

Literature Review

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1 Introduction

The University of Melbourne’s cold-atom electron source aims to create high-brightness, high-coherence electron bunches for use in coherent electron diffractive imaging. The imaging of nanoscale objects such as biological molecules [1,2] and defects in solid-state devices [3] by ultrafast, single-shot electron diffractive imaging would provide important information about structure and dynamic processes of these nanoscale objects.

In order to determine the structure of biological molecules atomic, sub-nanometre imaging resolution is required. A number of techniques are available for determining these structures [4–6] and the most successful to date has been x-ray crystallography [7,8]. Unfortunately the process of crystallising biological proteins such as membrane proteins is difficult and to date relatively few have been successfully crystallised [9].

Membrane proteins are the proteins that are associated with or attached to the membrane of a cell. They are involved in detecting and conveying external signals into cells which allows the cell to interact with and respond to their environment [10]. Membrane proteins are important in determining immune responses, interactions with pharmaceuticals, cell adhesion to form tissues and in controlling important metabolic processes such as salt balance, energy production and photosynthesis [11]. Determining the structure of these molecules is a key step in understanding their chemical and biological function. The importance of knowing the atomic structure of biomolecules is exemplified by the enormous progress made in various fields of biology once the double-helical structure of DNA was determined from x-ray images in 1953 [12]. Once a protein’s structure and function are known then it becomes possible to design drugs [13] where needed and to more fully understand how the protein behaves in its biological system.

New imaging techniques and light sources such as x-ray free electron lasers and ultrafast single-shot diffraction have been driven by the goal of overcoming the limitations of x-ray crystallography. Ultrafast single-shot diffraction imaging also has the potential to determine the dynamic structure of biological molecules.

1.1 Ultrafast, single-shot, coherent diffractive imaging with electrons

X-ray diffraction from crystals was first observed a century ago [14] and resulted in a Nobel prize being awarded to William Bragg and his son. Since then coherent diffractive imaging (CDI) has been performed on a myriad of different samples with coherent beams of x-rays and electrons.

Electron interactions with molecules are significantly strong than those of x-rays. For similar energies the electron interaction with a sample is $10^5 - 10^6$ higher than that of x-rays [15].

1.1.1 Single-shot diffractive imaging

Single-shot diffractive imaging with an x-ray source of sufficient brightness should be able to produce a diffraction pattern from scattered x-rays from a single molecule before the molecule is destroyed by the Coulomb explosion which follows photoionisation within the molecule [16, 17]. Single-shot imaging aims to avoid the need for crystallisation with x-ray imaging since with a sufficiently bright source imaging of any molecule would be possible.

Unfortunately in order to achieve single shot imaging with x-rays extremely high brightness such as the multi-billion-dollar x-ray free electron (XFEL) facilities. Due to the stronger interactions of electrons sources such as Melbourne’s cold-atom electron source may be able to generate bright enough electron sources at much lower costs.

With femtosecond timescale single-shot imaging it is possible to observe such things as molecular vibration and dynamic chemical processes [18]. With the sophisticated imaging techniques currently in development it will become possible to create “molecular movies” [1] of these processes.

1.2 Melbourne cold-atom electron source

The University of Melbourne’s cold-atom electron source project aims to produce an electron source for coherent diffractive imaging. If bright, coherent, femtosecond long bunches of electrons can be produced then CDI can be performed on a range of structures.

In order to produce the electrons Rubidium atoms from an oven are first slowed using a Zeeman slower which consists of a near-resonant laser beam and a tapered magnetic coil. The Zeeman slower slows the atoms leaving the

oven from speeds of order 300m/s to speeds of order 10m/s which corresponds to temperatures of a few Kelvin.

The slowed atoms are then cooled and trapped in a magneto-optic trap which consists of three sets of counter-propagating, circularly polarised, near-resonant laser beams combined with a magnetic field generated by two magnetic coils in an anti-Helmholtz arrangement. This serves to cool and trap the atoms to a temperature of order $100 \mu\text{K}$ forming an ultra-cold atom-cloud.

With the atom-cloud produced the electron beam production can begin. The cloud is first illuminated by a resonant 780 nm excitation laser to excite the valance electrons to a high energy level followed by a 480 nm ionisation laser pulse which provides just enough energy to ionise the electrons. Since the electrons have little or no excess energy once they have been ionised they are considered to be ‘cold’.

These cold electrons are then accelerated out of the cloud by a uniform electric field, guided to the neighbouring sample chamber and focused onto the target sample. After passing through the sample the resulting diffraction pattern is incident upon the detector.

