Permanent Magnet Materials and their Application

PETER CAMPBELL



This book is a comprehensive design text for permanent magnets and their application. Permanent magnets are very important industrially, and are widely used in a variety of applications, including industrial drives, consumer products, computers and automobiles.

In the early 1970s a new class of magnet - the rare earths - was discovered, the properties of which showed sustained improvement over the following two decades. New materials such as these have spawned many new markets for magnets, with significant performance gains in the devices for which they are used. By the early 1990s the new magnet technologies had matured. Until the advent of the present book, however, there has been no text that unified all the relevant information on the wide range of modern permanent magnet materials. This book, therefore, has been written as a comprehensive review of the technology, intended for scientists and engineers involved in all stages of the manufacture, design and use of magnets. A brief theory of magnetism explains the behavior of the different classes of permanent magnet, and the various production processes that lead to quite diverse material characteristics. The core of the book is a detailed treatment of the methods that are used to design permanent magnets, including assessments of the changes they experience under practical operating conditions. Modern analytical techniques are described, including the finite element method, with reference to the accurate simulation of permanent magnet materials. With the evolution of new materials, the markets for permanent magnets have changed. In this book, the author emphasizes the most important modern applications, and discusses the viability of the various magnet types that are now available.

This book, the first to cover comprehensively all aspects of modern permanent magnet materials, their design and application, will be of value to anyone involved in the design and use of magnets.

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Contents

Pr	eface	page ix	
1	Fun	1	
	1.1	Introduction	1
	1.2	Magnetic dipole moment	2
	1.3	Magnetizing force	5
	1.4	Magnetocrystalline anisotropy	9
	1.5	Magnetic energy	15
	1.6	Shape anisotropy	19
		References	23
2	Peri	manent magnet processes	25
	2.1	Introduction	25
	2.2	Magnetic domains	26
	2.3	Ceramic ferrite magnets	32
	2.4	Alnico magnets	35
	2.5	Samarium-cobalt magnets	38
	2.6	Neodymium-iron-boron magnets	45
	2.7	Bonded magnets	51
		References	56
3	Thermal stability		57
	3.1	Introduction	57
	3.2	The Curie temperature	59
	3.3	Demagnetization curves	61
	3.4	Composition variations	69
	3.5	Surface oxidation	76
		References	80
4	Magnetic circuit design		82
	4.1	Introduction	82
	4.2	Field equations	83
	4.3	Static operation	85

Contents

	4.4	Dynamic operation	90
	4.5	Energy transfer	97
	4.6	Equivalent magnetic circuit	105
		References	112
5	Mag	113	
	5.1	Introduction	113
	5.2	Magnetostatic fields	114
	5.3	The finite difference method	120
	5.4	Permanent magnet model	124
	5.5	The finite element method	126
		References	133
6	Mag	134	
	6.1	Introduction	134
	6.2	Magnetization	134
	6.3	Demagnetization	145
	6.4	Field measurement	146
		References	157
7	Applications		158
	7.1	Introduction	158
	7.2	d.c. motors	161
	7.3	Stepper motors	172
	7.4	Synchronous motors	178
	7.5	Moving coil actuators	180
	7.6	Holding force actuators	185
	7.7	Magnetic suspensions	189
	7.8	Sensors	195
	7.9	Steady fields	200
		References	203

204

viii

Preface

The original inspiration to write this book came when, after an electrical engineering training in the late 1960s, I embarked upon the design of a variety of permanent magnet electrical machines. I needed to know more about the behavior and performance of the different magnet materials than the electromechanical design texts provided, and significantly more applications data than the scientific books on magnetism contained. This shortcoming was exacerbated in the early 1970s when an entirely new class of magnet - the rare earths - was discovered, offering a vast array of new opportunities for permanent magnet devices, and new challenges to designers such as myself. As these new materials were developed, their properties exhibited dramatic improvements from year to year, reaching maturity in the early 1990s as a full range of samarium-cobalt and neodymium-iron-boron magnets. Until this had happened, I felt that any attempt to produce a comprehensive text including a description of these materials would have been premature. Now, with first-hand experience in most cases, I am able to describe their selection and design for a wide range of important applications.

The material for this book has evolved from courses given to students and practicing engineers while I was at the University of Cambridge and the University of Southern California, and from a variety of assignments to develop and design permanent magnet materials. Though this is intended mainly as a design text, I thought it important to open with an explanation of the theory of permanent magnetism, so the rationale for the various production processes can be understood, leading to the distinct properties of the different classes of magnet. Nevertheless, the core of this book is a detailed treatment of the methods that are used to design permanent magnets, but an important practical consideration is the changes that occur in material properties due to environmental conditions.

