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Electroactive Polymer Actuators and Devices (EAPAD) 2016

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Editors

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Volume 9798
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 1</th>
<th>EAP AS EMERGING ACTUATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9798 09</td>
<td>Multi-layer robot skin with embedded sensors and muscles [9798-3]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 2</th>
<th>CELEBRATING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DIELECTRIC ELASTOMER MINIMUM ENERGY STRUCTURES (DEMES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9798 0D</td>
<td>Enhanced dielectric strength and actuation of acrylic elastomer with silicone gel coating [9798-8]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 3</th>
<th>DIELECTRIC ELASTOMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9798 0I</td>
<td>High-force Dielectric Electroactive Polymer (DEAP) membrane actuator [9798-12]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 4</th>
<th>EAP FABRICATION TECHNIQUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9798 0K</td>
<td>Printing of CNT/silicone rubber for a wearable flexible stretch sensor [9798-14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 0L</td>
<td>Fully printed 3 microns thick dielectric elastomer actuator (Best Student Paper Award) [9798-15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 0M</td>
<td>Fabrication of a self-sensing electroactive polymer bimorph actuator based on polyvinylidene fluoride and its electrostrictive terpolymer [9798-16]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 0N</td>
<td>Fabrication and adhesion of conjugated polymer trilayer structures for soft, flexible micromanipulators [9798-17]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SESSION 5  EAP CHARACTERIZATION

9798 0P  Ras Labs.-CASIS-ISS NL experiment for synthetic muscle: resistance to ionizing radiation (Invited Paper) [9798-19]

9798 0Q  Electrical breakdown of dielectric elastomers: influence of compression, electrode’s curvature and environmental humidity [9798-20]

9798 0R  The behavior of dielectric elastomer actuators connected in series and parallel [9798-21]

SESSION 6A  POWER GENERATION AND ENERGY HARVESTING

9798 0T  From electrode charges on dielectric elastomers to trapped charges and electric dipoles in electrets and ferroelectrets: fundamental and applications-relevant aspects of diversity in electroactive polymers (Invited Paper) [9798-23]

9798 0U  Energy harvesting for dielectric elastomer sensing [9798-24]

9798 0V  Big power from walking [9798-25]

9798 0W  Modeling self-priming circuits for dielectric elastomer generators towards optimum voltage boost [9798-26]

9798 0Y  Pre-stretch induced leakage current in VHB electroactive polymers [9798-28]

SESSION 6B  THEORETICAL MODELING AND ANALYSIS

9798 0Z  General thermodynamic theory of the stress-composition interaction for bucky-gel electrochemical actuators (Invited Paper) [9798-29]

9798 10  Modeling and simulation of chemically stimulated hydrogel layers using the multifield theory [9798-30]

9798 12  Modeling and control of a dielectric elastomer actuator [9798-32]

9798 13  Electromechanical performance analysis of inflated dielectric elastomer membrane for micro pump applications [9798-33]

9798 14  Analytical approach on the performance of helical dielectric elastomer actuator [9798-34]

SESSION 7A  IONIC EAP MATERIALS AND ACTUATORS I

9798 15  Some electrochemical aspects of aqueous ionic polymer-composite actuators [9798-35]

9798 16  Design and manufacturing of an array of micro IPMC hair-like sensors [9798-36]
### SESSION 7B  NEW EAP MATERIALS, PROCESSES, AND FABRICATION TECHNIQUES I

| 9798 1A | Photopolymerization of 3D conductive polypyrrole structures via digital light processing [9798-40] |
| 9798 1B | Processing of dielectric laminate actuator based on high precision dispenser and ink jet [9798-41] |
| 9798 1D | Flexible, stretchable electroadhesives based on acrylic elastomers [9798-43] |
| 9798 1E | Crosslinkage of polymethylhydrosiloxanes utilizing a diallyl functionalized nitroaniline derivative [9798-44] |

