

The Genesis Solar Wind Sample Return Mission

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The Genesis spacecraft was launched on August 8 from Cape Canaveral on a journey to become the first spacecraft to return from interplanetary space. The fifth in NASA's line of low-cost Discovery-class missions, its goal is to collect samples of solar wind and return them to earth for detailed isotopic and elemental analysis. The spacecraft is to collect solar wind for over two years, while circling the L1 point 1.5 million km sunward of the earth, before heading back for a capsule-style re-entry in September, 2004. After parachute deployment, a mid-air helicopter recovery will be used to avoid a hard landing. The mission has been in the planning stages for over ten years. Its cost, including development, mission operations, and sample analysis, is approximately \$209M.

The spacecraft is shown in Figure 1. It consists of a relatively flat spacecraft bus containing most of the subsystem components, situated below a sample return capsule (SRC) which holds the solar-wind collection substrates and an electrostatic solar wind concentrator. Some of the collectors are exposed throughout the collection period, for a sample of bulk solar wind, while others are exposed only to certain solar wind regimes, or types of flow. Ion and electron spectrometers feed raw data to the spacecraft control and data-handling (C&DH) unit, which determines ion moments and electron flux geometries in real time. An algorithm is used to robotically decide between interstream (IS), coronal hole (CH), and coronal mass ejection (CME) regimes, and to control deployment of the proper arrays to sample these wind types independently. This is the first time such a solar-wind decision algorithm has been used on board a spacecraft.

Why Sample Return?

The findings of the Genesis mission are expected to extend far beyond solar-wind composition. The overarching goal is to understand the isotopic and elemental composition of the solar nebula from which our solar system was formed, and to use this as a baseline for comparison with present-day planetary compositions. The outer layers of the sun are considered to be relatively unchanged since the formation of the solar nebula, with the exception of slight gravitational settling and some solar-surface nuclear processes such as spallation-produced enhancements of highly depleted isotopes such as ^{19}F and ^{21}Ne . The solar wind is known to be elementally fractionated relative to the solar photosphere, but fractionation of isotopes, if it exists, is relatively minor.

The prioritized Genesis measurement objectives are given in Table 1. The highest priorities are isotopic measurements for oxygen, nitrogen, and the noble gases. The science rationale, described below, argues for very high precision measurements of $\pm 0.1\%$, at the 2σ level, particularly for the ratios of all three oxygen isotopes. High precision measurements are also required for a number of other measurements as well. While $^{18}\text{O}/^{16}\text{O}$ has been reported for astronomical observations of the solar photosphere (Harris *et al.* 1987) and for *in-situ* solar wind measurements (Collier *et al.*, 1998; Wimmer-Schweingruber *et al.*, 2001), these are only at the $\sim 10\%$ uncertainty level, and there are no current measurements of solar or solar-wind $^{17}\text{O}/^{16}\text{O}$. The situation is similar with solar-wind $^{15}\text{N}/^{14}\text{N}$, where higher precision measurements are needed than can be obtained with *in-situ* instruments (e.g., Kallenbach *et al.*, 1998). There are currently no direct solar or solar-wind measurements of the heavy noble gases. The Apollo Solar

Wind Composition (SWC) measurements of the early '70s provided early groundbreaking isotopic data on solar-wind helium and neon from exposures of foils for less than 48 hours on the lunar surface. So it is clear that sample return measurements and *in-situ* measurements can provide very complementary data. The Genesis mission, which has both traditional plasma instruments and a significant sample return component, is a marriage between space physics and planetary science at its most basic level.

Clues to Nebular and Planetary Formation

The oxygen isotope measurements resulting from the Genesis mission are designed to distinguish between two theories about isotopic heterogeneity among planetary bodies sampled so far. Oxygen isotopes are unique in their large-scale heterogeneity of more than 6% among solar system reservoirs, which cannot be attributed to mass-dependent fractionation. One widely held theory (e.g., Clayton, 1993), suggests that the solar nebula had compositionally diverse inputs of oxygen as solid-phase and gaseous oxygen components, and that incorporation of varying fractions of these components in the different solar system bodies accounts for the diversity observed today. A relatively simplistic model for this predicts the present-day solar composition to be depleted in ^{16}O relative to the bulk earth, as shown in Fig. 2 (Wiens et al., 1999). Another theory (e.g., Thiemens & Heidenreich, 1983) is that the oxygen isotopic diversity was produced within the hottest part of the nebula by non-mass-dependent fractionation during gas-phase reactions. Such reactions would automatically produce pure ^{16}O enrichments seen in primitive, high-temperature meteoritic objects. This theory predicts an average solar oxygen isotope composition similar to bulk earth and Mars, as shown in Fig. 2.

