

Intermolecular Interactions in Crystals

Fundamentals of Crystal Engineering

Edited by Juan J. Novoa



The field of crystal engineering concerns the design and synthesis of molecular crystals with desired properties. This requires an in-depth understanding of the intermolecular interactions within crystal structures. This new book brings together the latest information and theories about intermolecular bonding, providing an introductory text for graduates.

Front cover © Juan J. Novoa

The book is divided into three parts. The first part covers the nature, physical meaning and methods for identification and analysis of intermolecular bonds. The second part describes representative examples of the most relevant types of intermolecular bonds currently known to occur in molecular crystals. The third part describes how cooperativity affects the properties of intermolecular bonds, how they can be identified in crystals and how the information on intermolecular interactions and bonds can be used to design new molecular crystals. Each chapter is written by specialists in the topic being covered.

This comprehensive textbook will provide a valuable resource for all students and researchers in the field of crystallography, materials science and supramolecular chemistry.

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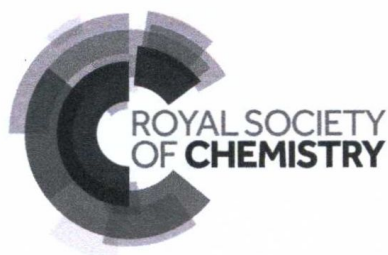
Fundamentals of Crystal Engineering

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Preface

The aim of this book is to present the current knowledge on the intermolecular interactions found in crystals, including the latest discoveries. But in doing so, we have tried to present the information in a pedagogical form, in order to make its contents understandable for non-specialists. We have tried to make it a textbook for Masters and PhD students who require an in-depth knowledge of intermolecular interactions, such as those working in Crystal Engineering or in the broader area of Supramolecular Chemistry. We have also tried to make it a reference book for researchers in these two fields who want a reference book containing the state-of-the-art knowledge on intermolecular interactions.

The book contains 20 chapters written by active researchers in the field, in some cases, the originators of important ideas in the field. These chapters cover from fundamental studies on intermolecular interactions, up to special properties and techniques required by their interconnected existence in crystals. A third area is devoted to a review of the state-of-the-art knowledge of the most common types of intermolecular interactions encountered in crystalline molecular solids. Chapters have been grouped into one of these three areas, according to their contents. Within each area, theoretical and experimental chapters have been mixed, ordered in a most-fundamental-first sequence. Although not as complete as originally planned, due to reasons external to this editor, the book covers the major topics on intermolecular interactions, the most common methods and techniques employed in their study, and a description of their most relevant properties, for intermolecular interactions found in molecular crystals with properties of technological interest (such as magnetic, or

conducting, or superconducting properties, to name only the most common).

Intermolecular interactions are the interactions produced between stable molecules oriented in regions of space where spontaneously they do not form new chemical bonds. This definition classifies as intermolecular those produced between two stable radicals at all distances and relative orientations, as in the interaction between two oxygen molecules. It also identifies as intermolecular the interaction between two $\text{TCNE}^{\bullet-}$ radical-anions (TCNE = tetracyanoethylene) around 3 Å where $\text{TCNE}^{\bullet-}$ neither dissociates nor forms a C–C bond between the radical anions. This is the metastable region of $\text{TCNE}^{\bullet-}$ radicals, where the potential energy curve as a function of the shortest separation between the radical anions presents a metastable minimum, a large barrier for the formation of a covalently bonded $\sigma\text{-}[\text{TCNE}]_2^{2-}$ molecule, and a smaller barrier towards dissociation (both barriers are overcome in some cases, but not in others). Notice that this definition does not include as intermolecular the interaction between two CH_3^\bullet radicals, even if at long distance these radicals exist, because their potential energy curve shows a minimum for the spontaneous formation of ethane; that is, is the curve for the formation of a C–C intramolecular bond.