### SESSION 8A  NEW EAP MATERIALS, PROCESSES, AND FABRICATION TECHNIQUES II

| 9798 1G | Robotic extrusion processes for direct ink writing of 3D conductive polyaniline structures [9798-46] |
| 9798 1H | Embedded Carbide-derived Carbon (CDC) particles in polypyrrole (PPy) for linear actuator [9798-48] |
| 9798 1I | Temperature dependent impedance spectroscopy and Thermally Stimulated Depolarization Current (TSDC) analysis of disperse red 1-co-poly(methyl methacrylate) copolymers [9798-49] |
| 9798 1J | A robotic finger driven by twisted and coiled polymer actuator [9798-50] |
| 9798 1L | Bending artificial muscle from nylon filaments [9798-121] |

### SESSION 8B  APPLICATIONS OF EAP

| 9798 1P | Fish-skeleton visualization of bending actuators [9798-55] |
| 9798 1Q | Soft shape-adaptive gripping device made from artificial muscle [9798-56] |
| 9798 1R | Lab on chip microdevices for cellular mechanotransduction in urothelial cells [9798-57] |

### SESSION 9A  APPLICATIONS OF EAP MATERIALS TO ROBOTICS

| 9798 1S | Here today, gone tomorrow: biodegradable soft robots (Invited Paper) [9798-58] |
| 9798 1T | Development of soft robots using dielectric elastomer actuators (Invited Paper) [9798-59] |
| 9798 1U | Bistable electroactive polymer with sharp rigid-to-rubbery phase transition [9798-60] |
| 9798 1W | Dielectric elastomer actuators for facial expression [9798-62] |
SESSION 9B  NEW EAP MATERIALS, PROCESSES, AND FABRICATION TECHNIQUES III

9798 1Y  Aerosol-jet-printing silicone layers and electrodes for stacked dielectric elastomer actuators in one processing device [9798-64]
9798 1Z  Crumpled indium-tin-oxide electrodes for transparency tuning [9798-65]
9798 21  Characterization of ultraviolet light cured polydimethylsiloxane films for low-voltage, dielectric elastomer actuators [9798-67]
9798 22  Morphology and conductivity of Au films on polydimethylsiloxane using (3-mercaptopropyl)trimethoxysilane (MPTMS) as an adhesion promoter [9798-68]
9798 23  Microfabrication of stacked dielectric elastomer actuator fibers [9798-69]

SESSION 10A  IONIC EAP MATERIALS AND ACTUATORS II

9798 24  Large deformation ionic polymer-metal composites actuators based on porous Nafion membranes [9798-70]
9798 25  Encapsulation of ionic electroactive polymers: reducing the interaction with environment [9798-71]
9798 26  Behavior of ionic conducting IPN actuators in simulated space conditions [9798-72]
9798 27  Performance improvement of IPMC flow sensors with a biologically-inspired cupula structure [9798-73]
9798 28  Characterization of 3D-printed IPMC actuators [9798-74]

SESSION 10B  HAPTIC, TACTILE, AND OTHER SENSORS

9798 2A  Dielectric elastomer strain and pressure sensing enable reactive soft fluidic muscles [9798-76]
9798 2B  From land to water: bringing dielectric elastomer sensing to the underwater realm [9798-77]
9798 2C  Applications of pressure-sensitive dielectric elastomer sensors [9798-78]
9798 2D  Non-verbal communication through sensor fusion [9798-79]
9798 2E  Fluid flow sensing with ionic polymer-metal composites [9798-80]
9798 2G  Dielectric elastomer for stretchable sensors: influence of the design and material properties [9798-82]
9798 2H  Tactile sensor integrated dielectric elastomer actuator for simultaneous actuation and sensing [9798-83]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9798 2I</td>
<td>Interface design for DE based stack-actuators considering various application cases</td>
<td>[9798-84]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2J</td>
<td>Neural network modeling and model predictive control of ionic electroactive polymer actuators</td>
<td>[9798-85]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2K</td>
<td>Silicones with enhanced permittivity for dielectric elastomer actuators</td>
<td>[9798-86]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>POSTER SESSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2N</td>
<td>Photocatalytic activity of TiO₂ nanomaterials for methylene blue dye degradation</td>
<td>[9798-89]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2O</td>
<td>A multi-physical model for charge and mass transport in a flexible ionic polymer sensor</td>
<td>[9798-91]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2W</td>
<td>Position control of fishing line artificial muscles (coiled polymer actuators) from nylon thread</td>
<td>[9798-99]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2X</td>
<td>Enhanced electromechanical response of Ionic Polymer-Metal Composite (IPMC) actuators by various Nafion roughening levels</td>
<td>[9798-100]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 2Z</td>
<td>Preparation and characterization of sulfonated carbon nanotube/Nafion IPMC actuators</td>
<td>[9798-102]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 30</td>
<td>A novel transparent dielectric elastomer sensor for compressive force measurements</td>
<td>[9798-103]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 31</td>
<td>Simulation of the transient electromechanical behaviour of dielectric elastomer transducers</td>
<td>[9798-104]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 32</td>
<td>Electrically tunable, optical microcavity based on metallized and ultra-soft PDMS gel</td>
<td>[9798-105]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 33</td>
<td>Mass and charge transport in IPMC actuators with fractal interfaces</td>
<td>[9798-106]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 34</td>
<td>Application of the H∞ filter in high speed turn maneuvering target tracking algorithm</td>
<td>[9798-107]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 36</td>
<td>A dynamic physics-based model for tubular IPMC sensors under torsional excitation</td>
<td>[9798-109]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 37</td>
<td>Novel pre-strain method for dielectric electroactive polymers</td>
<td>[9798-110]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9798 38</td>
<td>A flexible dual mode tactile and proximity sensor using carbon microcoils</td>
<td>[9798-111]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development of a biomimetic roughness sensor for tactile information with an elastomer [9798-112]