The diffraction pattern recorded by the detector can be used to determine the structure of the sample using standard diffraction techniques.

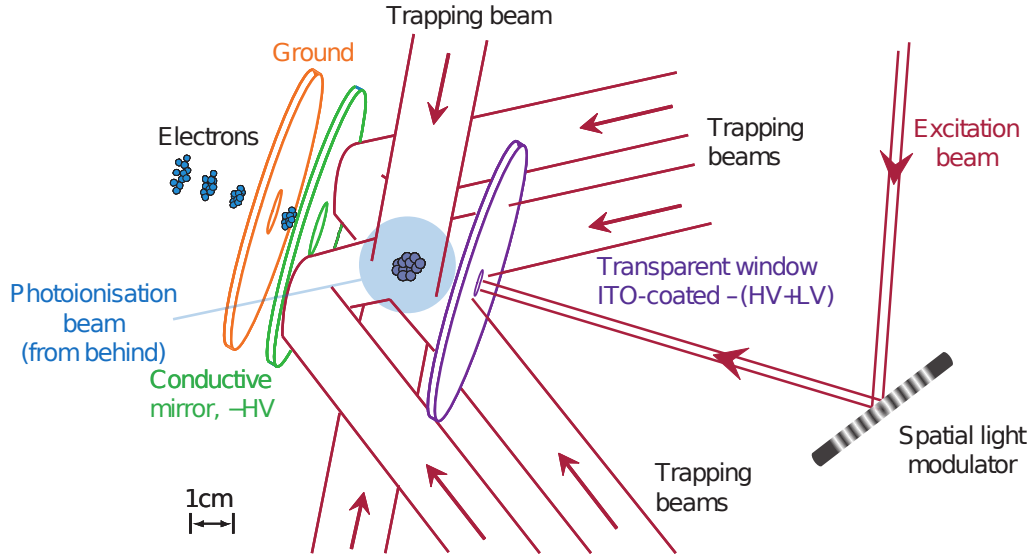


Figure 1: A quasi mirror MOT is used to trap Rb atoms. The atoms are then ionised and the resulting electrons are accelerated using two parallel plates.

2 Motivation for an optical dipole trap

When extracting the ionised electrons from the atom cloud it is necessary to turn off the magnetic trapping fields and the magnetic fields of the Zeeman slower in order to prevent magnetic distortions of the electron bunch trajectory. This means that just before electron extraction the cloud is no longer trapped it begins to expand. The use of additional trapping mechanisms that do not interfere with the electron trajectories, such as an optical dipole trap (ODT), will help prevent this expansion. An ODT will also serve to stabilise the initial position of the electron bunches which tend to drift at present due to dispersal of currents, and hence magnetic fields, in the magnetic coils and their power supplies.

Using an ODT in this system should also allow an increase in the brightness and perhaps coherence of the source due to higher atom cloud densities during the ionisation process. For single-shot CDI a combination of coherence and electron current is required in order for sufficient information to be captured in the resulting diffraction pattern.

2.1 Coherence

Unsurprisingly coherence is an important factor in CDI since this technique relies on the interference of the diffracted waves. The transverse coherence length of a imaging beam must be approximately twice the width of the object being imaged [20] in order to properly resolve structure.

For a quasi-homogeneous source [21], the transverse coherence length L_c can be related to the transverse momentum spread, and hence the temperature, through [22]

$$L_c = \hbar / \sqrt{m_e k_B T}. \quad (1)$$

The transverse coherence is determined solely from the temperature of the electrons which is proportional to the temperature of the electron source and the ionisation energy.

The coherence of the electron bunches could be increased with the sophisticated use of ODTs since the trap would serve to reduce the temperature of the atom cloud, and hence the electron bunches.

2.2 Brightness

Brightness is important in single-shot CDI due to the need to maximise the scattered signal to ensure sufficient sampling of the specimen within the exposure time.

For the cold-atom source the transverse brightness at the source is given by [19]

$$B_{\perp} = \frac{I_p m_e c^2}{4\pi^2 \sigma_x \sigma_y k_B T}, \quad (2)$$

where σ_x and σ_y are the root mean squared source size along the respective axes, I_p is the peak electron current and T is the source temperature.

The brightness of an electron bunch can be increased by a reduction in the length of the bunch or by increasing the density. A short bunch is also necessary for ultrafast electron diffraction.

The use of an ODT will increase the density of the atom-cloud by trapping the otherwise expanding atom-cloud which will result in an increase of the electron bunch density and hence the brightness.

3 Optical dipole trapping

The use of ODTs in the cold-atom electron source will allow greater stability of the atom cloud during ionisation and extraction as well as increasing the density of the atom cloud during these phases.

