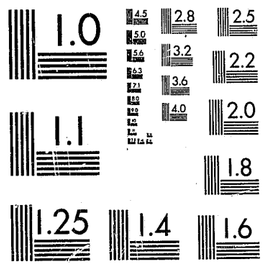

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TRACER: Computerized Service for the Criminal Justice System

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A computerized Total Recall Adult Criminal Element Records system, identified by the acronym TRACER, was first developed by the Norfolk Police Department in 1970. In essence, TRACER is a system designed to track an individual through each step in the criminal justice process—from the point of arrest to the point of exit from the system. Even though the theory is simple by nature, the process of creating a computerized program which would integrate all of the intricacies of the criminal justice system was not.

Based upon the value a project of this nature could hold for all criminal justice systems, author Nixon and Sgt. Duane Mason of the Norfolk Police Department, originators of the TRACER idea, applied for and obtained a $221,000 Federal grant for its development and implementation.

One of the most important functions in the design of TRACER is its capability to interface with the warrant files in TENPIN (Tidewater Electronic Network of Police Information). The TENPIN system enables each authorized participating police

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THE COVER

Director William H. Webster's message concerns the problem of arson. Photo by William A. Gangloff, Fire Inspector, Washington, D.C., Fire Department.

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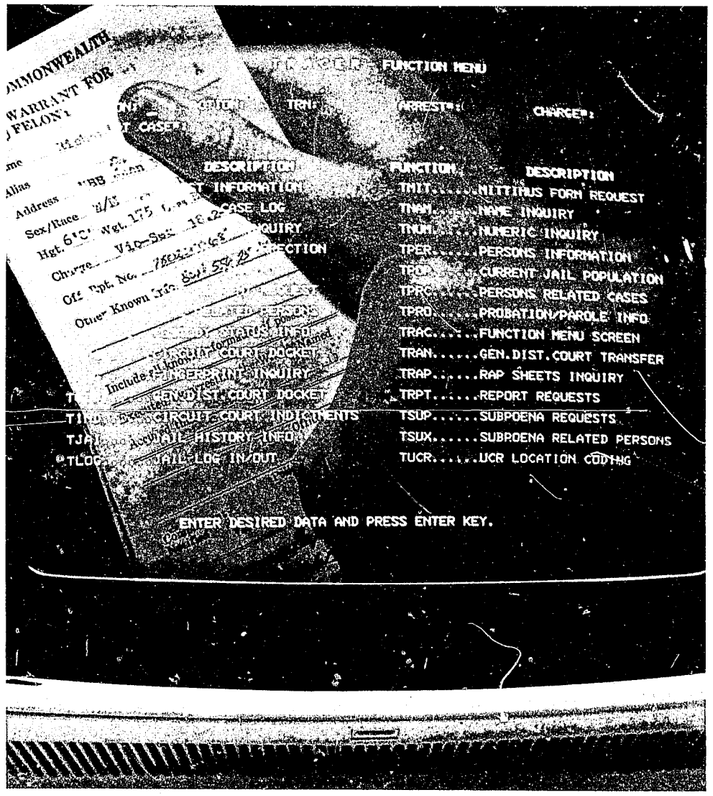
". . . TRACER is a system designed to track an individual through each step in the criminal justice process—from the point of arrest to the point of exit from the system."

agency in the Tidewater area of Virginia access to outstanding warrants in this region. In addition to this capability, the TENPIN system interfaces with the V–CIN (Virginia Criminal Information Network) and permits users access to warrant information on a statewide level. The V–CIN system, in turn, is tied into the NCIC (National Crime Information Center) in Washington, D.C., thus permitting TRACER users access to warrant information on a national level.

By having access to regional, State, and national warrant files, TRACER has assisted the Tidewater communities in serving 4,000 more warrants a year than in previous years. Because Tidewater is a metropolitan area consisting of seven cities and more than a million and a half people, local law enforcement agencies had difficulty in determining whether there was an outstanding warrant against an individual at the time of his arrest. The truism that crime knows no boundaries is particularly true in a metropolitan area where six other cities are only a few minutes away via the interstate system. TRACER has done much to overcome geographic limitations on criminal investigations in the Tidewater area.