Switchable adhesion for wafer-handling based on dielectric elastomer stack transducers [9798-115]

Electro-spraying and ultra-violet light curing of polydimethylsiloxane to fabricate thin films for low-voltage dielectric elastomer actuators [9798-116]

Characterization of screen-printed electrodes for dielectric elastomer (DE) membranes: influence of screen dimensions and electrode thickness on actuator performance [9798-119]

A study of metalized electrode self-clearing in electroactive polymer (EAP) based actuators [9798-120]
### Authors

Numbers in the index correspond to the last two digits of the six-digit citation identifier (CID) article numbering system used in Proceedings of SPIE. The first four digits reflect the volume number. Base 36 numbering is employed for the last two digits and indicates the order of articles within the volume. Numbers start with 00, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 0A, 0B...0Z, followed by 10-1Z, 20-2Z, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aabloo, Alvo</td>
<td>15, 1H, 1P, 1Q, 25, 2J, 2O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad</td>
<td>3F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed, Saad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akle, Barbar J.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albers, Leila N.</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Iain A.</td>
<td>0U, 0V, 2A, 2B, 2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arakawa, Takeshi</td>
<td>2W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asaka, Kinji</td>
<td>0Z, 2Q, 2W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascione, George</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assi, Slim</td>
<td>1P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aw, Kean C.</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben-David, Moti</td>
<td>0M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biedermann, Miriam</td>
<td>1E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocher, Whitney</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blümke, Martin</td>
<td>1E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bochmann, Helge</td>
<td>2I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Böse, Holger</td>
<td>2C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busfield, James</td>
<td>0Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butz, J.</td>
<td>3B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadiergues, Laurent</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cao, Jiawei</td>
<td>1T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpi, Federico</td>
<td>0Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrico, James D.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challifa, Elia</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang, Longfei</td>
<td>22, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, Bin</td>
<td>0Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, Hualing</td>
<td>24, 2X, 2Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheng, Tingyu</td>
<td>0R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesnê, S.</td>
<td>2G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cho, Kyeong Ho</td>
<td>1J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choi, Hyouk Ryeal</td>
<td>1J, 38, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choi, Jae Young</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke, David R.</td>
<td>1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbaci, Mert</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuervo-Reyes, Eduardo</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cylinder, David</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dascalu, Mihaela</td>
<td>2K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deyhle, Hans</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duchet-Rumeau, J.</td>
<td>2G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duduta, Mihai</td>
