USING A QUASI-POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION FOR MODELING DIFFUSION MEDIA IN POLYMER-ELECTROLYTE FUEL CELLS

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Abstract. In this paper, a quasi-potential approach along with conformal mapping is used to model the diffusion media of a polymer-electrolyte fuel cell. This method provides a series solution that is grid independent and only requires integration along a single boundary to solve the problem. The approach accounts for nonisothermal phenomena, two-phase flow, correct placement of the electronic potential boundary condition, and multilayer media. The method is applied to a cathode diffusion medium to explore the interplay between water and thermal management and performance, the impact of the rib-to-channel ratio, and the existence of diffusion under the rib and flooding phenomena.

Key words. modeling, PEFC, gas-diffusion layer, cathode, water management, quasi potential

AMS subject classifications. 35F30, 30C30, 93B11, 65N99, 76R99

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1. Introduction. Mathematical modeling is ideally suited for understanding and quantifying the complex interplay between water and thermal management in polymer-electrolyte fuel cells (PEFCs). Typical PEFCs operate below 100°C, meaning that water exists as both a liquid and a vapor. Furthermore, a PEFC produces liquid water at the cathode as a product of the electrochemical reduction of oxygen using protons generated by hydrogen oxidation,

\[ 4H^+ + 4e^- + O_2 \rightarrow 2H_2O. \]

This product water is formed on the cathode of the PEFC, and it must be removed before it accumulates and blocks the passage of reactant oxygen to the cathode catalyst layer. On the other hand, the proton-conducting membrane used in PEFCs requires hydration in order to conduct efficiently. Intimately involved with the above competing water-management issues is thermal management, where temperature gradients can drive water movement through a phase-change-induced flow [38]. Many models have been generated to examine the above interplays and are summarized in the recent reviews of Newman and coworkers [36, 41] and in other papers appearing in this special issue.

The complex needs of water management result in complex materials used as backing layers for the support of the catalyst layers, as shown in Figure 1. These so-called diffusion media (DM) are typically composed of a macroporous gas-diffusion layer (GDL) and a microporous layer (MPL). In addition, each layer contains mixed wettability composed of hydrophilic (carbon) and hydrophobic (Teflon) moieties. Various models have been developed to account for two-phase flow in these materials,

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where there is a lack of experimental data \([36, 8, 17, 19, 26, 33, 6, 42, 9, 31, 21, 37]\). While these models are aimed at determining the dependent transport properties, and medium saturation or liquid-volume fraction, they must be utilized in a macroscopic framework. Such a framework often employs discretization techniques (e.g., finite-differencing and computational fluid dynamics). Furthermore, the problem is multidimensional due to the geometry of the gas flowfields in contact with the backing layer. This rib/channel structure creates a problem, as highlighted in Figure 1.

As seen, the domain to be studied in this article is the cathode DM. The cathode is chosen because it is perhaps the most limiting layer in a PEFC due to its sluggish oxygen-reduction-reaction kinetics, its need to remove the generated liquid water and that coming from the anode due to an electro-osmotic flux, and due to the fact that PEFCs use air in which oxygen is already diluted. Although the full problem is three-dimensional, a two-dimensional approach can be used due to the much longer length-scale of the channel compared to the other dimensions. If one then uses enough segments in the channel or \(z\)-direction, then the composition in the gas channel can be taken as constant in each segment. The problem outlined in Figure 1 has been investigated previously for the cathode DM \([20, 43, 5, 16, 22, 35, 14]\). However, in those analyses, differencing techniques and full numerical solutions were employed. In this article, we utilize a quasi-potential transformation and conformal mapping to reduce the problem to a set of analytic series solutions, where the coefficients only require integration along a single boundary. Such an approach has several benefits, including removal of the singularity of adjacent conducting and insulating planes, a computationally fast and efficient solution procedure, a grid-independent accurate solution, and a more robust solution procedure involving ordinary differential equations (ODEs) instead of partial differential equations (PDEs).

Quasi-potential transformations have been discussed previously in terms of modeling electrochemical phenomena as well as the Stefan–Maxwell equations for mass transport \([20, 34, 2, 3, 29]\). Such an approach has been applied to the geometry in
Figure 1 [20], yet without considering two-phase flow effects, multilayer DM, non-isothermal phenomena, and the fact that the electronic current flows through the rib and not the channel (where all of the other species flow). All of these limitations are removed in the following analysis. However, there are still fundamental limitations when using a quasi-potential transformation, including the need for steady-state or quasi-steady-state behavior, equilibrated homogeneous reactions, constant variable values at one boundary, the overall fluxes to be related to one another, and no open-flow convection. Luckily, the case of the DM fits within these limitations, as discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The outline of the paper is as follows. First, the problem statement is outlined with the governing equations and boundary conditions. Next, the definition of the quasi-potential is made, and the reduction of the governing equations to Laplace’s equation and a set of first-order nonlinear ODEs is shown. Next, the geometric problem is solved using conformal mapping and analytic functions where possible. After discussing treatment of the electronic potential using a second quasi-potential transformation and conformal mapping, the overall solution procedure is outlined. This is followed by a discussion of the treatment of multilayer DM. Next, various simulation results are analyzed to show the impact of the ribs on performance and clarify the interplay between water and thermal management and performance. Finally, some remarks about future work and limitations of the presented approach are discussed.

