

## **Handwriting Comparison Using ESDA Lifts**

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## Abstract:

Forensic document examiners frequently utilize electrostatic detection methods to visualize indentations on paper. Typical indentation examinations can resolve sequencing issues, determine a source document, or provide investigative leads. Rarely are ESDA lifts utilized for handwriting comparison. This poster illustrates a case where written indentations developed with ESDA were compared to known writing. Factors that limited the comparison included overlapping of indentations and the lack of subtle features. The source document of the indentations was subsequently obtained and another handwriting examination was conducted. Detail that was not present in the ESDA lifts was observed in the writing resulting in identification of a writer.

## Case Information:

This case began in April 2002 with the disappearance of a twenty nine year old mother of two from her residence in Syracuse, New York. Onondaga County Sheriff's detectives submitted lined paper from the woman's home for indentation analysis. An ESDA examination developed indentations indicating a suicide note had been written, although none was located.

In 2006, Cold Case Investigators submitted known writing of the missing person for handwriting comparison to ESDA lifts developed in 2002. Although some similarities were noted between the ESDA lift indentations and the known writings, they were not sufficient for identification.

In January 2008, State Police divers on a training exercise near Onondaga Lake located a submerged vehicle that contained the missing person and a suicide note. Comparison of the suicide note to exemplars of the victim resulted in her identification as the writer.



4/16/02

I don't know where to start  
E just can't like this  
thing I try to do facts  
cannot or for them.  
Look at my house!  
look at matters do and tie a  
it's sti

less set less enough to  
why I'm  
world  
They wch love me  
th.selves care about

She  
they will  
take care of them  
that they do need them pret  
watch them suffer with me  
any more the need a REAL  
cure of all their needs  
One that can take

Transparency film was utilized to copy written indentations developed with ESDA. Decipherment of indentations indicated a note that was two pages in length.

IF I do make it through this  
alive I dont want to see  
any of my friends or family

I dont want life support or  
any thing just let me

die I hate myself I  
hate my life I hate  
life I live Owen to my kids  
they deserve so much more

love. Such a fat ugly  
worthless stupid lazy  
mentally ill abusive mother  
like me I feel like

I've ruined their lives

I want them to live at

Tina's and Andrew (Drew) Henshaw

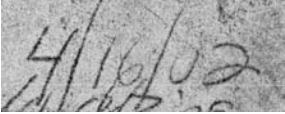
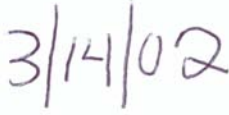
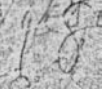
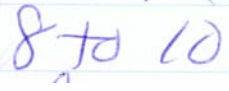


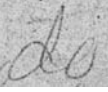
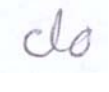
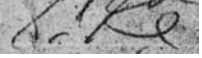

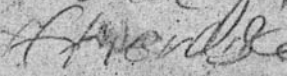
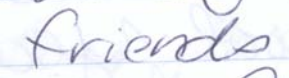
they will give them they will  
take care of them. 11/16/02

Hansen

Transparency of second page of suicide note deciphered from  
ESDA lifts.

ESDA Lift

Known Writing

Some features such as letter design, format, and connecting strokes were observed in the ESDA lifts and known writing.



Photograph of recovered car containing missing person and suicide note. The two-page suicide note was recovered from a plastic bag inside the vehicle interior, six years after disappearance.



4/16/02  
10:07pm

I dont know where to start.  
I just cant live like this anymore.  
Everything I try to do fails.  
My children deserve so much.  
I cannot provide for them.  
Look at my house!  
Look at my legal and financial  
matters. I do my best and  
it's still not enough. No  
one is selfless enough to  
love me, thats why I'm  
alone in this world. The  
people who I thought love me  
dont. They only care about  
themselves. I know youre going  
to say "how could she do  
this to her children!" I  
could have taken them with  
me. Would you have preferred  
that? I do love them. I cant  
watch them suffer with me  
any more! They need a REAL  
Mom! One that can take  
care of all their needs.

First page of note recovered from vehicle.

IF I do make it through this  
alive I dont want to see  
any of my friends or family

I dont want life support or  
anything. Just Let me


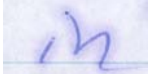
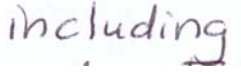
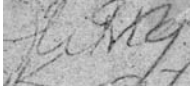
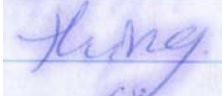

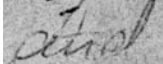
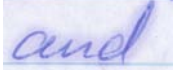
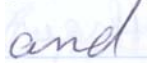

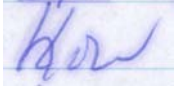
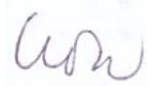

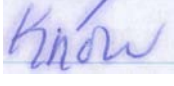
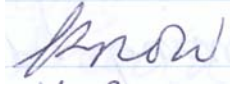
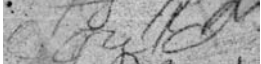
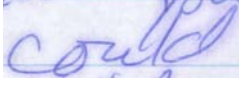
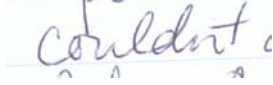
die!! I hate myself. I  
hate my life. I hate the  
life I've given to my kids.  
They deserve so much more  
than such a fat, ugly,  
worthless, stupid, lazy,  
mentally ill, abusive mother  
like me. I feel like  
I've ruined their lives.

I want them to live with  
Tina and Andrew (Drew) Henshaw.  
They will love them. They will  
take care of them the way  
they need to be.

10:18 pm 4/16/02

Dauphin

Second page of note recovered from vehicle.

ESDA Lift	Recovered Note	Known Writing
		
		
		
		
		
		

Some features, which were not developed on the ESDA lifts, were observed in the note recovered from the vehicle. These included subtle connecting strokes such as the “I dot” connection to the letter “n”.

## Summary:

The comparison of written indentations developed with ESDA to the known writing of an individual is uncommon. In this case the comparison was useful as an investigative aid prior to the discovery of the missing person and the actual note. It provided direction for the ongoing investigation.

Upon reflection, comparison of handwriting using ESDA lift indentations is somewhat analogous to examining a poor photocopy. An FDE needs to be conservative in opinion due to the lack of detail and the absence of the original document, but an opinion can be expressed. In this case the later recovery of the suicide note (source document of the indentations) provided the necessary details for an identification to be made.