From a more practical point of view, intermolecular interactions, and particularly intermolecular bonds (loosely considered by this editor as the dominant energetically stabilizing interactions found in supramolecular aggregates), play an essential role in rationalizing in simple terms the structure and relative stability of supramolecular aggregates, not to mention the speed of their transformation into other species. It was said more than 25 years ago that “supramolecular aggregates are to molecules and the intermolecular bond what molecules are to atoms and the covalent bond”. In another words, despite their different electronic structures, intermolecular bonds play in supramolecular aggregates the same role as chemical bonds play in molecules. The main difference is in the electronic structure of intra- and intermolecular bonds, which explains the different orders of magnitude of the optimum distance (about 2–3 Å) and interaction energy (in most cases less than 10 kcal mol^{-1}). Improving our control of the outcome of crystallization will only be possible after improving our control of the mechanism by which intermolecular interactions compete.

Intermolecular interactions are also key in determining the structure of the outcome of crystallization and the relative stability against other polymorphic forms. They also determine the speed of the thermodynamically allowed polymorphic transformations. And the structure of the crystal determines other physical properties of the

crystal. For instance, it determines the bulk ferromagnetic properties shown by the β -phase crystal of the *p*-nitrophenyl nitronyl nitroxide radical, a property absent in other polymorphs. It can be shown that the observed experimental structure of a crystal corresponds to the geometry of one of the minima on the free energy surface of the crystal (not always the most stable one), and that its relative stability is the energy difference between this minimum and others, while the speed of the polymorphic transformation depends on the height of the transition state connecting the two minima involved. Overall, energy, the free energy of the system, is the language chosen by nature to write the information concerning the main properties of a crystal. For this reason, the use of the term “intermolecular force” as equivalent to “intermolecular interactions” is misleading, as forces are different to energy. For similar reasons, we advocate the use of the term “bonds” (in its energetic interpretation, see above) or others with energetic meaning, rather than alternative concepts where the energetic meaning is lost (as in the term “bridges”, based on geometrical concepts). After all, if one has to talk about the energetic stability of a system as the sum of the stability of all its parts (as implied in the use of the Scientific Method), it is going to be more convenient to add components that have an energetic meaning.

Intermolecular interactions are sometimes called non-covalent interactions, as an equivalent name. This is equivalent to saying that covalent bonds are the only type of intramolecular bonds, and the IUPAC Gold Book contemplates a few other intramolecular bonds, among them ionic bonds (one can consider dative bonds, and dipolar bonds, considered to be coordination bonds, therefore to be one type of covalent bond), and also electron-deficient bonds (a two-electron three-center bond). Therefore, we believe that the terms intermolecular bond and intermolecular interaction are better defined. Finally, the term “intermolecular” was that used by the scientist who started the research on the interaction between molecules at the dawn of the 20th Century.

The fast progress in the knowledge on intermolecular interactions that has taken place during the last two decades makes a book collecting this progress very valuable; particularly when each chapter has been written by a specialist caring about delivering all essential information, in a pedagogical form, to the non-specialist. Here are the results. I hope that you like them.

Juan J. Novoa
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Contents

Section 1: Theoretical Foundations of Intermolecular Interactions

1	Bonds and Intermolecular Interactions – The Return of Cohesion to Chemistry	3
	<i>Sason Shaik</i>	
1.1	Introduction	3
1.2	Historical Perspective of the Evolution of the Bond Concept	6
1.3	Theories of Chemical Bonding	9
1.4	The Second Electronic Structure Revolution	14
1.5	Understanding the Nature of the Chemical Bond	21
1.6	Summary of Bonding	46
1.7	A Brief Historical Background of Intermolecular Interactions	46
1.8	Intermolecular Interactions – A Chemical Field in Eruption	56
1.9	Summary of Intermolecular Interactions	64
1.10	Concluding Remarks	64
	Notes Added in Proof	65
	Acknowledgements	65
	References	65

