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**Characterizing and Testing a Thermally Isolating  
Superconducting Link for SAFIRE-Like Missions  
Grant: NAG-1-1242**

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ORIGINAL PAGE 1  
OF POOR QUALITY

The recent discovery of high temperature ceramic superconductors with transition temperatures above 90 K has opened the possibilities for new exciting space applications. One application is the fabrication of an electrically conducting and thermally isolating electronic link to connect IR detectors to data acquisition electronics on remote sensing platforms. SAFIRE mission is one example of these platforms which employs hybrid dewars and combine both mechanical and cryogenic liquid cooling. This new technology is limited by the heat conducted through sensor array leads that connect the electronics (at ~ 80 K) to the sensors (at ~ 4 K). This link must be made of material that has high electrical conductivity and high thermal resistance. The  $YBa_2Cu_3O_x$  superconductor with a transition temperature,  $T_c$ , of 93 K can achieve these conflicting requirements. A link with these characteristics will improve the thermal isolation of IR detectors and will increase the lifetime of the cryogen. A reduction of the thermal load due to the link by a factor of 4 will increase the lifetime of a 7 year mission by about one year.

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Developing this high temperature superconducting link is a collaborative effort among NASA-Langley Research Center, Christopher Newport College (CNC), Clemson University and the industrial companies that have joined the Commercialization of Space Program for the purpose of developing and testing this link.

The focus of CNC's effort in the development of the superconducting link is the measurement of the thermal conductivity of  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  and several ceramic materials which are potential candidates for use as substrates in this link; the characterization of prototypes of high  $T_c$  links made by Electro-Science Laboratories (ESL) of King of Prussia; and the completion of an analysis of the effect of changing the superconducting link parameters on the amount of heat load on the cryogen.

The following is a summary of these three research efforts:

- 1) We have measured thermal conductivity of  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  samples made using a tape casting technique by Clemson University. The measurements were done in the temperature range of 20 - 120 K. The results were consistent with the published data in various journals. We have also measured the thermal conductivity of the ceramic materials  $\text{AlTiO}_5$  and  $\text{SiO}_2$ . These ceramics are potential candidates for use as substrates in this link as they have low thermal conductivity coefficients in the temperature range of 4 - 80 K. Figures 1 - 3 show some of these preliminary results.

- 2) We have characterized a number of prototype links made by ESL. These links used a screen printing process to print 10  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  lines on 1" X 2" substrates made of  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  or YSZ. We have measured the resistance versus temperature between 15-300 K for these screen printed lines. We have also heat treated some of these links in flowing oxygen at 950 °C and measured the resulting improvement in their superconducting properties due to this treatment. Figure 4 shows the resistance measurement results of one of these links.

3) A study on the the effect of varying the link parameters was performed and numerical calculations for the one dimensional heat transfer problem were carried out. In this study we have investigated the effect of different parameters on the performance of the link: wire material, cross sectional area per wire, substrate material, and the thickness of the substrate. The studies have been done for two probable cases where the low temperature detector is at 4.2 K with the high temperature electronics at either 30 or 80 K. The attached table shows some of the numerical results of this study which compares manganin #40 AWG,  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  on YSZ substrate, and  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  on  $\text{SiO}_2$  substrate. This analysis show that a superconducting link made of  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  screen printed lines with a cross section area of 1 mil X 2 mil and a substrate of 6 mils in thickness made of  $\text{SiO}_2$  will result in the lowest amount of heat load on the cryogen and is clearly superior to conventional wires made of manganin. The heat load is reduced by a factor of larger than 4 compared to #40 AWG manganin. Such a reduction would increase the lifetime of a mission considerably. Superconductors should be explored as low-current carrying interconnects for missions where the interconnect contribution to the heat load plays a predominant role in the lifetime of the mission. As the number of interconnects increases, the thick film superconducting links will be more attractive. A preprint of a contractor's report discussing these results is enclosed with this final report.

We are also setting up a second low temperature data acquisition system using equipment on loan from NASA Langley Research Center. The hardware and software development of that system is well underway. We expect the system to be available for use in the beginning of the summer of 1992.

Material	H80 numerical calculation
Manganin #40	16.6
YBa <sub>2</sub> Cu <sub>3</sub> O <sub>7</sub> *	1.3
YSZ tetragonal **	12.5
Total 1	13.8
YBa <sub>2</sub> Cu <sub>3</sub> O <sub>7</sub> *	1.3
YSZ cubic **	8.5
Total 2	9.8
YBa <sub>2</sub> Cu <sub>3</sub> O <sub>7</sub> *	1.3
a-SiO <sub>2</sub> **	2.3
Total 3	3.6

\* Assuming 1 mil x 2 mil films

\*\* Assuming a 6 mil thick substrate

Comparison of heat flow in  $\mu\text{W}$  for #40 AWG manganin and YBa<sub>2</sub>Cu<sub>3</sub>O<sub>7</sub> on different ceramic substrates.

