INSLAW
BRIEFING PAPER
INSTITUTE FOR
LAW AND
SOCIAL RESEARCH

Number 21
Revised
August, 1976

Optional On-line Inquiry and Data Input Capability.

PROMIS

PROSECUTOR'S MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION SYSTEM
An Exemplary Project of LEAA

PROMIS (Prosecutor's Management Information System) is a management informa-
tion system (computerized or manual) for public prosecution agencies and the courts.
Developed under a grant from the United States Department of Justice, Law Enforce-
ment Assistance Administration (LEAA), PROMIS has been in operation in Washington,
D.C., since January 1971 and is in various implementation stages in more than 30 other
jurisdictions.

LEAA has designated PROMIS an Exemplary Project. Such designation is reserved
for criminal justice programs judged outstanding, worthy of national attention, and
suitable for adoption by other communities.

The Institute for Law and Social Research (INSLAW) has prepared a series of 21
briefing papers to explain to nontechnical audiences of prosecutors, court administra-
tors, criminal justice planners, and members of the bar the underlying concepts of
management and organization inherent in PROMIS. It is expected that these briefings
will assist other jurisdictions to evaluate and when appropriate, implement PROMIS
in part or in its entirety. The implementation can range from adoption of the concepts
of management and organization, to the use of PROMIS forms and paperwork proce-
dures, to the application of the manual or semiautomated version of PROMIS, and,
finally, to the installation of the computer software.

Other PROMIS documentation produced by INSLAW under grants from LEAA
includes a handbook on *PROMIS For The Nonautomated or Semiautomated Office*,
research designs for using PROMIS data bases in statistical studies of criminal justice
policies, a six-volume set of computer software documentation, and a 20-minute color
documentary of PROMIS (16mm film or video cassette) for nontechnical audiences.
The 21 briefings are as follows:

1. Management Overview of PROMIS
2. Case Screening
3. Uniform Case Evaluation and Rating
4. Special Litigation (Major Violators) Unit
5. Witness Notification Unit
6. Paralegals
7. Comprehensive Training
8. Reasons for Discretionary and Other Actions
9. Counting by Crime, Case and Defendant
10. Research Uses of PROMIS Data
11. Uniform Crime Charging Manual
12. Police Prosecution Report
13. Crime Analysis Worksheet
14. Processing and Trial Preparation Worksheet
15. Police Intake Worksheet
16. Standardized Case Jacket
17. Interface with Other CJIS
18. Privacy and Security
19. Analysis of Costs and Benefits
20. Transferability
21. Optional On-Line Inquiry and Data Input Capability

PROMIS BRIEFING SERIES *ACQUISITIONS

21. Optional On-Line Inquiry and Data Input Capability

As the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals observed, "Official judgment in criminal justice as in other policy areas is not likely to be sounder than the available facts."[1] The Commission specifically referred to PROMIS as an example of how those facts might be collected, stored, and analyzed.[2]

But some of those facts frequently warrant faster access than do others. The Commission even referred to information systems operating in a "real-time context"[3] and to information that would be "accessible from remote terminals." Among the data the Commission suggested could be rapidly accessed are case status and history and names of the involved defendants, lawyers, victims, prosecutors, witnesses, and police officers. "The program could be set to check for alternate spellings of names."[4]

The remaining paragraphs of this Briefing indicate how PROMIS' optional on-line capability addresses the need for rapid access (and data entry) and how recent developments facilitate the implementation of the on-line feature.[5]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROMIS II

Some two years after PROMIS was implemented by the prosecutor's office in Washington, D.C.,[6] PROMIS II became operational. This is an on-line, real-time version of the original PROMIS--that is, prosecutors and police can direct certain queries at PROMIS' computer and the answers will immediately appear on the television-like screen of any of several remote terminals located at the prosecutor's office and at each police district station house.

