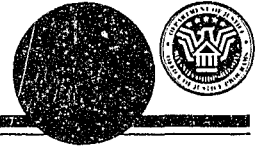


154875



Bureau of Justice Statistics

**Future Directions for
the National Archive
of Criminal Justice Data:
Report of the Task Force**

154875

OCT 85 1995

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Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data: Report of the Task Force

July 1995, NCJ-154875

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U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Preface

The Department of Justice has disseminated machine-readable data files of its statistical series since the mid-1970's. This function is carried out by the Bureau of Justice Statistics through its National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) project, currently operated for BJS by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This project acquires, processes, and disseminates files for data series that are useful for studying criminal justice system issues, whether sponsored by BJS or other sources. The Archive staff also answers questions from researchers and other members of the public on methods for accessing and processing data. NACJD helps acquaint the potential user community with Archive services by attending professional meetings and by publishing newsletters semiannually and a catalog of holdings annually. In addition, the Archive offers a month-long seminar each summer on use and analysis of BJS data files.

When this project arrived at ICPSR more than fifteen years ago, users were largely academic researchers, BJS staff, and a few other analysts in public or private settings. Data were transported and analyzed almost exclusively with 9-track tapes on mainframe computers. The environment in which analysts work today is dramatically different. Powerful PC's and workstations have become commonplace, as has data dissemination by diskette, CD-ROM, and file transfer protocols (ftp). The maturation of the Internet has also enabled users to access data from virtually any computer platform. Taken together, these developments create new opportunities for analysts to utilize BJS data to inform research, policy formation, and media discussions. At the same time, this potential creates new challenges for BJS to adapt its data dissemination practices.

BJS is attempting to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the data dissemination needs of users over approximately the next 5 years. To inform our planning, I sought to obtain the best advice on users' needs, technical opportunities and challenges, data management practices, and interfaces to other BJS products such as publications. To this end, I convened the Task Force on Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data in March and April, 1995. Task Force members (listed in Appendix III) were drawn from a variety of backgrounds, including data collection, production, and analysis at both the Federal and State levels, and academic research. Task Force meetings were also attended by BJS and ICPSR staff and several "resource" participants who had substantial expertise in working with archived data or data archiving projects.

The Task Force was assembled and conducted its work under a tight time frame, and I am grateful to its members for rearranging their schedules to accommodate this important program review. I especially want to thank Victoria Schneider Lake for her dedication to the Archive over the years and her willingness to serve as chair of the Task Force. This document is a reflection of her insights and those of all the participants in this project. The report will be reviewed carefully by the BJS and Archive staff and will be an important resource for our efforts to chart BJS's data dissemination activities for the remainder of this millennium and beyond.

Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D.
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Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data

Conclusions of the Task Force

Introduction

The Task Force on Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data was formed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in early 1995, meeting twice in Washington and once in Ann Arbor. During the third and final meeting, the Task Force agreed on a set of evaluations for the Bureau of Justice Statistics on maintenance and distribution of data, data processing, types of data for inclusion in the Archive, and expanding the archive's user base and services. The conclusions of the Task Force are stated in italics followed by background information.

I. Maintenance and Distribution of BJS Data

A. By the end of calendar year 1995, all data and machine-readable documentation of the following kinds should be made available via the Internet as the initial and primary mechanism for distribution to the public.

- 1. data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics*
- 2. data sent to the Archive via the Bureau of Justice Statistics*
- 3. other Federal criminal justice and civil justice datasets that are sent to the Archive*

(No distinction is made here between ICPSR members and nonmembers.)

The Task Force discussed the variety of media for storage and dissemination of data, with the conclusion that data made available via the Internet should be a priority for BJS. During the first and second meetings, Task Force members expressed concern over the present ICPSR official

representative (OR) and membership system. Members concurred that these systems limit access to criminal justice data. Many potential users of criminal justice data are located at institutions that are not ICPSR members, public, or private agencies. Having criminal justice data available via the Internet promotes accessibility for all potential users.

The Task Force discussed the kinds of data that should be included under the auspices of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The Task Force concluded that the three kinds listed above should be considered BJS data. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) participated in a resource capacity in the meetings of the Task Force. The Task Force also supports the idea that data collected through funding of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) should be made available via the Internet, but recognizes that NIJ would require some mechanism for selecting datasets to be made available in this way. The Task Force did not address questions related to data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) because of a lack of representation at the Task Force meetings.

B. The Bureau of Justice Statistics should set and announce reasonable time goals for the collection, processing, and release of BJS data. BJS should consider the public release of data provided by specific jurisdictions if they are of acceptable quality and fully documented, prior to the availability of data for all jurisdictions in the series.

BJS should initiate a study or monitor the dates of:

- 1. the decision to fund a data collection*
- 2. the collection of data*
- 3. the delivery of documented data to BJS*

4. *the delivery of documentation and data to the archive*
5. *the release of data to the public*
6. *the analysis of data by users*

The Task Force discussed the appearance of delays in the availability of BJS data to the public. Task Force members expressed the need for established and announced timetables for the collection, processing, and release of BJS data. The timetable should be published in print and electronic media. In addition, Task Force members believed it would be useful for BJS to consider a study of the key dates in the "lifetime" of a data collection. To date, there has never been a systematic study of the progression of a data collection from the decision to fund to the analysis of data by the public.

