New challenges for the lead acid storage and automotive starter batteries industry: high efficiency energy conversion and reduced environmental impact
Please, let me introduce my company is ROMBAT S.A. in Bistrita, at first:
Was founded in 1980, as „ACUMULATORUL” Bistrita, as part of a state owned industrial platform CICM in Bistrita.
Today is the sole Lead Acid Starter Battery Manufacturer in Romania.
With more de 2.3 million batteries production sold in 2018
Member of South African MIB Group – owned by METAIR Investment Ltd., since 2012

My name is, Ernest Csapo – Martinescu and am currently Senior Technical Advisor at ROMBAT Technical Department.
My professional background is Electrical Engineering, and I am Ph.D in Electrical Machines, Drives and Apparatus, with more than 25 years experience in Lead Acid Batteries Design and Development.

Ernest Csapo; 24.06.2019
ROMBAT in Bistrita is located on Northern part of Romania, at the foot of the East Carpathian Mountains. There are 3 batteries production plants, one plastic injection plant, laboratories and R&D department. In the center of the country, at less than 200 km distance, is situated REBAT Copsa Mica, ROMBAT’s scrap batteries recycling plant, delivering reused refined lead (Pb) and lead alloys for the new batteries production. A new Li – Ion prototype batteries assembling factory was founded at Bucharest, as a new start in developing motive power Li – Ion Batteries for EV and other uses.

ROMBAT is manufacturing a large range of Lead Acid automotive starter batteries:
- Standard Flooded Batteries technology – vented types for Cars
- Heavy Duty (Trucks, Buses)
- EFB Enhanced Flooded Batteries – vented types for S&S microhybrid cars
- AGM Absopitive Glass Matt, Valve Regulated Lead Acid batteries – sealed types for S&S premium cars

A 12 million EURO investment launched for a new Li – Ion Batteries and Cells manufacturing factory was founded last year at ROMBAT Bucharest site. Based on 2 chemistries:
- NMC – Lithium Nickel Cadmium Oxyde type cells - 30 Ah/ 3.65 V
- LFP – Lithium Iron Phosphate (Ferrophosphate) type cells - 20 Ah/ 3.2 V

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12 V Lead Acid Battery Design

The electrochemical reaction (molar based):

PbO₂(+) + Pb(-) + 2H₂SO₄(ELYT) → 2PbSO₄ + 2H₂O + 2e⁻

Electrochemical equivalents (netto):
• PbO₂ -> 4.464 g/Ah
• Pb -> 3.866 g/Ah
• H₂SO₄ -> 3.66 g/Ah
• PbSO₄ -> 11.318 g/Ah
• H₂O -> 0.672 g/Ah
An example of a ROMBAT EFB battery for modern Micro Hybrid Start & Stop cars is presented. There are quantitative relations between active mass amount – lead dioxyde (positive plate) and spongios lead (negative plate). The active mass is partially used as „energetic“ layer – the rechargable part of active mass is around 50 % only. The other 50 % of active mass part is used as „conductive scheleleton“ for the „energetic layer“ connecting the active mass to the lead grids.

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New challenges – Lead Acid Starter Batteries

Requirements for Flooded Batteries – EN50342-1: 2015
- Effective 20 h Capacity at 25 °C – Statistical Approach (Mean & Standard Deviation)
- Cranking Performance at -18 °C – requirement $t_{6V} \geq 90$ s
- High Current Discharge at Low Temperature at -18 °C – requirement $U_{30s} \geq 7.2$ V
- Water consumption $H_2O$ at +60 °C – requirements $W3 \leq 8$ g $H_2O /$ Ah for 42 days

Requirements for Micro Hybrid Batteries – EN50342-6: 2015
- 2 % DoD – Microcycling PSoC (85 %SoC) at 25 °C / 8000 cycles
- Dynamic Charge Acceptance – requirement $\geq 0.1$ A / Ah
- 17 %DoD – Endurance Cycling PSoC (85 %DoD) – requirements 9/15/18 weeks
- 50 %DoD – Endurance Cycling after Deep Discharge – requirements $\geq 150/240/360$ cycle

New Requirements for S & S (Start & Stop) – EN50342-6: 2019 (draft)
- 2 % DoD – Microcycling PSoC at +40 °C / 16000 cycles & 32000 cycles
- New KLT at +75 °C – requirement Water Consumption $Wx \leq T.B.D.$
Only two examples of strong challenges:
The water consumptions H2O –
test temperature was increased from 60 °C to 75 °C (battery immersed in waterbath)
2) Very high microcycling endurance requirements –
test temperature increased from 25 °C to 40 °C, and
number of 2 % DoD microcycling endurance resistance increased from 8,000 cycles to double (mandatory) 16,000 cycles or more.

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Corrosion layer curred plate

Bad contact

Good contact
A critical item in the Lead Acid Batteries manufacturing is the corrosion layer between lead alloy grid surface and the curred / formed active mass.