2. Problem statement. The problem statement in terms of geometry and boundary conditions is summarized in Figure 2. In total, there are seven principle variables: the mole fractions of oxygen, nitrogen, and water vapor, $y_{O_2}$, $y_{N_2}$, and $y_{H_2O}$, respectively; the temperature, $T$; the electronic potential, $\Phi$; and the liquid and gas pressures, $p_L$ and $p_G$, respectively. If the various fluxes ($N_i$ for the gas and liquid species, $i$ for current density, and $q$ for thermal energy) are taken to be variables as well, this results in a set of first-order equations for both the fluxes and the above variables. The flux conservation equations for the DM are

\begin{equation}
\nabla \cdot N_i = 0
\end{equation}

for oxygen and nitrogen;

\begin{equation}
\nabla \cdot N_w = \nabla \cdot N_L + \nabla \cdot N_{H_2O} = 0
\end{equation}

for water, where it has been assumed that the rate of condensation/evaporation is large enough (due to the fast interchange and substantial interfacial surface area between liquid and vapor) so that local equilibrium can be assumed;

\begin{equation}
\nabla \cdot i = 0
\end{equation}

for current density; and

\begin{equation}
\nabla \cdot q = 0
\end{equation}

for thermal energy. It should be noted that ohmic heating, which is expected to be small in the DM [38], is neglected in the thermal-energy balance due to its incompatibility with a quasi-potential transformation (it is a second-order effect). Furthermore, since local equilibrium is assumed between liquid and vapor, an equilibrium equation has to be added to the set of governing equations

\begin{equation}
\nabla_L (p_L - p_G) = RT \ln \left( \frac{p_G y_{H_2O}}{p_{vap}} \right),
\end{equation}
where $\nabla L$ is the partial molar volume of water, $R$ is the ideal-gas constant, and $p_\text{vap}^0$ is the vapor pressure of water over a planar interface. The above equation considers the effect of menisci on the water vapor pressure. Equation (6) can be seen as a combination of the Kelvin and Young–Laplace equations [7]. The former accounts for pore radii and contact angle, and the latter allows for the substitution of the capillary pressure for such effects. Thus, the impact of pore size and contact angle is implicitly accounted for.

The above fluxes are related to the set of transport equations. For the gas species, generalized Stefan–Maxwell equations are used with Knudsen and pressure diffusion considered [4, 40],

$$\nabla y_i = \frac{y_i}{RT} \left( \frac{RT}{p_G} - \frac{M_i}{\rho} \right) \nabla p_G + \sum_{j \neq i} \frac{1}{c_T \varepsilon D_{i,j}^{\text{eff}}} (y_i N_j - y_j N_i) - \frac{1}{c_T \varepsilon D_{i,j}^{\text{Kn}} N_i},$$

where $\rho$ is the density of the gas phase, $M_i$ is the molar mass of species $i$, $c_T$ is the total gas-phase concentration, $\varepsilon$ is the gas-phase volume fraction, $D_{i,j}^{\text{eff}}$ is the effective binary diffusion coefficient between species $i$ and $j$, and $D_{i,j}^{\text{Kn}}$ is the effective Knudsen diffusion coefficient of species $i$. The effective diffusion coefficients are typically corrected for tortuosity using the Bruggemann expression,

$$D_{i,j}^{\text{eff}} = \frac{1}{\tau} D_{i,j}^{\text{Kn}} = \varepsilon^{0.5} D_{i,j}^{\text{Kn}}.$$

The above form of the Stefan–Maxwell equations allows for a smooth, continuous transition between the modeling of both slip and ordinary diffusion through the range

![Diagram of modeling domain](image-url)
of pore sizes of the DM.

One of the three gas-species Stefan–Maxwell equations can be replaced by the sum of the mole fractions,

\[ \sum y_i = 1. \]

For the liquid phase, a flux form of Darcy’s law is used,

\[ \mathbf{N}_L = -\frac{k_L}{V_L \mu_L} \nabla p_L, \]

where \( V_L, \mu_L, \) and \( k_L \) are the partial molar volume, viscosity, and effective permeability of liquid water in the DM. Similarly, Darcy’s law is used for the gas phase to determine the gas pressure,

\[ \sum M_i \mathbf{N}_i = -\rho k_G \mu_G \nabla p_G. \]

For the current density, Ohm’s law is used,

\[ \mathbf{i} = -\sigma \nabla \Phi, \]

where \( \sigma \) is the effective electronic conductivity. Finally, for thermal energy, the flux is given by

\[ \mathbf{q} = -k_T \nabla T + H_G \mathbf{N}_G + H_L \mathbf{N}_L, \]

where \( k_T \) is the effective thermal conductivity and \( H_k \) is the enthalpy of phase \( k \).

The above expressions contain dependent variables that will change throughout the DM. While many of these are known functions of the other variables (e.g., viscosity dependence on temperature or concentration dependence of the gas-phase binary diffusion coefficients) \([18, 28]\), some of them require the use of a submodel for their evaluation. Prime among this second set of dependent variables are the effective permeabilities and the gas-phase volume fraction. To determine these values, a two-phase flow model previously detailed by us is utilized \([37]\). Essentially, this model uses a cut-and-random-rejoin, bundle-of-capillaries approach, where the pressure difference between the liquid and gas phases is used along with the DM pore-size distribution and a binary hydrophilicity (wettability) distribution to determine their values. For the scope of this paper, it is sufficient to know that the various dependent variables are calculated from the independent variables and structural properties where necessary, thereby making the problem highly nonlinear.

In terms of boundary conditions, most of the boundaries are insulating, as shown in Figure 2. For the gas channel, the six primary variable values are set, including the gas and liquid pressures (set to be equal), the gas mole fractions, and the temperature. The sole exception is that of the electronic potential, which has the opposite rib/channel boundary conditions than the other components. Since this variable does not impact the other ones except at the boundaries, it can be treated using a separate, parallel analysis, as discussed below. The same cannot be said for the temperature boundary condition, which is expected to have an influence at both the rib and the channel, the former due to conduction and the latter due to convection. As noted, both of these effects are essentially applied at the gas channel, and this represents a limitation of the quasi-potential approach. The justification for constant values is due
to the implicit assumption of using a pseudo-3D or 1+2D approach, where the channel is divided into segments that contact each other only at the boundaries through material and energy balances.

