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BASIC

ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE

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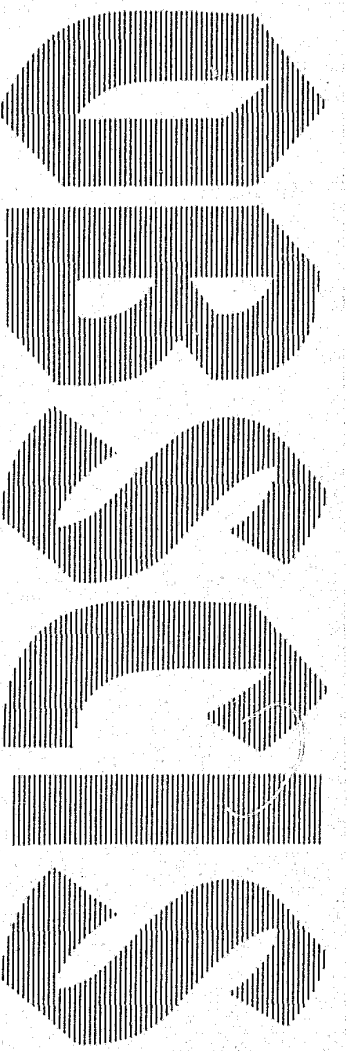


The Basic OBSCIS software package was developed by the SGI National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics under Grant No. 78-SS-AX-0029 awarded to SEARCH Group, Inc., by the System Development Division, National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice.

INTRODUCTION

More than 30 states are presently participating in the national Offender-Based State Corrections Information System program (OBSCIS). Most have developed their own computer systems based upon the OBSCIS conceptual model. However, with the availability of the Basic OBSCIS software package, new states can install OBSCIS quickly and at minimal cost.

Basic OBSCIS is a fully documented computer software package. The package, which is available to states without charge, is designed to meet the fundamental needs of corrections administrators for accurate and timely information about offender admissions and movement. It also can satisfy national reporting needs. Basic OBSCIS can be installed on a wide variety of computer systems. Technical assistance is provided by SEARCH Group, Inc., through funding from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

This booklet provides an overview of Basic OBSCIS and is intended to give administrators the initial information they require about the potential of Basic OBSCIS for their agencies. The material packaged is primarily non-technical, although a description of the minimum computer system necessary for Basic OBSCIS installation is included.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS

What does OBSCIS stand for?

OBSCIS is an acronym for the **O**ffender-**B**ased **S**tate **C**orrections **I**nformation **S**ystem. The OBSCIS program began in 1974 with 10 states coming together to develop a conceptual design for an information system that would meet the essential needs of state corrections agencies and also be capable of supporting a national reporting system. During the ensuing years, additional states joined the program and the OBSCIS model itself was refined in accordance with the states' actual experience developing and operating systems based upon the model. Presently over

30 states either have OBSCIS systems or are engaged in developing such systems. These activities are documented by the OBSCIS publications listed on the inside back cover; all are available from SEARCH Group.

Basic OBSCIS is a natural and inevitable outgrowth of the OBSCIS experience. Basic OBSCIS is the result of a realization that standardized computer software could be patterned upon the most common information needs of states and could allow significant savings in both time and money to new states joining the program.

What is Basic OBSCIS?

Basic OBSCIS consists of the computer programs and supporting documentation necessary for a state to install and operate a system to record the admission, movement, and status of individuals while they are the responsibility of the corrections agency. In addition, Basic OBSCIS supports state participation in national reporting programs.

Included within the package are computer programs written in ANS COBOL to carry out data input and editing, file maintenance, and report generation functions. The system can produce 38 separate reports and fully support the three fundamental OBSCIS applications of Admission, Movement/Status, and National Reporting. The Basic OBSCIS data base includes all OBSCIS *core* data elements, more than two-thirds of the *recommended* data elements, and many of the *optional* data elements.

Why should an agency consider Basic OBSCIS?