<td>1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dünki, Simon J.</td>
<td>2K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehrlich, Johannes</td>
<td>2C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, Leeva</td>
<td>0M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erickson, John M.</td>
<td>2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falk, Daniel</td>
<td>0N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannir, Adelyne</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasolt, Bettina</td>
<td>3E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Förster-Zügel, Florentine</td>
<td>31, 3B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franke, Jörg</td>
<td>1Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franke, M.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fröb, H.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Froio, Danielle</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuerst, Tyler</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furlong, Cosme</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallucci, Sergio</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbaguidi, Audrey</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentile, Charles A.</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard, Reimund</td>
<td>0T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giffney, Tim</td>
<td>0K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godaba, Hareesh</td>
<td>1T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Göttler, Michael</td>
<td>1Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grotepaß, T.</td>
<td>3B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gu, Guo-Ying</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guan, N.,</td>
<td>1R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupta, Ujaval</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablani, Surbhi</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallén-Grufman, K.</td>
<td>1R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg, Edgar</td>
<td>15, 1Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammami, S.,</td>
<td>0Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han, Hyo Seung</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han, Yu,</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hau, Steffen</td>
<td>0I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitchner, Robert</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodgins, Micah</td>
<td>3E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman, Dan</td>
<td>0P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffstadt, Thorben</td>
<td>2I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holness, F.</td>
<td>1G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer, Martin</td>
<td>0W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horuchi, Tetsuya</td>
<td>2O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu, Wei,</td>
<td>1U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang, Zhilong</td>
<td>0R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter, Ian W.</td>
<td>1L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ieropoulos, Ioannis</td>
<td>1S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iglesias, S.,</td>
<td>2G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illenberger, Patrin K.</td>
<td>0U, 0V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imamura, Hiroya</td>
<td>1B, 2H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jankson, P.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jager, Edwin W. H.</td>
<td>0N, 1R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Mistral, C.</td>
<td>0Y, 2G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeon, Min-Seok</td>
<td>2N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeong, Soon Cheol</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia, Shuhai</td>
<td>2Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanson, Umaras</td>
