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## Editor's Choice: "Organic Electronics: What a Journey!"

Jean-Luc Brédas

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of a key milestone in the field of organic electronics, *i.e.*, the first reports of metallic-like conductivity in the purely organic material tetrathiafulvene-tetracyanoquinodimethane (TTF-TCNQ), independently by the group of Dwayne Cowan at Johns Hopkins University<sup>1</sup> and the groups of Alan Heeger and Tony Garito at the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> Soon thereafter came the report of high electrical conductivity upon doping (*i.e.*, oxidation or reduction) of the organic polymer

*trans*-polyacetylene, by Alan Heeger, Hideki Shirakawa, Alan McDiarmid, and their co-workers.<sup>3</sup> This latter work offered the promise of combining in a single material, the electrical properties of metals with the flexibility of polymers, and led to the 2000 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

These discoveries arguably mark the beginning of the field of organic electronics. While early on, much of the emphasis was placed on developing highly electrically conducting systems, by the late 1980's much work had been performed to start exploiting the semiconducting properties of pristine  $\pi$ -conjugated organic materials, with initial impact in organic light-emitting

diodes (OLEDs), organic solar cells, and thin-film transistors.

Since then, what a journey for organic electronics, so to celebrate the 50th anniversary of TTF-TCNQ, we are offering this Editor's Choice collection, which gathers some of the recent, highly cited primary research articles published in *Materials Horizons* around the theme of organic electronics. The collection is meant to highlight the remarkable diversity and broad impact that organic electronics research now represents.

More specifically, the articles in the collection address:

- a range of sophisticated characterization techniques to better assess the

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*2020 Materials Research Society Materials Theory Award, and a 2021 Centenary Prize from the Royal Society of Chemistry. He is an Honorary Professor of the Institute of Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and holds an Adjunct Professorship at the Georgia Institute of Technology. His Focus article "Mind the Gap" (<https://pubs.rsc.org/en/content/articlelanding/2014/mh/c3mh00098b>) was the first article that appeared in the very first issue of Materials Horizons.*

electronic and structural properties *via*, for instance, optically detected magnetic resonance (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH00999K>), monitoring of trap dynamics (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH00706D>), *in situ* terahertz spectroscopy (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01343B>), probing static *vs.* dynamic disorder (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH00385A>) and excited-state vibrational couplings (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D2MH00829G>), IR spectroscopy depth profiling (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH02047H>), or solid-state NMR spectroscopy (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01574E>);

- the issue of free-charge yield (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01331A>);
- the factors that impact doping efficiency (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01019K>, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01357B>);
- understanding organic crystalline growth (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D2MH00854H>) and improving green-solvent processing (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH00785D>);

- engineering the band structure of 2D covalent organic frameworks to generate topological features in purely organic systems (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH00935D>);

- the development of interfaces for better carrier injection (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH00859E>, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01845K>) and of hybrid organic–inorganic 2D perovskites (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH01904F>, <https://doi.org/10.1039/C9MH01917K>);

- the potential impact of chiral structures (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01119G>, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D2MH00698G>); and;

- a range of applications, from thermoelectric generators (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH01679A>) to IR or visible photodetectors (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D2MH00479H>, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH00776A>), nonlinear optics (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1MH01206A>), memories (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH00203H>), energy storage (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D2MH000912>) and biological applications in terms of monitoring lipid bilayers

(<https://doi.org/10.1039/D0MH00548G>) or generating neural networks (<https://doi.org/10.1039/D3MH00775H>, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D3MH00858D>).

We hope our readers will enjoy this collection as much as we do!

## References

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