Intermolecular Interactions in Crystals: Fundamentals of Crystal Engineering

Edited by Juan J. Novoa

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2	Using Computational Quantum Chemistry as a Tool to Understand the Structure of Molecular Crystals and the Nature of their Intermolecular Interactions	69
	<i>Juan J. Novoa</i>	
2.1	Introduction: Computational Quantum Chemistry as a Tool to Rationalize the Structure of Molecular Crystals	69
2.2	Intermolecular Interactions and Intermolecular Bonds in Molecular Crystals	71
2.3	The Physical Meaning of Bonds: An In-depth Analysis	76
2.4	Conventions for Naming Intermolecular Interactions and Bonds	80
2.5	The Accurate Evaluation of the Properties of Intermolecular Interactions and Bonds Found in Molecular Crystals	81
2.6	Types of Intermolecular Interactions	89
2.7	Crystal Packing Analysis using Quantum Chemical Information about Intermolecular Interactions	101
	Acknowledgements	109
	References	109
3	Bonding in Organic Molecules and Condensed Phases. The Role of Repulsions	115
	<i>A. Gavezzotti</i>	
3.1	Introduction	115
3.2	Simulation Methods	117
3.3	Intramolecular Bonds and Bonding	123
3.4	Repulsion in Intermolecular Bonding	126
	References	145

4	On Topological Atoms and Bonds	147
	<i>Paul L. A. Popelier</i>	
4.1	Introduction	147
4.2	Questions and Answers	148
4.3	Conclusion	172
	Acknowledgements	172
	References	172

5	Quantitative Determination of the Nature of Intermolecular Bonds by EDA Analysis	178
	<i>A. Martín Pendás, J. L. Casals Sainz and E. Francisco</i>	
5.1	Introduction	178
5.2	Intermolecular Interactions and Energy Decompositions	180
5.3	The Energetic Terms: A Comparison	193
5.4	The Full Picture	214
5.5	In Support of Real Space Energetic Decompositions	216
5.6	Final Remarks	219
	Acknowledgements	219
	References	219

6	Beyond QTAIM: NCI Indexes as a Tool to Reveal Intermolecular Bonds in Molecular Aggregates	222
	<i>Roberto A. Boto and Julia Contreras-García</i>	
6.1	Introduction	222
6.2	The Need for a New Approach	224
6.3	From Kinetic Energy Densities to Non Covalent Interactions	225
6.4	Critical Points	232
6.5	Applications to Solid State	247
6.6	Conclusions	253
	References	254

Section 2: Spectroscopic and Database Information

7	Molecular Beam and Spectroscopic Techniques: Towards Fundamental Understanding of Intermolecular Interactions/Bonds	261
	<i>Sharon Priya Gnanasekar and Elangannan Arunan</i>	
7.1	Introduction	261
7.2	Structural Determination by Spectroscopy	267
7.3	Red, Blue and No-shifting Hydrogen Bonds: Spectroscopy and Theory	294
7.4	Spectroscopic Investigations on Non-covalent Bonds from Other Elements	296
7.5	Concluding Remarks	304
	Acknowledgements	305
	References	306
8	Solid-state NMR Techniques for the Study of Intermolecular Interactions	310
	<i>P. Cerreia Vioglio, M. R. Chierotti and R. Gobetto</i>	
8.1	Introduction	310
8.2	NMR Parameters Involved in the Study of Weak Interactions	311
8.3	SSNMR and Hydrogen Bonds	319
8.4	SSNMR and Halogen Bonds	336
8.5	Conclusions	344
	References	344
9	The Use of Databases in the Study of Intermolecular Interactions	350
	<i>Alessia Bacchi</i>	
9.1	Definition of Database	350
9.2	Early Applications of Crystallographic Databases	353

9.3	Intermolecular Interactions	355
9.4	Databases and the Study of Interaction patterns	361
9.5	Some Cautionary Words	367
9.6	Statistical Methods	369
9.7	Knowledge Based Applications	370
9.8	Conclusion	371
	References	371

Section 3: Isolated Intermolecular Interactions

10 Intermolecular Interactions in Crystals 377

Peter Politzer, Jane S. Murray and Timothy Clark

10.1	Coulomb's Law	377
10.2	Forces Within Nuclear/Electronic Systems	379
10.3	Intermolecular Interactions	381
10.4	Hydrogen Bonding	383
10.5	Mathematical Modeling and Physical Reality	388
10.6	A Survey of Some Noncovalent Intermolecular Interactions	393
10.7	Thermodynamic Stability	402
10.8	Discussion and Summary	403
	References	405

