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(54) **ENERGY STORAGE DEVICES AND METHODS FOR FAST CHARGING OF ENERGY STORAGE DEVICES AT VERY LOW TEMPERATURES**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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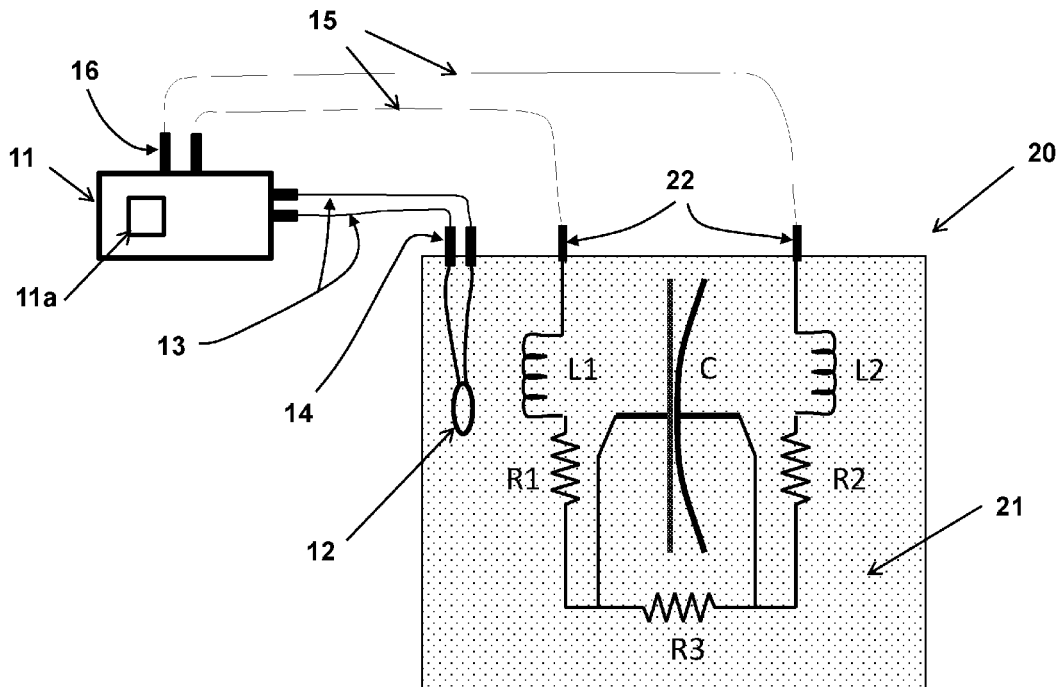
(63) Continuation of application No. 15/049,043, filed on Feb. 20, 2016, now Pat. No. 10,063,076, which is a continuation of application No. 62/168,037, filed on May 29, 2015, which is a continuation of application No. 62/189,156, filed on Jul. 6, 2015.

(60) Provisional application No. 62/119,003, filed on Feb. 20, 2015.

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
H02J 7/00 (2006.01)
H01G 11/54 (2006.01)

A charger for charging an energy storage device having a core with an electrolyte, the charger including: a controller comprising hardware, the controller being configured to: obtain a measurement and/or approximation of a temperature of the electrolyte; determine whether the obtained temperature is below a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device; and input a predetermined voltage and/or current input to terminals of the energy storage device causing internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat if the temperature is determined to be less than the predetermined threshold, wherein the energy storage device includes an internal surface capacitance, which can store electric field energy between internal electrodes of the energy storage device, and the controller is configured to input an AC current to the terminals with a frequency high enough to effectively short the internal surface capacitance.