3.1 History of optical dipole trapping

The use of the optical dipole force as a confining mechanism was first proposed by Askar'yan in 1962 [23] for plasmas and neutral atoms. Ashkin successfully demonstrated the trapping of micron-size latex spheres suspended in water using a focused Gaussian lasers in 1970 [24]. The first optical trapping of atoms was demonstrated by Chu et. al. in 1986 [25] where a ODT was used to trap sodium atoms.

Since then ODTs have been used extensively in atom optics especially in the creation of Bose-Einstein condensates (BECs) and atom lasers.

3.2 Theory of optical dipole trapping

ODTs are sometimes considered to be the simplest form of atom trap for two-level atoms since they consist solely of a focused, Gaussian laser beam detuned from the atomic resonances. The intensity of the Gaussian laser beam at the beam waist varies transversely with r as

$$I(r) = I_0 e^{-r^2/w_0^2}, \quad (3)$$

where I_0 is the intensity at the centre of the beam at the waist, r is the radial distance from the centre of beam and w_0 is the beam radius at the focus.

The ground state light shift for ground state atoms in the laser field is given by [26]

$$\Delta E_g = \frac{\hbar \Omega^2}{4\delta}, \quad (4)$$

where the Rabi frequency $\Omega^2 = \gamma^2 I / 2I_s$ and γ is the linewidth, I is the light intensity and I_s is the saturation intensity. Thus the light shift is larger at points of high intensity such as the centre of the beam and the beam focus.

In order to trap the laser is detuned below the resonances such that $\delta = \omega_l - \omega_a < 0$ where ω_l is the laser frequency and ω_a is the atomic resonance frequency. With negative detuning the ground-state light shift is negative

everywhere and thus atoms feels a force towards the centre given by the gradient of the light shift, and for $\delta \gg \Omega$ and $\delta \gg \gamma$ the force is given by

$$F \simeq -\frac{\hbar}{4\delta} \nabla(\Omega(r)^2) = -\frac{\hbar\gamma^2}{8\delta I_s} \nabla I(r). \quad (5)$$

At the focus of a Gaussian beam the transverse force is

$$F \simeq \frac{\hbar\gamma^2}{4\delta} \frac{I_0}{I_s} \frac{r}{w_0^2} e^{-r^2/w_0^2}, \quad (6)$$

and thus the transverse trapping potential is given by

$$U = -\int dr F \simeq \frac{\hbar\gamma^2}{8\delta} \frac{I_0}{I_s} e^{-r^2/w_0^2}. \quad (7)$$

It is easy to see with this equation how a negative (red) detuning will result in an inwards, trapping force and a positive (blue) detuning will result in a outwards, repulsive force. Blue detuned lasers can be used for trapping if the beam has a low intensity centre however [27–30].

3.2.1 Scattering rates

Atoms in near-resonant light fields experience a non-conservative force due to excitation and spontaneous decay (ie. scattering). More general expressions for the trapping potential can be used to compare the trap potential to the scattering rate due to the photon absorption [31]

$$U_{dip}(\vec{r}) = \frac{3\pi c^2}{2\omega_0^3} \frac{\gamma}{\delta} I(\vec{r}) \quad (8)$$

$$\Gamma_{sc}(\vec{r}) = \frac{3\pi c^2}{2\hbar\omega_0^3} \left(\frac{\gamma}{\delta}\right)^2 I(\vec{r}) \quad (9)$$

The scattering rate should be kept to a minimum in order to prevent the heating atoms in the trap. Fortunately the relationships are such that for large detunings $U_{dip} \gg \Gamma_{sc}$. Such far detuned lasers however do create shallower traps and thus require more powerful lasers to create similar trap depths.

3.3 Using an optical dipole trap in a cold-atom electron source

An ODT can serve several purposes in the cold-atom electron source including increasing the brightness and coherence of the electron bunches as described earlier.

A number of design choices in the development of this dipole trap are under consideration such as the wavelength of the trap, the configuration of the trapping beam/s and the size of the beam waist.

3.3.1 Available equipment

Two main options are available as far as light sources for the trap,

- a 20mW, 780nm diode laser amplified by a tapered amplifier (TA) to approximately 1.8W,
- a 20W, 1064nm fibre laser.

The 780nm diode laser that seeds the TA can be tuned away from the 780nm resonance by tens of nanometres however the TA has a maximum wavelength of 785nm. This restricts the possible red detuning to a maximum of 5nm.