Preface

The difference between *design* and *analysis* is emphasized, and an appropriate simulation for a permanent magnet is described for each technique, including the popular finite element method.

With the addition of the rare earth class of magnet to the existing ferrite and alnico types, there are new devices, which represent significant new markets for magnets, and there are existing devices whose performance has been substantially improved by changing to a modern material. The selection and optimization of a permanent magnet for the most important applications is described in this book, but the list of products is noticably different from any that would have appeared prior to commercialization of the rare earths. My hope is that the information contained in this book will make manufacturers, designers and users aware of the very broad range of properties available from today's permanent magnets, and arm them with the skills necessary to develop more, successful, new products.

Los Angeles, California

Peter Campbell

1

Fundamentals of magnetism

1.1 Introduction

Earlier texts on permanent magnets have opened with historical reviews of these materials (Hadfield, 1962; McCaig, 1977; Parker, 1990; Parker and Studders, 1962). In this book the design of modern permanent magnets is emphasized, and so initially the development of the relationships that are required to model today's materials for a variety of common applications is considered. To the extent that a historical review is provided in this chapter, it is of those fundamental equations of electromagnetism that are needed to understand the performance of magnets in circuits and devices.

There are many properties of a permanent magnet that are considered in its design for a magnetic device, but most often it is the *demagnetization curve* that initially determines its suitability for the task. Its shape contains information on how the magnet will behave under static and dynamic operating conditions, and in this sense the material characteristic will constrain what can be achieved in the device design.

The *B versus H* loop of any permanent magnet has some portions which are almost linear, and others that are highly non-linear. The shapes of these *B versus H* loops, or at least the *demagnetization* portions of them, tell the designer a lot about the suitability of the material for a given application. A brief derivation of the *B versus H* loop is presented, to illustrate the microscopic mechanisms that determine the macroscopic performance of a magnet.

The fundamental theory describing permanent magnets is similar to that for soft magnetic materials. A magnet is permanent (sometimes called *hard*) if it will alone support a useful flux in the air gap of a device, whereas it is *soft* if it can only do so with the aid of an external electrical or

magnetic input. The most basic parameter of either type of material is the *magnetic dipole moment*.

1.2 Magnetic dipole moment

The magnetic dipole moment may be modeled in a similar manner to a loop of wire carrying a current *i*. Consider that this loop lies in the x-yplane shown in Figure 1.1, and that the loop is divided into strips such as *abcd*, which will each carry i (this is legitimate since the currents in sides *ab* and *cd* will cancel for neighboring strips). There is a magnetic field **B** (flux density) in the magnet, which we shall take to lie in an x-zplane. **B** may then be resolved into components $B \cos \theta$ in the z direction and $B \sin \theta$ in the x direction, perpendicular and parallel to the plane of the loop respectively. The force due to a magnetic field on a conductor carrying electrical current is known to be proportional to the current (i), flux density (B) and conductor length (l), and the constant of proportionality is the sine of the angle between *i* and *B*. Thanks to our choice of orientation for the loop and the field, the forces in all four sides ab, bc, cd and da due to $B \cos \theta$ are in equilibrium, and the forces in the long sides ab and cd due to B sin θ are zero. However, those in sides bc and da due to B sin θ form a couple (or torque) of magnitude

$$\delta \boldsymbol{T} = abi \, \delta y \, \boldsymbol{B} \sin \theta \tag{1.1}$$

Because the area of the strip is $\delta A = ab \, \delta y$, this becomes

$$\delta \boldsymbol{T} = i \, \delta \boldsymbol{A} \, \boldsymbol{B} \sin \theta \tag{1.2}$$



Figure 1.1. A loop carrying current i in field B.