Several Task Force members felt that collections with data provided by specific jurisdictions lend themselves to release by jurisdiction before the availability of data for all jurisdictions in the series. Again, the issue was perceived delays in public release of data by the Archive. Archive and BJS staff members expressed concern over this conclusion and felt that very few collections would fall into this category, but agreed to pursue the investigation of such datasets.

C. All BJS data should be made available to the public in at least one alternative medium other than via the Internet: CD-ROM, 9-track tape, cartridge, and/or diskette, with policies consistent with OMB circular A-120.

Having all BJS data available to the public via the Internet provides easy accessibility for a large proportion of potential users. Others with limited or no access to the Internet, however, may require one or more of the alternate media. Several Task Force members and Resource Invitees mentioned that ICPSR's past pricing structure for individuals at nonmember institutions, and public and private agencies would violate OMB circular A-120, because data prices quoted by ICPSR exceeded reproduction costs. OMB circular A-120 states that government-produced or sponsored data can only be

sold at prices that cover reproduction costs. The Task Force concluded that pricing of any BJS data on CD-ROM, 9-track tape, cartridge, or diskette by the Archive should follow policies consistent with the OMB circular A-120. Members of the Task Force want BJS data to be utilized by a large community of researchers, policy analysts, legal analysts, and others not at traditional large research universities. ICPSR staff attending the Task Force meetings confirmed that this was their intent, as detailed in a proposal to BJS that was made available for inspection by Task Force members.

1. *BJS should encourage the archive to utilize present equipment for producing user-defined custom CD-ROM's. The equipment and procedures necessary to do this are currently available through ICPSR. This capacity needs to be advertised and marketed.*

During the second Task Force meeting in Ann Arbor, Archive staff provided a demonstration of custom CD-ROM production. The Task Force urges BJS to have the Archive take advantage of the present equipment, advertise and market the capabilities, and meet user demands for various BJS data collections on CD-ROM.

2. *BJS should, from time to time, create thematic or topical CD-ROM's that are mass produced and available to the public.*

The Task Force does not believe that all BJS data collections should be placed routinely on CD-ROM for distribution. The Archive expressed concern that placing all BJS data on CD-ROM would result in merely "bit-dumps" of data. The Task Force does acknowledge the value of having mass-produced thematic or topical CD-ROM's. The Task Force learned from the proposal for the interagency agreement between BJS and ICPSR that three topical CD-ROM's have been planned: Drugs and Crime Data, National Corrections Reporting Program, 1983-1992, and an update of the Crime and Justice Data CD-ROM. The Task Force urges BJS and the Archive to pursue such topical CD-ROM's for mass distribution.

3. *BJS topical CD-ROM's should be routinely sent to Federal depository libraries of which there are approximately 1,000. The Task Force alerts BJS staff to the Federal regulations surrounding Federal depository libraries.*

By using the Federal depository library program as a distribution mechanism, BJS has the opportunity to reach potential users at smaller academic institutions and public or private agencies. Federal depository libraries have regulations governing their designation, and BJS should investigate the extent to which data on CD-ROM would be an attractive addition for the library and the number of potential users reached through this distribution mechanism.

4. *BJS data, with explore-and-extract software, should be placed on the Internet's World Wide Web. BJS staff should prioritize the order of datasets for this project. A Homepage for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data should be developed. BJS should obtain the most cost effective and technologically sound Internet services to disseminate not only research and statistical data but also all BJS reports, tables, and products. Once the explore-and-extract software is perfected, it should accompany BJS data on other media, especially CD-ROM.*

The idea of a BJS Homepage and an Archive Homepage on the Internet World Wide Web was discussed at both the first and second meetings of the Task Force. Although the costs involved were not explored, the Task Force felt the use of BJS data will be enhanced tremendously with the explore-and-extract software and with availability on the Internet. The Task Force viewed with great interest the demonstration of the Census Bureau World Wide Web Homepage and urges BJS to pursue similar activities.

II. Data Processing

- A. *The Archive should develop written specifications of preferred formats for data producers to utilize in preparing machine-readable*

data and documentation files for archiving purposes.

- B. *BJS should require that its data producers send machine-readable data and documentation files to the Archive in the preferred formats.*

During the second meeting, the Task Force learned that the Archive received data and documentation from producers in a variety of formats, thus increasing the length of time for processing. The Handbook on Technical Standards for Machine-Readable Data was written approximately 15 years ago when the primary and only medium for data storage and dissemination was the 9-track magnetic tape. It is important that the handbook be updated in a timely fashion. In addition, the handbook should specify preferred formats for computer-readable data and documentation. BJS should require its data producers to follow these preferred format for archival purposes.