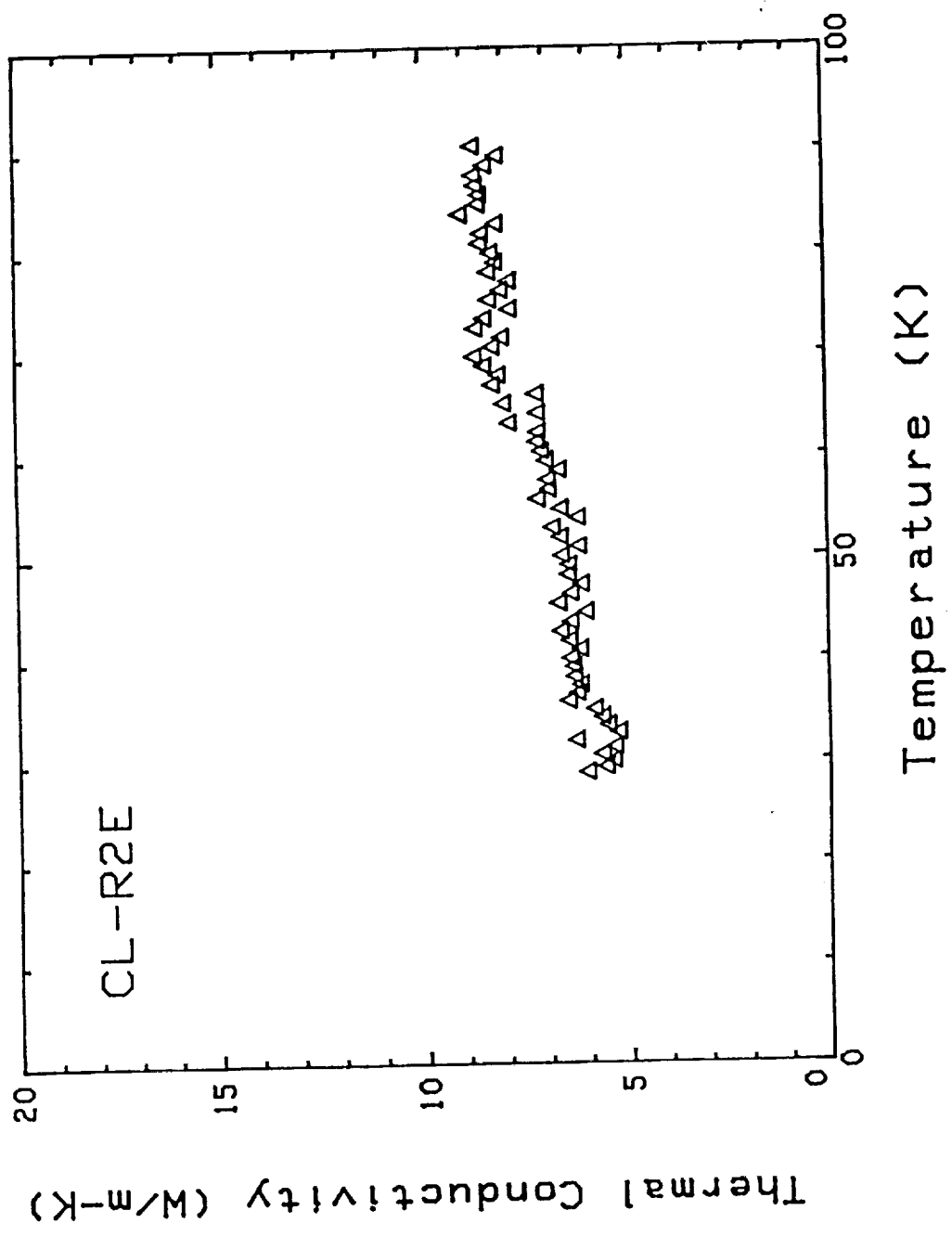


Figure 1. Thermal conductivity of  $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_x$  tape cast sample made by Clemson University