Photospheric values may be altered slightly by gravitational settling over the solar history (e.g., Bochsler, 2000), but the predictions of these two theories should remain distinct. The Genesis mission should collect sufficient solar wind to allow distinction between these two predicted compositions.

Solar-wind measurements of nitrogen and noble gases will aid models of planetary atmosphere formation and evolution. The original Apollo SWC measurements showed that planetary atmospheres were decisively modified by large-scale losses, as solar and terrestrial atmospheric $^{20}\text{Ne}/^{22}\text{Ne}$ differ by 30%. Atmospheric isotopic and elemental ratios still need a clear baseline for accurate hydrodynamic escape models. Estimates of solar and solar-wind compositions for the heavy noble gases exist from analyses of these gases in lunar soils. However, details of their modification by implantation and diffusion processes are not completely understood. Hence, Genesis samples are anticipated for the more accurate baseline they will supply for planetary atmospheric evolution.

The lower objectives in Table 1 represent a thorough mix of astrophysics and basic planetary science. Some objectives are general “survey” measurements, but a number of objectives focus on specific issues. For example, objective #9, mass 80-100 and 120-140 elemental abundance patterns, is intended to understand whether the Sun preferentially accreted volatile or nonvolatile elements from the solar nebula. Assuming that nebular abundances of odd-mass elements in these mass ranges follow a smooth curve based on s-process systematics, Genesis data should allow for the first time a close comparison of Kr and Xe odd isotope abundances with surrounding nonvolatile isotope abundances

(e.g., Wiens et al., 1991). Likewise, measurement of Li, Be, and B elemental and isotopic abundances (objective #12) is of great importance in establishing the thermal history of the solar convective zone because the nuclear destruction of these isotopes is very temperature-sensitive. Abundances of these isotopes will likely reveal details of mixing at the base of the convective zone.

Several objectives are aimed at understanding the cumulative effect of high-energy particle interactions within the photosphere. For example, fluorine, with its very low abundance compared to surrounding elements, has likely had its initial abundance enhanced by spallation. Radioactive nuclei ^{14}C and ^{10}Be are also spallation-produced in the photosphere. Measurement of these isotopes in Genesis collection foils should give estimates of spallation near the surface of the sun over the last several thousand to several million years, respectively. While a positive measurement is not assured, the Genesis mission will establish significantly lower limits than possible with lunar samples.

Fidelity of Solar Abundances

Present estimates of solar elemental abundances are generally based on two sources: photospheric emission lines and elemental abundances of primitive carbonaceous (C1) chondrite meteorites. It seems rather incongruous that solar abundances are based on meteorites, but photospheric emission lines do not exist for numerous elements, and for other elements they are uncertain enough that meteoritic abundances are considered to be more accurate. Important elements such as iron, oxygen, and beryllium have been the subject of abundance revisions of tens of percent based on recent studies of photospheric

emission lines. Meteorites, on the other hand, are greatly depleted in volatile elements, and even for involatile elements, there are significant abundance differences between the several different C1 meteorites. Solar-wind abundances are now available for many elements lighter than nickel from *in-situ* instruments. Genesis should add many more elements to the solar-wind database to give greater understanding of the solar composition.

Success in obtaining Genesis' solar-composition goals will depend partly on how well the solar composition can be inferred from solar-wind measurements. It is clear that solar wind is elementally fractionated relative to the photosphere as a function of the first ionization potentials (FIP). While the fractionation varies in the short-term, stable long-term averages are being compiled by *in-situ* instruments on Ulysses, ACE, WIND, and SOHO. The fractionation factor between high and low FIP in CH wind is approximately a factor of two, while interstream FIP fractionation is a factor of ~ 4 . Assuming the FIP fractionation can be well constrained by *in-situ* solar-wind instruments for a number of elements for which photospheric abundances are already reasonably constrained by emission lines, Genesis can apply the FIP fractionation principles to obtain accurate solar abundances for many more elements. Solar-wind data on elements heavier than helium show no conclusive evidence of isotopic fractionation. By comparing isotope ratios of different solar-wind regimes, the Genesis mission will be the first to test, to two orders of magnitude, for long-term isotopic fractionation of heavy elements in the solar wind.