- C. *BJS should request that only certain data files from the Bureau of the Census Governments Division and the first years of the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey be processed to the intensive level as described by the Archive. All other BJS data collections should be processed according to routine processing standards.*

During the second meeting of the Task Force in Ann Arbor, Archive staff conducted a demonstration of routine and intensive processing steps employed for collections at ICPSR. The Task Force learned that routine processing included such steps as identifying and masking any confidential identifiers, verifying the record layout, creation of SPSS and SAS data definition statements, updating the machine-readable documentation, and creating a descriptive abstract. Intensive processing was defined as all routine processing steps with the addition of correcting undocumented codes, converting character variables to numeric variables, standardizing missing data codes, checks of consistency among skip patterns where appropriate, and creating standard machine-readable documentation. This documentation includes an introductory section,

variable description list, codebook body with variable attributes and full-question text, and secondary appendix materials. The Task Force questioned BJS and Archive staff on the utility of continuing to process all BJS data collections to the intensive processing level. BJS staff informed the Task Force that the Archive encountered few consistency check problems, character variables, or undocumented codes with many data collections produced by the Bureau of the Census. The Task Force concluded that it would be useful for BJS to consider having certain collections processed to the intensive level as described by the Archive.

D. BJS should explore the costs and benefits associated with creating variable-level searchable indexes for BJS data collections.

Task Force members were particularly interested in being able to search the BJS data collections on a variable level. Variable-level searchable indexes allow users to better find data collections that answer specific research questions. The Task Force requested that BJS investigate the use of the askSam software as well as other developed software that may be modified for use with the BJS collections.

III. Expanding Archive Holdings

A. BJS should focus expansion of archival holdings on the following types of data. These are listed in priority order.

- 1. State and local data. State and local data collected through the State Statistical Analysis Centers (SAC's).*
- 2. Federal data. To fill the gaps in data on crime and criminal justice, Task Force members believed that it would be useful for BJS to make inquiries with Federal agencies that may have fully documented machine-readable data and documentation on criminal justice behavior. This list should include but not be limited to the Department of Justice (Attorney General's Report on Federal Cases Prosecuted) and its Immigration and Naturalization Service, the*

Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior and its Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

- 3. International Data. The Archive or BJS staff should make contacts with international archives to inquire about datasets available to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. BJS should:*
 - a. establish linkages with the United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network (UNCJIN) World Wide Web Homepage*
 - b. acquire international data that are unavailable to NACJD, as appropriate*
 - c. establish connections and publicize data links that would allow users to download international data directly without NACJD as an intermediary.*

The first goal of the Task Force was to investigate the gaps in and needs for data collections that are absent from the holdings in the Archive. The Task Force spent a great deal of time during the first and some of the second meetings in discussion of data needs. The first priority for expansion of Archival holdings is State Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) data. Currently, the Archive has very little SAC data. The major collection received in the past from the SAC's was the Offender Based Transaction Statistics Data. The Archive and BJS need to work with the SAC's to develop an inventory of data collections for possible inclusion in the Archive. A systematic attempt should be made by both BJS and the Archive to obtain and make available for public release these collections.

The second priority area for expansion of Archival holdings is other Federal criminal-justice-related data collections. There was discussion on the ability of BJS to collaborate with other Federal agencies to obtain criminal-justice data for inclusion in the Archive. Many Federal agencies collect criminal justice and criminal behavior-related collections, but few are fully documented or in a machine-readable format that is suitable for archival purposes.

However, the Task Force felt it was important for BJS to pursue relationships with other Federal agencies to obtain additional data for the Archive.

The third priority area was international data. Participants mentioned lack of international criminal justice data in the Archive several times during the roundtable discussion at the first meeting. A report indicated that, in response to a recommendation from the then National Advisory Board, the Archive had attempted to obtain a large volume of international data in the late 1980's. The International Victimization Survey, 1988 and the British Crime Surveys were the only two collections obtained through this process. In many European countries laws forbid the redistribution of data to Archives in other countries. Data may be given to individual researchers in other countries but not to other Archives. The Task Force discussed this and decided that BJS should make a renewed attempt to obtain international data. The Archive reported that relationships with the international archives had changed over the past 5 years, and that they might be more receptive to helping us in obtaining data. BJS also reported their current work with Internet activities abroad. The Task Force concluded that it would be useful for BJS to continue its efforts to develop international linkages on the Internet, as well as activities toward obtaining international data for the Archive.