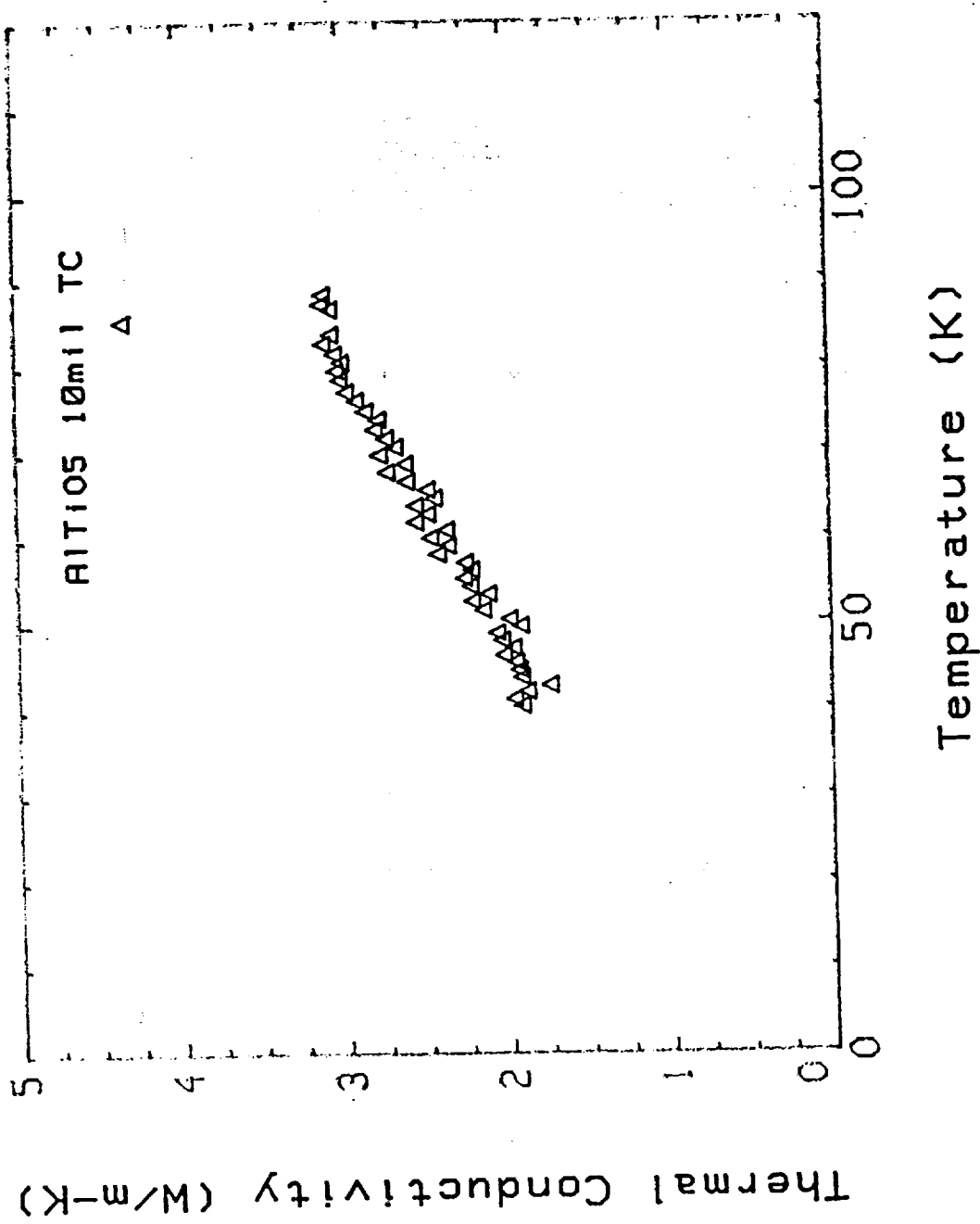


Figure 2. Thermal conductivity of AlTiO<sub>5</sub> as a function of temperature.

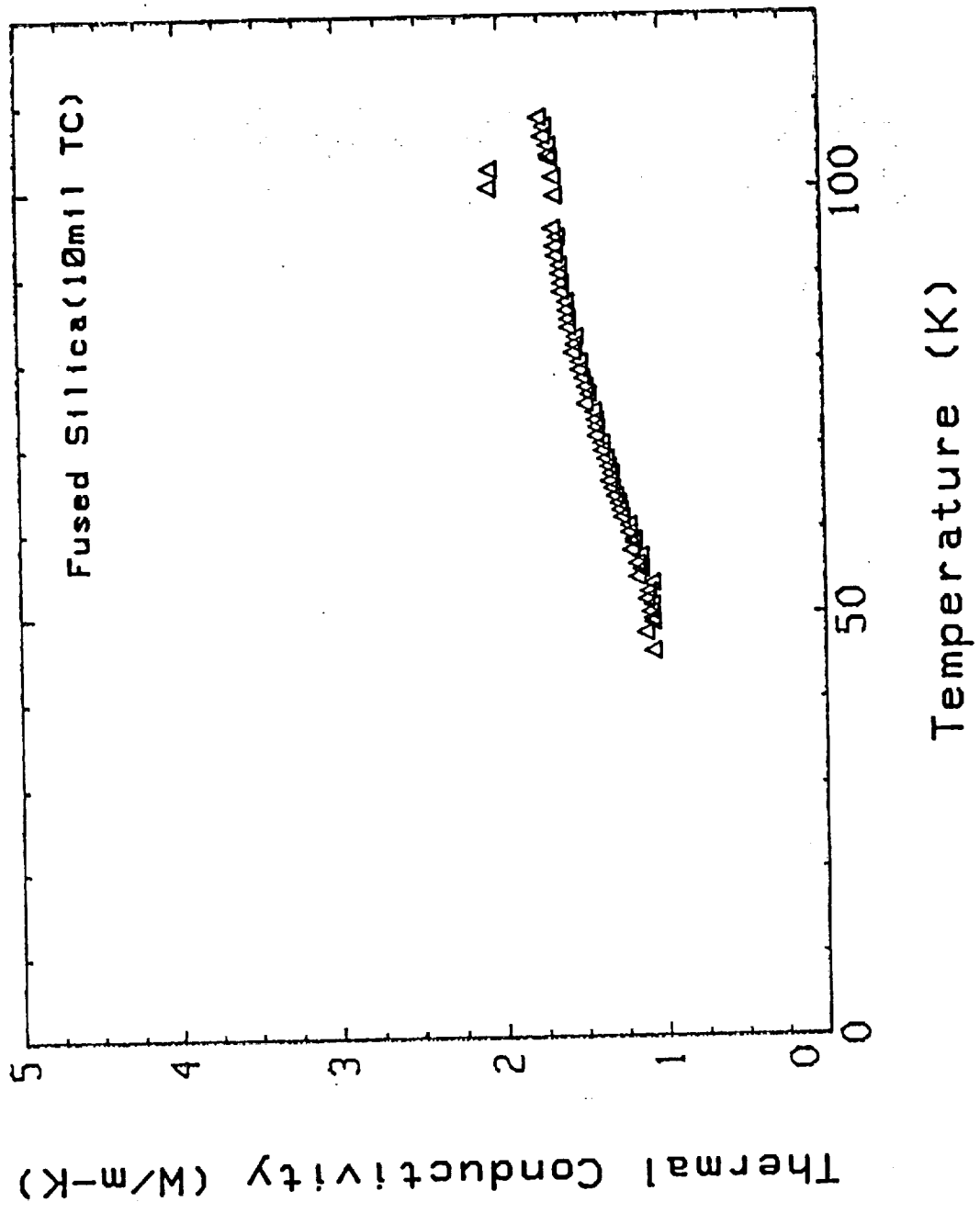


Figure 3. Thermal conductivity of SiO<sub>2</sub> as a function of temperature.