For the cathode catalyst-layer boundary, the five fluxes (equations (2)–(5)) are set. The catalyst layer is treated as an interface (i.e., a uniform reaction-distribution is assumed). The oxygen-reduction-reaction rate is given by Tafel kinetics [23], which, when written in terms of the oxygen flux using Faraday’s law, results in a boundary condition for the flux of oxygen,

$$N_{O_2} = -4Fat_{CL}i_0(p_{O_2})^{0.8} \exp \left( \frac{-F}{RT} (\Phi - \Phi_2 - U^\theta) \right) (1 - S_{CL}),$$

where $at_{CL}$ is the specific surface area for reaction, $i_0$ is the exchange current density, $p_{O_2}$ is the partial pressure of oxygen, $F$ is Faraday’s constant, $\Phi_2$ is the electrolyte potential, $U^\theta$ is the standard potential for the reaction, and $S_{CL}$ is the saturation (amount of pore space filled by liquid) of the catalyst layer which depends on the difference between the liquid and gas pressures using the two-phase model in the catalyst layer. For a physical representation, a value of $S_{CL} = 1$ means that there is no oxygen access to the catalyst sites, and thus the current density is zero (the limiting current is reached). Similarly, proton mobility is a function of water content, and if the membrane is dry, then a proton limiting current can be reached. This effect is accounted for in (13) by the value of $\Phi_2$. The value of $\Phi_2$ is set in this paper, where, to be rigorous, it should be allowed to vary, and it is calculated using detailed membrane and catalyst-layer models as well as consideration of the anode side of the PEFC; however, such a treatment is beyond the scope of this paper.

For the current-density boundary condition, Faraday’s law results in

$$i = -4FN_{O_2}. $$

Faraday’s law can also be used for the water flux, resulting in a boundary condition of

$$N_w = -N_{O_2}(2 + 4\beta_w),$$

where $\beta_w$ signifies the net flux of water per proton flux through the membrane from anode to cathode. Since nitrogen does not participate in the reaction, its flux is set equal to zero,

$$N_{N_2} = 0. $$

Finally, the temperature boundary condition can be given by

$$q = -4FN_{O_2} \left( (\Phi - \Phi_2 - U^\theta) + \Pi \right) - 4FN_{O_2} \beta_n(U_H - \Phi_0) - H_wN_{O_2}(2 + 4\beta_w),$$

where $\Pi$ and $U_H$ are the Peltier coefficient and enthalpy potential for the oxygen reduction reaction, respectively; $\Phi_0$ is the set potential at the rib; and $\beta_n$ is the dimensionless heat transferred through the membrane. The first term is due to heat generation, the second term is due to the thermal energy transferred from the membrane and the anode side, and the third term is the enthalpy carried into the DM from the water phase.

Equations (2)–(18) define the problem in terms of governing equations and boundary conditions. Besides the various DM properties such as porosity and pore-size
distribution, one must set the liquid and gas pressures, the temperature, and the nitrogen mole fraction at the gas channel; set the electronic potential at the rib; and set the values of $\Phi_2$, $\beta_r$, and $\beta_w$ at the catalyst layer. In reality, these last three values will change depending on location ($y$-direction); however, they will be taken to be uniform for the subsequent analysis.

3. Chemical model and quasi-potential definition. The approach to solving the problem is to use a set of two quasi-potential transformations: $Q_\Phi$ for the electronic potential and $Q$ for the rest of the variables. Essentially, these transformations separate the problem into two distinct categories: chemical problems and geometric problems. In the rest of this section and in the next, the analysis for the variables besides the electronic potential is given; the electronic potential is treated in a later section.

First, the quasi potential, $Q$, is defined in terms of the oxygen flux since oxygen is the most important parameter in the cathode DM,

\begin{equation}
N_{O_2} = \nabla Q.
\end{equation}

Because the fluxes in the DM are constant (see the conservation equations (2)–(5)), and at the boundaries each flux is related to the oxygen flux (see equations (15)–(18)), substitution of (19) into the conservation equations utilizing the boundary flux values results in Laplace’s equation,

\begin{equation}
\nabla^2 Q = 0.
\end{equation}

This sets up the geometric problem, which is discussed and solved in the next section.

For the chemical problem, in light of the simplification to Laplace’s equation and the constant fluxes, the flux of each component throughout the domain will remain uniform and is given by the boundary expressions (equations (15)–(18)) [29, 3]. To develop the chemical-model equations, one can start by substituting the boundary expressions into their respective transport equations (7), (10), (11), and (13). Then, using the chain rule,

\begin{equation}
\nabla Y = \left( \frac{\partial Y}{\partial x}, \frac{\partial Y}{\partial y} \right) = \frac{dY}{dQ} \left( \frac{\partial Q}{\partial x}, \frac{\partial Q}{\partial y} \right) = Y' \nabla Q,
\end{equation}

the gradient is rewritten in terms of the quasi potential, and the spatial derivative of the quasi potential will cancel, resulting in a set of nonlinear first-order ODEs which depend only on $Q$.

Enacting the above procedure results in the following set of equations: The equation for nitrogen (equations (7) and (17)) becomes

\begin{equation}
-\frac{y'_{N_2}}{y_{N_2}} - \left( \frac{RT}{p_G} \frac{M_{N_2}}{\rho} + \frac{y_{N_2} \alpha}{c_T \varepsilon D_{N_2,H_2O}^{eff}} \right) p'_G - \frac{y_{N_2}}{c_T \varepsilon D_{N_2,H_2O}^{eff}} \frac{y'_{H_2O}}{c_T \varepsilon D_{N_2,H_2O}^{eff}} \Psi = \frac{y_{N_2}}{c_T \varepsilon D_{N_2,O_2}^{eff}} - \frac{y_{N_2} \Psi}{c_T \varepsilon D_{N_2,H_2O}^{eff}}.
\end{equation}
where

\[
\alpha = \frac{y_\text{H}_2\text{O}}{RT} \left( \frac{RT}{p_G} - \frac{M_\text{H}_2\text{O}}{\rho} \right),
\]

\[
\Psi = \frac{y_\text{H}_2\text{O} c_T \varepsilon D^\text{eff}_\text{H}_2\text{O}}{c_T \varepsilon D^\text{eff}_\text{O}_2},
\]

\[
\xi = \frac{y_\text{O}_2 c_T \varepsilon D^\text{eff}_\text{O}_2}{c_T \varepsilon D^\text{eff}_\text{N}_2},
\]

the equation for liquid pressure (equations (10) and (16)) becomes

\[
-\frac{k_L}{V_\text{H}_2\text{O} \mu_L} p'_L - \frac{1}{\xi} y'_\text{H}_2\text{O} - \frac{\alpha}{\xi} p'_G = -(2 + 4\beta_\text{H}_2\text{O}) - \frac{\Psi}{\xi};
\]

the equation for gas pressure (equation (11)) becomes

\[
\left( \frac{\rho_G k_G}{\mu_G} - \frac{\alpha}{\xi} M_\text{H}_2\text{O} \right) p'_G - \frac{M_\text{H}_2\text{O}}{\xi} y'_\text{H}_2\text{O} = -M_\text{O}_2 - \frac{\Psi}{\xi} M_\text{H}_2\text{O};
\]

and the equation for temperature (equations (13) and (18)) becomes

\[
-k_T T' - \frac{H_G}{\xi} y'_\text{H}_2\text{O} - \frac{H_G \alpha}{\xi} p'_G - \frac{H_L k_L}{V_\text{H}_2\text{O} \mu_L} p'_L
\]

\[
= 4F \left( (\Phi - \Phi_2 - U) + \Pi + \beta_q (U_H - \Phi_0) \right) - H_G \left( 1 + \frac{\Psi}{\xi} \right) - H_w \text{N}_2 (2 + 4\beta_w).
\]

