

The wonderful world of X-ray imaging - Laboratory X-ray microscopy in materials research and innovation

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Abstract: X-ray imaging and X-ray computed tomography (XCT) provide non-destructive characterization capabilities on opaque objects across a range of length scales, observing features with sizes down to several 10 nanometers. Laboratory-based micro XCT in projection geometry with a resolution of about 1 μm and nano XCT with focusing X-ray lenses with a resolution down to about 50 nm are used for two- or three-dimensional inspection of medium and small sized objects, as well as object interiors and materials' microstructure components. Because of their ability to reveal structural characteristics, materials' microstructure and flaws, such as cracks and pores, or local composition and density differences, they are potential techniques for imaging of micro- and nanostructured objects (e.g. microelectronics products), advanced multi-component materials (e.g. composites and porous or skeleton materials) as well as biological objects (e.g. pollens and diatoms). In this plenary talk, the huge potential but also today's limits of laboratory X-ray microscopy and nano XCT for nondestructive 3D imaging of materials and biological objects will be described. Applications for nondestructive evaluation of geometrical features, materials' microstructure and flaws will be shown. Examples will be selected from several branches: energy storage and conversion, lightweight construction, microelectronics. Future developments in high-resolution X-ray microscopy and nano XCT will enable to investigate thicker samples using higher photon energies ($> 10 \text{ keV}$), to reduce the measurement time and consequently the time-to-data, and to improve the spatial resolution. Novel laboratory X-ray sources, e. g. using micro-patterned anodes, and recently developed focusing optics, e. g. multilayer Laue lenses, will enable spatial resolutions down 10 nm for X-ray microscopy, and shorter data acquisition times. These developments will be the "door opener" for the industrial application of nano XCT in materials and process development, process monitoring and quality assurance of hightech products with internal components that have geometrical dimensions or microstructure features in the micro- and nanometer range.

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