Reagents for infrared chemical imaging of fingerprints on difficult surfaces

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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Science)
University of Technology, Sydney
May, 2008
In light of knowledge attained, the happy achievement seems almost a matter of course, and any intelligent student can grasp it without too much trouble. But the years of anxious searching in the dark, with their intense longing, their alterations of confidence and exhaustion and the final emergence into the light – only those who have experienced it can understand it.

Albert Einstein, 1933
Certificate of authorship and originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all the information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Mark Tahtouh

08/12/2008
Acknowledgements

This thesis is the end product of a research project that spans several years. Over this period there have been a number of people who have contributed to the success of this project. First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to my principal supervisor Dr Brian J. Reedy. You have been the driving force behind this project since it began during my honours year (2003). You have always been supportive, encouraging and have played an enormous role in maintaining my drive and motivation. I can not thank you enough for always being helpful, supportive and encouraging throughout the highs and lows that this project has presented. You are truly the best supervisor that anyone could ask for. I am grateful to have come to know you as not only my teacher and supervisor but also as a colleague and friend.

To my co-supervisor, Dr John Kalman, I thank you for your help and support throughout this project. The organic synthetic chemistry section of this work would not have been possible without your input. I have enjoyed the many hours we have spent unlocking the mysteries of puzzling spectra and failed reactions. It has been a real pleasure and honour to work with you and I have learnt a great deal because of your involvement and enthusiasm.

To Dr Ronald Shimmon, a pseudo-supervisor, technical assistant, colleague and true friend. Your enthusiasm, commitment and helpfulness are second to none. You have made my experiences at UTS all the more enjoyable. Thanks for your help and friendship and thanks for the laughs.

To my synthetic chemistry brother, Tristan Rawling, I thank you for the laughs and good times. Thank you for never having any faith in me, my abilities or my project – you gave me motivation to prove you wrong. The organic research lab, and my experiences there, would not be complete without you. I thank you for your help and support with troublesome reactions and hereby give you credit for the ‘Rawlings gamble’ for improving product yield. Thank you also for your kind donation of greasy fingerprint deposits and for the gym therapy sessions that helped me though some tough times.

To my princess Kate Grimwood, thank you for being there for me and being so loving and supportive while I was being anything but. Your encouragement and patience has made more of an impact than you realise. I am happier than I have ever been because of you and I
am honoured to be walking this wonderful path through life along your side. You are my favourite and I love you. Thank you also for your greasy fingerprint deposits that, surprisingly, proved greasier than my own.

A big thank you to Pauline Despland for your help with the imaging of fingerprints on aluminium drink cans and the optimisation of parameters for FTIR chemical imaging. To Katherine Bojko (nee Flynn) for your fingerprints and help with FTIR chemical imaging. Thank you also to Dr Andrew McDonagh for helpful discussions. To Jean-Pierre Guerbois for assistance with the collection and interpretation of thermal analysis data. To Jim Keegan for assistance with GC-MS.

To all my friends, fellow students and post-graduates, past and present, thank you for your help in celebrating the good times and helping me through the bad. Whether it was sharing a laugh over lunch, a game of uno or a board meeting at the bar, you guys always helped me see there was light at the end of the tunnel. You are all, in your own way, important to me as colleagues and friends and in the interests of diplomacy, I list you here in alphabetical order: Christine Austin, Alison Beavis, David Bishop, Marty Blaber, Jessica Booth, Ellen Braybon, Adam Brown, Fiona Burger, Liz Chan, Hammish Conan, Jonathan Edgar, Matt Foot, Brad Green, Dominic Hare, Jane Hemmings, Tamsin Kelly, Ilona Kramer, Barry Lui, Katie McBean, Lisa Mingari, Julia Norman, Stephanie Notter, Sylvan Rudduck, Helen Rutlidge, Joanne Salama, Garry Sarkissian, Daniel Sommerville, Sonia Taflaga, Freya Turner and Rebecca Webb.