Users of the terminals need not be computer experts to extract information from PROMIS. For those unfamiliar with the operation of the system, they need only "type" the word HELP on the terminal's keyboard. This will automatically

display on the terminal's screen instructions and formats for making the kind of inquiry desired.

For instance, if an assistant prosecutor wants to retrieve information on a specific pending case, he or she would be instructed to type CASE followed by the court case (docket) number. Or if the commander of a police district wishes to know the pending cases about which Officer John Doe may have to testify in court, the letters USAO/B are keyed along with the officer's four-digit badge number. The desired information instantly appears on the screen.

The comments of a Washington prosecutor help put PROMIS II into operational perspective and also indicate the pragmatic value of obtaining certain facts from the PROMIS data base on an immediate basis:

"One of the most important achievements of the system was the ability to know about other pending cases against a particular defendant immediately, as soon as the defendant comes into the system in each new case.

"In the District of Columbia, the police officer comes to the [prosecutor's] office the morning after he has made an arrest or, if the man is released on station house bond, within a few days.

"The officer brings with him the offense report so that the prosecutor can take a look at it and decide whether to charge the individual and what charges to file, and also to make the determination on what kind of bond to request from the judge.

"The PROMIS system has enabled us to have some valuable information as soon as that police officer walks into the the office, even before he sees the assistant [prosecutor]. He goes over to an on-line terminal . . . and he is able to put into that on-line terminal the defendant's name, and his police department identification number [which, if the man had been arrested before, would be the same number he previously had been given] and immediately by looking at a television screen he is able to see if there are any other cases now in the system pending against that defendant.

"Has there been an information filed in a misdemeanor case? Is there a case pending before the grand jury? Is he awaiting sentence in a case in which he has already been convicted? Valuable information.

"The officer can also tell by looking at the screen whether or not any arrest warrants or bench warrants may have been issued against this defendant. . . .

"He takes all of this information [which is automatically printed out for him] to the prosecutor when he goes in to have the case reviewed.

"The assistant is able to take a look at the information on the print-out and make some sort of preliminary judgment about how important the case may be and what kind of bond recommendation to make.

"The felony trial assistants are also able to make use of the on-line terminals. For example, while engaged in plea bargaining discussions with defense counsel, they can obtain immediate information about other pending cases against the defendant."[7]

INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM THE ON-LINE SYSTEM

Since the PROMIS data base contains about 170 items of information on each case prosecuted, PROMIS II can be designed to respond to numerous queries that would be helpful to prosecutors and police. Illustrative of the possibilities are the inquiries currently utilized by the prosecutor's office in Washington, D.C.

1. The defendant query. When the defendant's fingerprint-based identification number (assigned by the Metropolitan Police Department) is entered through a terminal, the computer's response is displayed on the terminal's screen and indicates whether the defendant has other cases pending in the court system. If so, among the information displayed are the docket numbers and status of each case (see Figure 1).

If the identification number is unavailable, the defendant's name can be used as the basis of the query. In such an instance, the screen displays all names that sound like ("soundex" equivalents) the one inquired about, as illustrated by Figure 2.

This pending case information is extremely useful at screening, for plea bargaining, and in the grand jury.

THE FOLLOWING CASES ARE PENDING FOR PDID 207-303 (BACKUS, BILLY)

018193-73 IS A FELONY ARRESTED 03/21/73 BY LACKLAND, MORRIS (ID)
      FILED 03/22/73 AS RAPE
      CONTINUED FOR AUTOMATIC TO 03/29/73   CASE 01739373

217-74 IS A FELONY ARRESTED 09/18/73 BY NELTON, HENRY C (3D)
      INDICTED 01/09/74 AS CDW AFT FEL CNV ASSIGNED TO J. BROOKS
      CONTINUED FOR STATUS HEARING TO 02/08/74   CASE 00021774

********   END OF INFORMATION   ********

FIGURE 1

DEFENDANT QUERY DISPLAY WHEN TRIGGERED
BY IDENTIFICATION (PDID) NUMBER

All names listed on this page are fictitious.