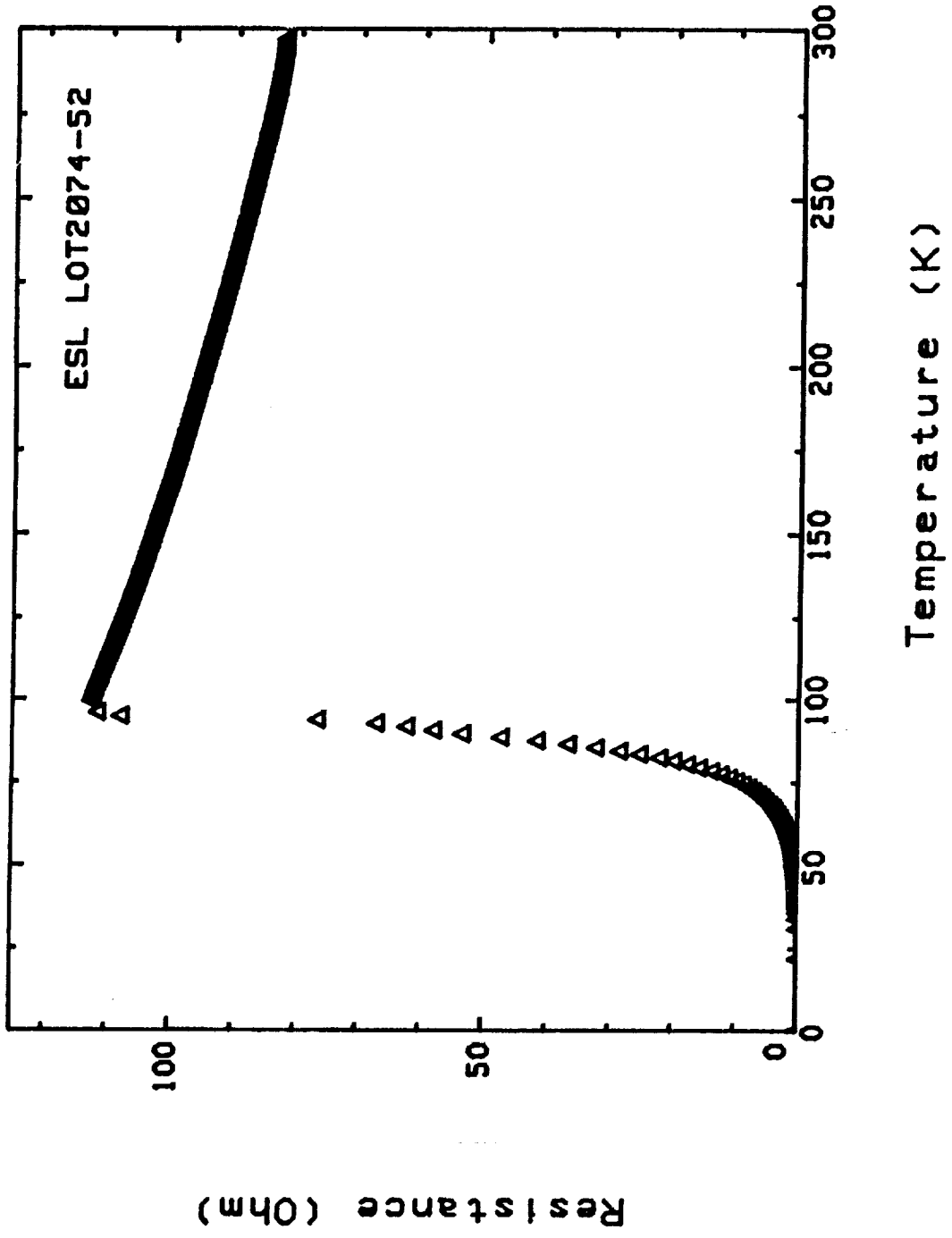


Figure 4. Resistance as a function of temperature for one screen-printed line of a superconducting link made by ESL.



# **A Comparison of Superconductor and Manganin Technology for Electronic Links used in Space Mission Applications**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The electronic link connecting cryogenically cooled radiation detectors to data-acquisition and signal-processing electronics at higher temperatures contributes significantly to the total heat load on spacecraft cooling systems that use combined mechanical and cryogenic liquid cooling. Using high transition temperature superconductors for this link has been proposed to increase the lifetime of space missions. In this paper, we examine several YBCO ( $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_7$ ) superconductor-substrate combinations and compare total heat loads to manganin wire technology in current use. Using numerical solutions to the heat-flow equations we demonstrate that replacing manganin technology with YBCO thick film technology can extend a seven year mission by up to one year.

