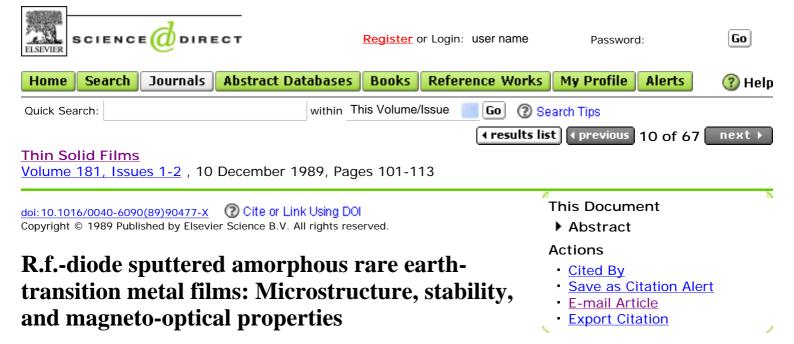
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Received 9 March 1989. Available online 17 September 2002.

Abstract

We report the strong correlation of deposition parameters, microstructure and stability of r.f.diode sputtered magneto-optical thin films studied by transmission electron microscopy and a magneto-optical hysteresis loop tracer. Both argon bleeding pressure and substrate bias strongly affect the microstructure and oxidation resistance of the films. Films sputtered using moderate argon pressures and substrate bias voltages are dense, smooth and morphologically featureless. They are strongly resistant to oxidation. In contrast, low or high argon pressures and substrate bias result in films of high porosity, columnar island-like structure or "spongelike" morphology. They degrade rapidly in air.

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