THE FOLLOWING DEFENDANTS HAVE SIMILAR OR THE SAME NAME AS HALL, JAMES

DEFENDANT	DOB	SEX	RACE	ARRESTED	PDID	CASE
HALL, JAMES LESLIE	05/11/24	M	N	01/19/73	158345	CASE00421873
HALL, JAMES LESLIE	05/11/24	M	N	11/18/72	158345	CASE06612472
HALL, JAMES FRANKLIN	03/30/46	M	N	11/10/71	187401	CASE01803872
HAUL, JAMES LEWIS JR	09/29/50	M	N	02/23/73	217971	CASE01194473

********   END OF INFORMATION   ********

FIGURE 2

DEFENDANT QUERY DISPLAY
WHEN TRIGGERED BY DEFENDANT'S NAME

All names listed on this page are fictitious.

2. _The court docket number query_. The prosecutor or police officer can access instantly the pertinent facts and status of any pending case. As noted in Figure 3, the computer flashes back such data as the following: defendant's name and bail status; charges; arrest date, time, and place; offense date, time, and place; names of police officers on the case; the number and reasons for continuances, if any, in the case; the crime gravity and defendant criminal history ratings.[8]

3. _The police officer query_. Enabling the prosecutor or police to determine the number and status of all cases a given officer has pending, the query results in a display that lists all the upcoming cases about which the officer is scheduled to testify and the next court date for each. See Figure 4.

4. _The case aging query_. Information generated by PROMIS in response to this query permits the prosecutor to monitor delay at each stage of the criminal proceedings. Type of case can be specified, such as misdemeanors, cases bound over to the grand jury, or felony indictments. For example, the prosecutor can request that PROMIS II display a list of felonies that have been pending at least 90 days. Figure 5 shows what would appear on the terminal's screen: indictment date, assigned prosecutor, charge, defendant's name, case number, and jail status.

5. _The date query_. This inquiry produces a listing of (1) misdemeanor cases scheduled for trial on the date specified in the query, (2) felony cases continued to the specified date for preliminary hearings, and (3) indicted felonies scheduled for trial. For each defendant, the listing includes his or her name, crime and defendant case-rating scores,[9] charge, arrest date, and case number.

Optionally, the prosecutor can limit the listing to cases whose seriousness (as determined through PROMIS' case-rating capability) exceeds a given level in terms of the crime and/or defendant (criminal history) score. For instance, Figure 6 illustrates a listing of misdemeanor cases continued to a certain date for trial whose crime scores are equal to or greater than four, regardless of what the defendant scores are. This capability helps the prosecutor more effectively allocate his resources. (And focusing on defendants with low crime or criminal history scores helps identify those individuals who may warrant enrollment in diversion programs.)

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017393-73              BACKUS, BILLY              NM   05/28/56
270-303    (THERE ARE NO OTHER PENDING CASES)
           (THERE ARE NO CODEFENDANTS)
FELONY CASE FILED ON 03/22/73

   CHARGES        OFFENSE WAS COMMITTED ON 03/21/73 at 22:20
RAPE                     AT 0300   KENTUCKY   AV  SW

              ARRESTED 03/21/73 BY LOCKHART, MORRIS (ID) BADGE 3256
                       ASSISTED BY WILSON, W D (ID) BADGE 0342
                       CENTRAL COMPLAINT NUMBER IS 0145500


CASE HAS BEEN CONTINUED  2 TIMES TO 03/29/73  * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
   LAST 2 CONTINUANCE REASONS ARE:             * CRIME IS 01.00          *
   BOUND OVER SC  GJ                           * DEFENDANT IS 00.00      *
   AUTOMATIC                                   *                         *
                                               * FOT PROGRAM IS NONE     *
                                               * BAIL STATUS IS SUR BOND *
                                               * URINE TEST IS NEGATIVE  *
                                               * * * * * * * * * * * * * *