Genesis Collectors and Instruments

The Genesis payload consists of three electrostatic instruments and several square meters of solar-wind collection arrays. The science canister, which contains the contamination-sensitive solar-wind collectors, is shown in Fig. 3. A stack of four collector arrays is deployed by rotation about a single axis. The top array is always exposed when the canister is open. The three lower arrays are regime-specific arrays. Each one is only deployed for a specific solar-wind regime identified by the spectrometers and on-board algorithm, and is shaded by the stack the remainder of the time. An array is also positioned in the lid of the canister (Fig. 3). Like the top array in the stack, this one also continuously collects solar wind. In addition to canister-mounted collectors, the SRC lid is covered with collection foils. For each passive collector the solar-wind ions simply embed themselves in the top 100 nm of material, awaiting analysis back on Earth.

The solar wind concentrator, mounted in the body of the canister (Fig. 3), is exposed when the collectors are deployed. The concentrator provides a high-fluence sample of solar wind onto a small target. This is done specifically to increase the signal-to-background ratio for oxygen, which tends to be a ubiquitous terrestrial contaminant. The concentrator consists of a series of flat grids and a parabolic electrostatic mirror that focuses ions upward onto a collection target in the center of the instrument, like a reflecting telescope. The flat grids serve several purposes, including rejection of >90% of solar-wind protons to minimize proton damage of the target, and acceleration of the remaining ions to better focus them and to allow deeper implantation in the target. The voltages of both the proton-rejection grid and the focusing mirror are continuously

adjusted based on real-time ion velocity and temperature data from the ion spectrometer, to optimize the concentrator performance. The concentrator was designed to minimize isotopic fractionation, so that the oxygen isotope precision goal of $\pm 0.1\%$ can still be met.

The Genesis ion monitor (GIM) and Genesis electron monitor (GEM) are typical plasma electrostatic analyzers, which provide data on proton and alpha velocities, temperatures, and densities, and electron energy and angle distributions. These instruments are mounted on opposite sides of the spacecraft deck. The GEM sensor head is an exact copy of ones operating on ACE and Ulysses. GIM uses a slightly modified design from current ACE and Ulysses ion spectrometers. These instruments provide the spacecraft C&DH with complete spectra every four spacecraft rotations (every ~ 2.5 minutes). Code residing in the C&DH converts the raw GIM counts to moments, and processes GEM data to search for bi-directional electron streaming (BDES). Genesis lacks a magnetometer, so it must identify coronal mass ejections (CMEs) by a combination of BDES, high alpha abundances, and high thermal mach number. Weighting functions are used so that combinations of these indicators can make the CME regime selection at the appropriate time.

As seen in Fig. 3, a number of different collector materials were incorporated into the arrays, with material selection based on substrate purity and amenability to the desired analysis techniques. The bulk of the collectors are silicon wafers. Germanium wafers were also used because of their advantage with secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIMS) analyses. CVD diamond was included because of its low-oxygen composition and low

diffusion-rate properties. A number of thin films were included: gold, silicon, aluminum, and diamond. These were mounted on sapphire wafers because of its good thermal properties and the ability to remove the solar-wind-loaded films from sapphire via laser ablation. The techniques to be used for returned-sample analysis include SIMS, noble gas mass spectrometry (MS), resonance ionization MS, accelerator MS, inductively coupled plasma MS, and radiochemical neutron activation analysis. These techniques have been applied to show that elemental backgrounds in the collector materials are sufficiently low, and instrumental sensitivities are sufficiently high, to analyze most elements in the solar wind, even including some of the rare-earth elements, from a two-year solar-wind exposure. Large collector areas and a strong curation plan will ensure the availability of solar wind samples for many years to come.

Concluding Remarks

The mission was conceived of, and is run by, Principal Investigator Donald Burnett of Caltech. Jet Propulsion Laboratory manages the mission and also built the science canister and collector arrays. The spacecraft was built and is being operated by Lockheed Martin Astronautics. Los Alamos National Laboratory built the space plasma instruments, GIM, GEM, and the solar wind concentrator, and is responsible for the *in-situ* data. Johnson Space Center provided the class-10 cleanroom facilities needed for assembly and eventual disassembly and curation of the collectors. The Genesis science team consists of approximately 20 co-investigators from universities and science centers around the country and internationally. Most of these co-investigators come from the

planetary materials geochemistry subdiscipline of NASA, while a subset of co-investigators represent the space physics area.