Key words: high temperature superconductor, high  $T_c$  superconductor, space application, heat load, thermal conductivity, thick film

### Abbreviations used in text:

YBCO	$\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_7$
IR	infrared
SAFIRE	Spectroscopy of the Atmosphere Using Far Infra-red Emission
SIRTF	Space Infrared Telescope Facility
AWG	American wire gauge
YSZ	$\text{Y}_2\text{O}_3$ -stabilized $\text{ZrO}_2$

### Symbols used in the text:

A	cross-sectional area of link
c	specific heat
$H_{30}$	heat load for upper temperature of link at 30 K
$H_{80}$	heat load for upper temperature of link at 80 K
i	electric current
J	electric current density
K	thermal conductivity
L	length of link
R	electrical resistance
S	electrical power dissipated per volume
t	time
T	temperature
$T_c$	superconducting transition temperature
$T_H$	temperature of link at hotter end
$T_L$	temperature of link at cooler end
x	position
$\rho$	mass density
$\rho_{\text{elect}}$	electrical resistivity

## I. Introduction

The discovery of a new class of ceramic superconductors with transition temperatures above the boiling point of liquid nitrogen has opened the doors for several important space applications. One near term application is the fabrication of an electrically conducting and thermally isolating link to replace manganin wires used in connecting IR detectors to data acquisition electronics on remote sensing platforms like SAFIRE and SIRTf. The SAFIRE mission employs hybrid dewars which combine both mechanical and cryogenic liquid cooling. This new technology is limited by the heat conducted through sensor array leads that connect the electronics ( at  $\sim 80$  K) to the sensors ( at  $\sim 4$  K). This link between a detector operating at 2-4 K and electronics operating at 30 - 80 K must be made of material that has high electrical conductivity and high thermal resistance. The YBCO superconductor with a transition temperature,  $T_C$ , of 93 K can achieve these conflicting requirements. A link with these characteristics will improve the thermal isolation of IR detectors and will increase the lifetime of the cryogen. A reduction of the thermal load due to the link by a factor of 4 will increase the lifetime of a 7 year mission by about one year. This report considers some of the principles that need to be addressed in order to develop a high  $T_C$  superconducting link for use in IR remote sensing platforms.

Using SAFIRE as an example of a cryogenically cooled remote sensing atmospheric mission that requires an electrically conducting and thermally isolating link connecting a detector at 4 K to electronics at 80 K, we note the following differences between conventional and superconducting links:

1. The state-of-the-art technology of conventional wires uses 158 manganin wires encased in Kapton ribbon. These #40 AWG manganin wires are approximately 6 inches long, with a 0.1 mil shield. For SAFIRE this conventional link produces 33 % of the instrument heat load on the liquid cryogen.

2. The state-of-the-art superconducting thick film technology produces  $YBa_2Cu_3O_x$  wires made by the screen printing process. Wires are 2-4 mils in width at a 2-4 mil spacing, and 30-40 micron in thickness with a reduced cross sectional area of 1000-2000  $\mu m^2$  per wire. Such wires are printed on  $MgO$ ,  $Al_2O_3$ , or YSZ ( $Y_2O_3$ -stabilized  $ZrO_2$ ) substrates.

Using such high  $T_C$  material can result in a significant reduction of the heat load from the link. In this report we have investigated the effect of different parameters on the performance of the link: wire material, cross sectional area per wire, substrate material, and the thickness of the substrate. The studies have been done for two probable cases where the low temperature detector is at 4.2 K

with the high temperature electronics at either 30 or 80 K.

## II. Theory

We need to describe the heat transport in one dimension between two isolated thermal reservoirs, one at a high temperature  $T_H$  and the other at a lower temperature  $T_L$ , linked by an element which has a thermal conductivity  $K$  and an electrical resistivity  $\rho_{\text{elect}}$  as shown in Figure 1. Heat flows from the high temperature reservoir to the low temperature reservoir and, in addition, when an electrical current flows through the element, heat is generated along its length. The local thermal energy density is given by the expression  $\rho c T$ , where  $\rho$  is the mass density of the element,  $c$  is its specific heat capacity and  $T$  is its temperature. The rate at which this energy density changes is given by the thermal continuity equation

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}(\rho c T) = -\nabla \cdot \mathbf{J} + S.$$

Here  $\mathbf{J}$  is the thermal flux vector, given by Fourier's law as,  $\mathbf{J} = -K \nabla T$ , and  $S$  is the local heat source. We assume that  $S$  is due to  $i^2 R$  heating from the electrical conduction; that is

$$S = \frac{\text{Electrical Power Dissipated}}{\text{Volume}} = \frac{i^2 R}{A L} = J^2 \rho_{\text{elect}},$$

where the cross-sectional area and length of the link are  $A$  and  $L$ , respectively. Assuming that the heat flow occurs only in the direction of the linking element we obtain the heat flow equation

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}(\rho c T) - \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left( K \frac{\partial T}{\partial x} \right) = J^2 \rho_{\text{elect}}.$$

Of course, in this expression the specific heat  $c$ , the thermal conductivity  $K$ , and the electrical resistance  $\rho_{\text{elect}}$  are functions of temperature.

We are mainly interested in the steady state behavior of the linking system which is governed by the following ordinary differential equation

$$\frac{d}{dx} \left[ K(T) \frac{dT}{dx} \right] = -J^2 \rho_{\text{elect}}(T).$$

This equation is discussed in a paper by Hull [1].