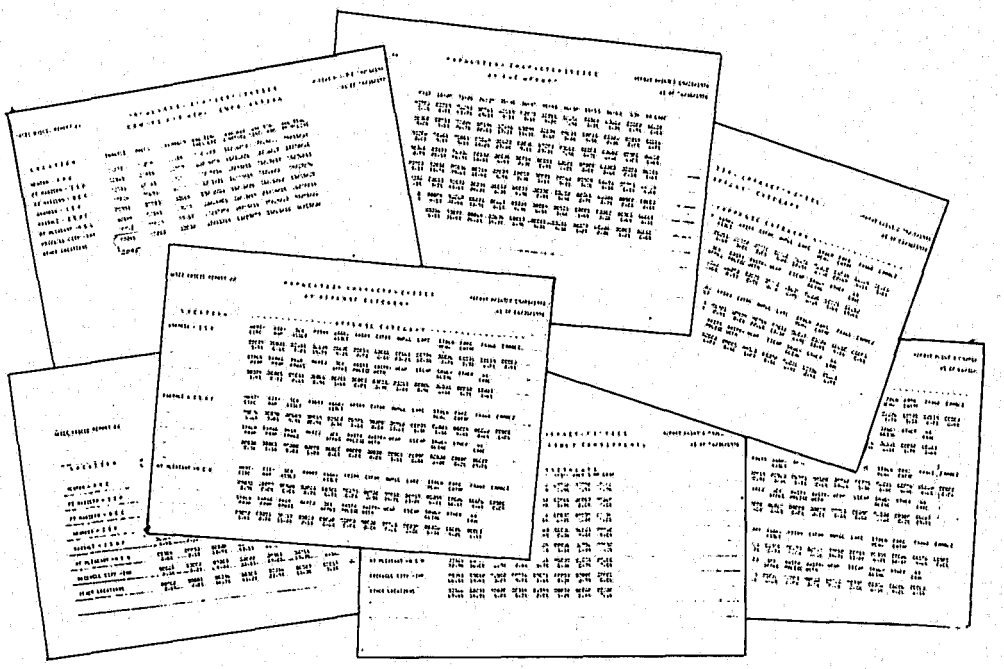
Development of a computer application is expensive, time-consuming, and sometimes risky. Packaged software, such as Basic OBSCIS, can be an effective and economical alternative. If the package is compatible with agency needs and can be installed on the agency's computer, then it may well save time and money, providing a working system in a matter of a few weeks and freeing technical resources for other tasks.

An additional advantage of a packaged application is that it is *proven*. Basic OBSCIS was tested in a live corrections environment in Iowa and is now operational in other states as well. The risks of development are avoided; agency administrators know precisely what they can expect from the system.

Can Basic OBSCIS be installed on our computer system?

Basic OBSCIS was designed to be compatible with the widest possible range of computers. The software is written in ANS COBOL, the computer language common to all but the very smallest microcomputers. Basic OBSCIS is a batch system that requires no on-line system capability but employs standard data conventions and file structures. In short, everything possible has been done to insure that Basic OBSCIS will work on your computer.

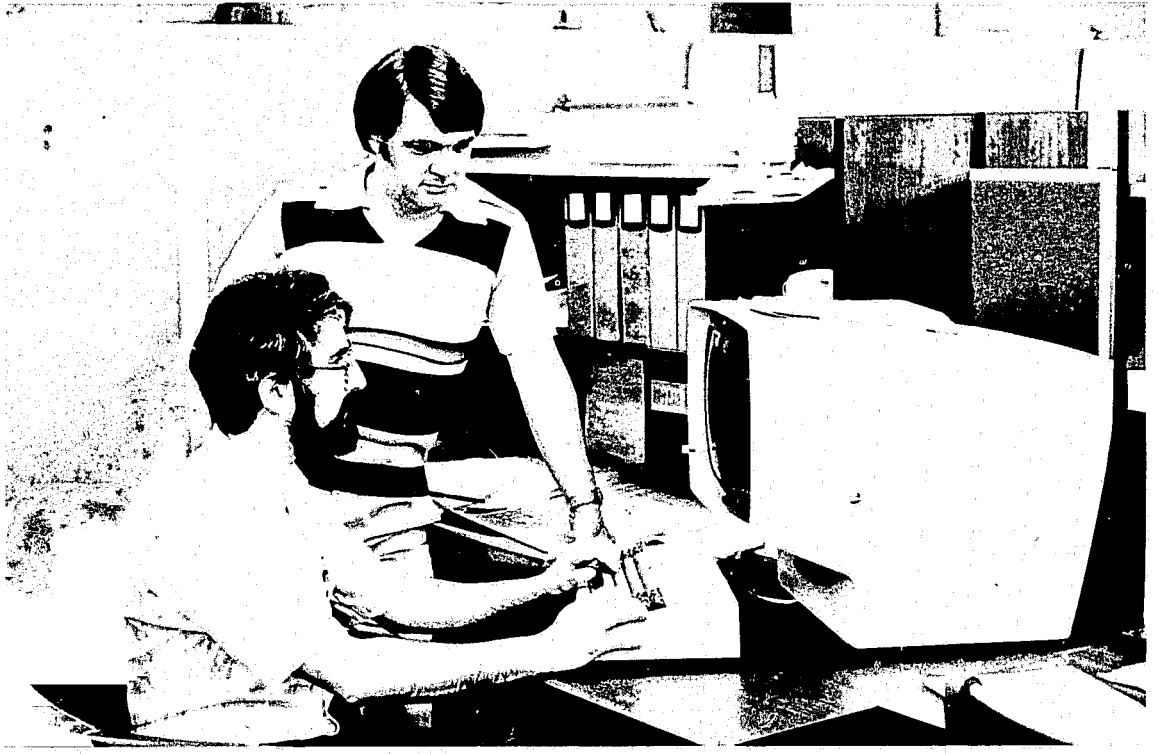
Part II of this booklet provides a specific description of Basic OBSCIS design and hardware considerations.