11 The Nature of the Hydrogen Bond, from a Theoretical Perspective 410

Steve Scheiner

11.1	Introduction	410
11.2	Computational Tools	412
11.3	Modern Understanding of H-bonds	420
11.4	The CH Group as Proton Donor – Historical Context	421
11.5	CH \cdots O H-bonds in Small Systems	422
11.6	CH \cdots O H-bonds in Biological Systems	425
11.7	Effect of Charge	433
11.8	Geometrical Distortions	439
11.9	Summary	443
	References	444

12	The CH$\cdots\pi$ Hydrogen Bond	453
	<i>Osamu Takahashi and Motohiro Nishio</i>	
12.1	Introduction	453
12.2	The CH $\cdots\pi$ Hydrogen Bond. What Is It?	454
12.3	Characteristics of the CH $\cdots\pi$ Hydrogen Bond	461
12.4	Computational Study	461
12.5	Summary and Prospect	474
	Acknowledgements	475
	References	475
13	Hydrogen Bonds and Halogen Bonds – A Comparative Study	478
	<i>Stawomir J. Grabowski</i>	
13.1	Introduction	478
13.2	The Dual Character of Halogen and Hydrogen Centres	479
13.3	Hydrogen and Halogen Bonds Are Ruled By the Same Mechanisms	491
13.4	The Energetic Characteristics	498
13.5	The QTAIM characteristics	503
13.6	Summary – Similarities and Differences	508
	Acknowledgements	512
	References and Notes	512
14	The Cation–π Interaction	516
	<i>Dennis A. Dougherty</i>	
14.1	Introduction	516
14.2	The Gas Phase and Theoretical Studies	517
14.3	The Magnitude of the Cation– π Interaction and the Aromatic Box	519
14.4	Cation– π Interactions in Molecular Crystals	522
14.5	Conclusions	527
	References	528

15	Intramolecular Beryllium Bonds. Further Insights into Resonance Assistance Phenomena	530
	<i>O. Brea, I. Alkorta, I. Corral, O. Mó, M. Yáñez and J. Elguero</i>	
15.1	Introduction	530
15.2	Computational Details	533
15.3	Results and Discussion	536
15.4	Concluding Remarks	554
	Acknowledgements	556
	References	556

16	On the Nature of Hydrogen–Hydrogen Bonding	559
	<i>Juan C. García-Ramos, Fernando Cortés-Guzmán and Chérif F. Matta</i>	
16.1	Introduction	559
16.2	Observational Evidence for Hydrogen–Hydrogen (H···H) Bonding	561
16.3	Occurrence of Short H···H Distances and Their Role in the Packing of a Crystal	565
16.4	Nature of the Hydrogen–Hydrogen Interaction	571
16.5	Theoretical Indicators of Hydrogen–Hydrogen Bonding	574
16.6	From Explanation to Prediction: Recent Examples	585
16.7	Closing Remarks	585
	Note Added in Proof	586
	Acknowledgements	586
	References	586

17	Long, Multicenter Bonds in Radical Anion π-dimers	595
	<i>Fernando Mota, Juan J. Novoa and Joel S. Miller</i>	
17.1	Introduction	595
17.2	A Computational Analysis of the Energetic Components of an Intermolecular Bond	602

17.3	Long, Multicenter Bond in π -[TCNE] ₂ ²⁻ Dimers	603
17.4	Conclusions	610
	Acknowledgements	610
	References	611

Section 4: Intermolecular Interactions in Crystals

18	Revealing the Intermolecular Bonds in Molecular Crystals Through Charge Density Methods	617
	<i>C. Gatti and A. Forni</i>	
18.1	Introduction	617
18.2	Electron Density from Experimental Data	620
18.3	Electron-density-based Methods to Reveal Intermolecular Interactions in Crystals	624
18.4	Selected Applications	635
	Acknowledgements	667
	References	667
 19	 Noncovalent Interactions in Crystal Structures: Quantifying Cooperativity in Hydrogen and Halogen Bonds	 673
	<i>Sławomir J. Grabowski</i>	
19.1	Introduction	673
19.2	Different Meanings and Classifications of Cooperativity Effects	676
19.3	Quantifying Cooperativity – Measures and Indices	682
19.4	Cooperativity Effects for Halogen Bonded Systems	702
19.5	Summary	711
	Acknowledgements	714
	References and Notes	714