At the time of writing, the spacecraft is well on its way out to the L1 halo orbit, and has been sending solar wind data from GIM and GEM since late August, 2001. In addition to on-board moments and regime selection, raw plasma data are telemetered to the ground several times per week. As sample collection is considered the primary science for the mission, space plasma data is considered bonus science for Genesis. The Genesis L1 halo orbit has a radius of ~ 1 million km, significantly larger than the ~ 0.3 and $\sim 0.7 \times 0.2$ million km orbits of ACE and SOHO, respectively, presenting opportunities for time-resolved cluster observations of solar wind flow properties. The Genesis spectrometers will be operated at L1 until spring of 2004, and then during the return phase, which takes the spacecraft through the L2 point prior to re-entry in September, 2004. At that time, Genesis will be the first spacecraft to re-enter from beyond the orbit of the moon, and the first spacecraft to return extraterrestrial samples in over thirty years.

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Table 1. Prioritized solar-wind measurement objectives of the Genesis mission.

1	$^{16,17,18}\text{O}$ ratios to $\pm 0.1\%$, $2\text{-}\sigma^*$
2	N isotopes to $\pm 1\%$, $2\text{-}\sigma$
3	Noble gas elements & isotopes, bulk solar wind
4	Noble gases in specific solar wind regimes
5	C isotopes to $\pm 0.4\%$, $2\text{-}\sigma$, bulk solar wind
6	C isotopes in specific solar wind regimes
7	Mg, Ca, Ti, Cr, Ba isotopes
8	Key first ionization potential elements
9	Mass 80-90 and 130-140 elemental abundance patterns
10	Survey of solar-terrestrial isotopic differences
11	Noble gas, N isotopes in higher energy particles
12	Li, Be, B elemental and isotopic abundances
13	Radioactive nuclei in the solar wind
14	F abundance
15	Pt-group elemental abundances
16	Key s-process heavy elements
17	Heavy-light element comparisons
18	Solar rare earth elements abundance pattern
19	Comparison of solar and chondritic abundances

*Measurement of bulk solar wind except where noted;
Elemental abundance ratios to $\pm 10\%$, $2\text{-}\sigma$

Figures



Figure 1. The Genesis spacecraft on its side during assembly at Lockheed Martin. The white return capsule houses all of the solar-wind collectors. The Genesis electron monitor (GEM) is the exposed instrument at the upper corner of the spacecraft deck.