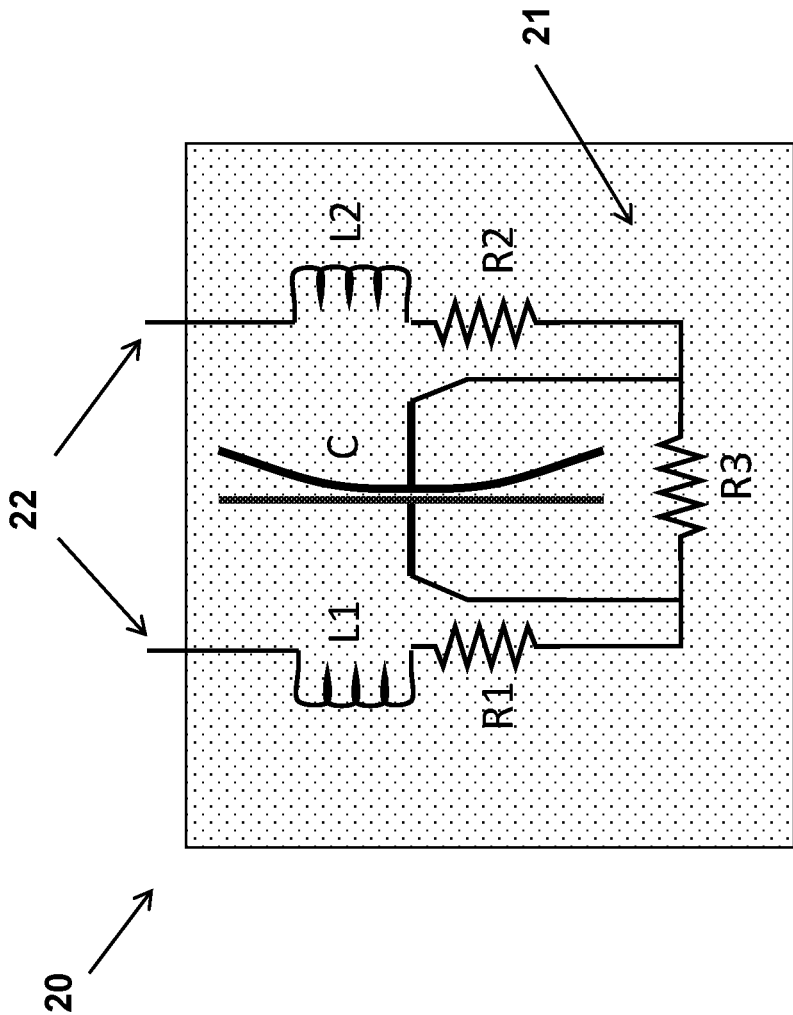


Fig. 1

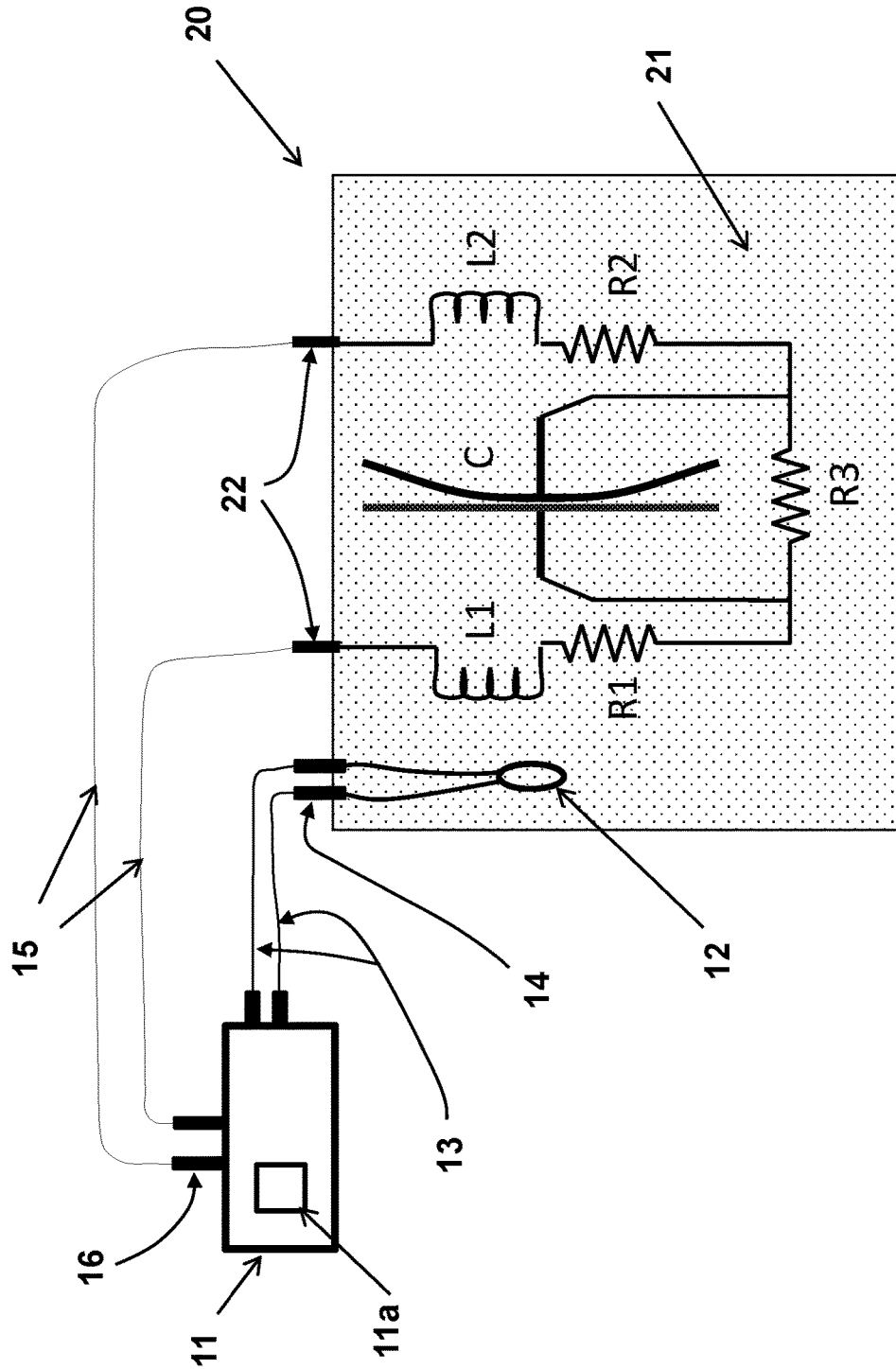


Fig. 2

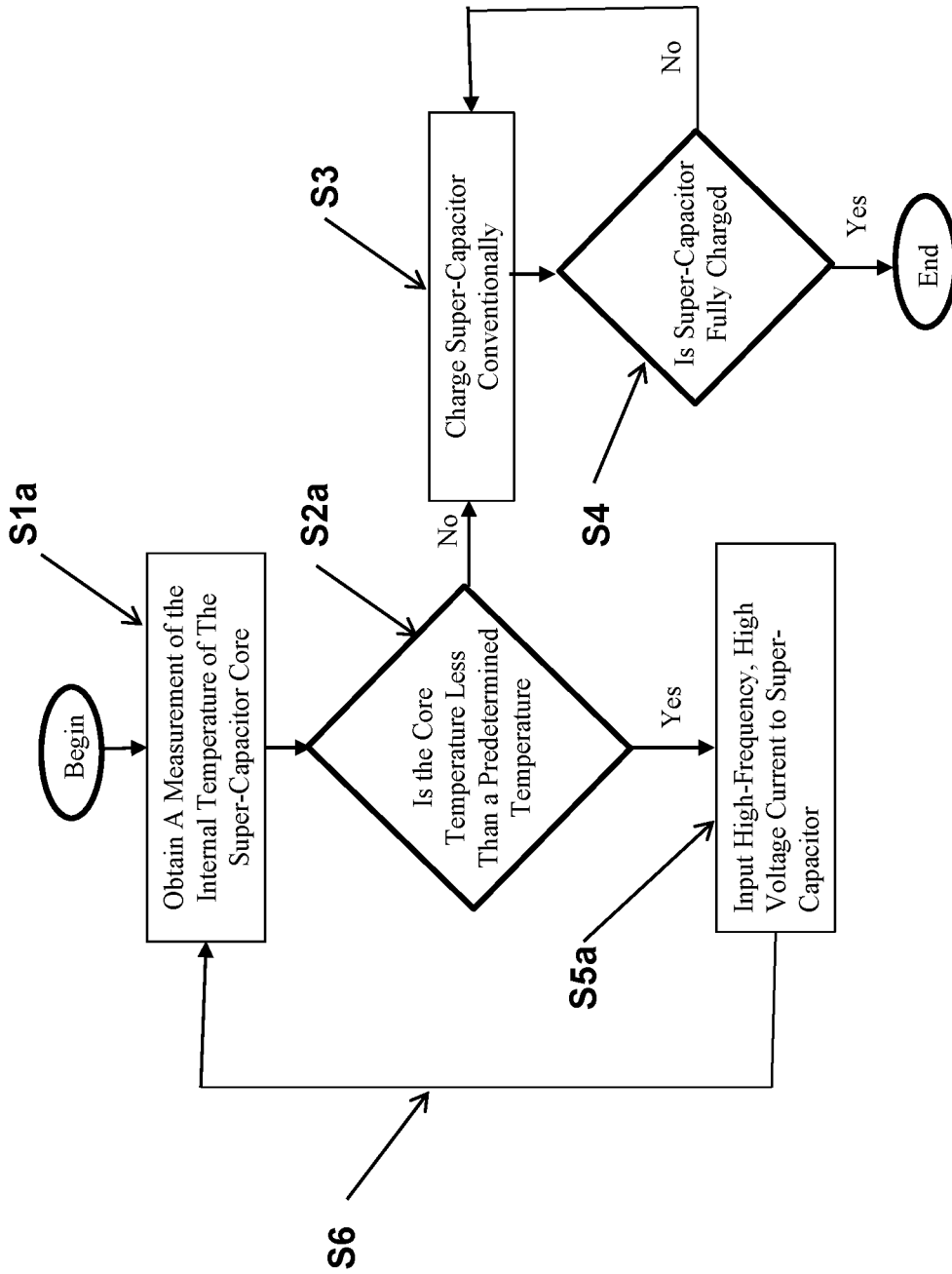


Fig. 3

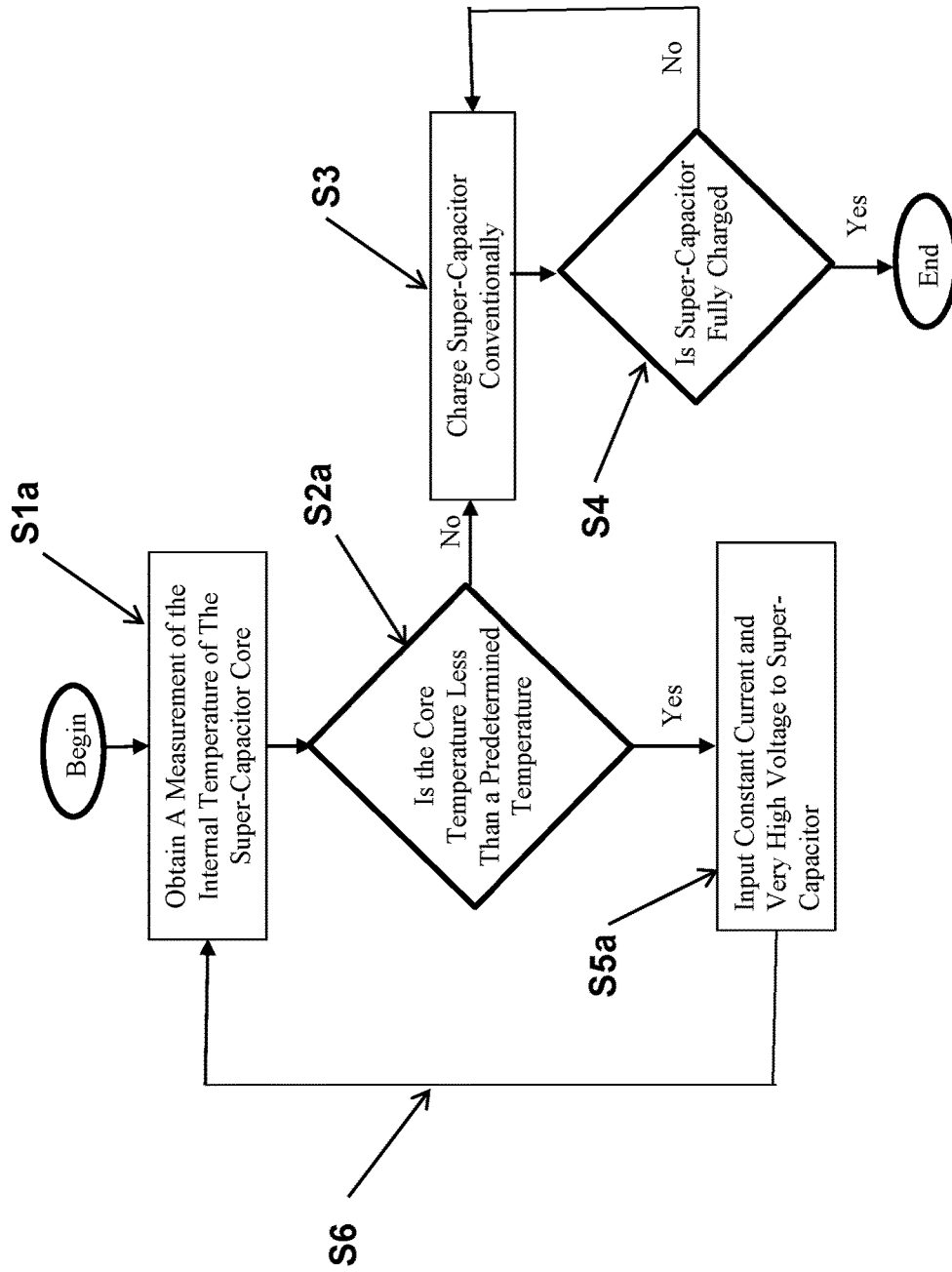


Fig. 4

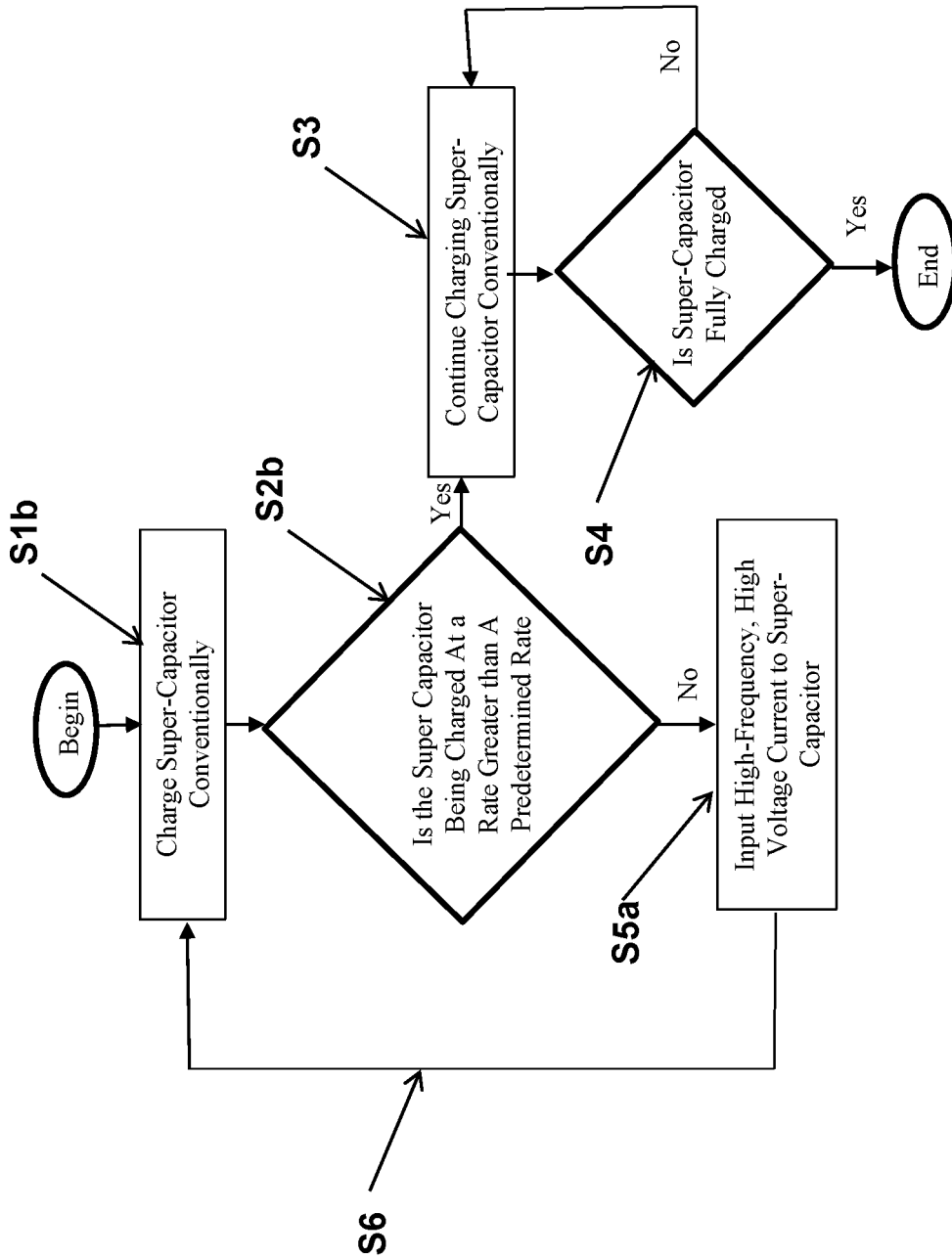


Fig. 5

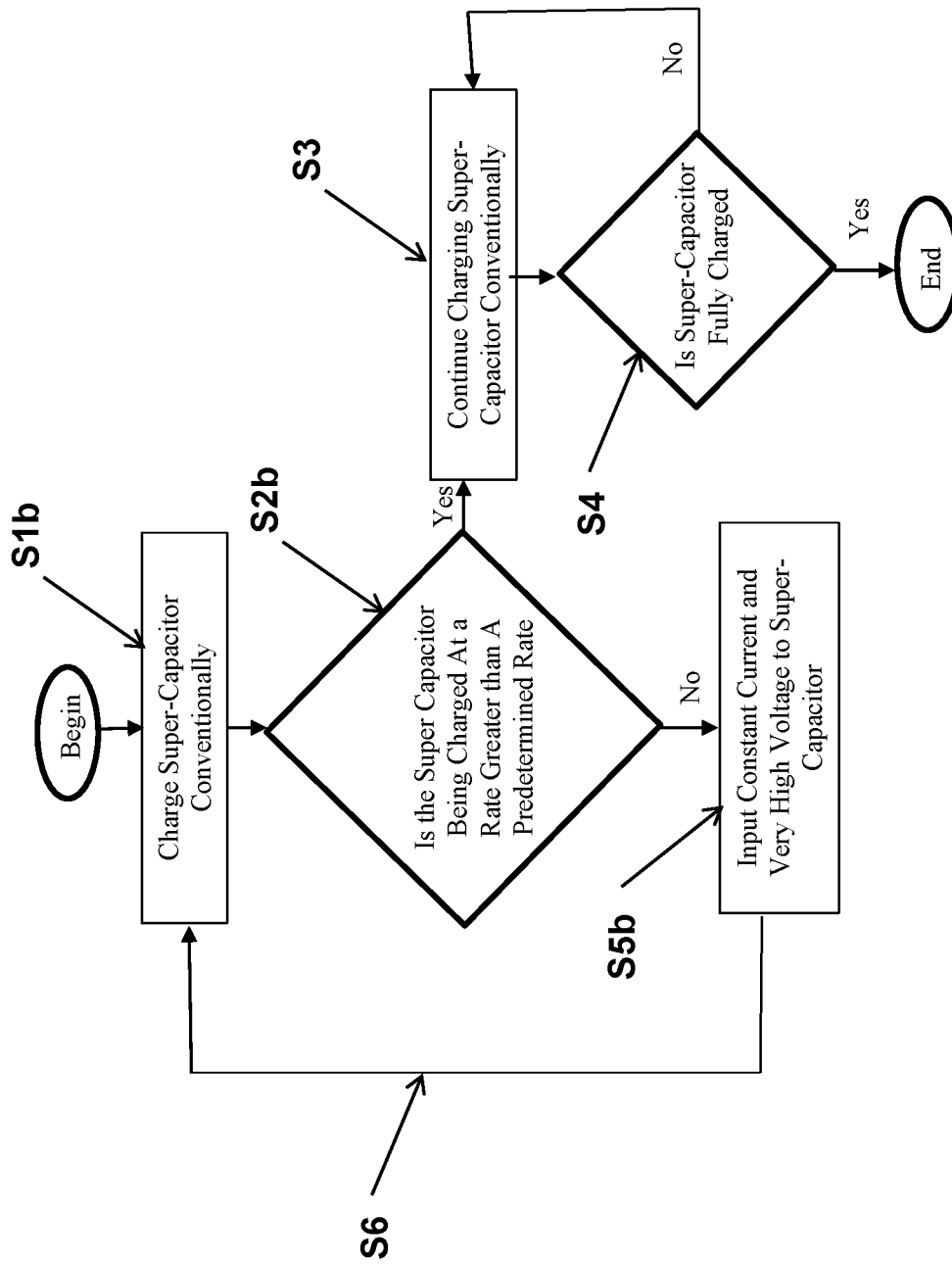


Fig. 6

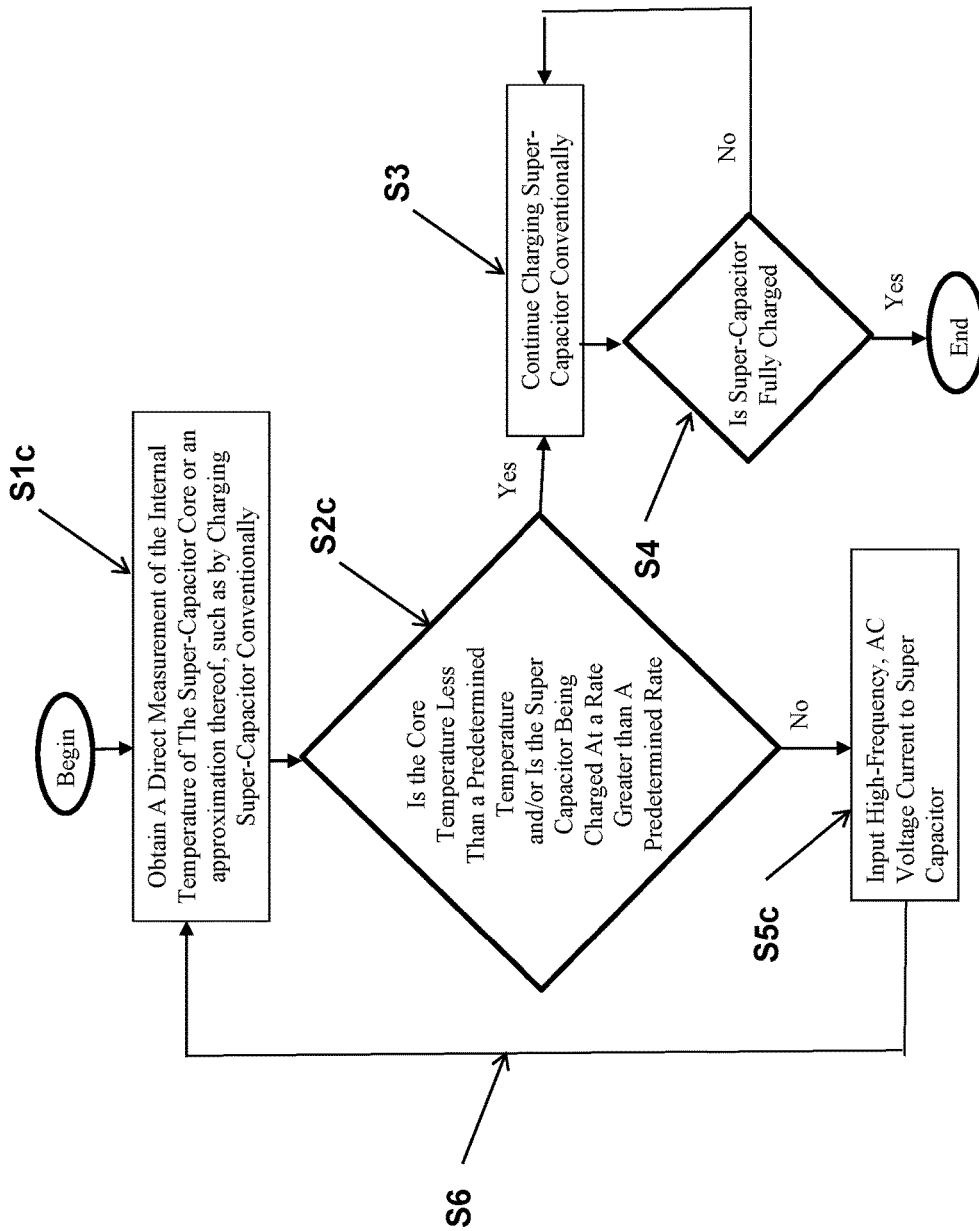


Fig. 7

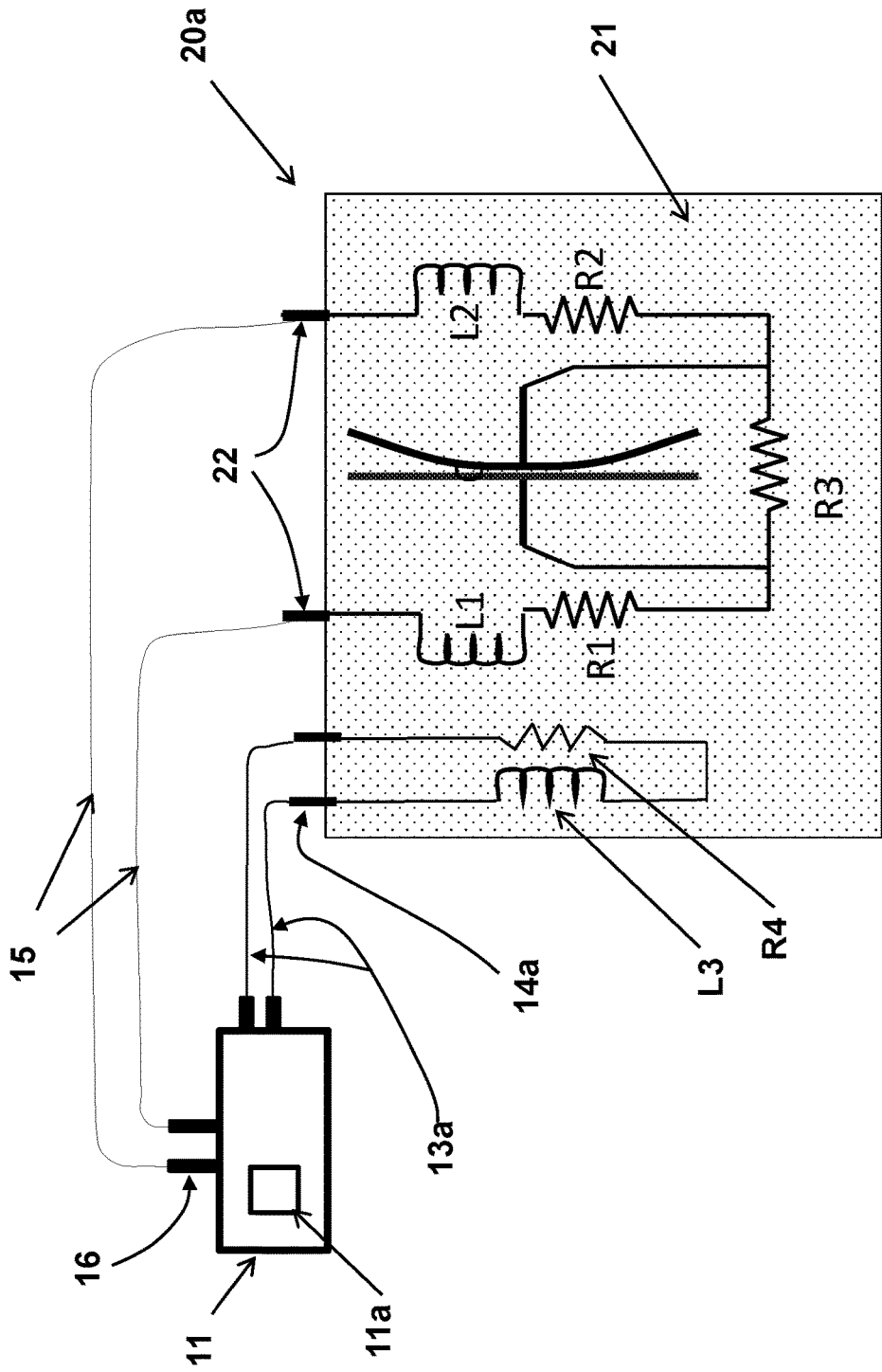


Fig. 8

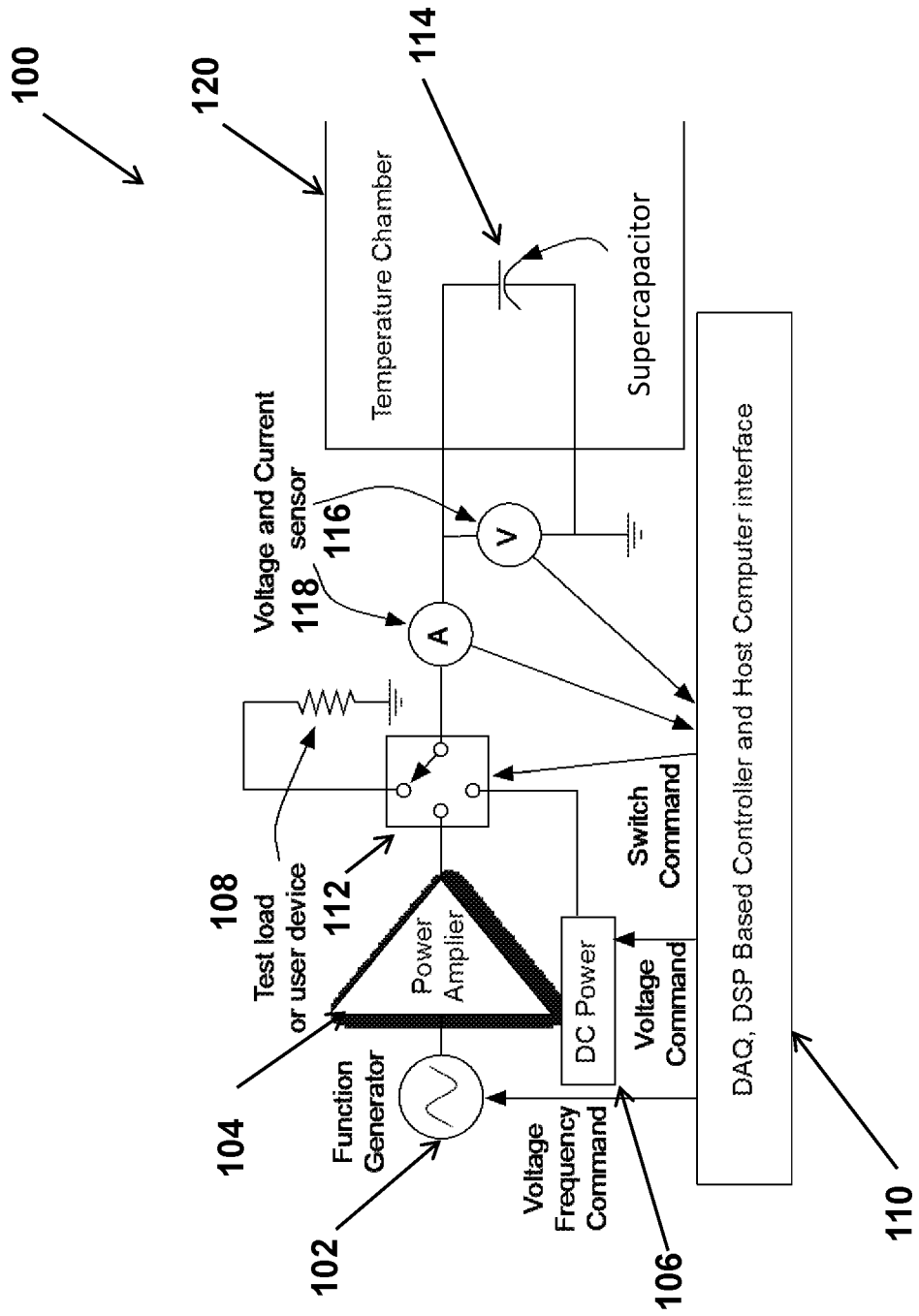


Fig. 9

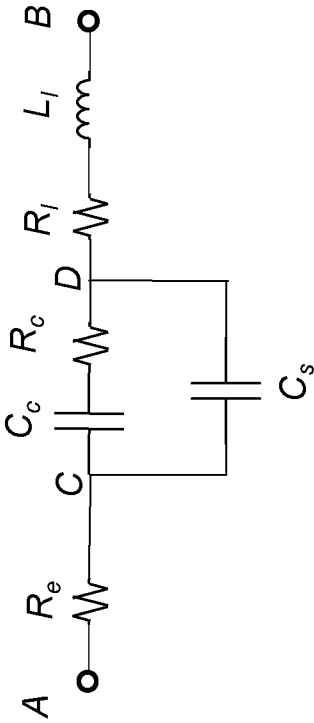


Fig. 11

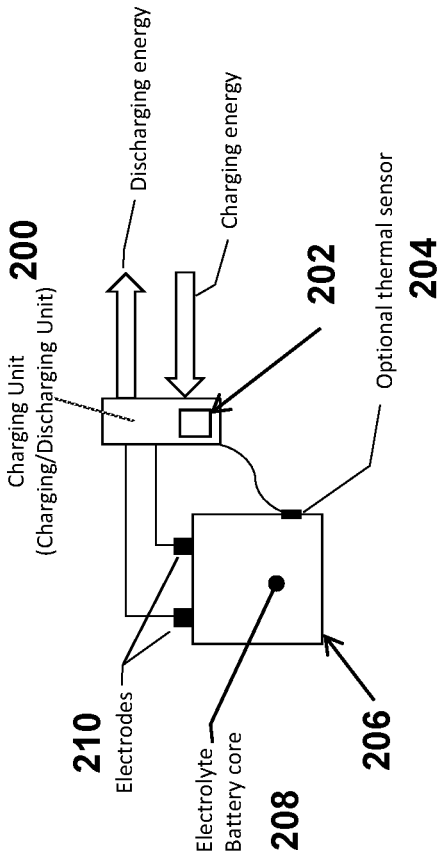


Fig. 12

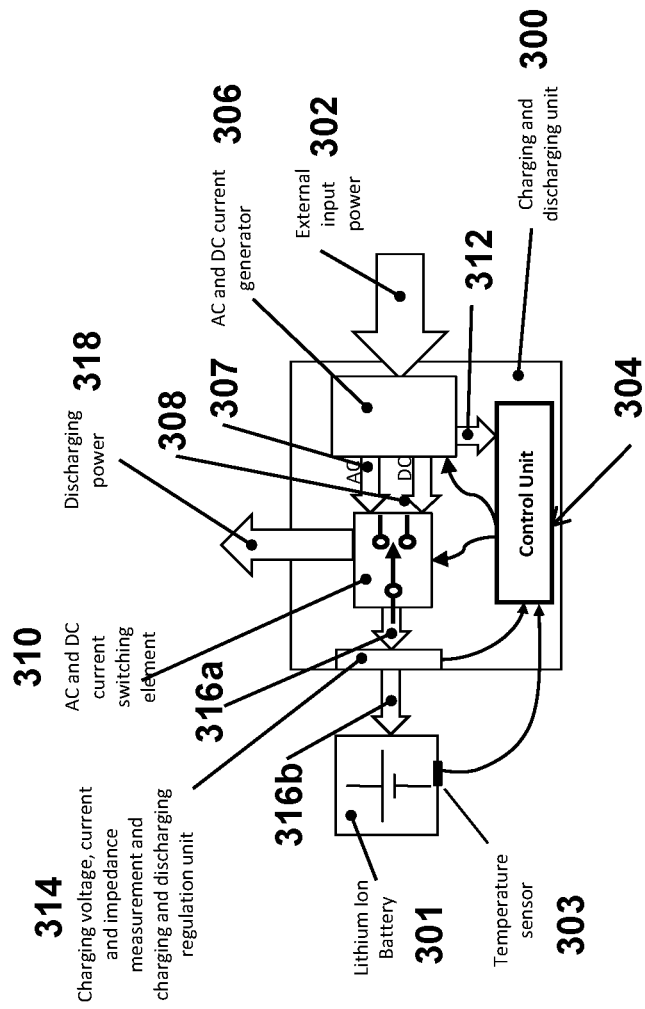


Fig. 13

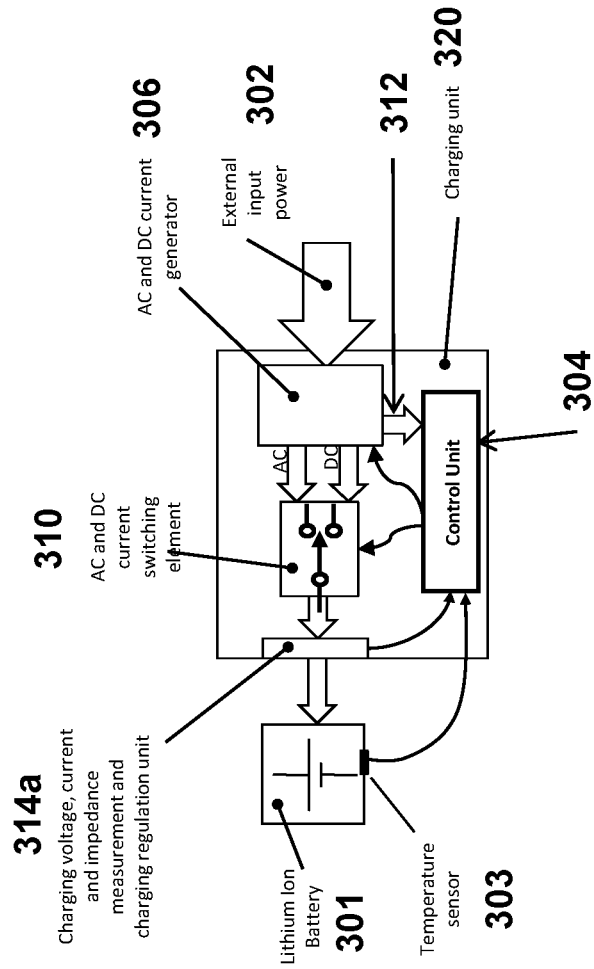


Fig. 14

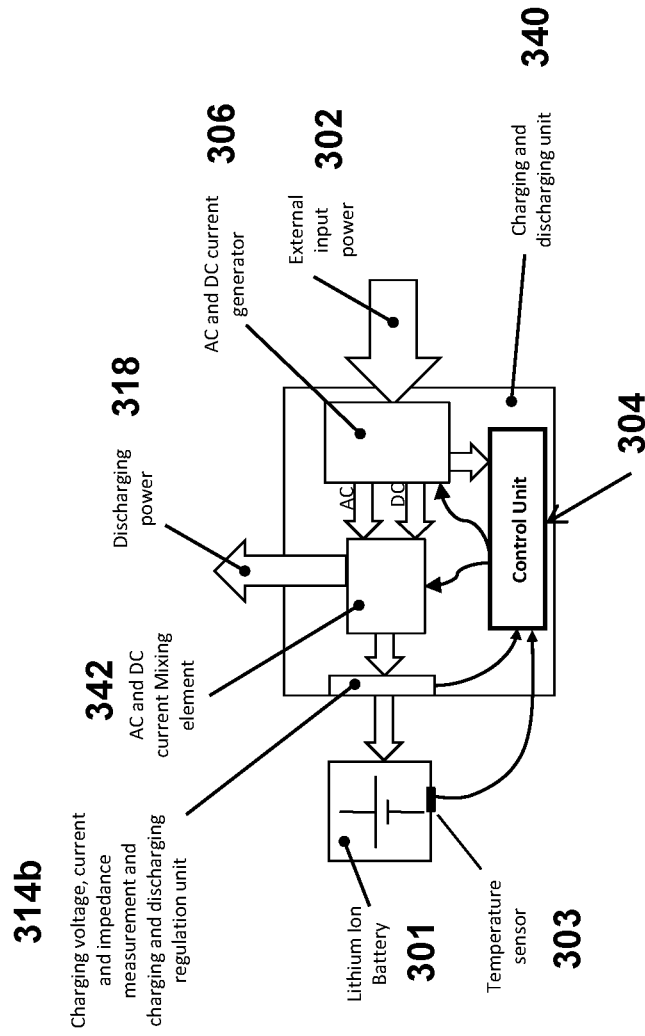


Fig. 15

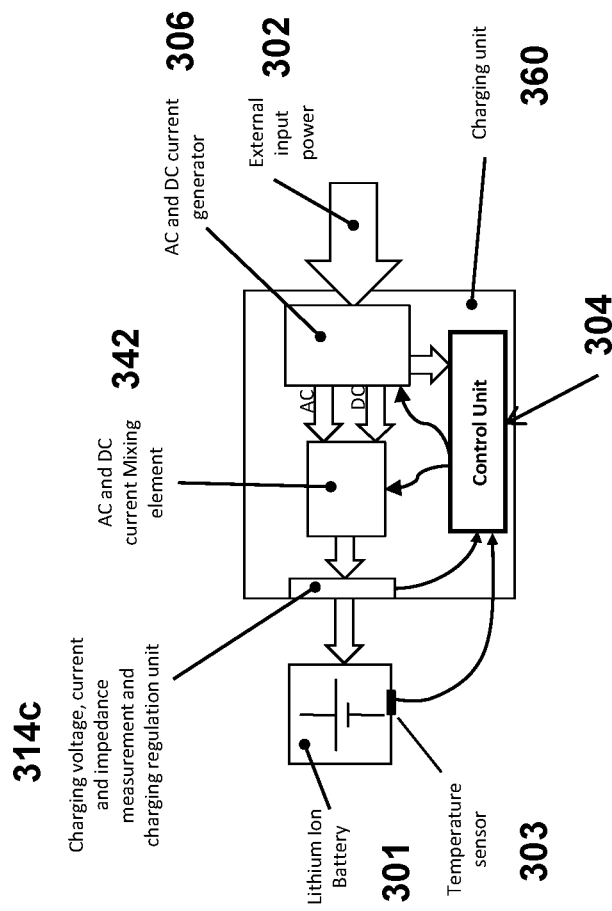


Fig. 16

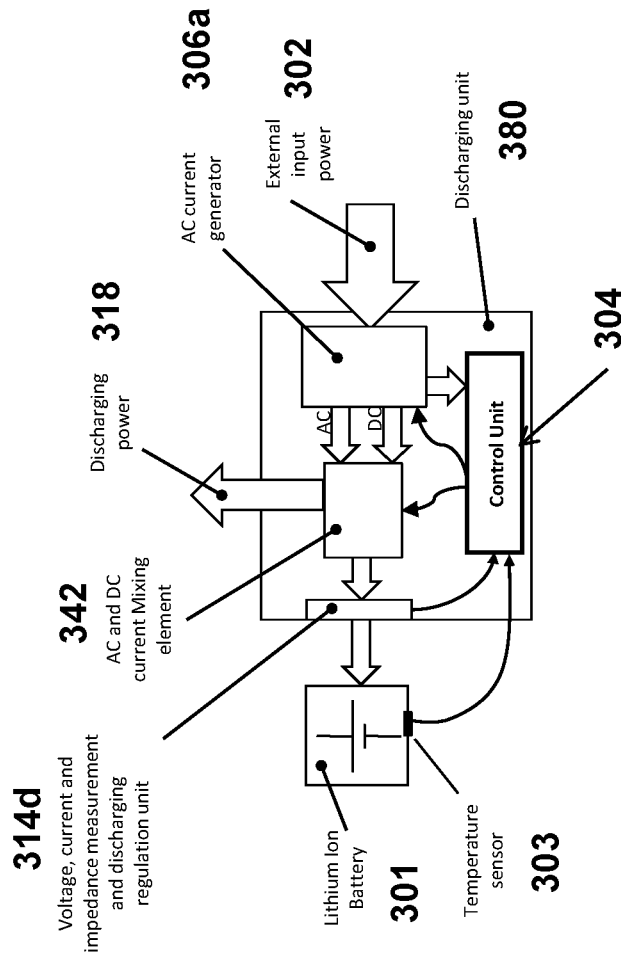


