

TECHNICAL NOTE

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Was the Document Reinserted in the Typewriter?

REFERENCE: Horan, J. J., "Was the Document Reinserted in the Typewriter?," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, JFSCA, Vol. 32, No. 1, Jan. 1987, pp. 245-247.

ABSTRACT: Experimentation indicates that, with care, a typist can in many cases reinsert a typewritten document in a typewriter and add a word, line, or paragraph without having vertical or horizontal misalignment.

KEYWORDS: questioned documents, typewriters

To the document examiner, the fact that a word, line, or paragraph of a typewritten document does not align vertically or horizontally indicates that the document may have been reinserted in the typewriter and a word, line, or paragraph added. Should the absence of this condition indicate the converse?

Hilton states: "When a document is removed from and replaced in the typewriter it contains evidence of this fact. Despite the greatest care, it is very difficult to reinsert the paper in exactly the position it was originally" [1].

Last year, I was asked to examine a document on which the client was sure that a paragraph was added after he had signed it. Since the person who would have added the questioned paragraph was the person who typed the original letter, this was not a question about a different typewriter being used or a change being made at a much later date. It was basically a question of whether there was any indication in the alignment or not of the paragraph being added. Examination of the document with a typewriter test plate revealed no indication of misalignment both vertically and horizontally. The question was raised how difficult it would be to reinsert the paper and add a paragraph without having either vertical or horizontal misalignment.

Since this case involved a modern typewriter, experimentation was indicated to determine if new controls would aid in reinserting a document. To conduct the experiments, the typewriter used and the same type stationery were obtained. The typewriter was an IBM Correcting Selectric®. Since I am not a typist and had never used an IBM Correcting Selectric before, I had to familiarize myself with the typewriter. Once I had done this, I found that it was relatively easy to reinsert the paper in the typewriter and add a paragraph.

By using the same techniques to insert the paper for both the first typing and the reinsertion, it was found that very little realignment was necessary. The first step is to place the

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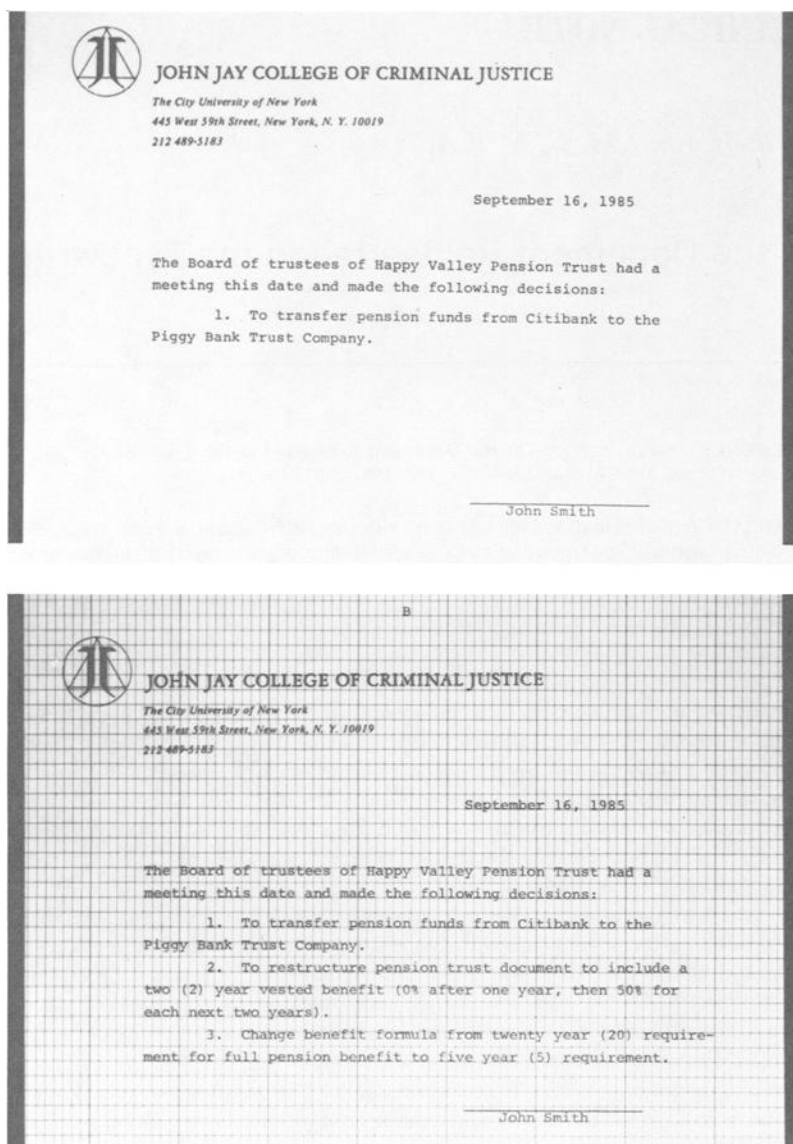


FIG. 1—(Top) Letter before paragraph was added and (bottom) after the paragraph was added.

paper against the paper guide and use the index key or the return key to feed the paper into the typewriter. Once this is done, the alignment can be checked on the cardholder scale.

If one is familiar with the typewriter and especially the cardholder scale, one can remove the paper and reinsert it without having either vertical or horizontal misalignment. Figure 1 shows an example before and after the paragraphs were added.

With the correcting Selectric, the alignment can be checked by typing the same letter over one of a letter already on the page. If the alignment is off, the letter can be removed and the alignment changed.

It was found with a little practice that it was possible to reinsert a document in the typewriter and type over the entire document leaving little or no indication that it had been typed over.

Conclusion

In cases where the same typist has access to the same typewriter and the typewriter setting has not been changed, a typist can, with care, reinsert a document in the typewriter and add words, lines, or paragraphs without having vertical or horizontal misalignment. In these cases, the examiner must look for other indications of reinsertion such as a single letter out of alignment that has been corrected. If he does not find them, the best that he can say is that he found no indication that the paper was removed and reinserted in the typewriter.

Reference

[1] Hilton, O., *Scientific Examination of Questioned Documents*, Elsevier, New York, 1982, p. 56.

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