For the oxygen and water-vapor mole fractions, (9) and (6) are differentiated, resulting in

\[
y'_\text{N}_2 + y'_\text{O}_2 + y'_\text{H}_2\text{O} = 0
\]

and

\[
\nabla_L p'_L - \left( \nabla_L + \frac{RT}{p_G} \right) p'_G - \left( \nabla_L + \frac{RT}{y_\text{H}_2\text{O}} \right) y'_\text{H}_2\text{O} + R \left( -\ln \left( \rho_G y_\text{H}_2\text{O} \right) + \frac{dp'_\text{vap}}{dT} \right) T' = 0,
\]

respectively.

Equations (22)–(28) represent the chemical problem. It should be noted that the quasi-potential transformation can only be applied to first-order effects in order for the spatial dependence to cancel from the chemical-model equations. This is why ohmic heating has to be ignored, which is a justified assumption given the high conductivity of the DM. Similarly, if one uses the Navier–Stokes equations instead of Darcy’s law for convective flow, the quasi-potential transformation cannot be applied. Luckily, the DM is a porous medium which can be described by Darcy’s law.

In terms of the boundary conditions, at the gas channel where the variables values are set, \( Q \) is set equal to zero. To solve the chemical problem, one solves the above initial-value ODE problem numerically to the specified \( Q \) value. A sample figure of the variables as a function of \( Q \) for the specified initial values and DM properties (see Table 1) is shown in Figure 3. From the figure, one can see that most of the deviations are relatively linear until larger values of \( Q \) are realized. Furthermore,
Table 1

Relevant material and transport properties; the other fluid properties and diffusion coefficients can readily be obtained through handbooks [18, 28].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Property</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific interfacial area</td>
<td>$a_{Cl}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORR standard potential</td>
<td>$U^{	heta}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORR enthalpy potential</td>
<td>$U_H$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORR exchange current density</td>
<td>$i_0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute permeability</td>
<td>$k_{sat}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thickness</td>
<td>$\delta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal conductivity</td>
<td>$k^{eff}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk porosity</td>
<td>$\varepsilon_o$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical conductivity</td>
<td>$\sigma$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pore-size distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic radii</td>
<td>$r_{o,1}$, $r_{o,2}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic spreads</td>
<td>$s_1$, $s_2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction that is distribution</td>
<td>$f_{r,1}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of hydrophilic pores</td>
<td>$f_{HI}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrophobic contact angle</td>
<td>$\theta_{HO}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrophilic contact angle</td>
<td>$\theta_{HI}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Region**
- MPL: $1 \times 10^{-12}$, $1 \times 10^{-10}$ cm$^2$
- DM: $1 \times 10^{-12}$, $1 \times 10^{-9}$ cm$^2$

**Material Properties**
- Thickness: 20, 250 μm
- Thermal conductivity: 0.003, 0.015 W/cm K
- Bulk porosity: 0.3, 0.7
- Electrical conductivity: 3, 7 S/cm
- Pore-size distribution properties:
  - Characteristic radii: $r_{o,1}$, $r_{o,2}$
  - Characteristic spreads: $s_1$, $s_2$
- Fraction that is distribution 1: $f_{r,1}$
- Fraction of hydrophilic pores: $f_{HI}$
- Hydrophobic contact angle: $\theta_{HO}$
- Hydrophilic contact angle: $\theta_{HI}$

**Fig. 3.** Results of the chemical model for the gas and liquid pressure, the temperature, and the gas-phase mole fractions as a function of the quasi potential. The material properties are given in Table 1.
while one could think of $Q$ as being intimately related to the oxygen partial pressure due to its definition (equation (19)), one can see that is not the case at large values due to the interplay among all of the equations.

From Figure 3, it is clear that for the given inlet conditions and material properties, there is a limiting current where the oxygen concentration goes to zero. If one uses Faraday’s law and assumes a 250 $\mu$m DM, then the limiting current density is equal to about 2.5 A/cm$^2$. This value is higher than most currently operating PE-FCs, thereby suggesting that DM limitations are not the largest. However, this simple analysis does not consider how the values of $\Phi_2$, $\beta_q$, and $\beta_w$ change with current density and other related effects. As shown later though, this simple analysis allows for a quick study of the general effects of medium wettability on performance. Finally, it appears that the flooding and limiting current density is being exacerbated and perhaps even driven by the decrease in the gas-phase pressure. However, due to the highly coupled nature of the problem and the variables, such a generalization is not tenable. Although, it is a noteworthy observation because many models, especially older ones, assume a uniform gas pressure in the DM, which is obviously a circumspect assumption.

4. Geometric model and quasi-potential solution. In the preceding section, the quasi potential is defined and the chemical problem explored. It is shown that for the geometric problem, Laplace’s equation is obtained. To solve this problem, the boundary conditions are required. Using the quasi-potential transformation, the insulating boundaries remain insulating. As noted, at the gas channel the value of $Q$ is arbitrarily set to 0. At the catalyst layer, the boundary condition can be written as (see equation (14))

$$\nabla Q \cdot n = -4Fat_{\text{CL},i_0}[Q](pG[Q]y_{O_2}[Q])^{0.8} \exp \left( -\frac{F}{RT[Q]}(\Phi[Q\Phi] - \Phi_2 - U^{\theta}[Q]) \right) (1 - S_{\text{CL}}[Q])$$

(29)

where the dependences on the two quasi potentials are shown explicitly, and many arise from the effect of temperature on the various properties (e.g., see Table 1).