It is instructive to solve this equation first assuming that the thermal conductivity and electrical resistivity do not change with temperature; in this case the exact solution has the form

$$T(x) = T_L + (T_H - T_L) x - \frac{J^2 \rho_{elec}}{2K} (x^2 - xL) .$$

The first two terms give the linear behavior of the thermal gradient contribution while the third term gives the contribution from the the electrical power dissipation in the link. Any further contributions to the spatial dependence of the temperature distribution are due to changes in the thermal conductivity with temperature. When the thermal conductivity and electrical resistance vary with temperature we must employ numerical techniques to determine the temperature distribution in the wire.

### III. Calculation

Numerical calculations for the one-dimensional heat transfer problem were carried out using a Runge-Kutta method with MathCAD™ [2]. We have used thermal conductivity data from the literature for the following materials: manganin [3], YBCO [1], tetragonal YSZ [4], cubic YSZ [5], and amorphous silica [6]. Electrical resistivity data for manganin were taken from reference 3. At low temperatures the thermal properties of the materials under consideration depend on temperature (see Fig. 2). The temperature dependencies for the electrical resistivity and thermal conductivity were approximated by linear or quadratic functions using the data in the above references. It was found that the Joule heating was insignificant at the low current densities ( $\leq 0.1$  A/cm<sup>2</sup>) required for the proposed applications. The temperature and temperature gradient at the low temperature end of the sample were input as parameters to the numerical solution of the second order differential heat transfer equation. The program was run repeatedly, choosing a new temperature gradient until the temperature at the high temperature end of the sample met the specified design value. The step size for numerical integration was continually decreased until the solution stabilized. Typically this occurred when the step size was about one thousandth of the total interval size.

The results of a typical solution (in this case #40 manganin wire) are plotted in Fig. 3. The heat load should be the same everywhere along a one dimensional wire which implies that the product of thermal conductivity and  $dT/dx$  (which is proportional to the heat load) should remain constant. The thermal conductivity increases monotonically with temperature for manganin while  $dT/dx$  (the slope in Fig. 3) decreases. Analysis shows that this product remains constant which provides a good check on the correctness of the solution.

### IV. Results

Since the proposed missions have different values for the temperature of the electronics, we have included two cases in Table 1. In both cases the detector is in contact with a reservoir at 4.2 K (liquid helium), but in one case the electronics are at 30 K with a link 3 inches long and in another they are at 80 K with a 6 inch link. We have labeled the heat loads (in  $\mu\text{W}$ )  $H_{30}$  and  $H_{80}$  for the two cases, respectively. For purposes of comparison it is instructive to consider the case where the thermal conductivity remains constant as a first order approximation. For this case the thermal conductivity is taken as an appropriate average of the temperature varying value. We have included results for the calculation done numerically as described above (columns 2 and 4 in Table 1) and the results assuming constant thermal conductivity  $K$  (columns 3 and 5 in Table 1). For the constant  $K$  results we simply picked a straight average of the thermal conductivity values at the highest and lowest temperatures.

Manganin wires coated with Kapton have already been used as an interconnect from a lower to a higher temperature in space flight [7], so Table 1 includes manganin for comparison. The thermal conductivity of Kapton is so low that it is not considered and it probably would be used in similar amounts for the proposed YBCO link. Thus, we list the heat load per wire for manganin and YBCO deposited on three different substrates: tetragonal YSZ, cubic YSZ, and amorphous silica ( $\text{a-SiO}_2$ ). We call the combined heat load for YBCO on the three substrates total 1, total 2, and total 3, respectively. In determining the amount of substrate needed per wire, we have used a thick film size for YBCO of 1 mil thick by 4 mils wide and assumed a 4 mil spacing between each YBCO wire. The area of substrate required for each wire then becomes 8 mils wide times the substrate thickness.

There are two things to be noted in Table 1. First, the estimates of the individual heat loads assuming a constant  $K$  can vary considerably from the more careful numerical calculation (the constant  $K$  estimate is 36% low for  $H_{80}$  for YBCO). In some cases the estimate assuming constant  $K$  varies in the opposite direction as for  $H_{80}$  for amorphous silica where the estimate is too high by 8%. The estimates assuming constant  $K$  for the YSZ substrates are not close to the numerical values of heat load in any case. The magnitude and sign of the difference between the constant  $K$  estimate and numerical result depend on the detailed shape of the thermal conductivity vs. temperature curve. Thus one must be cautious in interpreting the results using a constant  $K$  since different averaging methods could yield different comparisons. Clearly the numerical calculation which includes the temperature dependence of  $K$  is necessary for a reliable estimate and comparison of the heat load for various cases.

Secondly, we want to compare manganin to the various YBCO-substrate combinations and compare only the more reliable numerical results. Considering the  $H_{80}$  case, we see that the heat load for manganin (#40 wire) is greater than total 3 (YBCO-amorphous silica), but the manganin heat load is less than for totals 1 and 2. The results are similar for the  $H_{30}$  case; however, the

YBCO-substrate combination is relatively better for the  $H_{80}$  case because the substrate thermal conductivities level off at the higher temperatures ( $>50$  K) whereas  $K$  for manganin continues to increase approximately linearly (see Fig. 2). We have chosen an amorphous silica substrate of thickness 6 mils for these comparisons, although such substrates are not readily available off-the-shelf, because there should be no difficulty in producing the thinner substrates. On the other hand, the fine manganin wire chosen for comparison is very difficult to handle and smaller diameter wire is not available and would most likely be extremely intractable. Six inch long bundles of hundreds of ultra-fine manganin wires would be a nightmare. In contrast, the thick films of YBCO on substrates would be relatively easy to handle.