<td>1S, 1P, 1Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jomni, F.,</td>
<td>0Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung, Hongsang</td>
<td>1J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaasik, F.,</td>
<td>1Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadooka, Kevin</td>
<td>1B, 2H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kang, Doo In</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Karapetkova, Maria, 22
Khaldi, Alexandre, 0N
Kiefer, Rudolf, 1H
Kim, Bae-Yeon, 2N
Kim, Daewon, 14
Kim, Kwang J., 2E
Kim, Sung Joon, 39
Kim, Ulkyum, 38
Kimura, Mutsumi, 1B
Ko, Yee Song, 1I
Kollosche, Matthias, 0Q
Konduru, Vamsi Krishna, 14
Koo, Ja Choon, 1J, 39
Kovacs, Gabor, 3C
Krüger, Hartmut, 1E
Krutz, Gary, 37
Krylov, Slava, 0M
Kurian, Agee Susan, 0K
La, Thanh-Giang, 0D
Lamkin-Kennard, Kathleen, 23
Landgraf, Maximilian, 1Y
Lau, Gih-Keong, 0D, 1Z
Laurent, Elisabeth, 26
Leang, Kam K., 28
Lee, Deuk Yong, 2N
Lee, Jim, 0K
Lee, Myung-Hyun, 2N
Lei, Hong, 27, 36
Lei, Zhenda, 34
Leo, K., 32
Leung, Vanessa Y. F., 22, 3C
Li, Bo, 22
Li, Dichen, 24
Li, Guorui, 0R, 30
Li, Heng, 33
Li, Tiefeng, 0R, 30
Liang, Yiming, 0R, 30
Liffland, Stephanie, 0P
Liu, Chao, 1U
Liu, Jiayu, 2X
Luo, Meng, 24
Ma, Chunchao, 34
Maas, Jürgen, 2I
Madawala, Udaya K., 0V
Mark, Patrick S., 0P
Maziz, Ali, 0N, 1R
McHenry, Matthew J., 27
Meixler, Lewis D., 0P
Menegus, Michael J., 0P
Merkel, U., 32
Mirvacki, Seyed M., 1L
Moon, Hyungpill, 1J, 39
Mößinger, Holger, 31
Moy, Leon, 0P
Müller, Bert, 21, 22, 3C
Nakshatharan, Sunjai, 1P, 2J
Nam, Jae-Do, 1J
Newell, Britanny, 37
Nguyen, Giao T. M., 26
Nguyen, Tien Dat, 38
Nordarse, Robert, 0P
Nüesch, Frank A., 1J, 2K
O’Brien, Benjamin M., 0U, 2D
Ocak, Deniz, 3C
Ong, Hui-Ying, 1Z
Opris, Dorina M., 1I, 2K
Osmani, Bekim, 21, 22, 3C
Ounaies, Zoubida, 3F
Paley, Derek A., 27
Park, Jungwoo, 1J
Park, Junwoo, 38
Pascal, Kevin, 37
Paschew, G., 32
Patra, Karali, 13
Pei, Qibing, 1U
Plesse, Cédric, 26
Poulin, A., 0L
Price, Aaron D., 1A, 1G
Prillaman, Daniel L., 0P
Pruvost, S., 2G
Punning, Andres, 15, 1P, 2J
Qiu, Yu, 1U
Randriamahazaka, Hyacinthe, 0Z
Rasmussen, Lenore, 0P
Ratto, Jo Ann, 0P
Razavi, Payam, 0P
Reitelshöfer, Sebastian, 1Y
Ren, Zhi, 1U
Richter, A., 32
Rodriguez, Simone, 0P
Rosset, S., 0L
Rosster, Jonathan, 0W, 1S
Ru, Jie, 2Z
Saini, Abhishek, 13
Sandberg, Eric, 0P
Schlaak, Helmut F., 31, 3B
Schmidt, Philip, 1Y
Seelecke, Stefan, 0I, 3E
Shacham-Diamond, Yosi, 0M
Sharif, Montassar, 27, 36
Shea, H., 0L
Shen, Qi, 2E
Shrestha, Milan, 1Z
Slowik, I., 32
Sobczyk, Martin, 10
Son, Siwon, 2N
Song, Min Geun, 1J
Stelbaum, Tyler, 2E
Stewart, Frank, 37
Stewart, Mark, 0Q
Sun, Hongwei, 34
Svensenstien, K., 1R
Sylvestre, A., 0Y
Tadesses, Yonas, 09
Tahara, Kenji, 2W
Talych, Andreas, 2D
Takagi, Kentaro, 2O, 2W
Tam, Tarmo, 1H, 25
Tan, Xiaobo, 27, 36
Tawk, Charbel, 16
Taya, Minoru, 1B, 2H
Taylor, James, 0P
Thellen, Christopher T., 0P
Tomar, Ankit, 09
Töpper, Tino, 21, 22, 3C
Travia, Sarah, 2E
Travas-Sejdic, Jadranka, 0K
Treffer, Philipp, 1Y
Valenza, Logan, 0P
Valner, Robert, 1H
Van Volkinburg, Kyle R., 0M
Veale, Allan Joshua, 2A
Vidal, Frédéric, 26
von Heckel, Benedikt, 2I
Vunder, V., 1Q
Walker, Christopher, 2B
Wallmersperger, Thomas, 10
Walter, Wayne, 23
Wan, Bile, 30
Wang, Yanjie, 24, 2X, 2Z
Wang, Yuzhe, 1T, 1W
Washington, Gregory N., 0M
Wegener, Michael, 1E
Weiss, Florian M., 21, 22, 3C
Winfield, Jonathan, 1S
Wohlfender, Fabian, 2I
Wood, Robert J., 1D
Wu, Yucheng, 33
Xie, Shane Q., 2A
Xie, Yuhan, 30
Xu, Daniel, 2D
Yang, Xuxu, 0R
York, Alexander, 0I
Zanini, Plinio, 0W
Zhao, Dongxu, 24
Zhu, Jian, 12, 1T, 1W
Zhu, Zicai, 2O, 33
Zondaka, Zane, 15, 1H
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2 Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Dielectric Elastomer Minimum
   Energy Structures (DEMES)
   Siegfried G. Bauer, Johannes Kepler University Linz (Austria)
   Herbert R. Shea, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne
   (Switzerland)