Even when modeled as a current loop, the magnetic dipole moment is still a microscopic property of the material. All the strips that comprise the loop in Figure 1.1 carry the same current *i*, and the entire loop will experience a unique field **B**. The torque on the loop is therefore a summation of Equation (1.2) for all the δA areas that constitute the complete loop **A**, so

$$T = iAB\sin\theta \tag{1.3}$$

The boundary of area A is coincident with the path of i, so it is natural to define their product as a unique parameter, which is the *magnetic dipole moment*:

$$\boldsymbol{\mu}_{\mathrm{m}} = i\boldsymbol{A} \tag{1.4}$$

The torque on the current loop now becomes

$$\boldsymbol{T} = \boldsymbol{\mu}_{\mathrm{m}} \boldsymbol{B} \sin \theta \tag{1.5}$$

Torque T, moment μ_m and the field B (as $B \sin \theta$) are all vector quantities with specific directions as well as magnitudes. No particular shape was defined for the loop in Figure 1.1, so the area A may describe any shape of loop provided that it is planar. The vector A is normal to that plane, so too will be μ_m .

The rectangular current loop of Figure 1.2 has μ_m normal to its plane, and in the presence of a magnetic field **B** there is a torque **T** about its axis. If the loop can rotate about this axis, then the torque tries to align μ_m with the direction of **B**; if this is achieved, then θ and sin θ are zero, as will be **T**.

An electron in a microscopic orbit has a magnetic dipole moment, which we have modeled as a current circulating in a loop. A simple model of a bulk magnetic material is a large array of electrons, and this material will appear to be unmagnetized if its magnetic dipole moments are randomly



Figure 1.2. Torque applied to a magnetic dipole current loop.

oriented. When a field B is applied to the material, each moment experiences a torque that tends to rotate it towards the direction of B. There are atomic forces on the electron orbits, which resist rotation by T, but if the applied field is strong enough, then the torques will be great enough to align all the moments with B. The material has then reached its *saturation* field. This mechanism is not sufficient, however, to create a permanent magnet material, which by our earlier definition must be able to sustain its own magnetic flux in the absence of any external sources of field. In other words, a permanent magnet must sustain flux by virtue of its own internal field, which will require spontaneous alignment of the magnetic dipole moments, or *spontaneous magnetization*.

The work done in rotating the moment in a field is found by integrating Equation (1.5) through the angle of rotation,

$$E = \int \mathbf{T} \cdot d\theta$$
$$= \mu_{\rm m} B \int \sin \theta \cdot d\theta = -\mu_{\rm m} B \cos \theta \qquad (1.6)$$

The lowest value of energy E in the material occurs when μ_m and B are aligned, so there is indeed a natural tendency for this internal alignment to happen and hence minimize the energy. This process of aligning the axes of magnetic dipoles due to their own internal field is called *exchange interaction*. In an elemental volume of the bulk material, the adjacent values (and directions) of μ_m will be identical, so a summation of μ_m may be performed over this volume ΔV , which yields a new property of the material called its *magnetization* M:

$$M = \lim_{\Delta V \to 0} \frac{\sum \mu_{\rm m}}{\Delta V} \tag{1.7}$$

This strict definition of M shows that it is actually the magnetic dipole moment per unit volume, but unlike μ_m , it is a macroscopic property of the material, like B. In an elemental volume alone, although the dipoles are aligned by the internal field, that field B will *itself* be generated by M. The existence of an internal field even when no external field is applied is the phenomenon of *spontaneous magnetization*. This direct relationship is expressed as $B = \mu_0 M$ (where μ_0 is a constant of proportionality), which allows Equation (1.6) to be rewritten as

$$E = -\mu_0 \boldsymbol{\mu}_{\rm m} M \cos \theta \tag{1.8}$$

The foregoing is clearly a simplified theory of magnetization, which neglects many of the practical conditions that occur. For example, as we shall see later, thermal agitation will disrupt the alignment of the moments and reduce their magnetization M.

1.3 Magnetizing force

While spontaneous magnetization yields a specific value of M in an elemental volume of a magnet, it is not likely that an entire magnet will operate in the same condition with a unique M throughout. A magnet actually comprises a large number of elements ΔV , each of which has a volume $\delta x \cdot \delta y \cdot \delta z$ in Figure 1.3. Two adjacent elements may have different magnitudes for M, and we shall consider only the z components of these shown in Figure 1.3, M_z and M'_z . For the element with M_z , Equation (1.7) gives

$$\sum \mu_{\rm mz} = M_z \,\delta x \,\delta y \,\delta z \tag{1.9}$$

Since μ_{mz} is constant over an elemental volume, Equation (1.4) may be used to give

$$\sum \mu_{mz} = i \,\delta x \,\delta y \tag{1.10}$$

Considering that M was defined directly from μ_m , it is hardly surprising to find that M in an element is related to a circulating current *i*, as shown in Figure 1.3. Combining Equations (1.9) and (1.10), that relationship is

$$i = M_z \,\delta z \tag{1.11}$$

Similarly, in the neighboring element with M'_z there is

$$i' = M'_z \,\delta z \tag{1.12}$$



Figure 1.3. Magnetization in neighboring magnet elements.