IV. Expanding the User Base and Services

A. BJS should attempt to improve access and usability of data and documentation for the media and electronically challenged communities. BJS should explore the following options:

- 1. A specific workshop directed to media organizations that focuses on secondary analysis, machine-readable data, and interpretation of results using BJS data. The workshop would focus on news organizations that had operational data analysis capabilities, i.e., those that had data bases and staff who could manipulate them.*
- 2. A special handbook on BJS, its mission, data collection efforts, relationships with the State Statistical Analysis Centers, and the like would be available in paper copy for journalists, schools of journalism, and others. The handbook would also be available in hypertext form on the BJS Homepage.*
- 3. A general workshop for representatives of media organizations that focuses on BJS, data, publications, the Homepage, Archival holdings, and a general overview of the agency. There was discussion of BJS exploring the feasibility of doing this workshop as a 1- or 2-day event in the 50 largest cities in the United States.*

The use of BJS data by media organizations was discussed at both the first and second meetings of the Task Force. Several Task Force members and "resource" participants had experience dealing with media organizations and their search for statistics and information. The Task Force felt the use of crime and criminal justice data by the media would only increase in the future. It was felt that many journalists do not have the social science research background necessary to understand the limitations and uses of BJS data. The two workshops and handbook mentioned above represent strategies for BJS to educate media organizations on use of BJS data.

The second population of growing users of BJS data was identified by the Task Force as those that are "electronically challenged." These are individuals not skilled in the use of computers. The above options are also designed to assist this population of users learn more about BJS and the use of computer-readable data collections.

- 4. BJS should continue to make available in paper copy the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics. The Task Force concluded that it would be useful for BJS to explore an alternate electronic medium for the Sourcebook such as in hypertext form on a Homepage. One idea was to provide a table of contents that would*

allow users to "click" on a certain table and learn its data source(s). Users would also be directed to the latest version of the source table (possibly stored elsewhere.)

There was interest expressed by Task Force members for making the Sourcebook available in electronic form via the Internet World Wide Web. BJS staff assured the Task Force the Sourcebook would continue to be made available in paper form. The Task Force urges BJS to consider an electronic medium also for the Sourcebook.

5. *BJS should initiate a project to make available analysts specially trained in particular BJS datasets who would be available to do quick analyses for the media. The analysis requests would go through BJS staff, and results would be sent to BJS staff for distribution to the requesting party.*

The Task Force discussed the role of BJS and Archive staff in responding to queries from media organizations. Currently, BJS staff responds to many requests from media organizations and occasionally does quick analyses for them. NACJD staff does few, if any, such analyses. Archive staff refers media organizations either to BJS staff or the Clearinghouse for information. BJS staff felt one option for dealing with the media would be to have Archive or other external staff specially trained in specific data collections and available for quick analyses. BJS staff reported to the Task Force that they have limited time available for such activities. Although external staff would be responsible for the

analyses performed in response to these requests, the work would still originate with media requests to BJS staff and then flow to the external analysis staff.

B. The Task Force concluded that hypertext links should be created between BJS publications disseminated electronically by the BJS Clearinghouse and related data file documentation disseminated by the Archive.

The Task Force did not feel the relationship between the Archive and the Clearinghouse should be altered in any major way. However, the utility of hypertext links between BJS publications and data documentation was recognized. NACJD should create hypertext links from documentation to BJS publications disseminated electronically by the Clearinghouse, so that users may see how particular data files have been used to produce BJS statistics and analyses. Similarly, the Clearinghouse should create such links to documentation for the data files used to prepare a report, so that readers can see how particular variables were constructed, decide whether related data analyses are feasible, and learn how to order data used in a report.

C. BJS should examine the utility of separating versus aggregating the major activities involved in providing data for public use, namely the production, documentation, and dissemination of data, and the provision of technical assistance and training. BJS should also assess the benefits of sole-source versus competitive procurement for these activities.

Appendix A

Background of the Task Force

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) entered into discussions in late 1994 regarding their 1995 interagency agreement for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. BJS requested that the ICPSR proposal provide for a Task Force to convene meetings in early 1995. The purpose of the Task Force was to examine both the needs of the potential users of BJS data and the capabilities of the National Archive of Criminal Justice program to meet these needs. The ICPSR renewal proposal for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data covering January 1, 1995 through August 31, 1995 included the provision of a Task Force to include nine non-Federal Government criminal justice data experts, social science researchers and users of data and data archive technology, and representatives from Federal agencies nominated by BJS. The Task Force was scheduled to meet three times, with one meeting held in Ann Arbor.

In late January 1995, BJS approached former Archival Assistant Director of ICPSR, Victoria Schneider Lake, to chair the Task Force. She agreed to do so and with input from both BJS and ICPSR staff, eight other members were recommended as well as four resource invitees. A list of Task Force members, resource invitees, BJS representatives, and ICPSR representatives is attached with this report.

The Task Force had six goals or questions to address during its deliberations:

1. *What would the ideal criminal justice archive look like?*

This goal would address the general topic of what data the archive would present in what form to what users. It should also address the issues of how to provide user-friendly cost recovery and user outreach.

2. *What are the current user needs and the level of satisfaction with efforts to provide for these needs?*

The task force should evaluate information currently collected to address these questions and the quality of any ICPSR syntheses of this information provided to BJS for policy decisions. The task force should provide some vehicle for testimony from users on these questions, perhaps from recent Ph.D.'s who utilized archive data for their dissertations.

3. *What are user needs likely to be for the next 5 years?*

These should include an assessment of BJS needs, as well as those of external users.