Besides the warrant-checking capability, the major value of the TRACER system is its ability to link all of the criminal justice agencies together and to enable an authorized inquirer to determine the precise status of an individual who is currently in or has previously been in the criminal justice system. This capability has a wide range of possible applications—one of which is the ability to determine whether an individual who is being arrested is currently on probation, parole, or out on bond. Sergeant Mason describes a certain situation which occurred prior to the implementation of TRACER. "In one instance a man was arrested for murder and released on bond until his case was heard in court. During the time he was free on bond, the man committed another slaying and was arrested somewhere else—and again released on bond. He was released because no one knew he was out on bond." TRACER prevents such incidents from reoccurring.

Not only does TRACER enable the users among the various departments within the city of Norfolk to monitor the status of an individual within the criminal justice system, but effective December 3, 1977, the city of Virginia Beach joined Norfolk's TRACER. This now permits the sharing of information between two major independent municipalities with regard to individuals who have committed crimes in one or both of these cities. Other cities in the Tidewater area are currently investigating the best methods of implementing TRACER in their individual locales.



Another advantage of TRACER is the reduction in the number of hours spent in maintaining records by hand and the generation of reports automatically which were previously produced manually. For the police department, district courts, sheriff's office, and jail, TRACER is capable of producing arrest summaries, jail population reports (name and cell assignment), jail population summaries, jail logs (in/out), jail call sheets, jail sentences (1 year or more), district court dockets, misdemeanor summons dockets, traffic summons dockets, continuance dockets, district court disposition reports, district court end-of-month statistics, court attorneys' case lists, grand jury lists of prisoners, and continued judgment dockets. The Commonwealth attorneys' office can obtain from TRACER Commonwealth circuit court dockets, lists of felons in custody, lists of felons on bail, lists of felons with court-appointed counsel, lists of misdemeanor offenders without a lawyer, lists of individuals with fugitive indictments, lists of continued cases, and caseload statistical summaries. For the circuit court clerks' office, circuit court subpenas, circuit court caseload statistics, circuit court capiases for fugitive indictment, circuit court grand jury indictment lists, and circuit court disposition reports are available. City circuit court dockets, city appeals reports, capias cases, and continued cases can be prepared for the city attorneys' office. Monthly, quarterly, and annual reports are also prepared for the Virginia probation and parole office.

For the city of Norfolk, TRACER became operational in two phases: Phase I, in September 1976, providing service to the police department, the jail, the sheriff's office, and the district courts; and Phase II, in May 1977, with service provisions for the circuit court, the Commonwealth attorney, the city attorney, and the probation/parole department. Implementation for the city of Virginia Beach followed the same two-phase procedure.

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TRACER is a data-based system; its total success is contingent upon each user faithfully and correctly entering all of the information (with regard to the individual) relevant to the user's particular department. In order for TRACER to be of value to each department, all other departments, which had previous contact with the individual, must have already added to or updated the individual's TRACER file. For example, if an individual were arrested on a breaking and entering charge, the booking officer would enter the necessary information into TRACER. The bond would then be set; if the individual could not post bond, he would be jailed. The personnel in the jail would use the TRACER system to identify the current charge against the accused and to gain further information that might be available. If the arrestee was already on the TRACER system for his previous criminal history, as well as for his present arrest, the comments concerning his prior jail behavior could prove to be very valuable. If the accused had attempted to escape or had become violent with the guards during his previous incarceration, he in all probability would be placed in an isolation cell rather than in a group cell as an ordinary breaking and entering charge would dictate.

In administrative operations, one of the most difficult feats is to present automation to a manual operation while, at the same time, creating an environment in which personnel, who may initially fear replacement by a computer or feel inadequate in their ability to understand computers, become enthusiastic concerning the new dimensions automation may present to their current jobs.

One of the best methods to ensure the acceptance of an automated system within a department is by making members of the department a part of the planning and designing stages of the computerized system. The administrative aspect of the implementation of TRACER was handled in just this manner; users from each of the departments were instrumental in determining exactly what services would be provided by TRACER.

Once the planning and design of TRACER were completed, all user personnel involved in the planning of the system were then instructed in its op-

"[T]he major value of the TRACER system is its ability to link all of the criminal justice agencies together and to enable an authorized inquirer to determine the precise status of an individual who is currently in or has previously been in the criminal justice system."

eration by members of the Division of Data Processing. When each user department had at least one completely trained individual in TRACER applications, they in turn trained other individuals within their departments. One advantage to having user departments train their own personnel is that it enables each department to realize that TRACER actually belongs to the user and that it is not a monstrous threat forced upon them by a data processing society.

