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Investigation of the structural and magnetic properties of the interface in Fe₃O₄/TiO₂-Nb:STO heterostructures

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The Fe₃O₄/Nb:STO system has gathered significant attention due to its potential application in spintronics and memristors. The interface between Fe₃O₄ and Nb:STO plays a crucial role in determining the overall electronic and magnetic properties of the system. We present an investigation of a 30 nm Fe₃O₄ thin film on a TiO₂ terminated Nb-doped SrTiO₃ (TiO₂-Nb:STO) substrate deposited by pulsed laser deposition (PLD), focusing on the buried interface using Polarized Neutron Reflectometry (PNR), X-ray Magnetic Circular Dichroism (XMCD), and X-ray Reflectometry (XRR).

Our study utilizes XRR to assess the structural properties, including roughness and density variations, across the interface. PNR is employed to probe the magnetic depth profile. The combination of these techniques reveals a 1 unit cell (u.c.) γ -Fe₂O₃ interlayer between the Fe₃O₄ thin film and the Nb:STO substrate and a 2 u.c. γ -Fe₂O₃ surface layer. XMCD provides element-specific magnetic information throughout the entire system, confirming the total thickness of γ -Fe₂O₃ to be 3 u.c.

The results reveal significant modifications in the magnetic and structural properties at the buried interface, driven by interactions between the Fe₃O₄ film and the TiO₂-Nb:STO substrate. Specifically, the presence of the γ -Fe₂O₃ interlayer and surface layer affects the magnetic coupling of the system.

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