

Contents

List of Symbols IX

Preface XI

1	Problems of the Energy Economy	1
1.1	Energy Economy	1
1.2	Estimate of the Maximum Reserves of Fossil Energy	4
1.3	The Greenhouse Effect	6
1.3.1	Combustion	6
1.3.2	The Temperature of the Earth	7
1.4	Problems	9
2	Photons	11
2.1	Black-body Radiation	11
2.1.1	Photon Density n_γ in a Cavity (Planck's Law of Radiation)	12
2.1.2	Energy Current Through an Area dA into the Solid Angle $d\Omega$	16
2.1.3	Radiation from a Spherical Surface into the Solid Angle $d\Omega$	19
2.1.4	Radiation from a Surface Element into a Hemisphere (Stefan–Boltzmann Radiation Law)	20
2.2	Kirchhoff's Law of Radiation for Nonblack Bodies	22
2.2.1	Absorption by Semiconductors	24
2.3	The Solar Spectrum	25
2.3.1	Air Mass	26
2.4	Concentration of the Solar Radiation	28
2.4.1	The Abbé Sine Condition	29
2.4.2	Geometrical Optics	30
2.4.3	Concentration of Radiation Using the Sine Condition	32
2.5	Maximum Efficiency of Solar Energy Conversion	33
2.6	Problems	40

3 Semiconductors	43
3.1 Electrons in Semiconductors	44
3.1.1 Distribution Function for Electrons	45
3.1.2 Density of States $D_e(\epsilon_e)$ for Electrons	45
3.1.3 Density of Electrons	50
3.2 Holes	52
3.3 Doping	55
3.4 Quasi-Fermi Distributions	59
3.4.1 Fermi Energy and Electrochemical Potential	61
3.4.2 Work Function	66
3.5 Generation of Electrons and Holes	67
3.5.1 Absorption of Photons	67
3.5.2 Generation of Electron–Hole Pairs	71
3.6 Recombination of Electrons and Holes	74
3.6.1 Radiative Recombination, Emission of Photons	74
3.6.2 Nonradiative Recombination	77
3.6.3 Lifetimes	87
3.7 Light Emission by Semiconductors	90
3.7.1 Transition Rates and Absorption Coefficient	90
3.8 Problems	95
4 Conversion of Thermal Radiation into Chemical Energy	97
4.1 Maximum Efficiency for the Production of Chemical Energy	100
4.2 Problems	105
5 Conversion of Chemical Energy into Electrical Energy	107
5.1 Transport of Electrons and Holes	107
5.1.1 Field Current	108
5.1.2 Diffusion Current	109
5.1.3 Total Charge Current	111
5.2 Separation of Electrons and Holes	113
5.3 Diffusion Length of Minority Carriers	115
5.4 Dielectric Relaxation	117
5.5 Ambipolar Diffusion	118
5.6 Dember Effect	119
5.7 Mathematical Description	122
5.8 Problems	123
6 Basic Structure of Solar Cells	125
6.1 A Chemical Solar Cell	125
6.2 Basic Mechanisms in Solar Cells	129
6.3 Dye Solar Cell	131
6.4 The pn-Junction	132

6.4.1	Electrochemical Equilibrium of Electrons in a pn-Junction in the Dark	133
6.4.2	Potential Distribution across a pn-Junction	134
6.4.3	Current–Voltage Characteristic of the pn-Junction	137
6.5	pn-Junction with Impurity Recombination, Two-diode Model	143
6.6	Heterojunctions	145
6.7	Semiconductor–Metal Contact	148
6.7.1	Schottky Contact	150
6.7.2	MIS Contact	151
6.8	The Role of the Electric Field in Solar Cells	151
6.9	Organic Solar Cells	155
6.9.1	Excitons	156
6.9.2	Structure of Organic Solar Cells	159
6.10	Light Emitting Diodes (LED)	163
6.11	Problems	164
7	Limitations on Energy Conversion in Solar Cells	167
7.1	Maximum Efficiency of Solar Cells	167
7.2	Efficiency of Solar Cells as a Function of Their Energy Gap	170
7.3	The Optimal Silicon Solar Cell	172
7.3.1	Light Trapping	173
7.4	Thin-film Solar Cells	178
7.4.1	Minimal Thickness of a Solar Cell	179
7.5	Equivalent Circuit	180
7.6	Temperature Dependence of the Open-circuit Voltage	181
7.7	Intensity Dependence of the Efficiency	182
7.8	Efficiencies of the Individual Energy Conversion Processes	183
7.9	Problems	185
8	Concepts for Improving the Efficiency of Solar Cells	187
8.1	Tandem Cells	187
8.1.1	The Electrical Interconnection of Tandem Cells	191
8.2	Concentrator Cells	192
8.3	Thermophotovoltaic Energy Conversion	194
8.4	Impact Ionization	195
8.4.1	Hot Electrons from Impact Ionization	198
8.4.2	Energy Conversion with Hot Electrons and Holes	198
8.5	Two-step Excitation in Three-level Systems	201
8.5.1	Impurity Photovoltaic Effect	202
8.5.2	Up- and Down-conversion of Photons	206
8.6	Problems	209

VIII | *Contents*

Prospects for the Future 211

Solutions 215

Appendix 235

References 239

Index 241