The geometric problem is now completely specified. To solve this problem, conformal mapping is used. The overall procedure is to use Schwartz–Christoffel transformations to transform the initial geometry in the $z$-plane to the upper half of the $w$-plane and then into a rectangle in the $a$-plane [11]. Schematically, this solution procedure is shown in Figure 4, with the boundary conditions noted and the appropriate dimensions marked, where $t$ is the thickness of the DM, $L$ is the length of the DM, and $\delta$ represents the dimensionless location of the rib/channel interface. The origin of the $z$-plane is defined at the DM half-thickness for reasons that will become apparent.

The transform from the $w$-plane to the $z$-plane is given by

$$z = C \int_{0}^{w} \frac{dw}{\sqrt{w - a\sqrt{w - b\sqrt{w - c\sqrt{w - d}}}}}$$

(30)

where the lowercase letters correspond to the location of the $z$-plane vertices in the $w$-plane. We have a degree of freedom such that we can arbitrarily assign a value of 1 to $b$ (as noted in Figure 4). Due to the origin placement, we also have symmetry.
between points $a$ and $b$, and also between $c$ and $d$ \cite{1}. Thus, (30) can be written as

\begin{equation}
    z = -Ck \int_0^w \frac{dw}{\sqrt{1-w^2} \sqrt{1-k^2w^2}} = -CkF(w; k),
\end{equation}

where $k = e^{-1}$ and $F(w; k)$ is the incomplete elliptical integral of the first kind \cite{46}. In the above expression, there are two unknowns, $C$ and $k$. As noted above, in the $z$-plane, the DM thickness and length are specified. Substituting in the thickness in (31) results in

\begin{equation}
    C = \frac{-t}{2k \int_0^1 \frac{du}{\sqrt{1-u^2} \sqrt{1-k^2u^2}}} = \frac{-t}{2kK(k)},
\end{equation}

where $K(k)$ is the complete elliptic integral of the first kind \cite{46}. Next, substituting the length into (31) results in a transcendental equation for $k$,

\begin{equation}
    \frac{2L}{t} = \frac{K(k')}{K(k)},
\end{equation}

where $k' = \sqrt{1-k^2}$. Thus, $C$ and $k$ can be solved for, and (31) can be written as

\begin{equation}
    z = \frac{t}{2K(k)} F(w; k).
\end{equation}

The above transform can be inverted to yield the transform from the $z$-plane to the $w$-plane. Doing this inversion results in \cite{1, 46}

\begin{equation}
    w = \text{sn} \left( \frac{2K(k)}{t} z, k \right),
\end{equation}

where $\text{sn}$ is an elliptic function (which is tabulated), and expressions for $u$ and $v$ can easily be obtained by known elliptic-function identities \cite{46, 1, 30}. Now, all of the points in $w$-plane have been determined. Specifically,

\begin{equation}
    a = -b = -1; d = -c = -\frac{1}{k'}; e = -\frac{\text{dn} \left( \frac{2K(k)}{t} \delta L, k' \right)}{1 - k'^2 \text{sn}^2 \left( \frac{2K(k)}{t} \delta L, k' \right)}.
\end{equation}
Next, one must transform the \( w \)-plane into the \( a \)-plane. The resulting Schwartz–Christoffel transformation is

\[
a = - \int_{-1}^{w} \frac{dw}{\sqrt{w-1} \sqrt{w+1} \sqrt{w+c}}.
\]

where this integral has to be evaluated numerically.

Finally, before solving the problem in the \( a \)-plane, the boundary conditions must be transformed. Since insulators remain insulators and Dirichlet boundary conditions remain intact through the transformations, only the boundary condition at the catalyst layer (equation (29)) has to be transformed. This transformation is done by examining the respective transformations at the catalyst-layer boundary (\( BC \) in Figure 4),

\[
\frac{da}{dw} \bigg|_{BC} = \frac{i}{\sqrt{u-1} \sqrt{u+1} \sqrt{u-c}}
\]

and noting that in the \( z \)-plane,

\[
\frac{\partial Q}{\partial x} \bigg|_{BC} = \text{Re} \left\{ \frac{dQ}{da} \frac{da}{dw} \frac{dz}{dw} \right\} = -N[Q, Q_\Phi].
\]

The above analysis results in a catalyst-layer boundary condition in the \( a \)-plane of

\[
\frac{\partial Q}{\partial a_r} \bigg|_{BC} = -\frac{t}{2kK(k)} N[Q, Q_\Phi] \frac{\sqrt{u-e}}{\sqrt{u+c}} = G[Q, Q_\Phi, a_i].
\]

Now that the problem has been transformed into the \( a \)-plane, one can write the solution using a separation of variables,

\[
Q = c_0 a + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} c_n \cos \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_C} a_r \right) \sinh \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_C} a_i \right),
\]

where \( a_C \) denotes the point of \( C \) in the \( a \)-plane (see Figure 4). The Fourier coefficients are then given by

\[
c_0 = \int_0^{a_C} G[Q, Q_\Phi, a_i] da_i, \quad c_n = \frac{2 \int_0^{a_C} \cos \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_C} a_i \right) G[Q, Q_\Phi, a_i] da_i}{\pi n \cosh \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_C} a_B \right)}.
\]

It is obvious that, to solve the problem, all that must be done is to complete the above integrations along \( BC \) using the values of the quasi potentials and the value of \( G[Q, Q_\Phi, a_i] \) given by (40).

5. Treatment of the electronic potential. As noted above, the electronic potential has its boundary condition at the rib and not the channel, since the channel acts as an electronic insulator (see Figure 2). Because the potential only interacts with the other variables at the catalyst-layer boundary (the electronic conductivity is taken as uniform in the DM), it can be set up as its own independent problem.