What operational and administrative reports are produced by Basic OBSCIS?

The reports available through Basic OBSCIS include:

- reports on individual offenders documenting their activities and status throughout their involvement with the agency.
- day-to-day operational reports and listings, including court appearances, releases, program assignments, and cell or facility movements;
- statistical reports keyed to a variety of offender characteristics; and,
- periodic summaries for planning, budgeting, and national reporting.



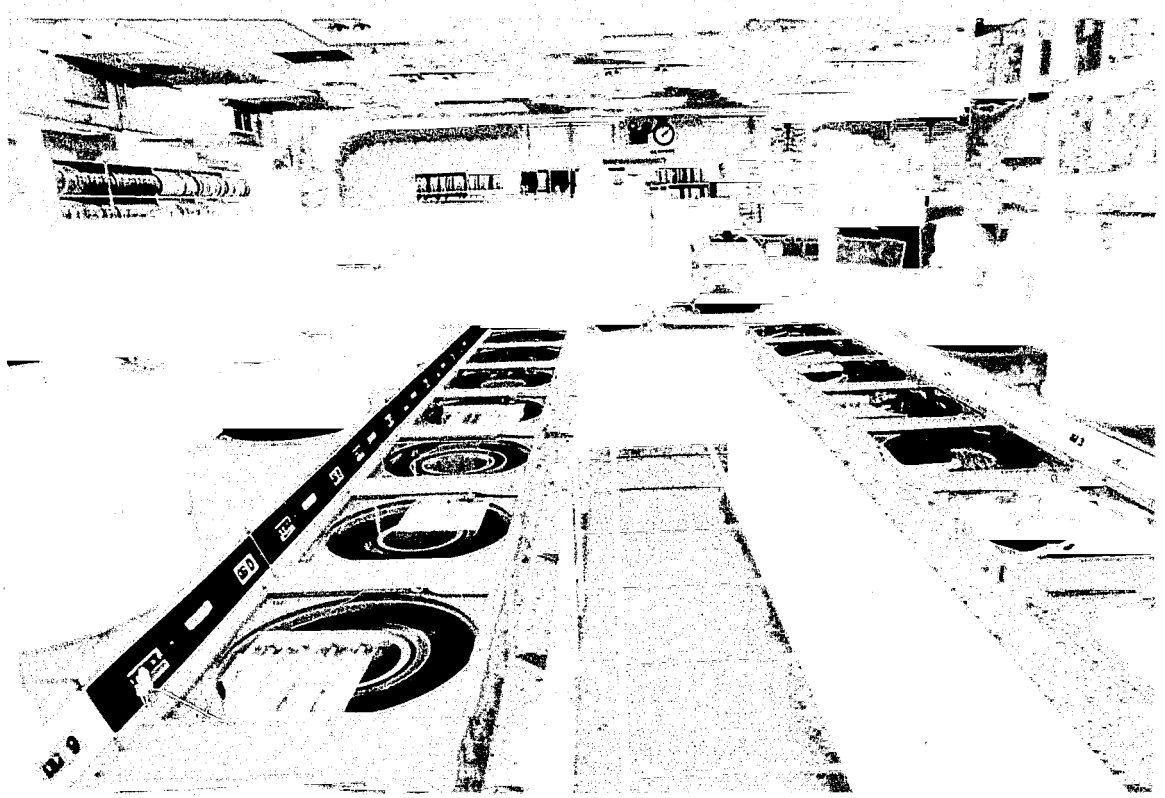
What documentation is included in the Basic OBSCIS package?