3 Dielectric Elastomers
   Elisabeth Smela, University of Maryland, College Park (United States)
   Frédéric Vidal, Université de Cergy-Pontoise (France)

4 EAP Fabrication Techniques
   Harold Park, Boston University (United States)
   Aaron D. Price, Western University (Canada)

5 EAP Characterization
   Rocco Vertechy, Università degli Studi di Bologna (Italy)
   Reimund Gerhard, University of Potsdam (Germany)
6A Power Generation and Energy Harvesting
  Jinsong Leng, Harbin Institute of Technology (China)
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6B Theoretical Modeling and Analysis
  Jian Zhu, National University of Singapore (Singapore)
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7A Ionic EAP Materials and Actuators I
  Barbar J. Akle, Lebanese American University (Lebanon)
  Richard J. Spontak, North Carolina State University (United States)

7B New EAP Materials, Processes, and Fabrication Techniques I
  Edwin W. H. Jager, Linköping University (Sweden)
  Lenore Rasmussen, Ras Laboratories, LLC (United States)

8A New EAP Materials, Processes, and Fabrication Techniques II
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8B Applications of EAP
  Jonathan M. Rossiter, University of Bristol (United Kingdom)
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9A Applications of EAP Materials to Robotics
  Herbert R. Shea, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Switzerland)
  Kwang Jin Kim, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (United States)

9B New EAP Materials, Processes, and Fabrication Techniques III
  Adrian Koh, National University of Singapore (Singapore)
  Yonas Tadesse, The University of Texas at Dallas (United States)

10A Ionic EAP Materials and Actuators II
    Markus Henke, TU Dresden (Germany)
    Thomas Wallmersperger, TU Dresden (Germany)

10B Haptic, Tactile, and Other Sensors
    Kyle Van Volkinburg, University of California, Irvine (United States)
    Miriam Biedermann, Fraunhofer-Institut für Angewandte Polymerforschung (Germany)

11A New EAP Materials, Processes, and Fabrication Techniques IV
    Qibing Pei, University of California, Los Angeles (United States)
    Frédéric Vidal, Université de Cergy-Pontoise (France)
Introduction

This SPIE Electroactive Polymers Actuators and Devices (EAPAD) conference is the leading international forum for presenting the latest progress and holding discussions among the attendees regarding the capabilities, challenges, and potential future directions. The conference this year was chaired by Yoseph Bar-Cohen, Jet Propulsion Laboratory/Caltech, and co-chaired by Frédéric Vidal, Université de Cergy-Pontoise (France), and it included 128 presentations.

The conference was well attended by internationally leading experts in the field including members of academia, industry, and government agencies from the United States and overseas. This year, the keynote speaker was Elisabeth Smela, University of Maryland, College Park (United States), and the title of her presentation was, “Nastic actuators.” In her presentation, she covered the progress in developing actuators that are inspired by plants, namely the use of miniature hydraulic pumping mechanisms to deliver large forces and displacements. Devices are being developed using lamination of elastomer layers and encapsulating a fluid. Propylene carbonate has been demonstrated to be an effective fluid that does not generate gas bubbles. An example of an application that is being pursued is the development of smart stents with adjustable diameters. This topic was discussed at her presentation.

Overall, the presented papers reported the significant progress that was made in each of the topics of the EAP field infrastructure. The topics included: theoretical modeling and analysis of EAP mechanisms; improved EAP materials, processes, fabrication (including 3D printing) and characterization techniques; emerging EAP actuators (including ionic, conducting, shape memory polymers, CNT and dielectric EAP); applications of EAP materials including power generation and energy harvesting, robotics, haptic, tactile, and other sensors. This year, the special session was dedicated to “Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Dielectric Elastomer Minimum Energy Structures (DEMES).”

The efforts described in the presented papers are showing significant improvements in understanding the electromechanical principles and better methods of dealing with the challenges to the materials applications. Researchers are continuing to develop analytical tools and theoretical models to describe the electro-chemical and -mechanical processes, non-linear behavior as well as methodologies of design and control of the activated materials. EAP with improved response were described including dielectric elastomer, IPMC, conducting polymers, gel EAP, carbon nanotubes, and other types. Specifically, there seems to be a significant trend towards using dielectric elastomers as practical EAP actuators. Interesting presentations include the invited paper by Markus Henke, and Iain A. Anderson, The University of Auckland (New Zealand) describing autonomous artificial muscle robots without electronics. Also, a team
that was led by Federico Carpi, Queen Mary, University of London (United Kingdom) reported the formation of standards for dielectric elastomer transducers. The formation of standards for the field of EAP is an important step towards a wide commercialization of the technology.

This year, the conference included a half-day course about electroactive polymers, and the instructors were Yoseph Bar-Cohen, Jet Propulsion Laboratory/Caltech, Pasadena, California; John Madden, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; and Qibing Pei, University of California, Los Angeles. Also, an EAP-in-Action session was held and consisted of nine demonstrations with presenters from China, Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, and the United States.