In a similar fashion to the quasi-potential analysis above, an electronic quasi potential, \( Q_\Phi \), can be set up, where again it will be related to the oxygen flux (see
equation (19)). Substitution of the transport equation (Ohm’s law, equation (12)) into the current conservation equation (4) results in Laplace’s equation for this quasi potential. Since the flux is known at the catalyst-layer boundary, the equivalent chemical-problem equation can be solved analytically to yield

\begin{equation}
\Phi = \Phi_0 + \frac{4F}{\sigma} \Phi.
\end{equation}

To solve the geometric problem, the same \( z \)-plane to \( w \)-plane and inverse transformations can be used. Thus, the \( w \)-plane values (equation (36)) remain the same. The difference is in the transformation from the \( w \)-plane to a different \( a \)-plane, denoted as the \( a_\Phi \)-plane, because now the left-hand side should be segment \( ED \) and the bottom should be \( EB \) instead of \( AE \) and \( AB \), respectively (see Figure 4). Thus, the correct Schwartz–Christoffel transformation is

\begin{equation}
a_\Phi = - \int e^{\frac{dw}{\sqrt{w+c\sqrt{w-1}\sqrt{w-c\sqrt{w-e}}}}} \, dw
\end{equation}

which again has to be evaluated numerically. The boundary condition transformation then becomes

\begin{equation}
\frac{\partial Q_{\Phi}}{\partial a_{\Phi_r}} \bigg|_{BC} = -\frac{t}{2kK(k)} N[Q, Q_{\Phi}] \sqrt{\frac{u-e}{u+1}} = G_{\Phi}[Q, Q_{\Phi}, a_{\Phi_i}],
\end{equation}

and the series solution is

\begin{equation}
Q_{\Phi} = c_{\Phi_0} a_{\Phi_r} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} c_{\Phi_n} \cos \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_{\Phi_C}} a_{\Phi_i} \right) \sinh \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_{\Phi_C}} a_{\Phi_r} \right),
\end{equation}

with the coefficients given by

\begin{equation}
C_{\Phi_0} = \int_{a_{\Phi_C}}^{a_{\Phi_R}} G_{\Phi}[Q, Q_{\Phi}, a_{\Phi_i}] da_{\Phi_i}, \quad c_{\Phi_n} = \frac{2}{\pi n \cosh \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_{\Phi_C}} a_{\Phi_R} \right)} \int_{a_{\Phi_C}}^{a_{\Phi_R}} \cos \left( \frac{\pi n}{a_{\Phi_C}} a_{\Phi_i} \right) G_{\Phi}[Q, Q_{\Phi}, a_{\Phi_i}] da_{\Phi_i}.
\end{equation}

Thus, one again need only integrate along \( BC \), this time in the \( a_\Phi \)-plane, to determine \( Q_{\Phi} \).

**6. Overall solution procedure.** The overall solution procedure is to solve for the two quasi potentials simultaneously by integrating on \( BC \) in their respective planes and using the chemical model to obtain the correct values for the variables. The equations are all given above, and in this section the solution procedure is summarized. Because of the use of the two quasi potentials and the need to ensure that all of the variables are evaluated at the same points, a Gauss–Legendre integration method is used. Thus, the integration points on \( BC \) are specified in the \( a \)- and \( a_\Phi \)-planes, thereby allowing one to switch between those planes as well as with the \( w \)-plane, since the values of \( u \) on \( BC \) are needed to evaluate \( G \) and \( G_{\Phi} \) (see (40) and (45), respectively). Therefore, a substantial amount of bookkeeping is required. For the integration, 25 points are used, and for \( Q \) and \( Q_{\Phi} \), 20-term series are used.

The overall solution procedure can be summarized by the following steps.

1. Calculate the relevant dimensions and points in the \( w \)-plane. This involves determining \( k \) using (33) and then calculating the other points using (36).
2. Calculate the location of B and C in the a- and \(a_{\Phi}\)-planes using the transformations given by (37) and (44), respectively.

3. Calculate the \(a\) and \(a_{\Phi}\) points along BC needed for the Gauss–Legendre integration; also determine the corresponding \(u\) points for each of these in the \(w\)-plane and either the \(a\)- or \(a_{\Phi}\)-plane.

4. Guess a value of the flux boundary condition at the catalyst layer, \(N[Q, Q_{\Phi}]\).

5. Calculate \(G[Q, Q_{\Phi}, a_{i}]\) and \(G_{\Phi}[Q, Q_{\Phi}, a_{\Phi}, \cdot]\) using (40) and (45), respectively; integrate to get the Fourier coefficient values in the series solutions, (42) and (47), respectively.

6. Calculate the values of \(Q\) and \(Q_{\Phi}\) along BC using (41) and (46), respectively.

7. Use the chemical-problem ODEs (equations (22)–(28)) to get the values for the various variables along BC and calculate the boundary-condition flux using (29).

8. Check the calculated flux with the guessed flux and iterate until convergence is achieved.

Out of the above steps, 1–3 are required only once per given geometry (\(t, L\), and \(\delta\)). Steps 5–8 represent an iteration loop. The above solution procedure is perhaps not the most robust or efficient way to solve the problem; optimization of the solution procedure is beyond the scope of this paper. Finally, if desired, once the problem is solved, one can calculate contours in the \(z\)-plane using the values of \(Q\) and \(Q_{\Phi}\) and the relevant transformations. As a benchmark, the typical solution time for a problem is a minute or so on a 2.8 GHz single-core CPU desktop computer. Before proceeding to examine simulation results, some comments on the treatment of multilayer DM are necessary.

7. Application to a multilayer diffusion medium. As mentioned in the introduction, DM are often composed of multiple layers. Typically this is a macroporous substrate layer and microporous layer (MPL) next to the catalyst layer. The MPL serves to provide good contact between the DM and the catalyst layer while also playing a role in cell water and thermal management [44, 10, 27, 13, 32, 45, 12, 24, 15, 25, 39]. The MPL is typically dense, with small hydrophobic pores. To treat MPLs and multilayer DM in general, the following approach is utilized.