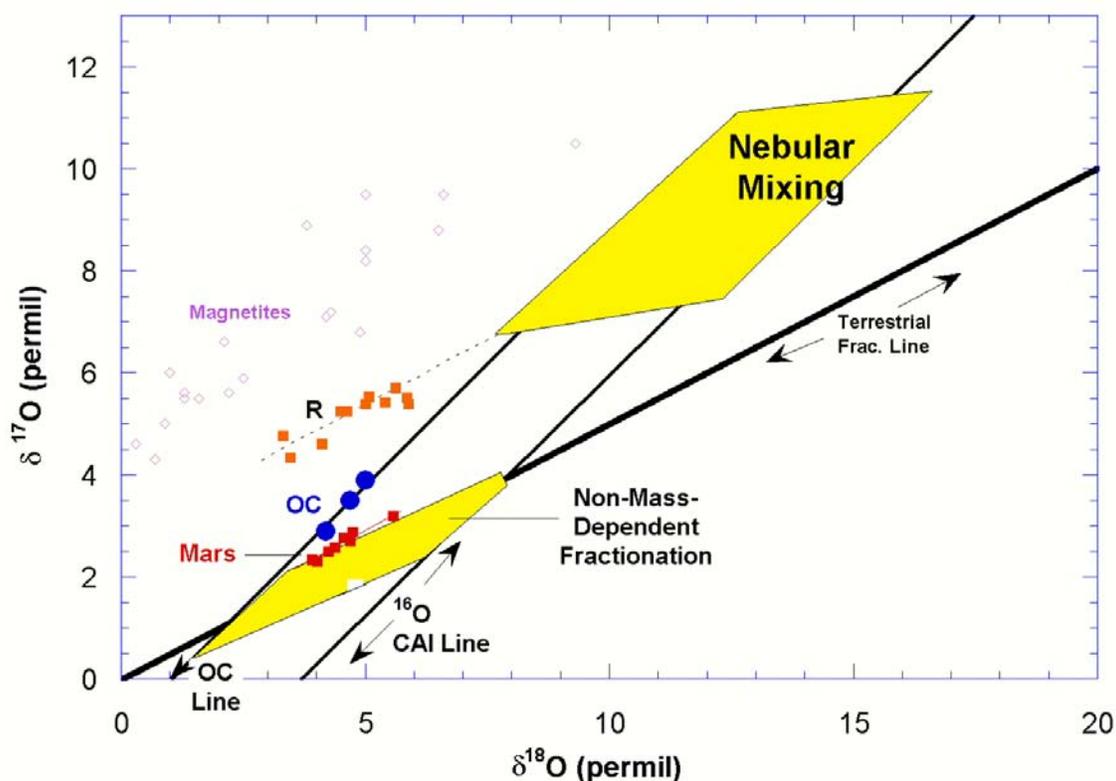


Figure 2. Oxygen three-isotope plot showing predicted ranges, in yellow, for the average solar oxygen isotopic composition based on the nebular-mixing model and the non-mass-dependent fractionation model mentioned in the text. The axes are in permil, or tenths of a percent enrichment relative to ocean water. Also shown is the Mars mixing line, based on martian meteorite measurements, the ordinary chondrite bulk averages (“OC”), R-chondrite measurements (“R”), and individual magnetite grains measured in unequilibrated ordinary chondrites, thought to be derived from nebular oxygen gas (references in Wiens et al., 1999). The “¹⁶O CAI” and “OC” lines represent trends towards pure ¹⁶O enrichment of high-temperature minerals in ordinary and carbonaceous chondrites. The solar ¹⁷O/¹⁶O ratio is completely unmeasured, while the uncertainty on the ¹⁸O/¹⁶O ratio is far larger than the size of this plot. The Genesis measurement goal for oxygen is ± 1 permil, $2\text{-}\sigma$, for both ratios.

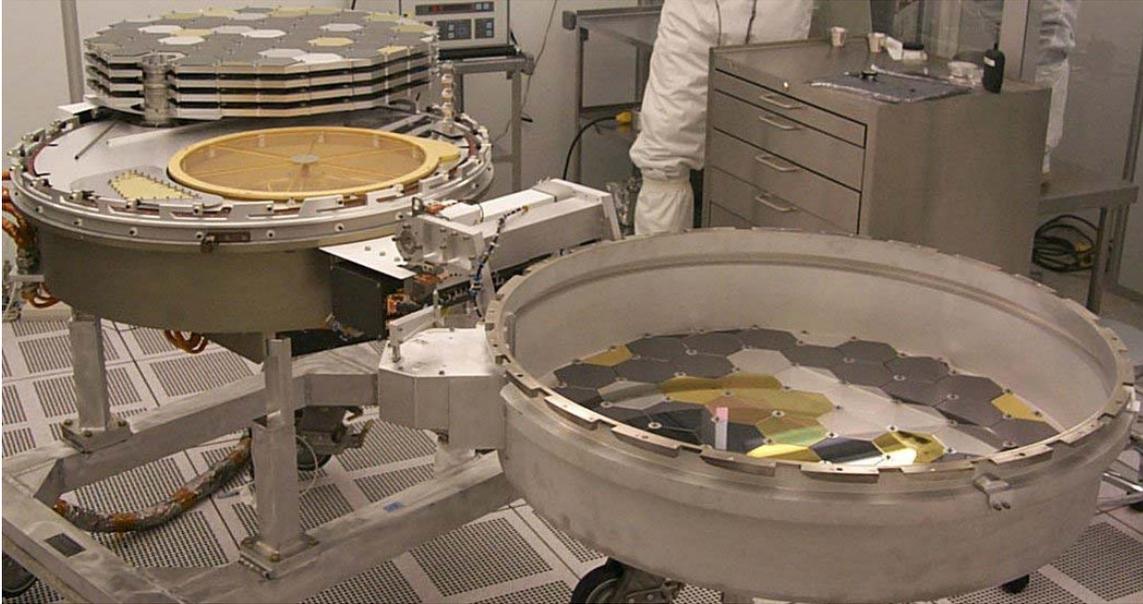


Figure 3. The Genesis science canister, during assembly in Johnson Space Center's class-10 cleanroom. The canister is housed inside the return capsule shown in Fig. 1. Collectors in the lid (right foreground) are always exposed when the canister is open. The top array on the stack of four (upper left) is also always exposed, while the lower three are regime-specific, and only rotated out from under the top one when their solar-wind regime is identified. The solar-wind concentrator is visible as the large gold instrument in the canister body.