The 1064nm laser is extremely far away from the resonances which results in reduced scattering rates however lasers with powers as high as 20W require more caution in their use as well as suitable optics capable of dealing with the high-intensity light.

3.3.2 1064nm optical dipole traps

ODTs with a wavelength near 1064nm are frequently used when rubidium BECs are being formed [32–37]. These BECs are used for many different applications including the creation of atom-lasers [32–34], atomic clocks [38] and obviously further studies into BECs themselves and related trapping mechanisms [35–37].

ODTs with wavelengths at 1064nm are not only used in rubidium BECs. They have to be used to form BECs of caesium [39], chromium [40], double-species BECs [41], and even molecular BECs [42].

3.3.3 “Near” 780nm optical dipole traps

Traps made from lasers “near” 780nm are more often used when studying and developing trapping methods. Such traps have detunings that vary from 0.5nm [43] to over 60nm [44,45] and are usually referred to as far-off-resonance traps (FORTs). Some of the things that these laser have been used to study are dipole trap loading [46], trapping single atoms [45] and the combination of an ODT with Sisyphus cooling [43].

3.3.4 Configurations

The simplest ODT consists simply of a focused Gaussian beam [25] and many of the references use this simple configuration.

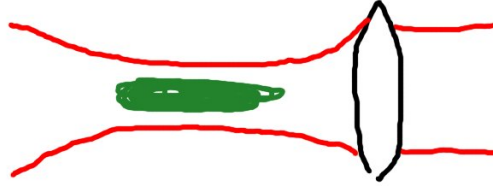


Figure 2: A simple ODT configuration

Crossed dipole traps [36,37,47,48] are a more complicated configuration that can provide a stronger trap as well as control over the shape of the trap and the trapping potentials in various directions. Unlike simple dipole traps which create long cigar-shaped traps crossed dipole traps can create spherical traps.

Crossed dipole traps do not require the beams to be at right angles. For example Couvert et. al. [33] have their beams at 45 degrees when generating atom lasers.

Kinoshita et. al. [49] use a crossed dipole configuration where the two beams do not cross at their respective foci. Instead the beams are crossed at the desired beam waist (initially $300\mu\text{m}$ in this case) after which the waists at the trapping point can be dynamically controlled by adjusting the positions of the lens.

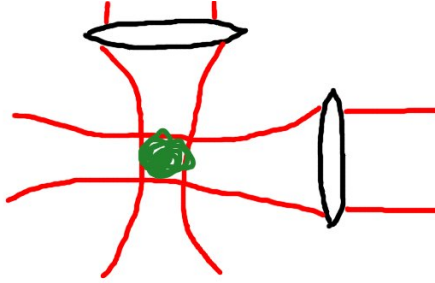


Figure 3: A crossed ODT configuration

3.3.5 Waist size

The size of the beam waist is an important factor for the performance of ODTs. In most experiments involving dipole traps the beam waist used is in the region of $30\mu\text{m}$ in order to provide the deepest trap possible. For the cold-atom electron source however it may be desirable to use a broader trap in order to trap a larger number of atoms. Then again the deepest trap attainable may provide better results.

In order to provide an easily modifiable beam waist a setup like the one describe in figure 4 which consists of a beam expander consisting of a concave then convex lens followed by the focusing lens could be used.

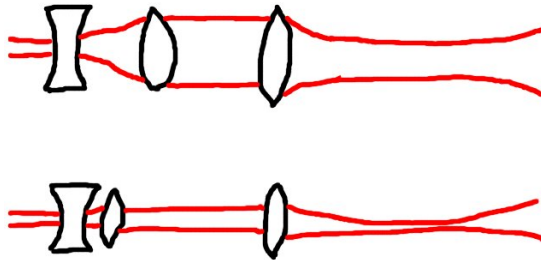


Figure 4: An example setup for controlling the beam waist

This configuration allows manipulation of the size of the beam incident on the final lens by adjusting the distance between the lens in the beam

expander. This in turn changes the beam waist at the focus according to

$$2w_0 = \frac{4\lambda}{\pi} \frac{f}{d} \quad (10)$$

where w_0 is the beam radius at the focus, λ is the wavelength of the light, f is the focal length of the final lens and d is the diameter illuminated by the beam incident on the final lens.

3.4 Conclusion

During the course of this project ODTs using both light sources will be used and the enhanced brightness of the electron source will be demonstrated. The groundwork for further enhancements to the cold-atom electron source such as further reductions in temperature and optical lattices will also be laid.

Glossary

BEC Bose-Einstein condensate.

CDI coherent diffractive imaging.

FORT far-off-resonance trap.

ODT optical dipole trap.

TA tapered amplifier.

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