              DEFENSE ATTORNEY IS WILLIAM W TAYLOR
            ***TO DISPLAY MORE INFORMATION PRESS THE PA2 KEY***

CASE 017193-73              BACKUS, BILLY              WITNESS INFORMATION

   WITNESS NAME              WITNESS ADDRESS              TYPE     E/N

HOWARD, BRENDA C      429 KENTUCKY AVE, WASH, DC  20052  COMPLAIN    E
MIDDLETON, JANICE A   1350 R ST SE 22, WASH, DC  20028   EYEWIT      E
***TO DISPLAY THE INFORMATION ON THE FIRST PAGE PRESS THE ENTER KEY***
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FIGURE 3

DISPLAY RESULTING FROM A
COURT DOCKET NUMBER QUERY

All names listed on this page are fictitious.

THE FOLLOWING CASES ARE PENDING FOR BADGE 0342 (*DENOTES ASSISTING OFFICER)

OFFICER	DEFENDANT NAME	ARRESTED	CONTINUED TO ASSIGNED TO	CASE
WILSON	BROWN, RONALD GREGORY	08/11/72	12/31/73	CASE02543673
WILSON	TAYLOR, DALLAS R	03/20/73	05/01/73	CASE01725973
WILSON	GARDNER, PHILLIP	03/27/73	04/26/73	CASE01847473
WILSON	WILLIAMS, JOEY	03/20/73	04/11/73	CASE01628673
*WILSON	BACKUS, BILLY	03/21/73	03/29/73	CASE01738373

******** END OF INFORMATION ********

FIGURE 4
ON-LINE DISPLAY FOR THE
POLICE OFFICER QUERY

All names listed on this page are fictitious.

THE FOLLOWING FELONIES HAVE BEEN PENDING AT LEAST 090 DAYS:

(* DENOTES POSSIBLE JAIL STATUS)

INDICTED	ASSIGNED TO	CHARGE	DEFENDANT	CASE
06/22/73	J. MC DONALD	CDW AFT FEL CNV	*MILES, JOAN FOY	CASE04722274
06/22/73	J. FLATTERY	ADW GUN	PRATHER, EUGENE	CASE04726974
06/22/73	R. BRANNUM	ROBBERY	ALLGOOG, GLORIA ANN	CASE04721874
06/22/73	J. HAWKINS	MURDER II	*MCCARTY, EVELYN L M	CASE04726274
06/22/73	J. APPLEBY	ROBBERY	JAMESON, KENNETH A	CASE04727874
06/22/73	D. MCCULLOGH	BURGLARY II	*MARSHAL, THEDWARD A	CASE04723274

FIGURE 5

PROMIS II RESPONSE TO A CASE AGING QUERY

All names listed on this page are fictitious.

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MISDEMEANOR CASES CONTINUED FOR TRIAL TO 09/24/73 WITH    (*=MAJOR VIOLATOR)
CRIME GREATER THAN OR EQUAL 04.00 AND DEFENDANT GREATER THAN OR EQUAL 00.00

        DEFENDANT              CRIME DEFEN    CHARGE          ARRESTED       CASE

 ZLOW, MARY                    05.00 00.00 PNS                05/30/73    CASE04514574
 DILLON, ANDREW JAMES          05.00 00.00 CDW GUN            07/25/73    CASE03466774
 WILSON, ANDRE                 05.00 00.00 LARCENY            08/24/73    CASE04100474
 MORRIS, GLYNIS SUE            05.00 02.50 CDW GUN            06/14/73    CASE04545874
 RICCO, WOODROW                05.00 10.00 CDW GUN            08/17/73    CASE05972474
 HARIMAN, STANLEY              05.00 15.00 SIMPLE ASSAULT     09/03/73    CASE06247174
 ELLRIDGE, JOHN J.             08.00 22.50 CDW GUN            09/08/73    CASE04302274
 JOHNS, CHARLES JEROME         09.00 00.00 SIMPLE ASSAULT     08/13/73    CASE03740174
*VANDERSTAY, MARTIN R          09.00 10.00 SIMPLE ASSAULT     08/23/73    CASE03971074
 ROMAN, JOHN PETER             12.00 00.00 SIMPLE ASSAULT     06/15/73    CASE04552474
*BACKUS, CHARLES LEWIS JR      16.00 17.50 CDW GUN            09/06/73    CASE04234074
        ********              END OF INFORMATION         ********
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FIGURE 6

