16th IUVSTA International Summer School on Physics at Nanoscale



Contribution ID: 43

Type: poster

Direct assessment of the acidity of individual surface hydroxyls on In₂O₃(111)

Non-contact atomic force microscopy is a versatile tool to investigate properties of individual atoms or molecules. Here we report a novel approach to determine the acidity of individual surface hydroxyls, which is directly linked to the proton affinity (PA) of the involved O atoms. The PA - the tendency to gain or lose a proton - is crucial *e.g.* in acid-base catalysis and the electro- and photocatalytic splitting of water.

The testcase of this study is the stoichiometric $In_2O_3(111)$ surface, which has four inequivalent surface O atoms $O_S(\alpha - \delta)$. Water dissociation leads to a pair of OH groups: the surface $O_SH(\beta)$ and the water O_WH . The remaining surface O atoms $O(\alpha, \gamma, \delta)$ can be protonated via manipulation with the tip. We probe the strength of their H bond with a functionalized tip of a nc-AFM via F(z)-spectroscopy and find quantitative agreement with density-functional theory (DFT) calculations. By relating the results to known PAs of gas-phase molecules, we can calibrate our data and determine the PA of different surface sites of $In_2O_3(111)$ with atomic precision. Measurements on hydroxylated TiO₂ and zirconia extend our method to other oxides. The trends of the site-specific PA values agree well with the expectations based on area-averaging techniques.

Primary authors: WAGNER, Margareta; MEYER, Bernd (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg); SETVIN, Martin (TU Wien (Vienna, AT) & Charles University (Prague, CZ)); SCHMID, Michael (Institute of Applied Physics, TU Wien); DIEBOLD, Ulrike (Institute of Applied Physics, TU Wien)

Presenter: WAGNER, Margareta

Session Classification: Posters

Track Classification: Surfaces and nanostructures for electronics