4. *How will the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data meet these needs?*

This should include an evaluation of both archive processing and documentation, as well as an assessment of proposals for new dissemination practices. Specifically, the task force should comment on the desirability and feasibility of (1) the proposed transparent Internet link between the archive server and the BJS server that would support a BJS gopher/World Wide Web Internet node, and (2) the utility of a

library of periodically updated CD-ROM's. In this context, BJS should brief the task force on plans for electronic dissemination of documents.

5. *What changes can BJS make in data it supports that will facilitate archive processing and user friendliness?*

Do we want to emphasize flexibility in submitted formats at the expense of uniform standards? Are there standards that will make submission more "user-friendly," and also facilitate processing by the archive?

6. *Do current archive practices do an adequate job of providing user-friendly data and documentation?*

Are data processed too much or too little? Do users need more flexible documentation or will fewer options suffice? In this context, it would be advisable to evaluate how several criminal justice data series, varying in complexity, initial quality, need for special-purpose files, and data sources, are processed. Some potential candidates are the National Crime Victimization Survey, the Uniform Crime Reporting Program data, the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics data, and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts data.

The Task Force Chair, together with BJS staff, requested certain resource materials for Task Force members to facilitate an understanding of ICPSR, its activities, and capabilities. Among the requested items were such publications as the *ICPSR Guide to Resources and Services*, *Data Available from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data*, *ICPSR Bulletins*, and *National Archive of Criminal Justice Data Newsletters*.

The ICPSR staff also assembled a Resource Compendium for Task Force members. Included in the Compendium were introductory documents such as the goals of the Task Force, list of participants, and list of BJS serial data collections. The Compendium also included a BJS codebook example, an optical scanned codebook, examples of SPSS and SAS control cards, work flow and organization, list of supported data formats, list of criminal justice collections in desktop formats, list of criminal justice outreach activities, list of studies ordered during 1994, and information on future directions, including the 1995 ICPSR proposal to BJS for criminal justice activities and information on ICPSR electronic services.

Appendix B

Meeting Summaries

March 24, 1995: Washington, D.C.

The first meeting of the Task Force on Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data was held in Washington on March 24, 1995. The meeting began with introductory remarks from Dr. Bruce Taylor, BJS Project Monitor for the Archive. The Director of BJS, Dr. Jan Chaiken, described the purpose of the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data and the purpose of the Task Force. The purpose of the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data is to provide easy access to computer-readable data to generate better information and understandings of crime and the criminal justice system. Task Force members were asked to consider all criminal justice, crime, and legal data in their discussions of the future directions of the Archive. The Task Force is designed to enhance BJS strategic planning for the Archive, and its deliberations will be summarized for use by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in this regard.

Dr. Christopher S. Dunn, ICPSR Manager Crime and Justice Programs, gave an overview of the functions, activities, and services provided by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. The mission of the ICPSR is to preserve social science data, supply access to data, and provide informed use of data. The ICPSR and Criminal Justice Archive have activities related to each component of their mission such as archival development, external relations, and training. Specific tasks for each activity were detailed for Task Force members.

Dr. Dunn said that two major changes in social science computing have affected the Archive. The first is the move from mainframe to desktop computing. The demands for data on desktop media have increased for the Archive. The Archive is meeting these demands for desktop media with the production of data and machine-readable documentation on diskette and CD-ROM. However, space limitations of desktop media place the Archive at a disadvantage. It is not feasible to place many of the larger BJS data collections on desktop media.

The second change in social science computing affecting the Archive is network computing. Presently, network computing for the Archive consists of data files and machine-readable documentation on a local server for individuals to access through the Internet. In the future the Archive is focusing on a front-end system by which all crime and criminal justice data will be placed on the World Wide Web for users to access via the Internet.

Task Force members and resource invitees spent the next several hours in a roundtable discussion on their perspectives, experiences, and goals relating to the Archive, criminal justice data, and dissemination. The following observations were made by individual Task Force members, not necessarily with endorsement from any other members:

- The production of data for submission to the Archive has grown easier over the years. Today, there is potential for custom designing very large collections.
- The Archive should create more subsets for users.

