

tographs stemming from what are considered 'cold cases.'

"When I was in San Diego, (police) basically had about 1,500 bankers boxes of information from unsolved cases that go back to the 1960s. The problem was with all of these paper-based documents — everything from hand-written notes to photographs — there was no method to analyze all of the information or to compare it to other cases.

"Many of the homicide detectives who were on the case initially are retired and to look between the cases by hand to find similarities was simply unfeasible.

"Our expertise is documents and document imaging ... so really, we were able to combine the knowledge of a homicide investigator and our technology to produce a product, which we call IS7."

First, the product digitizes old documents before using sophisticated text-recognition software to decipher hand-written material into computer text documents. The resulting document is then moved into a management software database, accessible by software developed in part by OE.

"First of all, it stabilizes the documents — paper doesn't last forever. Secondly, what it allows it to do through the case management software, it allows investigators to review the digital file from their desktop computer."

The files can be cross-referenced which allows detectives to look for similarities between cases.

"Once all of these cases are imaged, you can type in any keyword and (the program) will look through the entire database to find matches. Cold cases, for example, you can type in 'red fibre, knife and truck' and every time those items came up in a note, they'll actually appear in the search — whether the record was hand-written, typed or an image.

"It is image enhancement, but in the case of IS7, it is basically allowing police to match information that they have never been able to match before."

OE Technologies' clients include a number of police agencies across Canada and in parts of the United States — including the Belleville Police Service.

"Many people are a little taken aback when they see what we can do ... right here in little old Belleville," Bell said, chuckling.

Meanwhile, the imaging software used in the Williams case OE Technologies is already working on another cold case in San Diego from 1976.

"The old game of producing and selling photocopiers is long gone. We're now in the digital world ... and our basic business has moved from machines to providing digital solutions."

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