Fig. 17

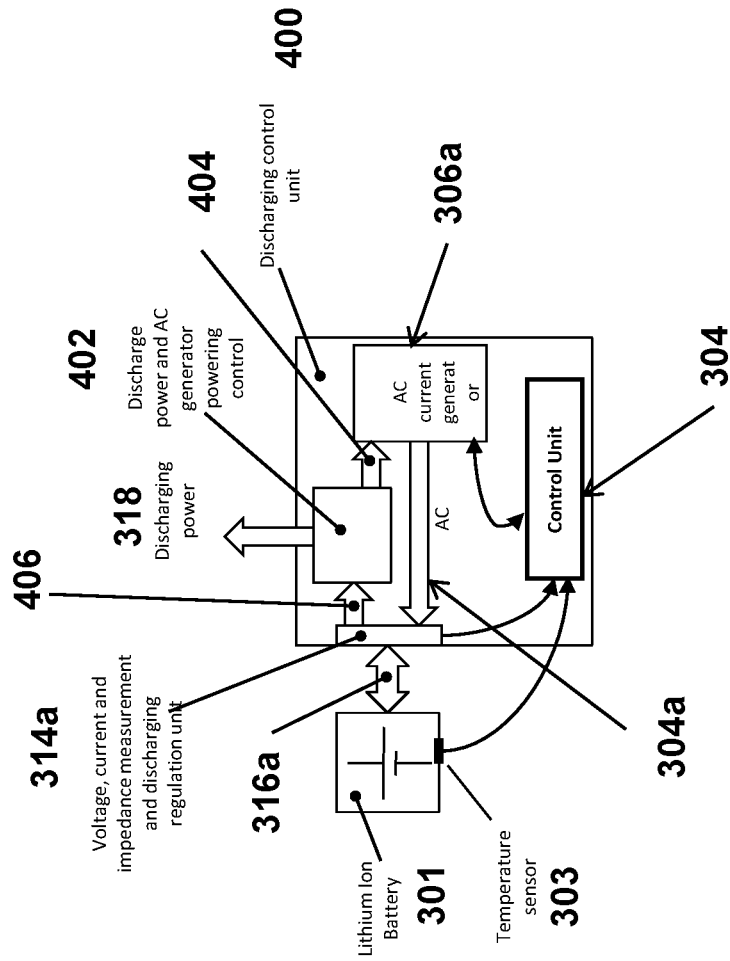


Fig. 18

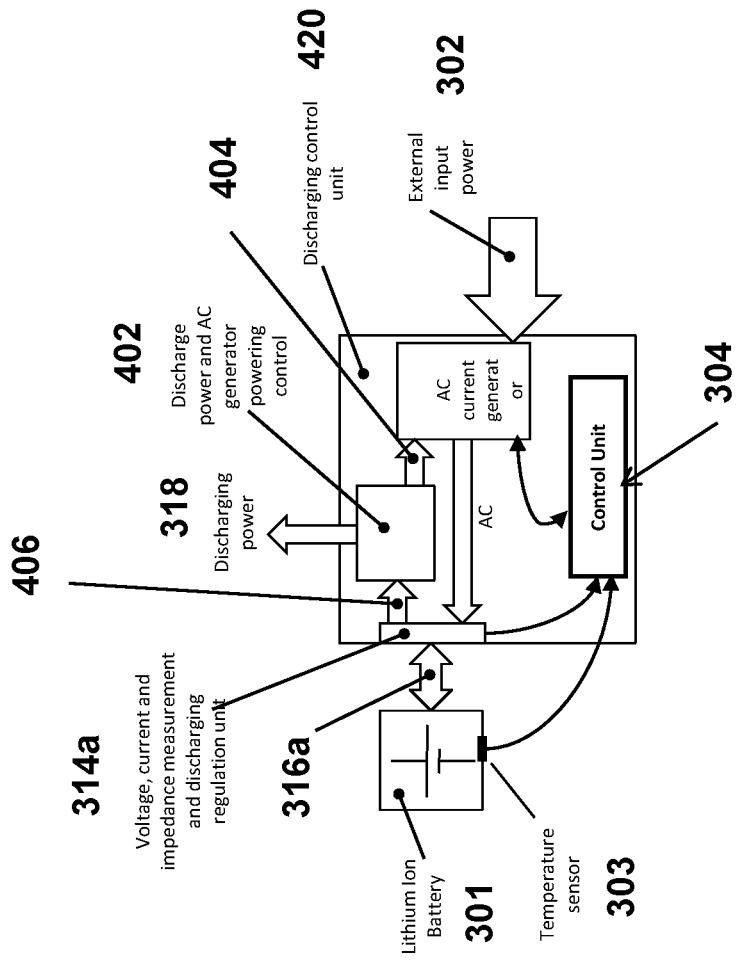


Fig. 19

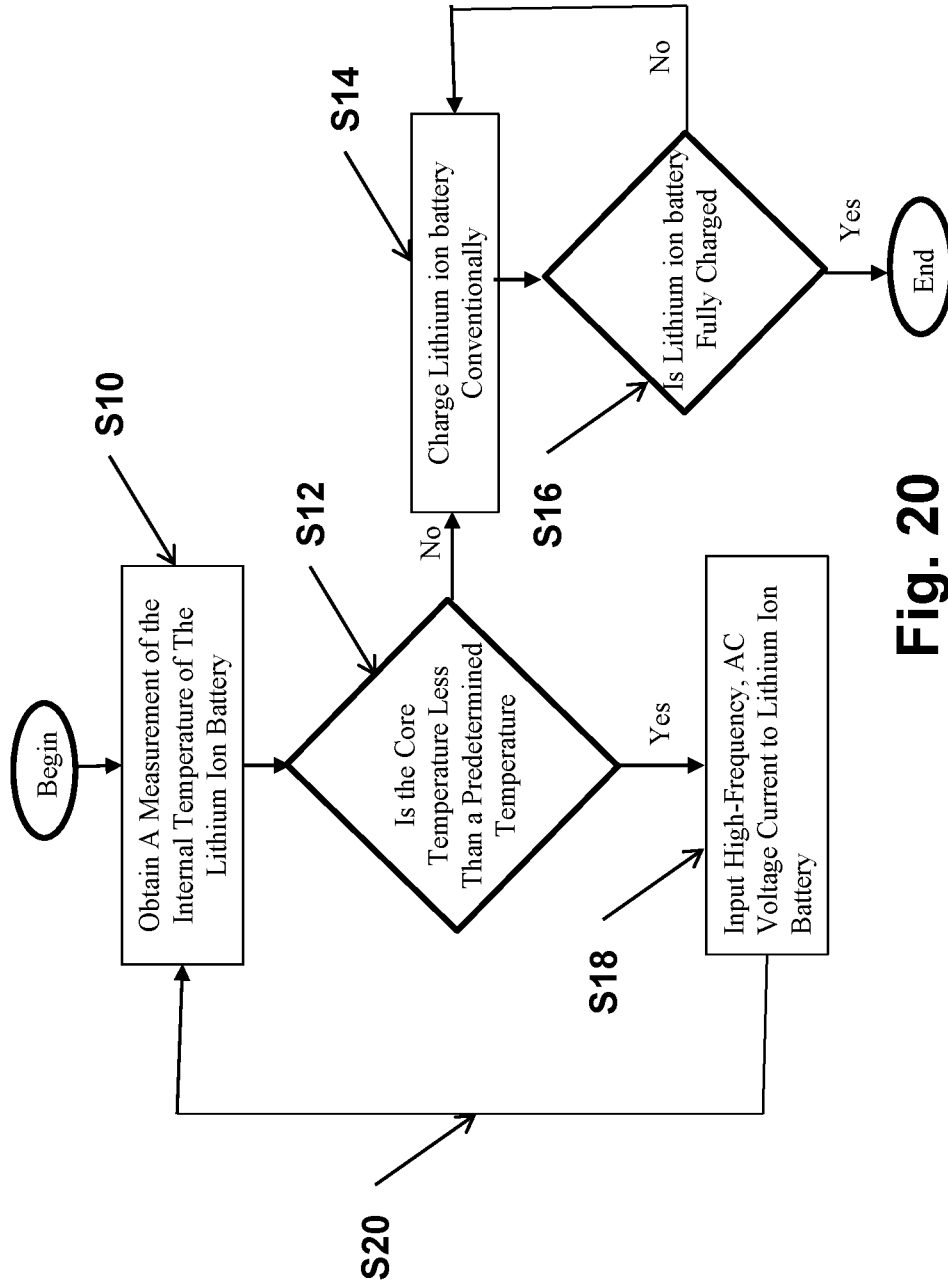


Fig. 20

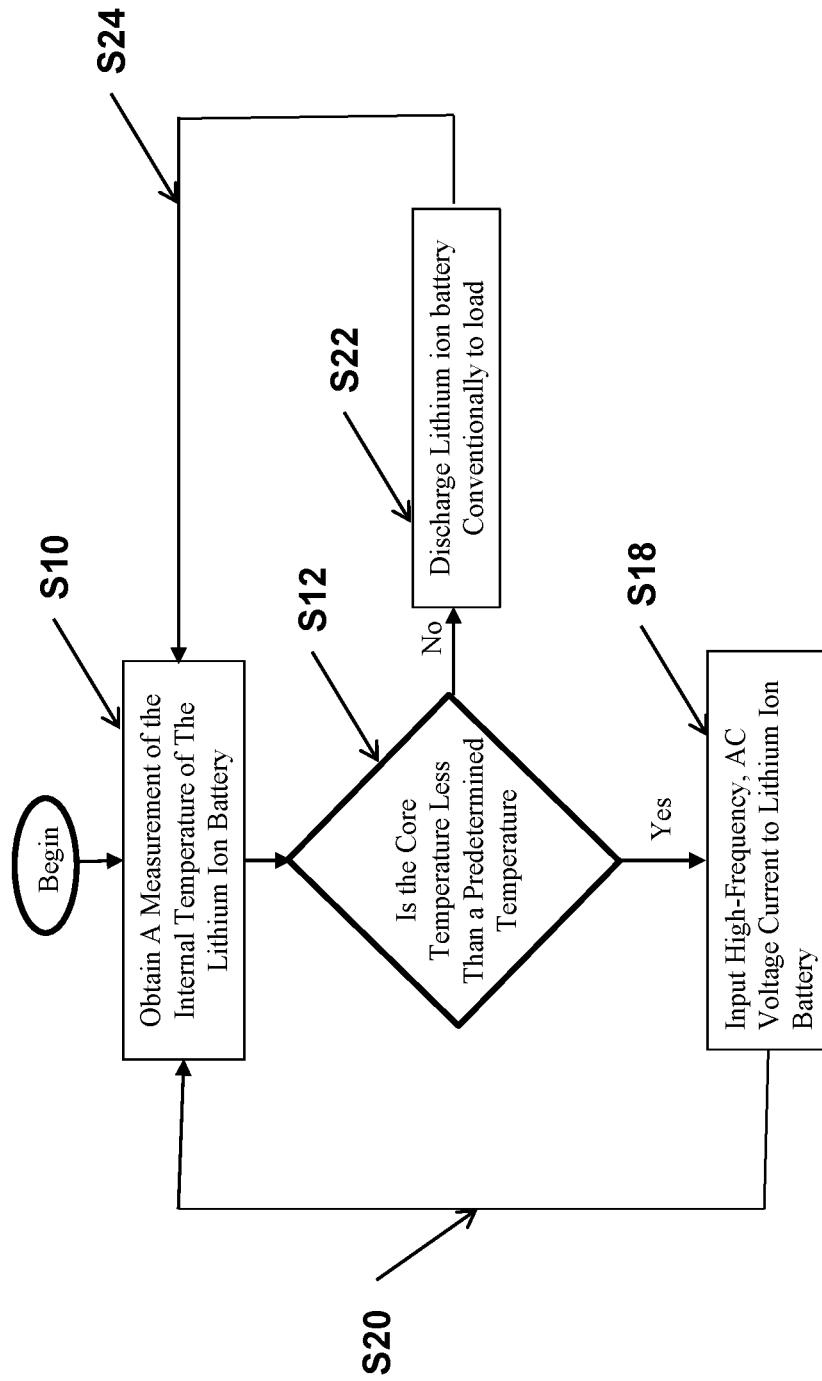


Fig. 21

**ENERGY STORAGE DEVICES AND
METHODS FOR FAST CHARGING OF
ENERGY STORAGE DEVICES AT VERY
LOW TEMPERATURES**

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a Continuation Application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/049,043, filed on Feb. 20, 2016, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,063,076, which claims benefit to U.S. Provisional Application No. 62/119,003, filed on Feb. 20, 2015; 62/168,037, filed on May 29, 2015 and 62/189,156, filed on Jul. 6, 2015, each of which are incorporated herein in their entirety by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Field

[0002] The present invention relates generally to energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, for fast charging and operation at high rate at very low temperatures, more particularly to methods and apparatus for fast charging of energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries and to supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries that are designed to be charged at high rates as well as for high discharge rate operation at very low temperatures. Herein, by very low temperature it is meant the temperatures at which an electrolyte in an interior of such energy storage devices at least hinders charging, such as at temperatures where the electrolyte becomes nearly solid, usually around -45 degrees C., but as low as -54 degrees C. or below.