The table clearly shows that the largest contributor to the heat load for the YBCO-substrate combinations is the substrate. The film width for YBCO (which controls the substrate width per wire) and substrate thicknesses are values we feel very confident in with present technology. It should be quite possible to get the substrate area per wire down by a factor of 2 to 4 which would reduce the substrate heat load contribution by 2 to 4. This would make all YBCO-substrate combinations an improvement over manganin wires, especially the YBCO-amorphous silica combination. Projections for this case where the YBCO film width and spacing are reduced by a factor of 2 appear in Table 2. Now YBCO on any substrate represents an improvement over #40 manganin wire. The result for the YBCO-amorphous silica combination projects an increased mission lifetime of about one year for a seven year mission compared to using #40 manganin wire.

The three combinations mentioned must continue to be considered because they all have advantages. Even though the YSZ substrates contribute a higher heat load, they are superior in strength and it is relatively easy to lay down thick YBCO films of high quality on YSZ substrates.

Thus far we have discussed only superconducting films on insulating substrates. The problem of the relatively high thermal conductivity of the substrate could be bypassed with stand-alone superconducting materials. The new laser-heated, pedestal-grown superconducting fibers offer a very attractive alternative to YBCO deposited on substrates [8]. High  $T_c$  superconducting fibers with diameters ranging from 40 to 90 microns have been produced. Links fabricated from these fibers would have contributions to the heat load comparable to YBCO alone which would result in a considerable improvement over manganin leads. This relatively new technology merits serious consideration.

A final comment is in order. Although the numerical calculations include a Joule heating term, the results for manganin (the only normal conductor) were not affected by the Joule heating term because the current for the envisioned application is quite low ( $1 \mu\text{A}$ ). As the cross section of the manganin decreases or the electrical current increases, the Joule heating will increase. Our numerical calculations show that the Joule heating will begin to play a role to increase the heat load as the current approaches  $100 \mu\text{A}$  for #40 manganin wire. This will occur sooner for #42

manganin wire because of its smaller cross-sectional area. For higher current applications the YBCO-substrate combinations will result in lower heat loads up to the point where the critical current is exceeded ( $\approx 5$  mA assuming currently obtainable YBCO with a critical current density of  $200 \text{ A/cm}^2$ ). At this point we would require better quality thick films of YBCO. A detailed analysis for heat transfer in the presence of large currents has been carried out by J. R. Hull [1].

## V. Conclusion

We have carried out an analysis of the heat load on a cooling system using low-temperature detectors. This analysis shows the importance of using the numerical solution to the differential equations for one-dimensional heat flow in estimating the heat load of interconnects in planned space flight missions. Simply assuming an averaged constant value for the thermal conductivity to estimate the heat load can lead to considerable error. With current technology the YBCO-substrate combinations result in numerically calculated heat flows comparable to those for available manganin wires. While there is little chance of reducing the heat load contribution using manganin wires, there is a good chance of obtaining considerable reduction using a YBCO-substrate combination or using superconducting fibers. Superconductors should continue to be explored as low-current carrying interconnects for missions where the interconnect contribution to the heat load plays a predominant role in the lifetime of the mission. As the number of interconnects increases, the thick film superconducting links or superconducting fibers will be more attractive.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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**Table 1: Comparison of heat flows in  $\mu\text{W}$  for various materials and cases.**

Material	H30 numerical calculation	H30 constant K calculation	H80 numerical calculation	H80 constant K calculation
Manganin #40	4.6	4.6	16.6	15.4
YBa <sub>2</sub> Cu <sub>3</sub> O <sub>7</sub> *	1.0	1.0	2.5	1.6
YSZ tetragonal **	11.2	9.3	25	16
Total 1	12.2		27.5	
YBa <sub>2</sub> Cu <sub>3</sub> O <sub>7</sub> *	1.0	1.0	2.5	1.6
YSZ cubic **	7.4	6.0	17	13
Total 2	8.4		19.5	
YBa <sub>2</sub> Cu <sub>3</sub> O <sub>7</sub> *	1.0	1.0	2.5	1.6
a-SiO <sub>2</sub> **	1.6	1.6	4.6	4.9
Total 3	2.6		7.1	