UPCOMING MISDEMEANOR CASES LISTED BY CRIME SCORE

All names listed on this page are fictitious.

6. <u>The witness query</u>. If a witness calls the prosecutor's office and states that he forgot the trial date and docket number of the case about which he is supposed to testify, his name can be entered in PROMIS through the keyboard on a remote terminal. Its screen will instantly display all pending cases involving witnesses whose names are the same as, or sound similar to, the name of the witness making the call. In addition, addresses of witnesses, docket numbers, case status, and next trial date are displayed, as illustrated by Figure 3 of Briefing No. 5, <u>Witness Notification Unit</u>.

As in Washington, D.C., PROMIS II could be linked to a local or regional criminal justice communications network, which, in turn, is tied into such other systems as NCIC, a wanted persons file, and a stolen vehicle file. Such a linkage enables Washington prosecutors to receive instant information on whether the defendant is on probation or parole, has outstanding warrants, etc.

Many other queries could be designed for PROMIS II, depending on local needs. For example, inquiries could be developed to trigger displays that:

- Inform police district commanders of the number of officers due in court on any given day.

- Indicate all cases involving specified prosecuting/ defense attorneys.

- List all cases in danger of violating speedy trial rules.

- Note the status of cases involving defendants defined as "career criminals."

<u>IMPLEMENTING PROMIS II IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS</u>

Unlike the traditional operating mode of PROMIS, the on-line feature utilized by Washington's prosecutors involves a teleprocessing language (FASTER) that is compatible with the hardware of only one manufacturer (IBM). Thus PROMIS II software must be altered to accommodate other makes of hardware.

However, recent development of the "on-line inquiry package" greatly facilitates implementation of PROMIS II, whose

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installation was usually not a lengthy or unduly complex process in the first place.[10] Essentially, availability of the package minimizes the time and steps needed to adapt the on-line inquiry feature to the hardware and teleprocessing language of any major manufacturer. The package is comprised of a set of specifications, including the following:

- A detailed description of the on-line application.

- A detailed description of the on-line keying procedures, which trigger the various displays.

- A detailed description of the on-line files.

- A detailed description of the inquiry displays.

- A documented ANSI/COBOL source program which creates the on-line file from the batch-oriented PROMIS data base.

The following tasks remain for completion by the implementing jurisdiction: reviewing the above documentation and altering it to conform to the needs of the office; preparing programs (1) to read the "instructions" keyed in at the terminal and (2) to retrieve the appropriate displays; and testing programs.

USING INQUIRY TERMINALS FOR DATA ENTRY

The terminals utilized for on-line inquiries can perform double duty by also serving as the hardware for on-line data entry. That is, data is entered onto a disk (temporary storage file) in the computer room through any of the several terminals located throughout the office, with the master file updated at the end of each day's operation via the disk on a batch basis. Figure 7 contrasts the process of on-line entry/batch update with batch entry/batch update and summarizes the benefits associated with each process.

Whether to employ one entry method or the other depends on input volume, access to the computer for on-line entry, organization of the prosecutor's office (centralized or scattered branches), etc. The decision is not necessarily an either/or proposition. Perhaps the batch mode would be appropriate for initial case entry while future updates are more efficiently accomplished through on-line entry.