2. Prior Art

[0003] A supercapacitor (SC), sometimes referred to as an ultra capacitor, and formerly referred to as an electric double-layer capacitor (EDLC) is a high-capacity electrochemical capacitor with capacitance values up to 10,000 Farads at 1.2 volt that bridge the gap between electrolytic capacitors and rechargeable batteries (each of which are collectively referred to herein as a "supercapacitor"). Such supercapacitors typically store 10 to 100 times more energy per unit volume or mass than electrolytic capacitors, can accept and deliver charge much faster than batteries, and tolerate many more charge and discharge cycles than rechargeable batteries. They are however around 10 times larger than conventional batteries for a given charge. The construction and properties of many different types of supercapacitors are well known in the art.

[0004] In certain applications, such as in munitions, supercapacitors may be required to be charged as well as discharge at very low temperatures, sometimes as low as -40 to -65 degrees F. or even lower. Similar very low charging and operating temperatures may also be faced in many commercial applications, such as in supercapacitors used in vehicles for direct powering or for regeneration circuits used during braking. At such very low temperatures, the supercapacitor electrolyte becomes solid, thereby hampering or preventing ion transportation within the electrolyte. As a result, the supercapacitor rate of charge and discharge is greatly diminished. As a result, the user may be unable to charge or when the temperature levels are not very low and the supercapacitor is not provided with enough thermal

insulation protection, must wait a relatively long time to charge the supercapacitor. It is appreciated by those skilled in the art that this is the case for all currently available supercapacitors.

[0005] Similarly, charging methods and devices for currently available rechargeable batteries, such as lithium ion batteries, cannot be used for charging these batteries at low temperatures. Although applicable to any rechargeable battery having an electrolyte interior, reference below will be made to lithium ion batteries by way of example. However, such low temperatures with regard to lithium ion batteries can be much higher than that discussed above with regard to supercapacitors, such as close to zero degrees C., and still hinder charging, damage the battery and even cause fire hazard because the components of a lithium ion battery are highly sensitive to temperature. At low temperature, the "viscous" resistance of the electrolyte to the movement of lithium ions increases. This increase in resistance causes higher losses during charging and discharging of the lithium ion battery. Low temperature charging passes (relatively high) currents through the components representing the battery electrical-chemical reactions, and is well known to result in so-called lithium plating, which is essentially irreversible, prevents battery charging, and permanently damages the battery.

SUMMARY

[0006] It is therefore highly desirable to have methods and apparatus for rapid charging of energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries available for storing electrical energy in military products such as munitions and in commercial products such as in electric and hybrid vehicles, in vehicle regeneration circuitry and power tools, in which the charging rate is critical for achieving the required system performance.

[0007] It is also highly desirable to have energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, with the capability of being charged and discharged at significantly faster rates at the aforementioned very low temperatures.

[0008] It is also highly desirable that the energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, could be readily implemented in almost any of the currently available designs to minimize the amount of changes and modifications that have to be done to current manufacturing processes for their production.

[0009] A need therefore exists for the development of methods and apparatus for rapid charging and discharging of energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, of different types and designs at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower.

[0010] There is also a need for methods to design and construct energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, which can be charged and discharged significantly faster than is currently possible at very low temperatures.

[0011] Such methods and apparatus for rapid charging and discharging of currently available energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, of different types and designs at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower will allow munitions and vehicles or other devices to be charged and/or discharged significantly faster and readied for operation. In

commercial applications, such as vehicles in which supercapacitors and/or lithium ion batteries are used, such methods and apparatus for rapid charging the same at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower will allow the operation of the vehicles and the like at such very low temperatures.

[0012] Such methods to design and construct energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, that can be charged and discharged significantly faster than is possible will allow munitions and/or vehicles using the same to be charged significantly faster and readied for operation at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower.

[0013] Herein are described novel methods and apparatus for rapid charging and discharging of currently available energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, of various types and designs at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower.

[0014] Herein are also described novel methods and apparatus for the design and construction of energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, that are designed with the capability of being charged and discharged very rapidly at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower.

[0015] In addition, herein are also described methods and apparatus for rapid charging and/or discharging of the energy storage devices, such as supercapacitors and lithium ion batteries, that are designed with the capability of being charged and discharged very rapidly at very low temperatures of sometimes -65 to -45 degrees F. or sometimes even lower.

[0016] Accordingly, a method for charging an energy storage device having a core with an electrolyte is provided. The method comprising: (a) obtaining one or more of a measurement or approximation of a temperature of the electrolyte; (b) determining whether the temperature obtained in step (a) is below a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device; and (c) inputting one or more of a predetermined voltage and current input to terminals of the energy storage device causing internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat if the temperature is determined to be less than the predetermined temperature.

[0017] The obtaining can comprise directly measuring the temperature of the electrolyte with a temperature sensor positioned at one or more of the electrolyte or a battery surface.

[0018] The obtaining can comprise: applying an initial charging input to the energy storage device, measuring a rate of charging using the initial charging input, and determining a charging rate at the initial charging input, wherein if a rate of charging is determined to be less than a predetermined charging rate, the electrolyte temperature is approximated as being less than the predetermined threshold. The initial charging input can be a charging input for charging the energy storage device where the predetermined temperature is above the threshold.

[0019] The obtaining can comprise directly measuring an ambient temperature and approximating the electrolyte temperature based on the ambient temperature.

[0020] The energy storage device can be a supercapacitor and the inputting can comprise inputting a high-frequency and high voltage AC current to the supercapacitor.

[0021] The energy storage device can be a supercapacitor and the inputting comprise inputting a constant DC current and high voltage to the supercapacitor. In which case, the method can further comprise: repeating step (a) during inputting the constant DC current and high voltage to the supercapacitor; and lowering the very high voltage as the obtained temperature of the electrolyte increases.

[0022] The energy storage device can be a lithium ion battery and the inputting can comprise inputting a high-frequency and high voltage AC current to the lithium ion battery. In which case, the method can further comprise repeating step (a) during step (c) to determine if step (c) can be stopped. In which case, the repeating of step (a) can comprise: measuring the battery impedance during step (c); and deciding to stop step (c) based on the measured battery impedance. Alternatively, the repeating of step (a) can comprise: turning the high-frequency and high voltage AC current off; discharging current from the battery through a resistive load for a predetermined duration; and deciding to stop step (c) based on a measured voltage across the load.

[0023] The method can further comprise repeating step (a) during step (c) to determine if step (c) can be stopped. In which case, the repeating can be performed periodically. In which case, the repeating can be performed at regular predetermined intervals.

[0024] The method can further comprise a step of inputting a charging input to the terminals of the energy storage device to charge the energy storage device if the temperature is determined to be above the predetermined temperature. In which case, the method can still further comprise: periodically assessing the temperature of the electrolyte after inputting the charging input to detect whether the temperature is one of less than the predetermined threshold or approaching within a predetermined limit of the predetermined threshold; and one of: stopping the charging input and inputting the one or more of the predetermined voltage and current input; or superimposing the input of the one or more of the predetermined voltage and current input on the charging input.

[0025] The method can further comprise a step of discharging the energy storage device to a load if the temperature is determined to be above the predetermined temperature.

[0026] The method can further comprise the steps of determining a charge level of the energy storage device prior to step (a) and commencing step (a) if the charge level is below a predetermined charge level.

[0027] Also provided is a method for charging an energy storage device having an electrolyte. The method comprising: (a) a step of inputting a charging input to the terminals of the energy storage device to charge the energy storage device; (b) a step of periodically assessing the temperature of the electrolyte after inputting the charging input to detect whether the temperature is one of: less than a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device; or approaching within a predetermined limit of the predetermined threshold; and (c) if the temperature is determined to be less than the predetermined temperature or approaching within the predetermined limit of the predetermined threshold, one of: stopping the charging input and inputting one or more of a predetermined voltage and current input to terminals of the energy storage device causing internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat; superimposing the input of the one or more of the predetermined voltage and

current input on the charging input; or discharging the energy storage device across a load.

[0028] The charging input can be a DC current input and the one or more of the predetermined voltage and current input can comprise a high-frequency and high voltage AC current.

[0029] Still further provided is a method for discharging an energy storage device having an electrolyte. The method comprising: (a) obtaining one or more of a measurement or approximation of a temperature of the electrolyte; (b) determining whether the temperature obtained in step (a) is below a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device; and (c) discharging the energy storage device to a load if the temperature is determined to be below the predetermined temperature.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0030] These and other features, aspects, and advantages of the apparatus of the present invention will become better understood with regard to the following description, appended claims, and accompanying drawings where:

[0031] FIG. 1 is a schematic of a simplified supercapacitor shown with a lumped core with its equivalent lumped internal resistance and inductance elements.

[0032] FIG. 2 illustrates a schematic of an embodiment of a supercapacitor rapid charging system for charging at very low temperatures and super capacitor to be charged at very low temperatures.

[0033] FIGS. 3-7 illustrate embodiments of flow charts of methods for charging supercapacitors at very low temperatures.

[0034] FIG. 8 illustrates an embodiment of a supercapacitor to be charged at very low temperatures.

[0035] FIG. 9 illustrates a schematic of a supercapacitor charging unit.

[0036] FIG. 10 illustrates a circuit diagram of a 2-30 MHz RF Power Amplifier.

[0037] FIG. 11 illustrates an equivalent circuitry of a lithium ion battery.

[0038] FIG. 12 illustrates a block diagram of a structure of a method of charging/discharging a lithium ion battery at low temperatures.

[0039] FIG. 13 illustrates a block diagram of main components of an embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit at low temperatures.

[0040] FIG. 14 illustrates a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit for low temperature of FIG. 13 for use only as a lithium ion battery charging unit for all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0041] FIG. 15 illustrates a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit for low temperature of FIG. 13 and for maintaining the battery core temperature during charging and discharging processes.

[0042] FIG. 16 illustrates a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit for low temperature of FIG. 15 for use only as a Lithium ion battery charging unit for all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0043] FIG. 17 illustrates a block diagram of another alternative embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion

battery charging and discharging unit for low temperature of FIG. 15 for use to keep the core temperature of a Lithium ion battery above a prescribed temperature for efficient discharging at all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0044] FIG. 18 illustrates a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit for low temperature of FIG. 17 for use to keep the core temperature of a Lithium ion battery above a prescribed temperature for efficient discharging at all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0045] FIG. 19 illustrates a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a processor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit for low temperature of FIG. 18 for use to keep the core temperature of a Lithium ion battery above a prescribed temperature for efficient discharging at all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0046] FIG. 20 illustrates a flow chart diagram for charging a lithium ion battery for low temperature by keeping the core temperature of the Lithium ion battery above a prescribed temperature for efficient charging at all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0047] FIG. 21 illustrates a flow chart diagram of discharging a lithium ion battery for low temperature by keeping the core temperature of the Lithium ion battery above a prescribed temperature for efficient discharging at all temperatures including at low temperatures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0048] All currently available supercapacitor types and designs exhibit internal resistance and inductance, which can be modeled as being in series. Both internal resistance and inductance of supercapacitors are relatively low. The inductance of supercapacitors is significantly higher for wound supercapacitors as compared to those that are flat and stacked in construction. The leakage current may be represented by a separate resistor in parallel with the capacitor. In general, the supercapacitor resistance may be ignored in short term operations. The supercapacitor inductance can also be ignored for low frequency operations.

[0049] In the schematic of FIG. 1, a simplified model of a supercapacitor 20 is shown with a lumped capacitor core 21 within which the aforementioned equivalent internal resistance and inductance are shown as two pairs of in-series resistors and inductors, which are connected to the supercapacitor capacitance C. In FIG. 1, the in-series resistor and inductor pairs are indicated by the resistances R1 and R2 and inductances L1 and L2. In most supercapacitors, the resistances of the resistors R1 and R2 are very low. In the present model, the pairs of lumped in-series resistors and inductors are connected on one end to the supercapacitor capacitance C and on the other end to the supercapacitor terminals 22. In FIG. 1, the internal resistance of the supercapacitor, which is the cause of leakage is modeled as a lumped resistor R3. In FIG. 1 and for the sake of simplicity and since the simplification does not affect the methods and apparatus for charging and discharging supercapacitors to be described, the electrical model of the supercapacitor is considered to be as shown in FIG. 1.

[0050] In the first embodiment shown schematically in FIGS. 2, 3 and 5, a supercapacitor charger unit 11 having an internal processor 11a would first obtain the internal temperature of the supercapacitor core at step S1a or S1b. Such processor comprises a hardware, component such as a PLC or CPU and can include software and a memory storing such

software and also storing data such as predetermined values used in the methods described below. In applications, such as munitions in which the munitions has been stored at the ambient temperature, the supercapacitor core temperature may be obtained by measuring the ambient temperature at step *S1a* and approximating the internal temperature of the supercapacitor core using some function of the ambient temperature, such as equating the ambient temperature to the supercapacitor core temperature. Alternatively, the supercapacitor core temperature can be directly measured by an internal sensor **12** (such as a thermocouple based sensor or other temperature measurement sensors known in the art), with the measured temperature signal being provided to the processor **11a** via wiring **13** connected to the sensor capacitor terminals **14**. The sensor **12** is used by the processor **11a** to determine if the supercapacitor can be charged at its regular rate or if the core temperature is so low that the supercapacitor electrolyte has become solid or very close to it, thereby hampering or preventing ion transportation within the electrolyte and preventing the supercapacitor from being rapidly charged at its regular (liquid electrolyte state) rate. As yet another alternative, the temperature sensor can be positioned on an exterior surface of the supercapacitor and the obtained temperature used to approximate the internal temperature of the supercapacitor core using some function of the exterior surface temperature, such as equating the exterior surface temperature to the supercapacitor core temperature.