The change from M_z to M'_z occurs over a distance δx , so the corresponding change in current may be expressed as

$$i' = i + \frac{\partial i}{\partial x} \delta x \tag{1.13}$$

With the aid of Equation (1.11), this current flowing up the wall that divides the two elements may be written as

$$i - i' = -\frac{\partial M_z}{\partial x} \,\delta x \,\delta z \tag{1.14}$$

This "wall" may be thought of as having an area $\delta x \cdot \delta z$ across which the current i-i' flows in the y direction. This is a current density, given by

$$J_{y} = -\frac{\partial M_{z}}{\partial x}$$
(1.15)

Now let us consider that M has a component in the x direction as well as that in the z direction. A change in M_x will also contribute to J_y (although a y component of M would not produce an equivalent current in its own direction). A similar derivation gives

$$J_y = +\frac{\partial M_x}{\partial z} \tag{1.16}$$

The total y component of current density will be

$$J_{y} = \frac{\partial M_{x}}{\partial z} - \frac{\partial M_{z}}{\partial x}$$
(1.17)

According to this expression, it is a change in the magnetization that is equivalent to the flow of current. J_y is just one of the three possible components of J_m (J_x and J_z are the others), the current density which may be used to model M. A full derivation of J_m yields a vector equation, which separates these three components using unit vectors i, j and k in the x, y and z directions respectively:

$$\boldsymbol{J}_{m} = \boldsymbol{i} \left(\frac{\partial M_{z}}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial M_{y}}{\partial z} \right) + \boldsymbol{j} \left(\frac{\partial M_{x}}{\partial z} - \frac{\partial M_{z}}{\partial x} \right) + \boldsymbol{k} \left(\frac{\partial M_{y}}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial M_{x}}{\partial y} \right)$$
(1.18)

The *j* component in the *y* direction is the one that was derived in Equation (1.17). Fortunately, there is a shorthand notation for the operation that is performed upon a vector such as M in Equation (1.18), to yield another vector such as J_m . It is the *curl* operation, sometimes referred to as *rotation*,

which is written mathematically as " $\nabla \times$ " (Shercliff, 1977). Equation (1.18) is therefore written as

$$\boldsymbol{J}_{\mathrm{m}} = \boldsymbol{\nabla} \times \boldsymbol{M} \tag{1.19}$$

As an example of this operation, imagine that there is a *rotation* of the M vector in the magnet, which causes the M_z component to change between adjacent elements, as was shown in Figure 1.3. The result is an equivalent current density, which we found by Equation (1.15) to be J_y , but which we now know to be just one component from the more general expressions (1.18) and (1.19).

If the magnet is *uniformly* magnetized, there will only be a change in M at the boundaries as shown in Figure 1.4, and there is only an effective rotation of M at the sides, which is where the equivalent current density J_m will flow. A uniformly magnetized magnet is therefore exactly equivalent to a solenoid coil, as one might indeed expect.

Another well-known situation in electromagnetics to which the *curl* operation applies is the magnetic field **B** circulating (rotating) around a conductor carrying current – Ampère's law (Shercliff, 1977). **B** is related to the current density **J** through the constant μ_0 by

$$\mu_0 \boldsymbol{J} = \boldsymbol{\nabla} \times \boldsymbol{B} \tag{1.20}$$

If **J** is only in the y direction with just a **j** component as shown in Figure 1.5, then J_y will have the same form as Equation (1.17):

$$\mu_0 J_y = \frac{\partial B_x}{\partial z} - \frac{\partial B_z}{\partial x}$$
(1.21)

As a *real* current density J causes a field B to circulate around it, then so too does an *equivalent* current density J_m representing magnetization. When both conducting and magnetic media are present, the total flux



Figure 1.4. Uniformly magnetized magnet (a), which may be modeled by a current density over its boundary (b).



