

# Dynamic contact angle accessory for thin film substrates

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The ability to measure the wetting properties of thin films by the Wilhelmy Plate Technique has been a challenge due to the lack of rigidity in many film substrates.

Polymer film substrates such as Mylar are being used today in many industrial applications including many packaging and printing operations. These materials are typically prepared as very thin film sheets with an average thickness of less than 15 microns. The surfaces of these substrate materials are often subjected to dip coating operations to control the wettability of the surface to fit the desired end-use application.

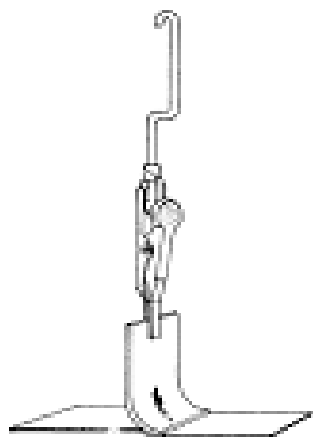


Figure 1: Mylar film held by traditional single point sample holder fails to penetrate the air/liquid interface.

Early attempts to characterize the wettability of these thin film substrates by the Wilhelmy Plate Immersion Technique were unsuccessful as the film sample (typically 5-20 microns thick, cut 10-30 millimeters square and held in place by a traditional single point contact sample holder) passed through the air/liquid interface, the sample was observed to lay down or bend, failing to penetrate the interface perpendicular to the liquid surface layer (see Figure 1). This phenomenon was first observed

with a 12 micron thick sample of Mylar film prepared in the manner described above.

After studying this phenomenon and experimenting with several options aimed at overcoming the flotation, Thermo Scientific CAHN application engineers came up with a solution. A new type of sample holder was developed (see Figure 2) to increase the rigidity of the film by forcing the sample into a slight curved orientation perpendicular to the air/liquid interface. The Thermo Scientific CAHN Thin Film Sample Holder (Part no. 21107-02) is recommended for use with most thin non-rigid materials including a variety of thin films and foils. Samples are prepared in the usual manner with vertical sides approximately 10 millimeters apart (sample holder 12 millimeters wide) and inserted into the thin film sample holder with the length of sample exposed for wettability scanning limited to 5-10 mm depending on the flexibility of the sample.

The holder is constructed of a rigid alligator clip design with two parallel copper-beryllium plates attached at one end. The plates have matched curvatures to sandwich the film sample uniformly and thus force the film into a rigid conformation. All users of Thermo Scientific CAHN DCA Systems can utilize the Thin Film Sample Holder.

Thermo Scientific CAHN's Thin Film Sample Holder opens up a whole new class of materials to experimentation by the Dynamic Wilhelmy Plate Method.

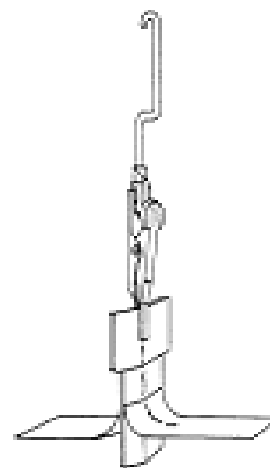


Figure 2: Mylar film readily penetrates air/liquid interface when held rigidly between copper-beryllium plates of Thermo Scientific CAHN Thin Film.

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