The difference between the MPL and macroporous GDL is only in terms of the dependent properties. The governing equations remain the same throughout all the layers of the DM. Thus, the geometric problem is identical (with different values along BC), and hence one only requires a methodology to determine the correct set of material-property expressions to use in the chemical-model equations. This is done by separating the chemical-model integration for each specified Gaussian integration point in the \(a\)- or \(a_{\Phi}\)-planes,

\[
\{p_{L}, y_{O_{2}}, T, \ldots\} = \int_{0}^{Q} \{\text{ODE}(Q)\} dQ = \int_{0}^{Q_{\text{tran}}} \{\text{ODE}_{\text{GDL}}(Q)\} dQ + \int_{Q_{\text{tran}}}^{Q} \{\text{ODE}_{\text{MPL}}(Q)\} dQ,
\]

where the set of values represents the chemical-model ODEs, the subscripts denote the regions, and \(Q_{\text{tran}}\) is the transition point from the GDL to the MPL. This transition point can be determined by mapping the MPL/GDL boundary in the \(z\)-plane to the other planes, as shown in Figure 5 for the \(a\)-plane. To implement this method, one calculates the \(Q_{\text{tran}}\) points for the BC Gaussian integration points in step 3 of the
solution method outlined above. Then, when solving the initial-value ODEs, one utilizes (48). This treatment will create a slope change in the curves in Figure 3 when $Q_{\text{tran}}$ is reached. Obviously, this method is assuming that more or less line integrations and changes in the MPL occur primarily in the $x$-direction. Since the MPLs are relatively thin, this should not be a major source of error. While the above method is not rigorous, it does allow the use of the quasi-potential transformation for multilayer DMs with minimal error; to be fully rigorous, the quasi potential would have to become spatially dependent, and one loses its attractiveness for use.

8. Results and discussion. The above described model can provide many insights, depending on what is being focused upon. In this section, we focus on a few issues, namely, the cause of flooding and the relationship between thermal and water management, the effect of the rib/channel geometry on performance and oxygen concentration, and the impact of having an MPL. For the analyses presented in this section, the inlet values and input parameters are given in Table 2, and the material properties are presented in Table 1. The input parameters are typical values as determined by our earlier full-cell simulations, but where we did not account for the rib/channel effect [38]. A potential of 0.6 V is chosen since this corresponds to the expected cell potential in an automotive fuel cell. The use of the values in Table 2, especially concerning the assumption of uniform values in the catalyst layer, limits the accuracy of the simulation results; however, some general trends can be examined and insights gained.

Fig. 5. Transformation of the MPL/GDL interface from the $z$-plane to the $a$-plane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic potential</td>
<td>0.6 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas and liquid pressures</td>
<td>1 bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel relative humidity</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrogen mole fraction</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>339.2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ionic potential, $\Phi_2$</td>
<td>$-0.173$ V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensionless net water flux, $\beta_w$</td>
<td>0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensionless net heat flux, $\beta_q$</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUASI-POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION OF DIFFUSION MEDIUM

Fig. 6. Oxygen partial pressure at the catalyst layer as a function of DM hydrophilicity for different DM absolute permeabilities and isothermal (gray) and nonisothermal (black) simulations. The chemical model is used assuming a 1 A/cm$^2$ current density with the Table 2 inlet conditions and the Table 1 GDL properties for those that are not varied.

One can use the chemical model to do a relatively simple analysis of the effect of DM wettability or hydrophilicity. Since the chemical model is being used, a value of $Q$ is chosen that corresponds to a current density of 1 A/cm$^2$ and a DM thickness of 250 μm (i.e., $Q = 1.3 \times 10^{-7}$ mol/cm s). As shown in Figure 3, the value of $Q$ where the oxygen partial pressure goes towards zero can be seen as a limiting current density. Furthermore, it is suspected that the decrease in gas-phase pressure can result in flooding and perhaps have a greater effect than the increase in the liquid pressure. To examine some of these issues, and also the impact of the phase-change-induced (PCI) flow, simulation results are shown in Figure 6.

From the figure, one can see that as the hydrophilicity is increased from a pure hydrophobic to a mainly hydrophilic DM, the oxygen partial pressure decreases nominally due to increased blockage of the pores by liquid water, i.e., flooding. Furthermore, for the assumed DM thickness, the figure shows that 1 A/cm$^2$ is the limiting current density when the hydrophilic pore fraction is 0.8 or less, depending on the absolute permeability of the DM. The effect of absolute permeability is relatively straightforward, since as the permeability decreases, the resistance to gas and liquid flow increases, thereby causing more significant water flooding throughout the DM.

Flooding is a combined result of the intrinsic decrease in the gas-phase volume fraction due to having a more hydrophilic medium and an increase in the capillary pressure, which is defined as the liquid pressure minus the gas pressure. In terms of capillary pressure, intuition states that as the DM becomes more hydrophobic, the increase in the liquid pressure will cause more flooding than the gas-pressure decrease. Conversely, as the DM becomes hydrophilic, the decrease in the gas pressure will cause more flooding than the liquid-pressure increase. The interplay between these effects is seen in Figure 6, where the oxygen partial pressure exhibits a maximum with respect to the fraction of hydrophilic pores. This maximum becomes sharper as the permeability decreases since flow resistance becomes more dominant in the system and the capillary-pressure effect on flooding begins to outweigh the intrinsic
hydrophilicity effect. In agreement with Figure 3, it seems that the decrease in the gas pressure results in more significant flooding than the increase in the liquid pressure based on the shape of the curves in Figure 6 at the high and low hydrophilicity levels, respectively. Finally, it seems that a hydrophilic pore fraction around 0.2 results in optimal water-balance performance.

Figure 6 also compares nonisothermal and isothermal simulations. This comparison allows one to quantify the PCI flow on PEFC performance and the DM. The PCI flow occurs with saturated gas feeds, where water will evaporate at the catalyst layer and condense at the gas channel due to the temperature gradient within the DM. This effect impacts performance both beneficially and detrimentally [38]. On the beneficial side, it removes liquid water by transferring it into the vapor phase, thereby decreasing flooding. On the detrimental side, the incoming oxygen gases must now diffuse against a countercflow of water vapor that is moving along the temperature gradient instead of with the incoming oxygen. The interplay between these two effects is clearly seen in Figure 6. For the cases where flooding is important (e.g., at low permeabilities or high hydrophilic pore fractions), the PCI flow is beneficial overall and the nonisothermal case results in higher oxygen partial pressure than the isothermal one. However, there is a switching point where the detrimental effects of the PCI flow outweigh the beneficial ones for conditions where flooding is less important. This results in a crossover of the curves under these conditions such that the isothermal case results in higher partial pressures than the nonisothermal one. In all, Figure 6 demonstrates that water and thermal management are intricately linked, and that mathematical modeling provides a route to begin optimizing the operating conditions and material properties.