In closing, I would like to extend a special thanks to all the conference attendees, session chairs, the EAP-in-Action demo presenters, and the members of the EAPAD Program Committee. In addition, special thanks are extended to the SPIE staff that helped making this conference a great success.

Yoseph Bar-Cohen
THE 2016 EAP-IN-ACTION PROGRAM

Moderator:

Yoseph Bar-Cohen, Jet Propulsion Lab.

The 2016 EAP-in-Action Session highlighted some of the latest capabilities and applications of Electroactive Polymer (EAP) materials where the attendees were shown demonstrations of these materials in action (Figure 1). Also, the attendees were given an opportunity to interact directly with the presenters as well as have been given “hands-on” experience with the presented technology. The first Human/EAP-Robot Arm-wrestling Contest was held in 2005 during this session. In 2017, another EAP robotic arm is expected to participate.

Figure 1: A view of the presenters and the participants of the 2016 EAP-in-Action Session.

The Session in 2016 included 9 demonstrations with presenters from China, Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, and USA. The presenters consisted of professors and their students as well as engineers from companies. The demonstrations included innovative devices and potential new products that are driven by EAP including (listed by the country of the leading presenters):

China
1. Tiefeng Li, Yuhan Xie, Guorui Li, Yiming Liang, Xuxu Yang, Yongbing Jin, Zhejiang University (China), “Soft robotics and smart SAM structures” (Figure 2) - In this demonstration, soft robotics and smart structures driven by dielectric elastomer were shown to produce large actuation, fast response and integrated actuation-sensing (Figure 3). The demonstrated materials
were thermally active tough hydrogel and the objective is to use them for bio-medical applications.

Figure 2: The team from Zhejiang University (China)

Figure 3: A model of a dielectric elastomer that produces large actuation, and fast response.

2. Liwu Liu, Jinrong Li, Fengfeng Li, Xiongfei Lv, Jinsong Leng, Harbin Institute of Technology (China), “Applications of smart polymers” (Figure 4) - This demonstration showed smart polymers in action taking advantage of their lightweight, fast response, and large deformation. These advantages make them attractive for applications in smart bionics, aerospace, biomedicine and other fields. The demonstration included application of shape memory polymer (SMP) and dielectric elastomer EAP as actuators and deployable structures (Figure 5).
Figure 4: The team from Harbin Institute of Technology (China). From left to right: Qingqing Lu, Liwu Liu, Jialiang Tao and Xiongfei Lyu.

Figure 5: Soft robot and soft gripping device based on DE Actuators

Germany
Steffen Hau, Alexander York, Saarland Univ. (Germany). “High force dielectric electroactive polymer (DEAP) membrane actuator” (Figure 6) - Energy efficiency, lightweight and scalability are key features to actuation applications such as valves, pumps or any portable system. DEAP technology is able to fulfill the requirements better than commonly used technology e.g. solenoid, but it has limitations concerning force and stroke. This demo showed improvements that were made in increasing the force that is delivered by DEAP stack. Two different actuators were shown: The 1st lifted 10kg and the 2nd generate 66N force while acting against a spring load (Figure 7).
Figure 6: The team from Germany

Figure 7: The two different DEAP actuators that were shown with an example of lifting 20 lbs.

New Zealand
Iain Anderson, Markus Henke, Patrin Illenberger, Andreas Tairych, Allan Veale, Chris Walker: “New technology from the Biomimetics Laboratory and StretchSense Ltd.”
(Figure 8) - The Biomimetics Lab. and its spinout company StretchSense Ltd. demonstrated EAP soft autonomous robots, wearable sensors, and energy harvesters.
The demos included:
1) Trevor the robot and Jule the Dragonfly – These EAP robots have no control electronics. By simply adding electric charge Trevor will crawl and Jule will flap her wings (Figure 9).
2) Wearable, stretch sensitive communication – An EAP glove for gesture-based communication and game control was demonstrated.
3) Wearable muscles with cyber-proprioception – Using soft wearable motion sensing, the team showed how to augment ones’ strength and get machines to follow gesture based commands.
4) Generate electricity using EAP – The lab’s spinoff company, Stretchsense, displayed an EAP starter kit that includes a polymer generator (that you squeeze) coupled to portable electrical charge management electronics.

