This has been a fun group to work with. The ECS staff continue to weave their magic in transforming the raw materials submitted to the finished products that you see in these pages. Please give us your feedback and let us know how we can make this magazine better. ST. [BTW, ST stands for stay tuned!]



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Editor

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INTERFACE

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