BATCH ENTRY/BATCH UPDATE	ON-LINE ENTRY/BATCH UPDATE
<u>PROCESS</u> Collect data and deliver to centralized location for data reduction. Key data. Verify data. Transfer data to computer-readable medium. Deliver to computer room for batch update.	<u>PROCESS</u> Enter data onto disk in computer room through one of several terminals scattered throughout the office.
<u>BENEFITS</u> Lower costs. Faster for high volume data.	<u>BENEFITS</u> Some errors are detected/corrected while source document is still at hand. Records can be entered later in the day and processed the same night. Fewer keystrokes are required because computer supplies some data and verification is not necessary. Terminals are located where data can best be collected. Same terminals can be used for entry <u>and</u> inquiry. Fewer errors to correct the following day.

FIGURE 7

DATA ENTRY: BATCH VERSUS ON-LINE

As with the on-line inquiry application, an on-line data entry package is available to PROMIS users.[11] It includes the following:

- A detailed description of the on-line data entry method.

- A detailed description of the associated on-line input keying procedures at the terminal.

- A detailed description of the input displays.

Given this package, the local jurisdiction is left with the following implementation tasks: review the documentation and alter it to conform to local needs; write programs that will read the keyed input transactions and will produce the appropriate input displays; and test the programs.

IN CONCLUSION . . .

The National Advisory Commission concluded as follows: "One of the biggest obstacles to improving the criminal justice system has been the lack of information regarding its current operation. Such specific information that is available often is neither timely nor in a form useful for decision making."[12]

In the context of the prosecutor's office, this is precisely the type of problem PROMIS and its on-line feature are designed to attack.

Obviously, obtaining accurate, relevant facts on a timely basis and in a format conducive to sound decision making does not guarantee superior prosecutory performance. But such facts constitute a resource without which prosecutors cannot reasonably assure that a full measure of justice is accorded to either the courtwise career criminal or the bewildered innocent suspect.

FOOTNOTES

[1]National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, _Criminal Justice System_ (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 2.

[2]"Finally, where feasible, automated data processing should be provided to support many of the prosecutor's functions. One example is the Prosecutor's Management Information System. . . ." Cited in National Advisory Commission, _Courts_ (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 235. Other Commission references to PROMIS occur in _Courts_, p. 96, and in _Criminal Justice System_, p. 76.

[3]National Advisory Commission, _Courts_, op. cit., p. 218. One way to define "real-time": the elapsed time between the inquiry to and response from the computer is such that it permits the solution of problems relating to a set of conditions while those conditions are still in the process of being generated--as in the case of checking and correcting, if necessary, the flight of a missile while still in flight. A comparable situation in a prosecutory context occurs when, during a conversation with defense counsel about plea negotiations, an assistant prosecutor is able to receive an immediate response from PROMIS regarding a defendant's other pending cases.

[4]_Ibid_.

[5]On-line: the information user is directly linked with computerized files through a terminal device, so that the user's instructions are programmatically processed without human intervention at the computer site.

[6]In the District of Columbia, the U.S. Attorney serves as the local prosecutor. About 75 lawyers are assigned to the D.C. Superior Court (equivalent to a state court of general jurisdiction), where prosecution of local "street crime" cases is conducted. About 16,000 allegations of such crimes are considered for prosecution annually.

[7]Not only is this type of immediate access valuable per se but it also produces a desirable by-product in that "hands-on" utilization of terminals by prosecutors reinforces their perception of PROMIS' overall effectiveness and helps convince them that the forms they complete for PROMIS data-input purposes are worth the time involved.