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The Central Files Division of the Norfolk Police Department took additional measures toward assuring the acceptance of TRACER by its officers. In order to work in central files with TRACER, an officer must now request desk duty, thereby indicating his enthusiasm to learn the details of TRACER's operation.

A second advantage of having user departments train their own personnel is a direct by-product of having each department realize that TRACER belongs to the user. By identifying with TRACER and having enthusiasm for the system, the individuals entering information into TRACER files will make every effort to update information as rapidly as possible and to make sure that all entries are correct. In other words, user identification with the system facilitates entry efficiency.

Two Norfolk police officers run a name check through TRACER.

TRACER in Operation

An arrestee's master file is the main component of TRACER. This file contains personal information including names and aliases, addresses, identification elements, such as local, State, and FBI numbers, and fingerprint codes, etc. Also contained are arrest charges, docket numbers or arrest report numbers, custody status (including history of confinement and bail changes), dispositions, previous confinements, etc. The TRACER Reference Number (TRN) is a unique eight-digit number automatically assigned to a person when he/she first enters the system. An Arrest Report Number (ARN) is also automatically assigned by the system for each arrest event. This is a seven-digit number with the first two digits representing the year in which the event occurred. Information in the master file may be obtained by using the TRN, name search (last name phonetically encoded), and other identification numbers, driver's license number, ARN, etc.

The TRACER function menu is the starting point for TRACER functions. When the menu or selection screen is displayed, the operator selects the desired transaction (arrest information, fingerprint inquiry, jail history, etc.) and enters the four-letter function code.

At the time of arrest, police personnel can find out whether the individual is already in the master file by entering TNAM (code for name inquiry) in the menu screen. In response, the system will display all exact and sound-alike names in the TRACER files. Additional information, such as sex, race, and date of birth, may also be added to narrow the search. The operator may then select the proper individual from the list displayed and request more detailed information by entering the TRN. If the individual is known to

The author receives information resulting from a TRACER inquiry.

the system, the new arrest information is added to the file and accumulated on the TRACER rap sheet—a history of the individual's contact with the system that can be displayed on the screen. If not, a TRN is automatically assigned by the system, and personal information obtained from the offender during the booking interview is entered directly via the arrest booking function.

The arrest booking function (TBOK) allows the operator, using the person and arrest information screens, to review, add, or update arrest and charge data for an individual. When adding arrest information, TBOK will assign the ARN to the arrest and a unique number to each charge. In addition, the function will create a docket entry for each charge.

TBOK also provides for a check of the probation/parole file (of TENPIN) when the arrest is recorded. If the offender is listed in the file, notices are automatically generated for the booking officer and the probation/parole office. TBOK will also check current custody status, and if the individual is out on bail, will generate a notice for the magistrate.

When the booking interview is completed, the officer requests a CCRE (Central Criminal Report). TRACER immediately generates this triplicate form, with one part each for the State police, the Norfolk police, and the court. If the offender is not released on bond, TRACER also produces at the same time the mittimus (commitment) form, which authorizes the sheriff to take the individual into custody. TRACER also adds the case to the court docket when the docket for that day is produced. After the person appears in court, the disposition information is entered. If, however, the case is continued, TRACER automatically creates a continued docket entry; when the docket for the later court date is prepared, that continued case will appear.

Other functions listed on the TRACER function menu allow users to inquire into the person's information data in different ways. TFPC (code for fingerprint inquiry) searches by fingerprint classification (TENPIN-fast), and TRACER displays a listing of individuals who match the entered fingerprint code. TRACER automatically converts the NCIC classification to the Henry classification for ease in searching manual files.

TLOG (jail log in/out) allows the user to review, enter, or update the inmate records of the jail population file. Data maintained in this file is used to produce the daily log in/out report screen, the daily jail call sheets, the jail population report, and the prisoners confined in jail report. Inquiry to this file may be by the inmate's TRN or a related ARN. TJAI (jail history information) makes it possible for the jail to maintain a history of previous incarcerations for an individual, with comments.

TGDD (general district court docket) permits the user to review, enter, or update the general district court docket case records of the TRACER docket file. Data from these case records is used for generation of the daily dockets and disposition reports.

TRACER users have been well-satisfied with the current system. But as with all computerized systems, improvement of existing capabilities, as well as expansion to include new capabilities, are constantly in progress.

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