- The Archive should increase the level of outreach at conferences, to include the American Psychological Association and American Statistical Association.
- A "cookbook" for sophisticated researchers who are unfamiliar with using secondary data should be developed.
- The Archive should move beyond the traditional academic community to policy analysts and more community colleges.
- The Archive needs to deal with the problem of users who order a particular data collection, and once it is obtained, find it does not address their research question. The Archive needs to provide better direction for users to data collections appropriate for their research questions.
- The Archive needs a more formal, consistent procedure for receiving comments from individuals on the use and problems of a particular data collection.
- The Archive needs to study the time from 1) when data are collected for a study, 2) when the data are sent to the Archive, 3) when the data were publicly released, and 4) when the data were analyzed.
- The ICPSR is still a mainframe, Official Representative (OR), university-based organization. Many academics find it so difficult to interact with their OR's that they would rather purchase the data. The quality of OR varies from institution to institution. The ICPSR needs to provide a handbook for local OR's on how to make data more readily available on their campus.
- The ICPSR needs a database of principal investigators and their last known address and a bibliography of published analyses that use archived data collections. The Archive needs a Directory of Data Producers and Directory of Data Users.
- The ICPSR needs to broaden their base of potential users around specialized user groups such as the Homicide Research Working Group. These groups can give reactions to the use of various collections.
- The Archive needs to prioritize the promotion of data collections. The high quality, high utility collections should be promoted the most. The publications need to be more selective. They are difficult to read and assimilate.
- The speed at which major data collections are made available for public release is a concern for some Task Force members.
- Should the Archive offer custom data analysis on a fee-for-service basis? How would this activity be coordinated with the National Criminal Justice Reference Service? What is the relationship between the Archive and NCJRS? Should the Archive have more linkages with other agencies?
- Concerning missing types of data from the Archive, there are many Federal agencies conducting criminal-justice-related activities that possibly have machine-readable data that can be made available through the Archive. There are gaps in international holdings, as well.
- The Archive should promote subsets for use with research methods and statistics textbooks.

- In the future the media will more frequently want access to machine-readable data. How will the Archive deal on a systematic basis with media organizations?

The Task Force learned during the roundtable discussion that BJS and the Archive have proposed an Internet World Wide Web Homepage to include text documents and graphics from government reports using archived data, tables from publications in spreadsheet form, and the underlying data.

The Archive responded to the roundtable discussion with four points. First, the Archive already produces customized subfiles or subsets such as the National Crime Victimization Survey: National Sample of Rape Victims. The question is not so much whether subsets should be produced but rather which additional subsets should be prepared. Second, the ICPSR attends a number of social science conferences; however, staff need to work on having more crime and criminal justice data introduced to the attendees. Third, the Archive might want to consider working with professional associations and journal editorial staffs to require that data used for a published paper be sent to the Archive. Fourth, the Archive needs more electronically searchable options for the *Data Available . . .* publication.

During the remainder of the meeting the Task Force discussed the requirements for an ideal criminal justice data archive.

April 3, 1995: Ann Arbor, Michigan

The second meeting of the Task Force on Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data was held in Ann Arbor on April 3, 1995. This meeting was primarily devoted to Archive staff providing information for Task Force members on data processing, maintenance and distribution, and technological advances.

Archive staff presented information to define the user community and its requests for information. The user community was defined as universities and small colleges, police departments, corrections departments, non-criminal justice agencies, government agencies, private research and legal firms, private individuals, and media organizations.

Archive staff explained the different means employed to interact with users. Users interact with Archive staff primarily through the telephone, by either contacting the Archival Development or Member Services staff. Since June 1993, the Archive has received 1,415 telephone calls for an average 3.4 calls per day and 74.8 calls per month. The number of calls per day ranges from 1 to 17. Incoming calls represent 70 percent of the total, and outgoing 30 percent. Archive staff also interact with users through conference exhibits and e-mail via the Internet.

Archive staff then focused on use of general archive holdings, as well as and crime and criminal justice-related data. The three Archive-wide data collections most frequently ordered during calendar year 1994 were:

General Social Surveys, 1972-1993: [Cumulative File] -- 116 orders

Mortality Detail Piles, 1968-1991-- 62 orders

Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of the Lifestyle and Values of Youth, 1992 -- 28 orders

General criminal justice-related collections that were frequently ordered through ICPSR included:

Executions in the United States, 1608- 1991: The ESPY File -- *17 orders*
Federal Court Cases: Integrated Database, 1970-1991 -- *16 orders*
Drug Use Forecasting in 24 Cities in the United States, 1987-1991-- *41 orders*
United States Supreme Court Judicial Database, 1953-1992 Terms -- *33 orders*

The five BJS data collections most commonly ordered by government agencies during calendar year 1994 were:

Recidivism Among Released Prisoners, 1983 -- *5 orders*
Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics, 1990 -- *4 orders*
Murder Cases in 33 Large Urban Counties in the United States, 1988 -- *4 orders*
Expenditure and Employment Data, 1988 and 1990 3 -- *orders*
Capital Punishment in the United States, 1973-1990 -- *3 orders*

The five non-BJS criminal justice data collections most frequently ordered from government agencies during calendar year 1994 were:

Evaluating Alternative Responses to Spouse Assault, 1987-1989 -- *14 orders*
Exploring the House Burglar's Perspective, 1989-1990 -- *7 orders*
Shock Incarceration in Louisiana, 1987-1989 -- *7 orders*
Drug Use Forecasting in 24 Cities in the United States, 1987-1992 -- *7 orders*
Implementation of Quantitative Decision Aids in the Oklahoma Probation and Parole System.
1989-1990 -- *6 orders*

Archive staff reported that the Uniform Crime Reporting Program data and the National Crime Surveys: National Sample were overall the two most frequently ordered NACJD data collections. Other frequently ordered BJS collections included Capital Punishment in the United States and Historical Statistics on Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions.