Figure 8: From left to right: Allan Veale, Chris Walker, Andy Tairych, Markus Henke, Iain Anderson, Antoni Harbuz and Patrin Illenberger (Biomimetics Lab. and StretchSense Ltd.)

Figure 9: Trevor the robot
Singapore
Jian Zhu, Yuzhe Wang, Ujjaval Gupta, National Univ. of Singapore (Singapore),
“Soft robots based on dielectric elastomer actuators”
(Figure 10) - Artificial muscles were developed to mimic natural masseter muscles
(superficial portion), using dielectric elastomer actuators. Soft actuators were
installed onto a robotic skull, and were shown moving the jaw and the mimicking
natural muscles’ displacement and velocity. Also, a worm-like robot driven by a
dielectric elastomer actuator was shown (Figure 11).

Figure 10: The team from National University of Singapore.

Figure 11: A demo and a video that were shown by the National University of
Singapore.

Figure 11: A demo and a video that were shown by the National University of
Singapore.
Singapore and Great Britain

Koh Soo Jin Adrian, Stoyan Smoukov*, Ang Marcelo H. Jr., Vy Khanh Vo Tran, Tan Hiok Yang, Christopher Tan, Zhang Jie, I-Ting Lin, and Tiesheng Wang, National University of Singapore (NUS) and Cambridge University, “An arm for the Arm-wrestling contest” (Figure 12) – Capabilities that are going to be used to produce an antagonistic system of a wrestling arm were described and shown. The concept of driving the arm is the use of a pair of elastomers that work against each other are attached to a disc that forms the “shoulder” of the artificial arm, via (ideally) inextensible cords. Both elastomers are pre-tensioned by mechanical stretching. A wrestling arm is under development for potential demonstration at the 2017 EAP-in-Action Session.

Switzerland

Nadine Besse, Samuel Rosset, Alexandre Poulin, and Herbert Shea, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) (Switzerland), “Tactile display based on shape memory polymers” (Figure 13) - A fully latching and scalable 4x4 tactile display was demonstrated to have 300 mN holding force and 300 μm motion per taxel (tactile pixel). The device, which is intended to provide graphical information to visually impaired users, consists of a shape memory polymer membrane, a compliant integrated heater per taxel, and a single common pneumatic actuation mechanism. Each taxel is individually addressable and the entire display can be refreshed in 5 seconds (Figure 14).

Figure 12: Koh Soo Jin Adrian, National University of Singapore (NUS) on the left and Stoyan Smoukov, Cambridge University, on the right describing their arm-wrestling EAP actuator

Figure 13: A fully latching and scalable 4x4 tactile display

Figure 14: The tactile display can be refreshed in 5 seconds.
United States
1. Qi Shen, Sarah Trabia, Tyler Stalbaum, Choonhan Lee, Robert Hunt, and Kwang Kim, Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas (United States), “Shape memory programmable and electrically controllable IPMC” (Figure 15 and Figure 16) - Recently, the UNLV team successfully demonstrated an ionic polymer-metal composite (IPMC) actuator, having multiple-shape memory by two external inputs, electrical and thermal. This demonstration introduces a soft multiple-shape-memory IPMC actuator having multiple degree-of-freedoms that exhibited high maneuverability when controlled by two external inputs, allowing complex motions that are routine in nature.
2. Lenore Rasmussen, Eric Sandberg, Leila Albers, Simone Rodriguez, Ras Labs., “Synthetic Muscle™: shape-morphing EAP based materials and actuators” (Figure 17) - EAP materials that contract upon activation and expand under a reversed electric input has been shown. A thin shape-morphing film of the material in the expansion mode produces raised surface zones in desired shapes. A thick shape-morphing pad can controllably contract or expand, which are being used to prototype self-adjusting prosthetic socket liners and other void-filling continual-fit applications. These EAPs can serve as sensors, which can be tied to biofeedback, and communicate impact and pressure. The material is currently being tested for radiation resistance on the International Space Center (ISS) (see Figure 18).
**Figure 17:** Lenore Rasmussen, Ras Labs.

**Figure 18:** The Synthetic Muscle™ that is on the ISS.