\* Assuming 1 mil x 4 mil films

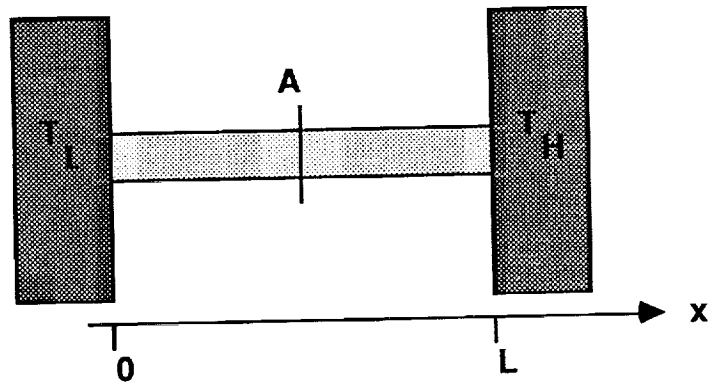
\*\* Assuming a 6 mil thick substrate

**Table 2: Comparison of heat flows in  $\mu\text{W}$  for a 2 mil spacing.**

<b>Material</b>	<b>H80 numerical calculation</b>
<b>Manganin #40</b>	<b>16.6</b>
<b>YBa<sub>2</sub>Cu<sub>3</sub>O<sub>7</sub> *</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>YSZ tetragonal **</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>Total 1</b>	<b>13.8</b>
<b>YBa<sub>2</sub>Cu<sub>3</sub>O<sub>7</sub> *</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>YSZ cubic **</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Total 2</b>	<b>9.8</b>
<b>YBa<sub>2</sub>Cu<sub>3</sub>O<sub>7</sub> *</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>a-SiO<sub>2</sub> **</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Total 3</b>	<b>3.6</b>

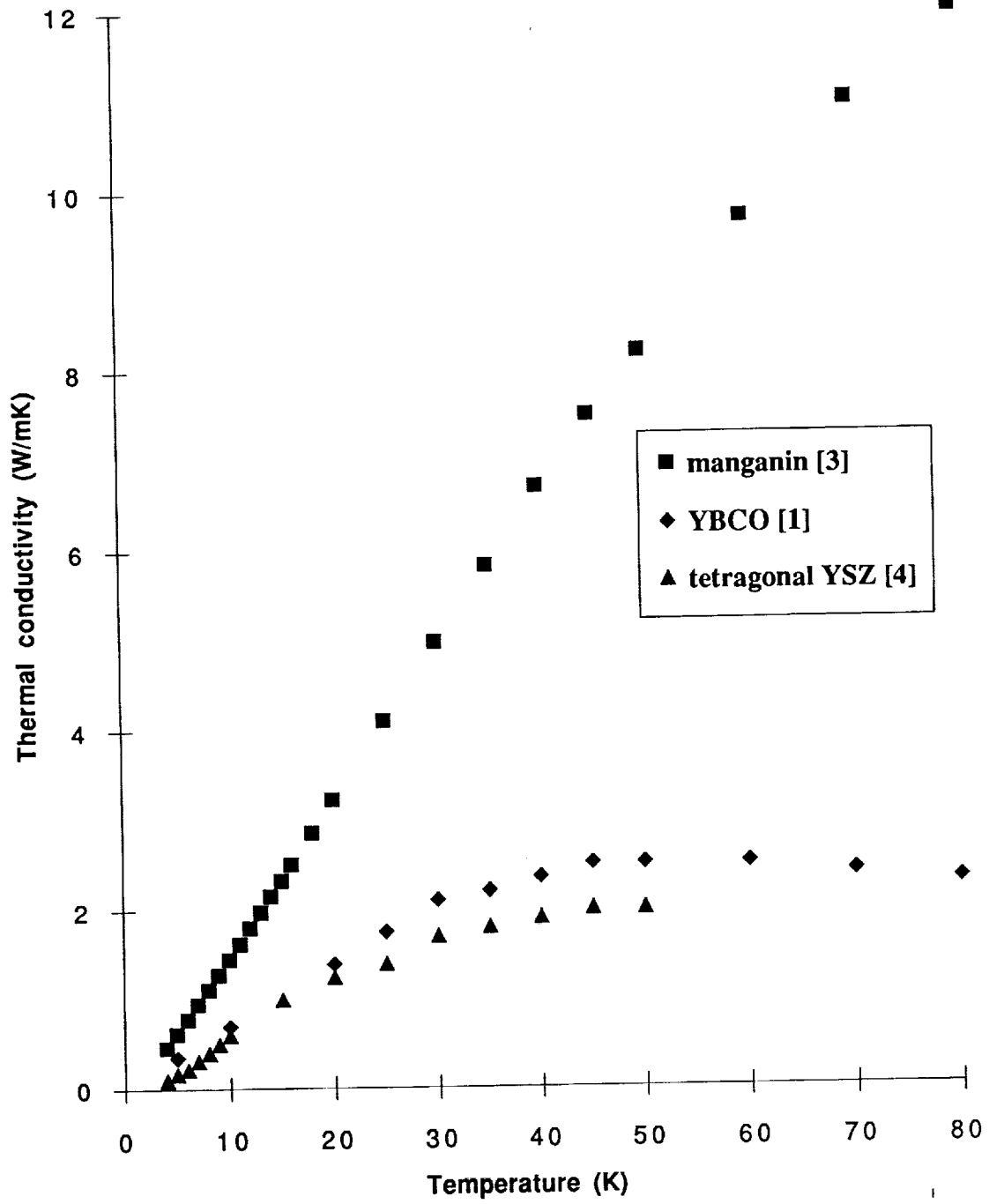
**\* Assuming 1 mil x 2 mil films**

**\*\* Assuming a 6 mil thick substrate**



**Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the link with important parameters indicated:**  
 **$T_L$**  - temperature of the lower temperature reservoir (detector)  
 **$T_H$**  - temperature of the higher temperature reservoir (electronics)  
 **$A$**  - cross-sectional area of the link, and  **$L$**  - length of the link.

**Figure 2. Thermal conductivity vs temperature for various materials**



**Figure 3. Temperature along the link vs position along the link for the numerical calculation of the case where  $T_L = 4.2$  K and  $T_H = 80$  K for #40 manganin wire.**