Finally a big thank you to my family and loved ones, too numerous to list here but forever in my mind and heart. To my brothers Michael and Emil, thank you for your help and support over the past several years. You have both been helpful and a source of inspiration although you may not have realised it; I certainly did not recognise or acknowledge your importance to me often enough. To mum and dad, thank you for all your love, help and support over the past several years and indeed throughout my life. You have always done everything possible to ensure that I have the best opportunities in life and for that I am truly and humbly thankful. Your unconditional love has made me the person I am and has allowed me to pursue my dreams. Words can not express my gratitude – I love you.
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A/CAA</td>
<td>anthracene / 2-cyanoacrylic acid adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/CAA-K</td>
<td>anthracene / 2-cyanoacrylic acid potassium salt adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/CAC</td>
<td>anthracene / 2-cyanoacryloyl chloride adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/1-CECA</td>
<td>anthracene / 1-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/2-CECA</td>
<td>anthracene / 2-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/ECA</td>
<td>anthracene / ethyl 2-cyanoacrylate adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/ECA-d₅</td>
<td>anthracene / pentadeuteroethyl 2-cyanoacrylate adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/MA</td>
<td>anthracene / maleic anhydride adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/MCA</td>
<td>anthracene / methyl 2-cyanoacrylate adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/MCA-d₃</td>
<td>anthracene / trideuteromethyl 2-cyanoacrylate adduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATR</td>
<td>attenuated total reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-BPN</td>
<td>3-bromopropionitrile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-CECA</td>
<td>1-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-CECA</td>
<td>2-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-CECAc</td>
<td>2-cyanoethyl cyanoacetate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAB</td>
<td>diaminobenzidine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBU</td>
<td>1,8-diazabicyclo[5,4,0]undec-7-ene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFO</td>
<td>1,8-diazafluorene-9-one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMAC</td>
<td>dimethylaminocinnamaldehyde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMF</td>
<td>N,N-dimethylformamide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMSO</td>
<td>dimethylsulfoxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTA</td>
<td>differential thermal analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>ethyl 2-cyanoacrylate (superglue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA-d₅</td>
<td>pentadeuteroethyl 2-cyanoacrylate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPA</td>
<td>focal plane array</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTIR</td>
<td>Fourier transform infrared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS-MS</td>
<td>gas chromatography – mass spectrometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSAB</td>
<td>hard soft acid base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMPA</td>
<td>hexamethylphosphoramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-HPN</td>
<td>3-hydroxypropionitrile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-HPN</td>
<td>2-hydroxypropionitrile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>infrared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA-d₃</td>
<td>trideuteromethyl 2-cyanoacrylate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMD</td>
<td>multi-metal deposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>minimal noise fraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>mass spectrometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMR</td>
<td>nuclear magnetic resonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSD</td>
<td>non-water-soluble deposit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oligo-2-CECA</td>
<td>oligo-2-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OsO₄</td>
<td>osmium tetroxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>physical developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>principal component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P₂O₅</td>
<td>phosphorus pentoxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poly-1-CECA</td>
<td>1-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate polymer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poly-2-CECA</td>
<td>2-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate polymer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poly-ECA-d₅</td>
<td>pentadeuteroethyl 2-cyanoacrylate polymer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poly-MCA-d₃</td>
<td>trideuteromethyl 2-cyanoacrylate polymer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTX</td>
<td>ruthenium tetroxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO₂</td>
<td>sulfur dioxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCl₂</td>
<td>thionyl chloride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR</td>
<td>small particle reagent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGA</td>
<td>thermogravimetric analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMD</td>
<td>vacuum metal deposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSD</td>
<td>water-soluble deposit</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Note:** as a supplement to the above list of abbreviations, a fold out page at the back of this thesis contains structures, names and abbreviations for the majority of the compounds discussed.
Abstract

Fingerprints continue to be an important form of forensic evidence for individual identification. A number of techniques are currently available for the detection and enhancement of invisible or latent fingerprints. While these techniques perform well on many surfaces, there are a number of surfaces that pose problems. On such surfaces, Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) chemical imaging can provide superior results. FTIR chemical imaging involves the simultaneous collection of thousands of mid-infrared spectra across a sample using a focal plane array (FPA) detector. This allows for the collection of chemically specific spectral data while maintaining spatial information. Images can then be generated based on spectral / chemical contrast between components within a sample. A key aim of this project was to further investigate the use of FTIR chemical imaging for the detection and enhancement of latent (untreated) and developed (treated) fingerprints on a number of ‘difficult’ surfaces.