[0051] Alternatively, as shown in FIG. 5, the supercapacitor core temperature may be obtained based on an assumption, such as by applying the regular charging voltage (or any appropriate initial voltage level) to the super capacitor via the charging unit **11** at step *S1b* and if the processor **11a** determines that the supercapacitor does not charge at its regular rate at step *S2b*, i.e., for example, the measured charging current is significantly lower than a known regular charging current rate, then the processor **11a** can assume that the supercapacitor core temperature is very low and below that where the same can be charged at its regular (liquid electrolyte state) rate.

[0052] Hereinafter, as discussed above, very low temperature is used to indicate temperature levels at which the supercapacitor electrolyte is rendered solid or effectively incapable of allowing relatively free transport of its ions.

[0053] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that for safety reasons, the processor **11a** of the charger unit **11** can also determine the charge level of the supercapacitor prior to the start of the charging cycle. In addition, the temperature sensor **12** can be employed to ensure that a low charging rate is in fact due to low supercapacitor core electrolyte temperature level as was earlier described.

[0054] In the schematic of FIG. 2, the charger unit **11** is shown to be powered internally, such as by a battery. In many applications, however, the charger unit **11** can be powered by an external source (not shown). The charging unit **11** functions similarly irrespective of the source of charger unit **11** power.

[0055] Then, once the processor **11a** has determined that the supercapacitor core temperature is very low and that due to the very low temperature level the supercapacitor (which can also be determined not to be fully charged) cannot be rapidly charged at either step *S2a* or *S2b*, the charger unit **11** can begin to charge the supercapacitor at step *S5a*. In the schematic of FIG. 2 the charger unit **11** is shown to be

connected to the supercapacitor **20** via wires **15** connecting the terminals **22** of the supercapacitor **20** to the corresponding terminals **16** of the charger unit **11**.

[0056] However, if the processor **11a** determines the core temperature of the super capacitor is not less than a predetermined temperature (e.g., the core is at a temperature above which normal charging can be conducted) at step *S2a* or *S2b* (the determination at step *S2a* or *S2b* is NO), the charger unit would charge the supercapacitor conventionally at step *S3*, and continue to do so until the super capacitor is determined to be fully charged at step *S4* or charging is otherwise terminated.

[0057] On the other hand, if the determination at step *S2a* or *S2b* is YES, the charger unit **11** can input one or more of a predetermined voltage and current to the terminals **22** of the supercapacitor which will cause internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat. As a first exemplary input, the charger unit **11** can apply a relative high frequency to the supercapacitor at step *S5a*. The high frequency can be at a peak voltage of around or above the maximum allowable charging supercapacitor voltage. Here, high frequency means a frequency at which the supercapacitor inductances **L1** and **L2** are caused to generate heat. The processor **11a** can then periodically continue to obtain the supercapacitor core temperature by any of the methods discussed above, such as at some predetermined intervals (shown by line *S6* in FIGS. 3 and 5). The periodic obtainment of the supercapacitor can be by direct measurement or assumption as discussed above, such as by measuring the internal temperature with the temperature sensor **12** at step *S1a* or by attempting to charge the capacitor at the regular charging voltage at step *S1b* and measuring the charging rate from the charging current. Alternatively, more than one method can be used, such as both methods (*S1a* and *S1b*) for measuring the core temperature until either the core (the supercapacitor electrolyte) temperature has reached a desired level for proper charging of the supercapacitor or until the supercapacitor nominal charging rate has been reached. At which time the applied high frequency voltage signal is terminated at step *S2a* and/or *S2b* and the processor **11a** instructs the charging unit **11** to conventionally charge the supercapacitor to the desired level at steps *S3* and *S4*. The temperature level and/or charging rate measurements may be repeated as needed, such as at regular intervals, particularly at very low ambient temperature conditions to ensure that the process of charging is not interrupted by “re-freezing” of the supercapacitor electrolyte.

[0058] An alternative embodiment is now described using the schematic of FIG. 2 and the flow diagrams of FIGS. 4 and 6 in which similar steps are numbered similarly to those illustrated in FIGS. 3 and 5, respectively. In the alternative embodiment, once the core **12** of the (not fully charged) supercapacitor **20** is determined to be at very low temperature at step *S2a* or *S2b* using any one or combinations of aforementioned techniques, the processor **11a** instructs the charging unit **11** to heat the core **12** at step *S5b* by passing a constant current through the equivalent internal resistance **R3** through the supercapacitor terminals **22** and the aforementioned two pairs of serially connected resistors and inductors. The current is generated by the charging unit **11** through the wiring **15**. In general, and depending on the type and design of the supercapacitor **20** and its charging state and the electrolyte temperature, the high frequency current may be applied at voltages that are significantly higher than

the voltage rating of the supercapacitor. This is usually possible since frozen electrolytes of a capacitor with low level of charge can withstand significantly higher voltages. When using the heating voltages that are above the rated voltage of the supercapacitor, the processor **11a** can regularly monitor the core temperature and the charging state of the supercapacitor at **S6** and properly lower the heating voltage as the supercapacitor begins to be charged at or close to its nominal rate.

[0059] In general, due to the very high internal resistance level **R3** of most supercapacitors at very low temperatures, the methods illustrated in FIGS. **3** and **5** of providing heat to the supercapacitor core via the equivalent inductances **L1** and **L2** and resistances **R1** and **R2** of the supercapacitor may be more effective. Such methods illustrated in FIGS. **3** and **5** may also be safer since the high frequency current may be applied at or even below the rated voltage of the supercapacitor. However, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that since the inductor core in this case is in effect the conductive supercapacitor electrolyte, the amount of heat that may be generated in many supercapacitors could be relatively low.

[0060] In the lump model shown in FIG. **1**, the aforementioned heat generated per second (**P**) by the application of a constant voltage to the supercapacitor terminals is given by

$$P = \frac{V^2}{R_1 + R_2 + R_3} \quad (1)$$

[0061] As can be seen from the above equation, since the leakage resistance **R3** is very large at very low temperatures, the amount of heat that can be generated per second for a relatively low voltage that can be applied to a supercapacitor (with, for example, a rate voltage of 2.7 Volts) is very small. For example, for a typical 100 F supercapacitor with a rated voltage of 2.7 V and with a serial resistance **R1+R2=50 mΩ** and leaking resistance **R3=10 jΩ** will, according to equation (1) above only generate heat at a rate of:

$$P = \frac{(2.7 \text{ V})^2}{(10 \text{ K}\Omega + 50 \text{ m}\Omega)} = 0.73 \text{ mW}$$

[0062] In another alternative embodiment, the following method can be used instead of the previously described application of a constant voltage to significantly increase the above rate of heat generation within the core **21** of a typical supercapacitor **20**, such as the one shown schematically in FIG. **1**. In this method, shown in FIG. **7**, once the charger unit **11** has determined that the battery is not charged completely and that the battery core is at a very low temperature at steps **S1c** and **S2c**, as was previously described, then the charger unit **11** would apply an alternating current (AC) with a peak voltage of V_p at a high frequency **f** to the terminals at step **S5c**. The behavior of the lumped circuitry (consisting of the resistors **R1**, **R2** and **R3** and inductors **L1** and **L2** as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**) will now be very different than that indicated by the above equation (1). At a high frequency **f**, the capacitor **C** provides very low impedance, effectively shorting the leakage resistor **R3** which is in parallel with it. As a result, the total resistance to the applied current becomes very small since the resis-

tances **R1** and **R2** are very small. As a result, the total heat generated per second becomes very large and therefore the very cold supercapacitor core electrolyte can be heated very rapidly to the temperature at which it can be charged at or close to its nominal charging rate. It is noted that at such very high frequencies, the inductors **L1** and **L2** also provide high impedance but would usually contribute significantly less heat in a supercapacitor environment than those generated by low resistances **R1** and **R2**. The heat generated per second (power **P**) is given approximately by the equation (2) below.

$$P = \frac{1}{2} \frac{V_p^2}{R_1 + R_2 + 2\pi f(L_1 + L_2) + \frac{R_3}{1 + 2\pi fCR_3}} \quad (2)$$

[0063] For the aforementioned 100 F supercapacitor with a typical total inductance of **L1+L2=0.06 μH** and **R1+R2=50 mΩ** and leaking resistance **R3=10Ω**, with an applied AC voltage of $V_p=1 \text{ V}$ at frequency **f=1,000 Hz**, the heat generated per second can reach 9.3 W. It is noted the above calculations are approximate and does not consider change in the supercapacitor capacitance at very low temperatures and with the applied high frequency voltage.

[0064] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the charger unit **11** would require not only the processor **11a** but any electronics and logic circuitry for the core temperature measurement and for providing the indicated currents and voltage inputs for the described supercapacitor heating process as well as safe charging of the supercapacitor. These technologies are widely used in practice and are considered to be well known in the art.

[0065] In the above embodiments, the inductance or the internal resistance of the supercapacitors is used by the described charging unit to heat up the supercapacitor core (mainly its electrolyte) to a temperature at which electrolyte ions are provided with enough mobility to allow rapid charging of the supercapacitor. It consists of a series resistance and an inductance, and the leakage current is represented by a resistor in parallel with the capacitor. The series resistance ranges from a few milliohms to several tens milliohms. The inductance depends on the construction and can be ignored for low frequency operation. The leakage resistance can also be ignored for short-term operation. The electrolyte in supercapacitors forms a conductive connection between the two electrodes which distinguishes them from electrolytic capacitors where the electrolyte is the second electrode (the cathode). Supercapacitor electrodes are generally thin coatings applied and electrically connected to a conductive, metallic current collector. Electrodes must have good conductivity, high temperature stability, long-term chemical stability, high corrosion resistance and high surface areas per unit volume and mass. Other requirements include environmental friendliness and low cost.

[0066] Referring now to FIG. **8**, no matter the type and design of the super-conductor and its electrodes, another embodiment relates to additional resistive and/or inductive elements added to the supercapacitor electrode surface or otherwise distributing such resistive and/or inductive elements throughout the supercapacitor core. Similarly, such additional resistive and/or inductive elements can also be added to a rechargeable battery, such as a lithium ion battery.

These added resistive and/or inductive elements can be electrically insulated by dielectric materials to prevent them from interfering with the operation of the energy storage device. The added resistive R4 and/or inductive elements L3 can be distributed throughout the core and as close as possible to its electrolyte material. Then when the core temperature is determined to be low as was previously described, passing current through the added resistances generates heat to increase the temperature of the electrolyte and thereby allowing charging at its nominal rate once the core temperature rises above some predetermined temperature or charging ability. When an inductive element is added, an alternating current of high enough frequency can be used for the heating of the electrolyte thereby facilitating the process of rapid charging at very low temperatures. With such a supercapacitor 20a, additional terminals 14a can be provided for inputting the required electrical input for heating the core though independent wiring 13a from the charger unit of electronic logic can be provided to use only one set of terminals 22 to both charge the supercapacitor 20a and input the additional inductor(s) L3 and resistor(s) R4 for heating the core.

[0067] A block diagram of a supercapacitor testing unit 100 is shown in FIG. 9. A function generator 102 is provided, such as a 25 MHz arbitrary waveform generator. A power amplifier 104 is also provided and can be constructed by modifying an available 2-30 MHz RF power amplifier by matching the supercapacitor impedance and the required power range as described below. The DC power source 106 is provided by a regulated source with output voltage and current limit setting. The test load or user device 108 can be a high power resistor, which is used to measure the available energy stored in the supercapacitor.

[0068] The function generator frequency and the power amplifier voltage amplitude can be manually set. A host computer 110 equipped with a DAQ and DSP board can provide the means of controlling the process and for data collection and online analysis and feedback. A DSP board clock can be used to provide for fast input/output operations and sampling time. The provided system can allow continuous measurement of the voltage and current across the load and the consumed power, thereby the load impedance. The DC power source 106 can also be controllable by the DSP based controller 110 to achieve a desired charging profile. The test load can be used to measure an amount of energy the charged supercapacitor can provide following charging. A switch 112, controlled by the DSP controller 110, can be used to connect the supercapacitor 114 to the desired circuitries. A set of voltage and current sensors 116, 118 report their values to the DSP A/D converter via the DAQ. The controller 110 can communicate with a host computer to exchange the command and status of each device. The DSP controller 110 can also generate charging pulses.

[0069] The supercapacitor testing unit can be designed to apply a high frequency sinusoidal AC voltage signal with and without DC bias to the supercapacitor load. The voltage and frequency of the AC signal can be manually or automatically controlled. The voltage across the load and the current passing through the supercapacitor load and their phase are measured. The power applied to the load and the impedance of the load can then be calculated.

[0070] The high frequency 25 MHz function generator 102 can be used as an input to the power amplifier 104. The power amplifier 104 can be constructed by the modification

of the input and output impedance of an existing RF power amplifier. A circuit diagram of an existing 2-30 MHz RF power amplifier design is shown in FIG. 10. The nominal power output of this device can be 30 Watt, which is appropriate for superconductor charging.

[0071] An existing host computer will be provided with a DAQ and a DSP board for this purpose. The required software for running the system with proper data communication, sensor data acquisition and processing and generating the required control signals can be stored in a memory (not shown) accessible by the controller 110.

[0072] The charging unit 100 can measure the impedance of the supercapacitor 114 at different AC frequency, temperature and voltage. The function generator 102 can be used to generate sinusoid with adjustable voltage signal, for example up to 25 MHz. The power amplifier 104 will then produce and apply an AC voltage at a predetermined (preset) voltage level to the supercapacitor. The switch 112 controlled by the pulse generator will be used to apply the AC voltage to the supercapacitor 114 for a predetermined time period, such as an adjustable short duration of 10 to 100 microseconds depending on the AC voltage frequency. The short duration of the input power ensures that the total input energy is negligible. The input voltage and current waveform is then measured and used to calculate the supercapacitor impedance.

[0073] Tests of the superconductor charging can be conducted at various temperatures, such as at -20°C ., -25°C ., -35°C ., -45°C ., -48°C ., -54°C ., and -65°C . The tests can also use various AC voltage amplitudes, such as 2.7 V, 3.2 V, 4.5 V, 6 V, 8 V and 10 V. The AC voltage frequency range can be 2 MHz to 25 MHz, and testing can be performed in 0.5 MHz steps.

[0074] As was previously described, the application of high frequency AC voltage to the supercapacitor is for the purpose of heating the supercapacitor core at low temperatures, in particular its electrolyte, before charging it with an applied DC voltage.

[0075] An objective of the testing device is to determine at what point the AC voltage must cease and the DC charging should begin so as to build a database for use in the methods described above. At very low temperatures of below around -45°C . to 48°C ., the electrolyte is nearly frozen solid and the impedance of the supercapacitor is very high. But as the electrolyte becomes active (melt), the rapid increase in the effective capacitance of the supercapacitor causes the impedance to rapidly drop, thereby causing the passing current level to increase accordingly. In the tests, the AC current level is measured and after it has increased by a factor of 10, 25, 50, 75 and 100 then the AC voltage can be switched off and the DC charging voltage applied to the supercapacitor. In the test, for example, the supercapacitor can be charged at 3.2 V until the charging current drops to 20 mA, at which point the supercapacitor will be considered to be fully charged. The available stored energy is then measured by discharging the stored energy in the supercapacitor through the test load 108.