Member Services of ICPSR reported that a fourth of the ICPSR holdings are crime and criminal justice data collections. Over the past 5 years, orders for ICPSR data have increased. Data collections such as the National Crime Victimization Surveys or Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data which are updated annually, are ordered on a consistent basis. Although the orders for ICPSR have increased, the resources devoted to Member Services have stayed the same. Task Force members asked questions about local university-based archives and the information ICPSR has on redistribution of data on the local level. Member services responded that their information was limited but that local archives may disappear when network transfer of data to individuals becomes a reality.

The Task Force discussed the mechanisms ICPSR uses for feedback from users. The Organizational Representative (OR) List Server allows users to share information about ICPSR from specific datasets to courses in the summer program. One idea is to have List Servers for the major BJS data collections. (A list server for the NCVS data was started as a result of the workshops on those data several years ago.) BJS staff reported that they are always available to answer user questions.

There was some discussion on how a user is to know whom to call for a particular question: the ICPSR, BJS, or the National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Users have little clear direction for assistance with data collections.

The Task Force turned to a discussion of the length of time to receive a dataset. ICPSR Members Services reported that it took 16.9 calendar days for a request to be filled. The time from data collection, to receipt by ICPSR, processing time, and release time had not been fully researched.

Archive staff then presented a demonstration on data processing steps and codebook production. Staff reported that data collections arrive at the Archive and are initially evaluated for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) scanning and level of processing. The Data Library assigns a study number to the collection, inventories all materials, creates two tape copies of the original machine-readable files, and assembles all paper documentation in a numbered file. OCR scanned documentation is proofread and edited by staff. Collections are either processed to the routine level or the intensive level. Staff reported that BJS collections are processed to the intensive level. The steps included in both processing levels were described for the Task Force.

After processing is complete the Archive has a quality control check in which another staff member checks the collection for completeness and accuracy. The processed collections are turned over to the Data Library for inventory and tape copy. Data collections are then made available to the public via the ICPSR Hotline telephone number, Consortium Data Network Ordering Capability, ICPSR Gopher and Homepage, quarterly Bulletins, and annual Guide to Resources. Data are distributed on a variety of media, and staff provides user service and support for collections.

Codebook production was explained to the Task Force as the most time-consuming component of processing. Members referred to their Resource Compendium for an example of a codebook as sent to the Archive from data producers and the final copy compiled by ICPSR. Archive staff reported that automated steps are used to create standard ICPSR codebooks. A SAS program called PROGEN is used. The Task Force then saw a computer demonstration of the automated steps.

The Task Force discussed having data and documentation standards for data producers. Archive staff reported the wide variety of data and documentation files received that complicates the processing time and thus delays the release time. SAS and SPSS system files from the Bureau of the Census would be the preference for the Archive. Staff explained that ICPSR releases data in ASCII files.

After lunch the Task Force briefly met with Richard Rockwell, Executive Director of ICPSR. Then the group went to the Institute for Social Research to view demonstrations of documentation scanning production, custom CD-ROM production, diskette production, and file transfer via the Internet.

The final demonstration for Task Force members was of the prototype World Wide Web Homepage of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Task Force had questions about the storage of data and machine-readable documentation. Another question was about the subset capabilities. Can users subset the data via the Internet and transfer only the subfile to their local computer?

The meeting ended in Ann Arbor with a short discussion on the changing user population for ICPSR data. The role of media organizations as future users of data was discussed. BJS and the Archive might want to consider routinely distributing the mass-produced CD-ROMs to Federal repository libraries.

The Task Force also restated their concern for the Official Representative and membership school system employed by ICPSR. The system limits the use of criminal justice data by the public because many potential users are not working at ICPSR member schools.

The Task Force discussed the integration of data from State Statistical Analysis Centers and the national incident-based reporting system for Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data called NIBRS into the Archive holdings.

April 24, 1995: Washington, D.C.

The third and final meeting of the Task Force on Future Directions for the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data was held in Washington on 24 April 1995. The primary purpose of the third meeting was for the Task Force to review and approve evaluations and conclusions regarding archive services and user needs. The conclusions section of this report is the product of this meeting.

Appendix C

NACJD Task Force Membership

Chair

Victoria Schneider Lake
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Members

William C. Bailey
College of Graduate Studies
Cleveland State University

Allan Barnes, Director
Statistical Analysis Center
Alaska Statistical Analysis Unit
Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage

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College of Criminal Justice
Northeastern University

Joel Garner
School of Criminal Justice
Rutgers University

Gary LaFree, Director
Statistical Analysis Center
University of New Mexico

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Northwestern University
Department of Political Science

James R. Wetzel
U.S. Census Bureau (retired)

Franklin Zimring
University of California Law School at Berkeley

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School of Public Affairs
American University

Michael Maltz
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& BJS Visiting Fellow

BJS representatives:

Jan M. Chaiken, Director

Patrick A. Langan, Senior Statistician

Bruce M. Taylor, Project Monitor

ICPSR representatives:

Christopher Dunn, Manager,
Crime and Justice Programs

Christopher Lysholm

Kay Marz

Shalene Sheley

BJS data available on the NCJRS Bulletin Board System

Bureau of Justice Statistics reports, press releases, publication lists, and other information on BJS activities are available on the improved National Criminal Justice Reference Service Bulletin Board System (NCJRS*BBS). You can access the BBS in two ways:

From your personal computer and modem:

- Set at 8-N-1; 9600 baud rate.
- Call (301) 738-8895.
- From the main menu, select the BJS option.