Figure 1.5. Circulation of flux density B around a conductor carrying current density J.

density due to both sources will be

$$\mu_0(\boldsymbol{J} + \boldsymbol{J}_{\rm m}) = \nabla \times \boldsymbol{B} \tag{1.22}$$

However, J_m itself is caused by the material magnetization M according to Equation (1.19), so

$$\mu_0(\boldsymbol{J} + \nabla \times \boldsymbol{M}) = \nabla \times \boldsymbol{B} \tag{1.23}$$

This expression may be rearranged to group the two magnetic parameters together as

$$\mu_0 \boldsymbol{J} = \nabla \times (\boldsymbol{B} - \mu_0 \boldsymbol{M}) \tag{1.24}$$

In the previous Section we showed that spontaneous magnetization could alone cause a field within the material given by $B = \mu_0 M$, which is the condition in Equation (1.24) for real currents to be absent (J=0). In reality, we will be interested in the external effects that a permanent magnet can produce for us, which will of necessity require **B** to be dissimilar to $\mu_0 M$. To this end, a new parameter called magnetizing force **H** is defined as

$$\mu_0 \boldsymbol{H} = \boldsymbol{B} - \mu_0 \boldsymbol{M} \tag{1.25}$$

The more common way to write this most fundamental relationship between the three macroscopic parameters of a magnet is

$$\boldsymbol{B} = \mu_0 (\boldsymbol{H} + \boldsymbol{M}) \tag{1.26}$$

This allows Equation (1.24) to be rewritten as a more general version of Ampère's Law, one that allows for real currents and material magnetization:

$$\boldsymbol{J} = \boldsymbol{\nabla} \times \boldsymbol{H} \tag{1.27}$$

In a magnetic material, an applied current (density J) actually causes H, rather than B, though for a non-magnetic medium we find that Equation (1.27) reverts to Equation (1.20) by setting M=0 and using $B=\mu_0H$. If a winding is placed around a permanent magnet and electrical current is applied, then the magnet becomes magnetized by virtue of J establishing H within the material. H in turn establishes M and hence B, which explains it being called *magnetizing force*.

1.4 Magnetocrystalline anisotropy

Many permanent magnet materials are manufactured in a way that enhances their magnetic properties along a preferred axis, because in most applications we are only interested in field being produced in one particular direction through the magnet. The most fundamental way to attain this is if the crystal lattice structure of the material itself has preferred directions for the magnetic moments, which may then form the foundation for achieving net alignment in the magnet. Such an alignment of the magnetic dipole moments in the lattice is called *magnetocrystalline anisotropy*.

It is already seen in Equation (1.8) that the work done in rotating μ_m in a material with magnetization M would have a minimum when μ_m and M are aligned, and we can use this relationship as the basis for determining the preferred axes in a crystal lattice. It is helpful to rewrite Equation (1.8) using a trigonometric identity for $\cos \theta$ as

$$\boldsymbol{E} = -\mu_0 \boldsymbol{\mu}_{\rm m} M \left(1 - 2\sin^2 \frac{\theta}{2} \right) \tag{1.28}$$

We can now define a magnetocrystalline anisotropy energy E_k as the change in energy that is required to rotate μ_m from a preferred axis ($\theta = 0$):

$$\boldsymbol{E}_{k} = 2\mu_{0}\boldsymbol{\mu}_{m}M\left(\sin^{2}\frac{\theta}{2}\right)$$
(1.29)

In this expression, E_k is a maximum when $\theta = \pi$ (180°) and μ_m is anti-parallel to M – an unstable condition.

The crystal lattices of real magnetic materials are much more complicated than this situation depicts, although Equation (1.29) can be easily modified to account for greater complexity. For example, iron, which is the principal element in many popular permanent magnets, has the body-centered *cubic* crystal lattice structure shown in Figure 1.6. There are now six equally preferred directions of magnetization: [0, 0, 1], [0, 1, 0], [1, 0, 0],



Figure 1.6. Body-centered cubic lattice structure of iron, and magnetization curves on various crystallographic axes.



Figure 1.7. Magnetocrystalline anisotropy energy E_k in a cubic crystal lattice structure.

[0, 0, -1], [0, -1, 0] and [-1, 0, 0]. The unstable condition for μ_m is to lie in a plane between two of these at an angle of $\pi/4$ (45°) to each axis. It is only necessary to increase the periodicity in Equation (1.29) for it to apply to iron, as

$$\boldsymbol{E}_{\mathbf{k}} = 2\mu_0 \boldsymbol{\mu}_{\mathbf{m}} M \sin^2 2\theta \tag{1.30}$$

The plot of Equation (1.30) shown in Figure 1.7 demonstrates the stability of μ_m along two of the axes in one plane. In reality, rotation of μ_m may be considered in many other planes of the body-centered cube,