9. MONOCHROMATIC DATA COLLECTION

9.1. Principles of monochromatic data collection

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9.1.1. Introduction

X-ray data collection is the central experiment in a crystal structure analysis. For small-molecule structures, the availability of intensity data to atomic resolution, usually around 0.8 Å, means that the phase problem can be solved directly and the atomic positions refined with a full anisotropic model. This results in a truly automatic structure solution for most small molecules.

Macromolecular crystals pose much greater problems with regard to data collection. The first arise from the size of the unit cell, resulting in lower average intensities of individual reflections coupled with a much greater number of reflections (Table 9.1.1.1). Secondly, the crystals usually contain considerable proportions of disordered aqueous solvent, giving further reduction in intensity at high resolution and, in the majority of cases, restricting the resolution to be much less than atomic. Thirdly, again mostly owing to the solvent content, the crystals are sensitive to radiation damage. Such problems have severe implications for all subsequent steps in a structure analysis. Solution of the phase problem is generally not possible through direct methods, except for a small number of exceptionally well diffracting proteins. The refined models require the imposition of stereochemical constraints or restraints to maintain an acceptable geometry. Recent advances, such as the use of synchrotron beamlines, cryogenic cooling and high-efficiency two-dimensional (2D) detectors, have made data collection technically easier, but it remains a fundamental scientific procedure underpinning the whole structural analysis. Therefore, it is essential to take the greatest care over this key step. The aim of this chapter is to indicate procedures for optimizing data acquisition. Overviews on several issues related to this topic have been published recently (Carter & Sweet, 1997; Turkenburg *et al.*, 1999).

9.1.2. The components of a monochromatic X-ray experiment

To collect X-ray data from single crystals, the following elements are required:

(1) a source of X-rays;
(2) optical elements to focus the X-rays onto the sample;
(3) a monochromator to select a single wavelength;
(4) a collimator to produce a beam of defined dimension;
(5) a shutter to limit the exposure of the sample to X-rays;
(6) a goniostat with associated sample holder to allow rotation of the crystal; and
(7) the crystalline sample itself.

Other desirable elements are:

(1) a cryogenic cooling device for frozen crystals;
(2) an efficient, generally 2D, detector system;
(3) software to control the experiment and store and display the X-ray images;
(4) data-processing software to extract intensities and associated standard uncertainties for the Bragg reflections in the images.

Many of these are discussed elsewhere in this volume. This chapter aims to provide guidance in those areas where choices are to be made by the experimenter and is concerned with the interrelations between parameters and how they conspire for or against different strategies of data collection.

Table 9.1.1.1. *Size of the unit cell and number of reflections*

Compound	Unit cell		Reflections	Average intensity
	Edge (Å)	Volume (Å^3)		
Small organic	10	1000	2000	1
Supramolecule	30	25000	30000	1/25000
Protein	100	1000000	100000	1/1000000
Virus	400	100000000	1000000	1/100000000

9.1.3. Data completeness

The advantage of diffraction methods over spectroscopy is that they provide a full 3D view of the object. Diffraction methods are theoretically limited by the wavelength of the radiation used, but, in practice, every diffraction experiment is further limited by the aperture and quality of the lens. In the X-ray experiment, the aperture corresponds to the resolution limit and the quality of the 'lens' to the completeness and accuracy of the measured Bragg reflection intensities.

In this context, completeness has two components, the first of which is geometric and hence quantitative. It is necessary to rotate the crystal so that all unique reciprocal-lattice points pass through the Ewald sphere and the associated intensities are recorded on the detector. Ideally, the intensities of 100% of the unique Bragg reflections should be measured. The second component is qualitative and statistical: for each *hkl*, the intensity, I_{hkl}, should be significant, with its accuracy correctly estimated in the form of an associated standard uncertainty, $\sigma(I)$. The data should be significant in terms of the $I/\sigma(I)$ ratio throughout the resolution range. This point will be returned to below, but it is especially important that the data at low resolution are complete and not overloaded on the detector, and that there is not an extensive set of essentially zero-level intensities in the higher-resolution shells.

9.1.4. X-ray sources

There are two principal sources of X-rays appropriate for macromolecular data collection: rotating anodes and synchrotron storage rings. These are discussed briefly here and in more detail in Chapters 6.1 and 8.1.

9.1.4.1. *Conventional sources*

Rotating anodes were initially developed for biological scattering experiments on muscle samples and have the advantage of higher intensity compared to sealed-tube generators. They usually have a copper target providing radiation at a fixed wavelength of 1.542 Å. Alternative targets, such as silver or molybdenum, provide lower intensities at short wavelengths, but have not found general applications to macromolecules. Historically, rotating anodes were first used with nickel filters to give monochromatic Cu $K\alpha$ radiation. Current systems are equipped with either graphite

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