From the Internet:

- Gopher to ncjrs.aspensys.com 71.
- Select 6 for NCJRS*BBS.
- Select 2 to connect to the BBS.
- At the prompt, enter "ncjrs."
- You will then be prompted for a user ID and password.
- From the main menu, select the BJS option.

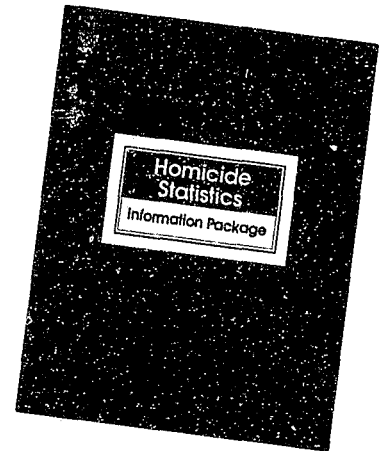
For more information about the NCJRS*BBS, call (800) 732-3277 or send an e-mail to askncjrs@ncjrs.aspensys.com

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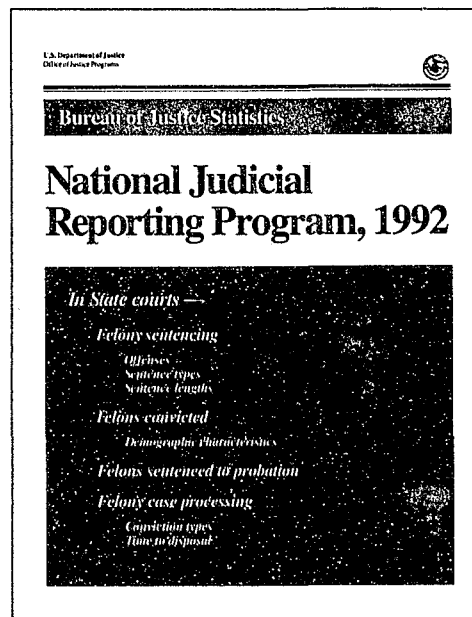
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BJS maintains these mailing lists:

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- State felony courts
- Corrections
- National Crime Victimization Survey
- Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (annual)

Single copies of reports are free; use title and NCJ number to order. Postage and handling are charged for bulk orders of single reports. For single copies of multiple titles, up to 10 titles are free; 11-40 titles \$10; more than 40, \$20; libraries call for special rates.

Public-use tapes, disks, and CD-ROM's of BJS data sets and other criminal justice data are available from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (formerly CJAIN), P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 (toll-free 800-999-0960).

National Crime Victimization Survey

NCVS redesign:

- Press release, NCJ-151169, 10/94
- Fact sheet, NCJ-151170, 10/94
- Questions and answers, NCJ-151171, 10/94
- Technical background, NCJ-151172, 10/94
- Criminal victimization in the U.S.: 1973-92 trends, NCJ-147006, 8/94
- 1992 (final), NCJ-145125, 4/94
- Violence against women, NCJ-145325, 1/94
- Highlights from 20 years of surveying crime victims: 1973-92, NCJ-144525, 10/93
- Crime and older Americans information package, NCJ-140091, 4/93, \$15
- Crime victimization in city, suburban, and rural areas, NCJ-135943, 6/92
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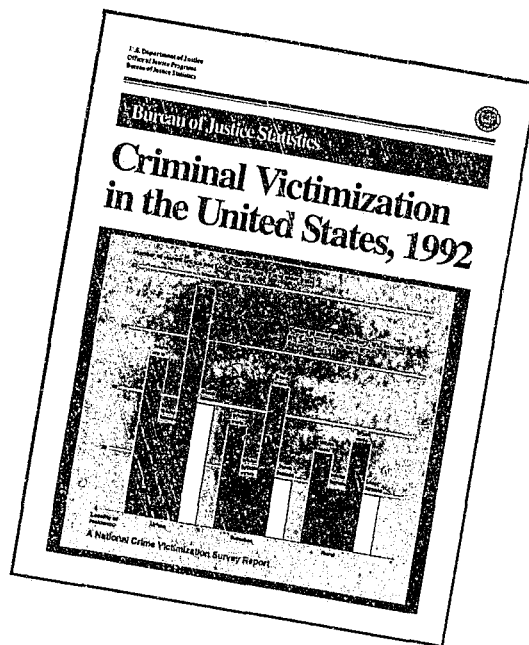
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