[0076] The AC current and voltage profiles and the DC charging time are recorded. The tests can be performed while the supercapacitor is inside a temperature chamber 120. The tests can be performed with the capacitor wrapped in a typical thermal insulation jacket and without thermal insulation to mimic a supercapacitor installed within a

housing that provides certain level of thermal insulation against heat loss and outside of any housing, respectively.

[0077] During the tests, the supercapacitor **114** will be considered damaged if the stored energy is less than 95% of the expected available stored energy.

[0078] Such testing can be used to optimize the above described methods for charging supercapacitors at low temperature to achieve full charge in minimum amount of time and used to formulate a general time optimal strategy for charging supercapacitors at low temperatures. A range of AC voltage and frequency for preheating of the supercapacitor and its follow up DC charging and the expected optimal AC to DC switching point can be determined for different low temperature levels which can be tested and fine-tuned to obtain the desired time-optimal strategy for implementation.

[0079] Thus, the above testing device and methods can be used to obtain statistical information regarding the time needed to charge various size and configuration supercapacitors to full charge at various low temperatures. The statistical information generated can include the mean time required to charge a capacitor at a given temperature and its standard deviation at a certain confidence level, such as 95%.

[0080] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the disclosed testing device and method for charging supercapacitors at low temperatures can be applied to the other methods described above (such as at FIGS. 3-6) and/or for different types of commonly known supercapacitors, ultracapacitors and so-called hybrid capacitors and the like as well as to rechargeable batteries, such as lithium ion batteries.

[0081] The above method and devices for rapid charging of supercapacitors at low temperatures can also be used to similarly enable and/or significantly increase the charging rate of lithium-ion and other similar rechargeable batteries at low temperatures. As discussed above, low temperature charging is in general even more an issue for lithium-ion and other similar rechargeable batteries since their rate of charging is low at even higher temperatures than supercapacitors, usually even a few degrees below zero C.

[0082] In the case of lithium-ion and other similar rechargeable batteries, similar to the previously described method for supercapacitors, the charging process includes similar steps. After determining that the lithium ion battery requires charging and that its core is at a low temperature that prohibits/minimizes charging, the battery electrolyte and electrodes are heated by similar methods as described above with regard to FIGS. 3-7, by inputting one or more of a predetermined voltage and current input to terminals of the battery causing internal components thereof to generate heat, such as with the application of an AC high frequency voltage, usually in the order of 1-10 MHz and sometimes higher depending on the battery size and construction. Then once the battery core, particularly its electrolyte, has reached a desired predetermined temperature or charging ability, which may be detected directly with a temperature sensor as described above or assumed, such as by detecting the charging rates with AC and/or DC voltages, as also described above, the battery can be charged conventionally using DC voltages following well known electronic and logic circuitry and procedures to ensure safe and rapid charging.

[0083] It will be appreciated by those in the art that in many cases in lithium-ion and other similar rechargeable

battery charging (including supercapacitor charging), the optimal charging time can be achieved by overlapping AC voltage and DC voltage charging during a portion of the time, usually before switching from the AC to DC voltages.

[0084] A basic operation of Lithium ion batteries may be approximately modeled with the equivalent (lumped) circuitry shown in FIG. 11. In this model, the resistor R_e is considered to be the electrical resistance against electrons from freely moving in conductive materials with which the electrodes and wiring are fabricated. The equivalent resistor R_l represents the ("essentially viscous") resistance to free movement of lithium ions by the battery electrolyte. The equivalent inductor L_f represents the ("essentially inertial") resistance to change in its state of motion, which is insignificant until the frequency of the required motion becomes extremely high. The capacitor C_s is the surface capacitance, which can store electric field energy between electrodes, acting similar to parallel plates of capacitors. The resistor R_c and capacitor C_c represent the electrical-chemical mechanism of the battery in which C_c is intended to indicate the electrical energy that is stored as chemical energy during the battery charging and that can be discharged back as electrical energy during the battery discharging, and R_c indicates the equivalent resistor in which part of the discharging electrical energy is consumed (lost) and essentially converted to heat. The terminals A and B are intended to indicate the terminals of the lithium ion battery and C and D are other internal points in the circuitry.

[0085] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that many different Lithium ion types and designs and different chemical compositions are currently available. It is also appreciated by those skilled in the art that other models of the Lithium ion batteries have also been developed. The model presented in the schematic of FIG. 11 does however represent the basic components of Lithium ion batteries as far as the disclosed method and apparatus for charging such batteries at low temperatures are concerned. Therefore the methods and apparatus described herein applies to all different types and designs of Lithium ion batteries with all different design structures and chemistries and not just those having the configuration represented by FIG. 11. The reasons that currently available Lithium ion battery charging methods and devices cannot be used for charging these batteries at low temperatures of even close to zero degrees C. are briefly described above and well described in the published literature and have been shown to damage the battery and even cause a fire hazard if used.

[0086] In the approximated equivalent (lumped) circuitry model of Lithium ion batteries shown in FIG. 11, three components of the battery, namely R_f , R_c and C_c , are highly sensitive to temperature. At low temperature, the resistance of the resistor R_f increases due to the increase in the "viscous" resistance of the electrolyte to the movement of lithium ions. This increase in resistance causes higher losses during charging and discharging of the lithium ion battery. Low temperature charging passes (relatively high) currents through the indicated components R_c and C_c representing the battery electrical-chemical reactions, and is well known that results in so-called lithium plating, which is essentially irreversible, prevents battery charging, and permanently damages the battery.

[0087] An embodiment of a method for charging lithium ion batteries at low temperatures can be described as follows. Consider the circuit model of FIG. 11. If an AC current

with high enough frequency is applied to the battery, due to the low impedance of the capacitor C_s , there will be no significant voltage drop across the capacitor, i.e., between the junctions C and D, and the circuit effectively behaves as if the capacitor C_s were shorted. As a result, the applied high frequency AC current is essentially passed through the resistors R_e and R_f and not through the R_c and C_c branch to damage the electrical-chemical components of the battery. Any residual current passing through the R_c and C_c branch would also not damage the battery due to a high frequency and zero DC component of the applied current. The high frequency AC current passing through the resistors R_e and R_f will then heat the battery core, thereby increasing its temperature. If the high frequency AC current is applied for a long enough period of time, the battery core temperature will rise enough to make it safe to charge using commonly used DC charging methods.

[0088] Furthermore, when the demanded frequency of AC current becomes high, the inductance L_f indicates high AC voltage potential requirement from the charging device. In other words, while there is an AC voltage limitation on the charging device, the inductance L_f would become dominant when the frequency is high enough so that all voltage potential drop falls across it. Even though there is still part of the energy being transferred into heat from this inductor, it is far less than from R_f . Therefore, the high frequency AC current can be chosen with the inductance L_f taken into consideration.

[0089] In the device designed to provide the aforementioned high frequency AC current to raise the battery core temperature to a safe charging temperature, provision can be made to periodically assess the temperature status of the battery core and determine if a safe charging temperature level has been reached.

[0090] Although temperature sensors can be used, similarly to that discussed above with regard to the supercapacitor of FIG. 12, in the method and apparatus for charging Lithium ion batteries at low temperatures, two basic methods may be used to assess the battery core temperature without the need for temperature sensors (thus, not requiring a special configuration of the lithium ion battery for use in such methods or with such apparatus). In one method, as the aforementioned high frequency AC current is applied to the battery, the battery impedance is regularly measured. Since the resistance of the resistor R_f is high at low temperatures, the level of battery impedance indicates if the battery core temperature is low or around a safe temperature for charging. When using this method, the impedance of the battery can be measured a priori for the charger to use to determine when the battery core safe charging temperature has been reached.

[0091] A second method for determining if the battery core temperature has reached a safe charging temperature level while applying the aforementioned high frequency AC current is as follows. In this method, the high frequency AC current is periodically turned off and current is discharged from the battery through a resistive load for a very short duration. If the battery core is still cold, then the voltage across the load will be low.

[0092] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that both methods described above can be readily incorporated in the battery charging unit. In fact, the electrical and electronic circuitry required to apply the aforementioned high frequency AC current as well the above one and/or both

methods of assessing the Lithium ion battery core temperature for safe charging may be readily incorporated in one single charging unit. Such a unit can also use commonly used methods to charge the battery once the battery core temperature has been raised to a safe charging level.

[0093] Furthermore, once DC charging has begun, the charging unit may be programmed to periodically assess the battery core temperature and if detects that the temperature is approaching an unsafe (low) temperature, then the high frequency AC current would be turned on and the DC charging current is turned off. Alternatively, a high frequency AC current may be superimposed on the charging DC current.

[0094] The Lithium ion battery may also be provided with a temperature sensor to measure its temperature such as those used in some currently available Lithium ion batteries. The temperature sensor input, which can be in addition to one or both aforementioned methods, may then be used to determine the safe charging temperature of the battery.

[0095] The aforementioned high frequency AC current may also be used to increase Lithium ion battery core temperature at low temperatures to achieve higher discharge rates. As such, the present method provides the means of charging Lithium ion batteries at low temperatures as well as providing the means of increasing the performance of Lithium ion batteries, i.e., increasing their discharge rate, at low temperatures.

[0096] The block diagram of the apparatus using the present novel method for charging and/or discharging Lithium ion batteries 206 having an electrolyte battery core 208 at low temperature is shown in FIG. 12. The charging/discharging unit 200 (collectively referred to herein as a "charging unit") is provided with electrical and electronic circuitry to provide the aforementioned high frequency AC current and the charging DC current, both with voltage controls, and can include a processor 201, such as a microprocessor or CPU for controlling the process of measuring the battery core temperature as previously described and increasing the core temperature if below the battery safe charging temperature and charging when the battery core temperature above the said safe charging temperature. The charging unit 200 having wiring to connect to the terminals 210 of the battery 206. The process steps for carrying out such methods can be stored as software on a memory device accessible by the processor 202. The charging unit 200 would periodically check the temperature by using one or both aforementioned methods based on the battery impedance and/or alternatively from an external or internal battery temperature sensor source 204 to properly direct the charging process.

[0097] Alternatively, the charging unit of FIG. 12 may function as a charging and discharging control unit and increase the battery core temperature when it is below the aforementioned safe charging temperature for charging by applying an appropriate high frequency AC current to the battery to be followed by a DC charging current. And if the battery temperature is low enough to significantly degrade its performance, i.e., its desired discharge rate, the charging unit 200 would also apply the high frequency AC current to the battery 206 to increase its core temperature to increase its discharge rate.

[0098] An embodiment 300 of the Lithium ion charging and discharging unit is shown in the block diagram of FIG. 13. Although the unit 300 can be used to solely charge

lithium ion batteries at low temperatures, the unit **300** is intended for use as a charging and discharging unit for Lithium ion batteries at all temperatures including at low temperatures.

[0099] It is appreciated here that for Lithium battery charging low temperature is intended to indicate those battery core temperatures at which DC currents (continuous or pulsed or other variations known in the art or the like) causes damage to the battery or that the battery cannot effectively be charged. In the Lithium ion battery discharging process, low temperature is intended to indicate temperatures at which the Lithium ion battery discharge rate is significantly lower than its normal rate. In Lithium ion batteries the latter temperatures are generally lower than those for safe charging of the battery.

[0100] The unit **300** is powered by an external power source as shown schematically by arrow **302**, which might for example be an outlet provided outdoors for charging the Lithium ion batteries of an electric car. A microprocessor-based controller **304** (alternatively referred to herein and in FIG. **13** as a “control unit”) is used for determining the status of the battery **301** which may or may not have an internal or external temperature sensor **303** as was previously discussed while being charged and which when its battery core is determined to be below a safe charging temperature would instruct the AC and DC current generator **306** to output high frequency AC current, shown schematically by arrow **AC 304**) and when it is safe to charge, would instruct the AC and DC current generator **306** to output DC current, shown schematically by arrow **DC 308** using the indicated switching element **310**. The control unit **304** may be programmed (the instructions of which may be stored in a memory provided in the unit **300** and accessible by the control unit **304**) to increase the internal temperature of the battery **301** a safe amount to allow the battery **301** to be charged at faster rates. The high frequency AC and DC currents are generated by the indicated AC and DC current generator **306**, which is powered from the unit input power **302**, and which is in direct communication with the control unit **306** as indicated by the arrow **312**. The control unit **306** is also in constant communication with the AC and DC current switching element **310** and can determine if one or the other of the AC or DC current needs to be turned on or off. In this embodiment only one of the AC or DC current can be turned on simultaneously.

[0101] In the embodiment **300** of FIG. **13**, when either the AC or the DC current is turned on, the current is passed through a charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314** as indicated by arrow **316a**, which is used to determine the aforementioned current, voltage and impedance measurements needed for the control unit **314** to control the charging process as was previously described. The charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314** also regulates the charging current during the charging cycles and the discharging current during the discharging cycles as directed by the control unit **306** to ensure proper and safe operation of the battery **301** and the charging and discharging unit **300**. The charging and discharging connections between the above charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314** and the Lithium ion battery **301** are indicated schematically by arrow **316b**. The battery discharge is routed through the AC

and DC current switching element **310** as shown schematically by arrow **318**. The control unit **304** is also in communication with all the system units as shown in FIG. **13** as well as the battery temperature sensor **303** if such a sensor is provided. Although shown separately, the charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314** can be integrated into the control unit **304**.

[0102] Once the battery core temperature has reached a safe charging level, the battery can then be charged using a DC current or any other currently available technique for example with or without charging pulses, etc., that are well known in the art and are used for efficient and safe charging of Lithium ion batteries. Any one of the well-known methods for safeguarding the discharging process may also be employed. Similarly, different hardware designs are also well known in the art and may be used in the design of the charging and discharging circuitry of this and the following embodiments after the aforementioned safe core temperature levels (measured directly or via the aforementioned impedance related techniques) have been reached for charging the battery and when the desired core temperature (measured directly or via the aforementioned impedance related techniques) has been reached for efficient discharge (usually in terms of fast discharge rates and lower internal losses which are higher at low temperatures).

[0103] A block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a microprocessor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit **320** for low temperatures is shown in FIG. **14**. The embodiment **320** is intended for use as the means for just charging Lithium ion batteries at all temperatures including at low temperatures when the battery core temperature is below its safe charging temperature level. All components of the embodiment **320** are the same as those of the embodiment **300** of FIG. **13** except that in the embodiment **320**, the charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314a** is modified to eliminate its discharging regulation function. The Lithium ion charging unit **320** functions as previously described to charge the battery using a DC current (continuous or pulsed or other variations known in the art or the like) while the battery core temperature is above its safe charging temperature as measured using one or more of the previously described methods. If the battery core temperature is determined to be below or approaching the battery safe charging temperature, then the charging DC current is disconnected and the high frequency AC current is applied as was previously described for the embodiment of FIG. **13** to raise the battery core temperature above its safe charging temperature. The core temperature measurement can be made either continuously or at short enough intervals of time to ensure that the battery core temperature does not drop below its safe charging temperature during its charging.