During the initial development of an infrared chemical imaging technique for fingerprints, an un-optimised set of image collection parameters was used. Using these settings, the collection of an entire fingerprint image was time consuming (often several hours or days). A systematic method for the optimisation of the image collection parameters has been developed. This method allows the optimisation of parameters such as spectral resolution, number of co-added scans, spectral range, pixel aggregation and image formation parameters in order to minimise image collection time and file size while maintaining the quality of the fingerprint image produced.

A commonly-used fingerprint detection technique for latent fingerprints on non-porous or semi-porous surfaces involves fuming samples with monomeric ethyl 2-cyanoacrylate (superglue). This reagent leaves a white residue (polymeric cyanoacrylate) on the ridges of latent fingerprints, rendering them visible under white light. On some surfaces, such as polymer banknotes, however, the contrast between cyanoacrylate-developed fingerprints and the background is poor. FTIR chemical imaging of cyanoacrylate fumed fingerprints on polymer banknotes and other difficult surfaces has been shown to provide better results than optical techniques alone. During this project, further investigations into the use of FTIR chemical imaging for latent fingerprints treated with commercial cyanoacrylate monomer on a range of difficult surfaces were conducted. While excellent results were obtained on many
samples, the need for novel cyanoacrylates containing infrared absorbance in specific parts of the spectrum was identified.

A major focus of this project has been the identification, synthesis and characterisation of modified cyanoacrylates which may be used as reagents for FTIR chemical imaging of fingerprints. Monomers that contained particular functional groups that show vibrational modes in the range from 2500 – 1800 cm⁻¹ were sought. This region typically contains very few vibrational bands and therefore a reagent that could be used to give fingerprints absorptions in this range is desirable. This would provide the necessary contrast between the ridge details of the treated fingerprint and the background on which it may be located.

In total four novel cyanoacrylates were prepared. These included 2-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate (2-CECA), 1-cyanoethyl 2-cyanoacrylate (1-CECA), trideuteromethyl 2-cyanoacrylate (MCA-d₃) and pentadeuteroethyl 2-cyanoacrylate (ECA-d₅).

Each of the four novel monomers was tested a reagent for the detection and enhancement of latent fingerprints on a number of surfaces via FTIR chemical imaging. The 2-CECA monomer was found to be less volatile than conventional cyanoacrylate and thermally decomposed at the temperatures required to vaporise it. Treating latent fingerprints with this monomer at a reduced pressure yielded better results on reflective surfaces. On less reflective surfaces, such as polymer banknotes, however, the nitrile band of 2-CECA was almost undetectable and therefore could not be used for imaging the treated prints.

Fingerprints treated with the deuterated monomers (MCA-d₃ and ECA-d₅) showed characteristic bands in the region from 2300 – 1900 cm⁻¹ owing to C–D stretching vibrations. Once again, however, the relatively low intensity of these bands meant that they were only detected from prints on reflective surfaces.

The monomer that produced the best results was 1-CECA. Surprisingly the contrast between the ridge detail and the background, was not generated by the nitrile band at 2250 cm⁻¹ as anticipated. Instead it appears that the absorption band for the carbonyl group in poly-1-CECA is sufficiently resolved from any absorption within this region from the background surface (such as polymer banknotes) to provide good contrast images of the treated fingerprint. High quality fingerprint images were obtained of prints treated with 1-CECA on
all difficult surfaces tested including white opaque acrylic sheets, fluorescent acrylic sheets and all areas of polymer banknotes including areas containing raised intaglio printing.