Good corrosion layer, covering complete the grid surface by Lead Oxyde / Sulphate interface, conduct to Reduced electrical internal resistance of plate
High starting performance – Could Crank Current (A)
In case of the grid surface is not completely covered (glossy zones) the active mass is not optimally used, risc for early grid growth (potential shortcircuit inside cells) and corrosion (ribs crossection reduced or interrupted)

This phenomenon starts from the pasting process, as shown in the figure.
Good contact – the grid is completely covered by Lead oxyde crystals
Bad contact – glossy zones means lack of corrosion layer on curred plates

Ernest Csapo, 24.06.2019
Current Distribution in Commercial plates

Mathematical model

Propagation of the thermal wave in a homogenous environment, in the presence of a heat per volume and unit time \( q \) is:

\[
\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = \alpha \Delta T + \frac{1}{c_p \rho} q
\]  \hspace{1cm} (1)

\( T = T(x, y, z, t) \) is the temperature
\( q \) - heat per volume and unit time
\( \alpha \) - thermal diffusivity: \( \alpha = \frac{K}{c_p \rho} \)
\( K \) - thermal conductivity
\( c_p \) - specific heat capacity
\( \rho \) - density of the material
\( \Delta \) - Laplace operator:

\[
\Delta = \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2}{\partial z^2}
\]

The Laplacian of temperature distribution is

\[
\Delta T = \frac{1}{\alpha} \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} - \frac{1}{K} q
\]  \hspace{1cm} (2)

The power dissipated by current per volume unit, \( p = P / V \) is \( p = j^2 / \sigma \)
The relation between current density and conductivity is \( j = -\sigma \varepsilon \)
The Laplacian of the temperature distribution is

\[
\Delta T = \frac{1}{\alpha} \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} - \frac{j^2}{\sigma K}
\]  \hspace{1cm} (3)

The current density can be computed as

\[
j^2 = \sigma K \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} - \Delta T \right)
\]  \hspace{1cm} (4)
In cooperation with INCDTIM Cluj – Napoca, the current density distribution inside of plates is identified by using Thermographical analysis method.

Based on this data, a new grid design was elaborated, and implemented in a new battery application.

The succesive Thermal Images stored in the computer, based on mathematical model issued by the researchers, allows the calculation of the local current density in the plate.

Very different current densities in the grid are noticed.

High current densities figures in the top area near the flag.

Low densities on the base of the plate.

This is the reason why the active material of plates are analysed on three zones:

On the top
In the middle
On the bottom

The aim is to uniform the current density and active mass efficiency on the whole plate surface and Optimise the grid design according to the current density measured.

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Electrochemical Impedance Analysis

- Battery = electric circuit
- Frequency-dependent impedance = fit to circuit elements
- The value of each circuit element depends on the SOH of the battery

EIS data on newly designed grids

Example: dependence of the CPE element at 75% SOC as a function of aging cycles for a newly designed battery plate
Another Research and Product Development, supported by INCDTIM Cluj – Napoca, is based on the individual cells and batteries EIS (Electrical Impedance Spectroscopy) characterization.

The most relevant parameter of the EIS electrical equivalent circuit is the CPE (constant phase element) Q1.

A direct quasi linear dependance between battery aging and Q1 was identified.

The evolution of Q1 (F sa-1) is the most relevant parameter for the battery aging.

The new design can be assessed and development duration and costs dramatically reduced.

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Conclusions

• With a 160 years of history behind, the Lead Acid Batteries are used actually for starting the Internal Combustion Engines of Automotive Vehicles
  – For medium term – in the next 15 – 20 years – they are still necessary
  – Based on market figures, in 2018, the new Start and Stop technology is used for more than 85 % of the new cars – in 2030 will be estimated around 50 % EV

• New European Norms enforce new quality requirements and major restrictions on environmental impact
  – The Research trend is headed to Active Mass Improvements by using Ingredients (crystallisation centers, conductive carbon additives)
  – The Grid Design has a relevant role in Electrical Current Collection from the Active Mass and leads to increase of Cycling Endurance Lifetime

• New Investigation Methods are applied for quick parameters analysis and product characterization – for early design quality assessments
In conclusion:
the lead Acid Battery chemistry, known for 160 years, are facing today the hardest challenges on survival.
Lead ban on European market – heavy metall, exemption based automotive batteries manufacturing only allowed, and subjected to periodically review by the EC.
New customer performance required – increased operational temperature (60 oC -> 75 oC), reduced water consumption, double number of endurance cycles (microcycling)
Lead Acid Batteries are the optimal solution for ICE startup
High startup performance at low temperature
No explosion risk – liquid aqueous electrolyte
Very good cooling in case of high current cycling – high specific heat of the electrolyte
100 % recycling – lead, plastic material – circular economy, reused prime materials for new batteries production
Today market figures 85 % of OEM (new cars) are microhybrid S&S type.
The OEM represents 18 % - 20 % of the total lead acid batteries market in Europe.
The trend is to
Hybrid cars,
Plug in Hybrid and
EV, forcasted figure in 2030 of EV-s in the OEM volume (new cars) is around 50 %
Mid term perspective: in the next 15 -20 years the Lead Acid Batteries will be used, so any improvement of lead use efficiency (only 50 % of active mass is forming the energetic layer) and CO2 greenhouse gas makes sens.
Very high improving potential for the negativ plate technology (carbon black, acetylene black, nanotubes)
Ernest Csapo; 24.06.2019
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