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Let's Do the Twist

Posted 01.13.2009 at 11:58 am

Silicon wafers, the backbone of the electronics industry, are brittle and fragile. So researchers have sought to create a more supple polymer surface that can be stretched, twisted, and bent in any direction and to populate it with newly engineered circuits. The solution: "pop-up" wire connections between the circuit components, along with flexible S-curves in the wires that can unwind and slip back into shape. "We are now the first to produce a way to stretch electronic components up to 140 percent," says Yonggang Huang, an engineering professor at Northwestern University and the co-leader of the project with John Rogers, an engineering professor at the University of Illinois. Mountable on most surfaces, flexible technology may eventually be found in displays that you can wrap around your arm, as well as solar panels on car bodies, building windows, and even an implantable camera shaped like a human eye.



Stre-e-e-tch: John A. Rogers

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