[0104] A block diagram of another alternative embodiment of the microprocessor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit **340** for low temperatures is shown in FIG. **15**. All components of the embodiment **340** are the same as those of the embodiment **300** of FIG. **13** except that in the embodiment **340**, the AC and DC current switching element **310** of FIG. **13** is replaced by an AC and DC current mixing element **342**. Depending on the detail design of the charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit

314b, some routine modifications may be made to its design to accommodate the mixed AC and DC current signals.

[**1015**] The operation of the microprocessor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit **340** of FIG. **5** is similar to that of the embodiment **300** of FIG. **13** except for the following. In the embodiment **300** of FIG. **13** and during a battery charging cycle, the unit **300** can either apply a high frequency AC current or a DC current to the battery. During low temperature charging, the unit **300** applied the high frequency AC current until a safe battery core temperature is reached. The charging DC current (continuous or pulsed or other variations known in the art or the like) is then applied to charge the battery **301**. In the embodiment **340** of FIG. **15**, when the battery core temperature is below its safe charging temperature, the unit will similarly apply a high frequency voltage to the battery to raise its core temperature to a safe charging level. However, the provision of the AC and DC current mixing element allows the embodiment **340** maintain the battery core temperature at a safe charging temperature level when it is detected to be dropping close to the safe charging temperature. Whenever such a condition is detected, by adding the high frequency AC current to the charging DC current, the core temperature is raised above its safe charging temperature. By continuous or frequent measurement of the battery core temperature, the temperature can be maintained above the battery safe charging temperature and be continuously charged. This situation is regularly encountered when the Lithium ion battery is exposed to a very cold environment and particularly if the battery is relatively small and has a geometrical shape in which the ratio of its surface area to volume is relatively high such as in batteries that are relatively thin with large surface areas.

[**1016**] The high frequency AC current may also be applied to the battery **301** during the discharging cycles when the battery core temperature is below or is dropping to levels close to a predetermined optimal level for efficient discharge (usually determined in terms of achievable discharge rates and lower internal losses, which are higher at low temperatures). In this embodiment, the battery core temperature can be measured at least periodically via temperature sensor(s) if provided and/or using the aforementioned impedance related measuring techniques.

[**1017**] A block diagram of an alternative embodiment of the microprocessor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit **360** for low temperatures is shown in FIG. **16**. The embodiment **360** is intended for use as the means for just charging Lithium ion batteries at all temperatures including at low temperatures when the battery core temperature is below its safe charging temperature level. All components of the embodiment **360** are the same as those of the embodiment **340** of FIG. **15** except that in the embodiment **360**, the charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314c** is modified to eliminate its discharging regulation function. The Lithium ion charging unit **360** functions as described for the embodiment **340** of FIG. **15** to raise the battery core temperature to a safe charging temperature level, to be followed by charging using a DC current (continuous or pulsed or other variations known in the art or the like) while the battery core temperature is above its safe charging temperature as measured using one or more of the previously described methods. Then whenever the battery core temperature is detected to have dropped to close to its

safe charging temperature, the control unit **304** instructs the AC and DC current generator to add a high frequency AC current to the charging DC current, thereby raising the battery core temperature above the safe charging temperature. By continuous or frequent measurement of the battery core temperature, the core temperature can be maintained above the battery safe charging temperature while continuously charging the battery.

[**1018**] A block diagram of another alternative embodiment of the novel microprocessor controlled lithium ion battery charging and discharging unit **380** for low temperatures is shown in FIG. **17**. The embodiment **380** is intended for use as the means for keeping the core temperature of a Lithium ion battery above a prescribed level for efficient discharging at all temperatures including at low temperatures. All components of the embodiment **380** are the same as those of the embodiment **360** of FIG. **15** except that in the embodiment **380**, the charging voltage, current and impedance measurement and charging and discharging regulation unit **314d** is modified to only provide discharge regulation and voltage, current and battery impedance measurements functionality. While the battery **301** is being used to power certain load, i.e., while electrical energy is being discharged from the battery, the high frequency AC current may also be applied to the battery whenever the battery core temperature is measured to be below or if it is dropping close to levels predetermined to be optimal for efficient battery discharge (usually determined in terms of achievable discharge rates and low internal losses, which are higher at low temperatures). In this embodiment, the battery core temperature can be measured at least periodically via temperature sensor(s) **303** if provided or using the aforementioned impedance related measuring techniques.

[**1019**] In the embodiment **380** of FIG. **17**, the high frequency AC current producing generator element **306a** is powered from an external source **302**. External powering of the AC current generator **306a** may be necessary in certain situations, for example when the charged battery core is at such a low temperature that cannot provide enough power to the AC current generator **306a** or that it cannot provide enough power to raise the core temperature to the required operating temperature in short enough period of time. If such situations are not expected to be encountered, the AC current generator **306a** may be powered directly by the Lithium ion battery **301** itself or after an initial external powering period. The embodiment of FIG. **18** illustrates such a discharging control unit **400** in which the AC current generator **306a** of the discharging control unit is powered by the battery **301** itself.

[**10110**] The embodiment **400** shown in FIG. **18** is similar in functionality and design to the embodiment **380** of FIG. **17** except for the source of AC current generator powering. In the embodiment **400**, the AC current generator **306a** is powered from the device discharge power and AC generator powering control unit **402** as shown by the arrow **404**. The AC current generator **306a** is in direct communication with the system control unit **304** as shown in FIG. **18**. The discharge power and AC generator powering control unit **402** gets its power from the battery via the voltage, current and impedance measurement and discharging regulation unit **314d** as indicated by arrow **406**. The input and output currents to the battery **301** are via the connection indicated by the two-way arrow **316c**. The battery discharge is through the discharge power and AC generator powering control unit

402 as shown by the discharging power arrow 318. The generated AC current is provided to the voltage, current and impedance measurement and discharging regulation unit 314d, which is in communication with the system control unit 304, for increasing the battery core temperature when it is or about to fall below a prescribed temperature level.

[0111] The embodiment 400 of FIG. 18 may also be provided with an external source of powering for its high frequency AC current generator similar to the embodiment 380 of FIG. 17. The device will then have the capability of using the external power source, particularly as an initial source of power to bring the battery core temperature to a prescribed level before switching to an internal mode of powering as shown in the embodiment of FIG. 18. Such a configuration is shown in the embodiment 420 shown in FIG. 19, which is similar in functionality and design to the embodiment 400 of FIG. 18 except for the source powering the AC current generator 306a. In the embodiment 400 of FIG. 18, the AC current generator 306a is only powered by the arrow 404. However, in the embodiment 420 of FIG. 19, the AC current generator 306a also can take energy from the external input power 302, and depending on the situation, select one or both of the power sources to heat the battery 301.

[0112] FIGS. 20 and 21 show flow charts for charging and discharging a lithium ion battery at any temperature. As discussed above, if it is determined that a battery needs to be charged, a measurement is obtained of the internal temperature of the lithium ion battery at step S10. A determination is then made at step S12 as to whether the obtained temperature is lower than some predetermined threshold temperature at which the battery cannot be charged or cannot be efficiently charged. If such determination at step S12 is no, the method proceeds to steps S14 and S16 to conventionally charge the battery. However, if the determination at step S12 is yes, the method proceeds to step S18 where high frequency AC voltage current is input to the lithium ion battery to heat the interior thereof. Such process can loop back to step S10 along route S20, periodically or at some regular interval until the determination of step S12 is no, at which time the battery is charged conventionally at steps S14 and S16 until fully charged or the process is otherwise terminated. Thus, In FIG. 20, while the battery's core temperature is detected to be lower than a predetermined temperature, to avoid damage the battery, the heating procedure is executed until the core temperature rises high enough.

[0113] In FIG. 21, a measurement is made at step S10 to obtain a measurement of the battery internal temperature. Similarly to FIG. 20, if the core temperature is determined to be less than a predetermined temperature at step S12, the battery is input with a high-frequency, AC voltage current at step S18 to heat the interior of the battery. Such process loops back to step S10 via S20 as discussed above with regard to FIG. 20 until the core temperature is determined to be above such predetermined threshold temperature at step S12, at which time the process continues to step S22 to discharge the lithium ion battery conventionally to a load. Thus, as can be seen at loop S24, while the battery's core temperature is low so that the discharging efficiency is dropping, the heating procedure is also executed until the core temperature rises above the predetermined temperature. Thus, the discharging at step S22 is not be interrupted during the heating procedure at step S18.

[0114] In both FIGS. 20 and 21, the alternative steps discussed above for determining whether the battery core has too low a temperature (without the use of a temperature sensor) and cannot be charged conventionally can also be used, in which case step S12 determines whether the core temperature is too cold based on such determinations and not on a direct temperature measurement. Of course, both determinations can be used and the method can include logic for making the determination in step S12 based on multiple inputs (e.g., the temperature measurement, the battery impedance as described above with regard to the first method and/or the voltage across a small load with regard to the second method discussed above).

[0115] It is appreciated by those skilled in the art that numerous variations of the described designs shown by the block diagrams of FIGS. 13-19 are also possible for performing the indicated functions. The disclosure of the indicated embodiments by no means is intended to limit their implementation only in the described manner, rather to demonstrate the various combinations of functionalities that can be incorporated in a given design and their general purpose.

[0116] It is also appreciated that the means of controlling the operation of the disclosed embodiments can be with the use of a microprocessor based control unit. However, it is also appreciated that that the general functions performed by the microprocessor may also be performed by appropriate electronics and logic circuitry. Similar circuitry designs have been developed for the control of various processes in the industry and commercially and may be designed for the control of the disclosed Lithium ion battery charging and discharging devices for all temperature operation including low temperature operation.

[0117] Lastly, any of the above methods can be practiced without the initial determination of the core temperature of the energy storage device. That is, a conventional charging input can be used regardless of the temperature of the energy storage device's core and such determination can be made while the charging input is being applied. In this case, the core temperature determination can be made periodically and if the temperature of the core is obtained (directly measured or assumed) is below the predetermined threshold that would hinder further charging or approaching within some limit of the predetermined threshold, the alternative inputs discussed above for heating the internal components of the energy storage device can be superimposed over the charging input or the charging input can be stopped and the alternative input applied until the charging input can be resumed, such as when the predetermined threshold is reached. The same can also be for the discharging methods discussed above.

[0118] While there has been shown and described what is considered to be preferred embodiments of the invention, it will, of course, be understood that various modifications and changes in form or detail could readily be made without departing from the spirit of the invention. It is therefore intended that the invention be not limited to the exact forms described and illustrated, but should be constructed to cover all modifications that may fall within the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A charger for charging an energy storage device having a core with an electrolyte, the charger comprising:

- a controller comprising hardware, the controller being configured to:
- obtain one or more of a measurement or approximation of a temperature of the electrolyte;
 - determine whether the obtained temperature is below a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device; and
 - input one or more of a predetermined voltage and current input to terminals of the energy storage device causing internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat if the temperature is determined to be less than the predetermined threshold,
- wherein the energy storage device includes an internal surface capacitance, which can store electric field energy between internal electrodes of the energy storage device, and
- the controller is configured to input an AC current to the terminals with a frequency high enough to effectively short the internal surface capacitance.
- The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to obtain the measurement of the temperature of the electrolyte by receiving an output from a temperature sensor positioned at one or more of the electrolyte or a battery surface, wherein the output being indicative of the temperature of the electrolyte.
 - The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to obtain the approximation of the temperature of the electrolyte by:
 - applying an initial charging input to the energy storage device,
 - measuring a rate of charging using the initial charging input, and
 - determining a charging rate at the initial charging input, wherein if a rate of charging is determined to be less than a predetermined charging rate, the electrolyte temperature is approximated as being less than the predetermined threshold.
 - The charger of claim 3, wherein the initial charging input is a charging input for charging the energy storage device where the predetermined temperature is above the threshold.
 - The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to obtain the approximation of the temperature of the electrolyte by approximating the electrolyte temperature based on a measured ambient temperature.
 - The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is further configured to repeat step (a) during step (c) to determine if step (c) can be stopped.
 - The charger of claim 6, wherein the repeating of step (a) comprises deciding to stop step (c) based on a measured battery impedance.
 - The charger of claim 6, wherein the repeating of step (a) comprises:
 - turning the AC current off;
 - discharging current from the battery through a resistive load for a predetermined duration; and
 - deciding to stop step (c) based on a measured voltage across the load.
 - The charger of claim 6, wherein the repeating is performed periodically.
 - The charger of claim 9, wherein the repeating is performed at regular predetermined intervals.
 - The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is further configured to input a DC charging input to the terminals of the energy storage device to charge the energy storage device if the temperature is determined to be above the predetermined temperature.
 - The charger of claim 11, wherein the controller is further configured to:
 - periodically assess the temperature of the electrolyte after inputting the DC charging input to detect whether the temperature is one of less than the predetermined threshold or approaching within a predetermined limit of the predetermined threshold; and
 - one of:
 - stop the DC charging input and input the one or more of the predetermined voltage and current input; or
 - superimpose the input of the one or more of the predetermined voltage and current input on the charging input.
 - The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is further configured to discharge the energy storage device to a load if the temperature is determined to be above the predetermined temperature.
 - The charger of claim 1, wherein the controller is further configured to determine a charge level of the energy storage device prior to step (a) and commence step (a) if the charge level is below a predetermined charge level.
 - A charger for charging an energy storage device having an electrolyte, the charger comprising:
 - a controller comprising hardware, the controller being configured to:
 - input a charging input to the terminals of the energy storage device to charge the energy storage device;
 - periodically assess the temperature of the electrolyte after inputting the charging input to detect whether the temperature is one of:
 - less than a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device; or
 - approaching within a predetermined limit of the predetermined threshold; and
 - if the temperature is determined to be less than the predetermined temperature or approaching within the predetermined limit of the predetermined threshold:
 - stop the charging input and inputting one or more of a predetermined voltage and current input to terminals of the energy storage device causing internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat;
 - wherein the charging input is a DC current input and the one or more of the predetermined voltage and current input comprises an AC current;
 - the energy storage device includes an internal surface capacitance, which can store electric field energy between internal electrodes of the energy storage device, and
 - the AC current applied to the terminals having a frequency high enough to effectively short the internal surface capacitance.
 - A charger for discharging an energy storage device having an electrolyte, the charger comprising:
 - a controller comprising hardware, the controller being configured to:

- (a) obtain one or more of a measurement or approximation of a temperature of the electrolyte;
- (b) determine whether the temperature obtained in step (a) is below a predetermined threshold considered to at least reduce the charging efficiency of the energy storage device;
- (c) input one or more of a predetermined voltage and current input to terminals of the energy storage device causing internal components of the energy storage device to generate heat if the temperature is determined to be less than the predetermined threshold, and
- (d) discharge the energy storage device to a load if the temperature is determined to be below the predetermined threshold;

wherein the energy storage device includes an internal surface capacitance, which can store electric field energy between internal electrodes of the energy storage device, and

the inputting comprises applying an AC current to the terminals with a frequency high enough to effectively short the internal surface capacitance.

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