The full model can be used to assess the impact of the rib and channel on performance. To visualize the transformation and to see the resulting profiles, $Q$ is given in both the $a$- and $z$-planes in Figure 7. As shown in Figure 3, as $Q$ increases, the temperature and liquid pressure increase and the partial pressure of oxygen decreases. Therefore, Figure 7 clearly shows in the real or $z$-plane a buildup of liquid water under the rib and a subsequent lower amount of oxygen available for reaction. The $Q$ profile also shows that there are not significant gradients under the rib, except perhaps near the channel and also somewhat near the catalyst layer. The latter is driven by the reaction rate distribution, to be discussed later. If one envisions an entire flow channel, the $Q$ profile demonstrates that the maximum concentration of oxygen starts at the middle of the channel (i.e., the symmetry line at $y = 0$) as expected, but then forms

![Figure 7](image-url)
two maxima and a resulting minima in the middle of the channel. This shape is due to the effect of the interplay of gas diffusion and the reaction-rate distribution.

It is of interest to examine the effect of the rib/channel ratio. To do this, the maximum, minimum, and average current densities are tabulated as a function of the relative size of the channel, and are given in Figure 8(a). From these values, an optimum value of around 65% channel (channel-to-rib ratio of 1.86) is obtained. However, such a study ignores the impact of manufacturability of the flowfield, type of flow path (e.g., serpentine versus straight channels), and mechanical effects of the rib. The optimum in current density arises from the fact that at large channels (small ribs), transport of the electronic current is limiting, and at small channels (large ribs) transport of the oxygen becomes limiting. Overall, the oxygen is more limiting, which is why the optimum is shifted toward larger channels than ribs and the decrease is longer and more severe with smaller channels than with smaller ribs. The current-density spread for a given channel-to-rib ratio has a complex shape, with the smallest spread (i.e., the most uniform current-density distribution) occurring at the optimum channel-to-rib ratio. The spread then becomes larger as the current-density distribution becomes more nonuniform with, again, a larger spread observed with smaller channels than with smaller ribs due to the dominant oxygen-transport limitations.
While Figure 8(a) shows the range of current density, it does not indicate the current-density distribution. Figure 8(b) shows distributions for three channel-to-rib ratios. It is clear that the three cases have vastly different current-density distributions. Furthermore, the locations of the maximum and minimum values reported in Figure 8(a) can occur at different points along the curve. Essentially, the maximum value is the point at which the various transport limitations are minimal. It occurs near the rib/channel interface because there is not significant redistribution of current and oxygen in the DM, and it helps to explain the profiles in Figure 7. It does shift to more under the rib with larger channels, since this does allow more oxygen redistribution. The minimum current density occurs near the top of the rib because of oxygen limitations. However, as the ribs become smaller, the dominant limiting phenomena change and the minimum shifts toward the bottom of the channel. Overall, the impact of the rib and channel can generate very nonuniform current-density distributions, especially as one moves far away from the optimum value for a given set of operating conditions and material properties.

Finally, the impact of a multilayer DM can be investigated. This analysis is shown in Figure 9 for the oxygen partial pressure. For these simulations, the same current density is examined in order to better see the MPL effect since it will result in the same oxygen flux. However, because the case with the MPL demonstrates worse performance, this required that the cell voltage be lowered about 20 mV compared to the non-MPL case. The reason for this decrease is due to the resulting thicker layer (270 versus 250 μm) and the buildup of liquid water next to the catalyst layer and a greater temperature gradient caused by the more resistive MPL. The decrease in the liquid water under the rib is primarily due to the increased temperature. However, near the catalyst layer, this gain is offset by the increased buildup of liquid water.
as shown in Figure 9. Typically, MPLs result in better performance, which is not captured by the simulation because the buildup of liquid water will cause more water to move toward the anode [39]. However, this link is missing in the current simulation, where the net water flux through the membrane, $\beta_w$, is set and does not vary. Finally, Figure 9(b) shows the current-density distribution for the two cases. Clearly, the impact of the MPL is significant and causes a shift in the maximum current density toward the channel and away from the rib/channel interface. This demonstrates that the flooding and oxygen limitation caused by the MPL are more significant than its effect on the electronic conductivity.

9. Summary. In this paper, a quasi-potential approach, along with conformal mapping, has been used to model the diffusion medium (DM) of a polymer-electrolyte fuel cell. This method goes beyond previous approaches and removes previous limitations of isothermal operation, placement of the electronic-potential boundary condition, neglect of two-phase flow, and examination of only single-layer diffusion media. The presented method provides a series solution that is grid independent and only requires integration along a single boundary. As applied to the cathode DM, simulations showed the complex interplay between water and thermal management and performance, the importance of gas-phase pressure decreases, the impact of the rib-to-channel ratio on the current-density distribution and performance, the existence of diffusion under the rib and water buildup, and the impact of having a multilayer DM with a microporous layer.

This last analysis highlighted some of the current limitations of the method. Primarily, there are three principal values that must be assumed at the catalyst-layer interface and are taken to be constant. Ideally, these values should be determined using models of the porous electrode, membrane, and anode side of the cell. This can be implemented using 1D models for those layers at each Gaussian integration point, and this approach is currently under investigation. Also under investigation is using the model in a $1 + 2D$ arrangement, where the composition along the gas channel varies and the presented model can be run in the various segments. However, as these conditions change, so too do the values of the assumed catalyst-layer values, again necessitating some kind of model for the catalyst layer and the rest of the cell. Another limitation of the method is the, perhaps improper, placement of the temperature boundary condition, and this needs to be quantified. Another effect to be quantified is that the material properties of the medium have to be assumed isotropic for the quasi-potential transformation, which is not necessarily in agreement with experimental data. A possible extension of the model would be to include a first-order, macroscopic mechanical force balance, which will enable one to examine how compression on the DM by the ribs changes the overall performance. Finally, other improvements for the model include optimizing the mathematics and the numerical solution along the boundary to be more robust and less computationally costly.

REFERENCES