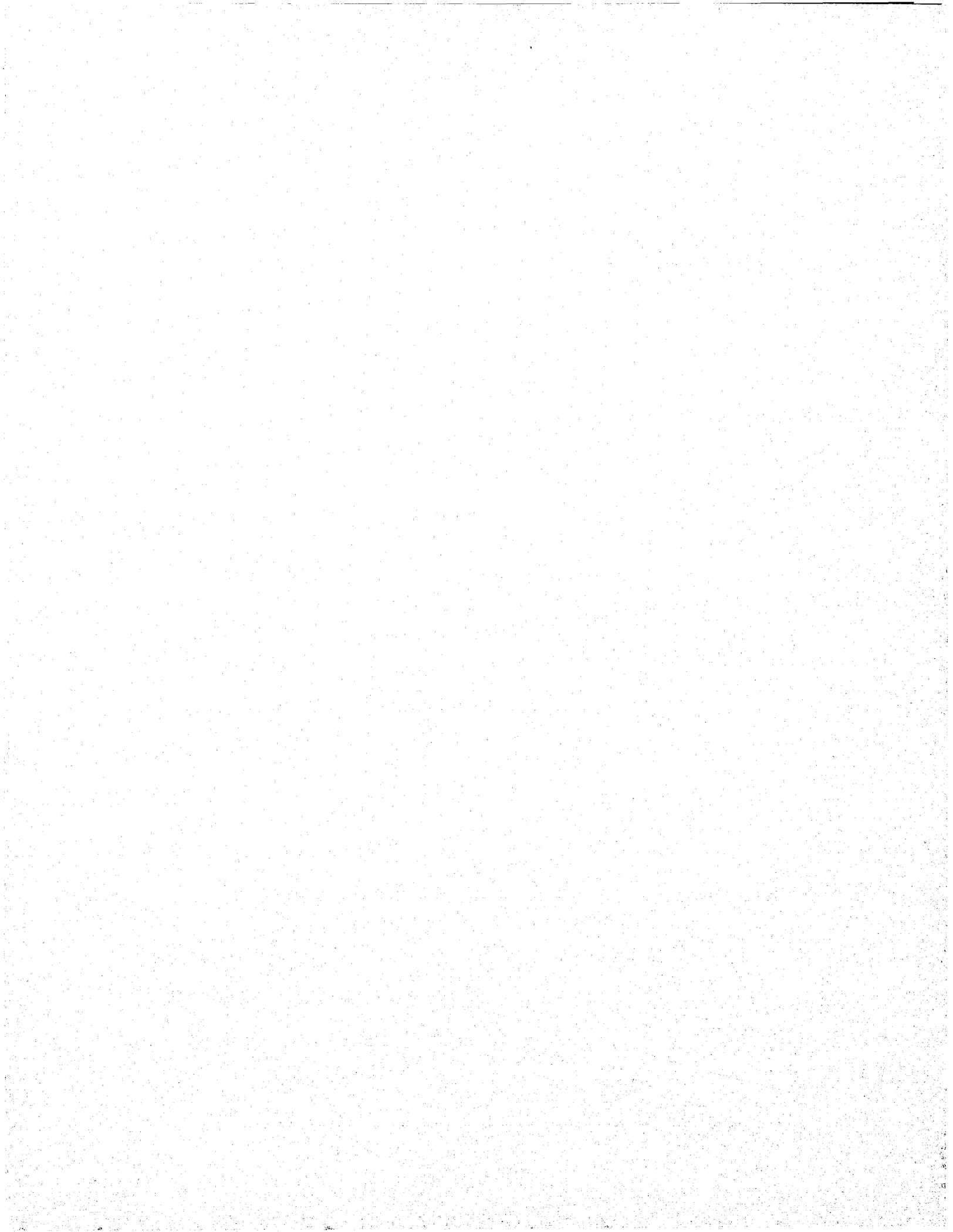[8]For more information about these ratings see Briefing No. 3, Uniform Case Evaluation and Rating.

[9]Ibid.

[10]The on-line inquiry package was prepared by the Institute for Law and Social Research under a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

[11]Contact the Institute for Law and Social Research.

[12]National Advisory Commission, Criminal Justice System, op. cit., p. 37. See also President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: Science and Technology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 2.

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