Controlled Coupling and Occupation of Silicon Atomic Quantum Dots at Room Temperature

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It is demonstrated that the zero-dimensional character of the silicon atom dangling bond (DB) state allows controlled formation and occupation of a new form of quantum dot assemblies - at room temperature. Coulomb repulsion causes DBs separated by less than ~2 nm to experience reduced localized charge. The unoccupied states so created allow a previously unobserved electron tunnel-coupling of DBs, evidenced by a pronounced change in the time-averaged view recorded by scanning tunneling microscopy. It is shown that fabrication geometry determines net electron occupation and tunnel-coupling strength within multi-DB ensembles and moreover that electrostatic separation of degenerate states allows controlled electron occupation within an ensemble.