The Basic OBSCIS Package contains the computer software and the supporting documents necessary for a state to install and operate the system. The supporting documentation includes:

- The Basic OBSCIS System Guidelines
- The Basic OBSCIS Users' Manual
- The Basic OBSCIS Operations Manual
- The Basic OBSCIS Installation Guide
- Basic OBSCIS System and Program Documentation.

What technical assistance will be provided to states installing Basic OBSCIS?

SEARCH Group will assist states wishing to install Basic OBSCIS. This assistance is funded through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and includes pre-installation planning, training for both administrative and operational personnel, software installation and validation, and continuing technical consultation. Thus, there is no cost to the states. In addition, Basic OBSCIS states will be invited to join the OBSCIS Users' Group, the community of states participating in the national OBSCIS program. The Users' Group is a major forum wherein issues of common concern are addressed and new ideas exchanged.



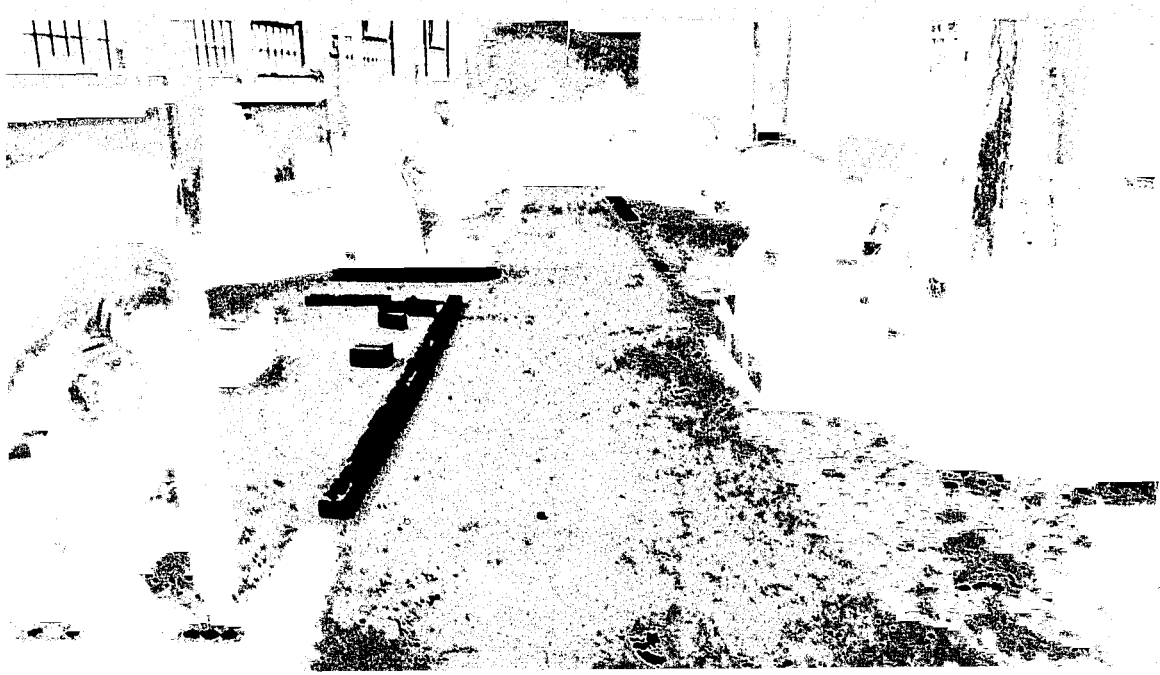
II. BASIC OBSCIS DESIGN AND HARDWARE CONSIDERATIONS

A. BASIC OBSCIS DESIGN FEATURES

Basic OBSCIS is suitable for installation in a wide variety of hardware environments and can be used by most state corrections departments. The major design features which contribute to the flexibility of the Basic OBSCIS software are summarized below.

The Basic OBSCIS system is designed to fulfill the basic needs of the corrections departments in most states.

The system concepts and specific data elements upon which the Basic OBSCIS software design has been based were derived from the original OBSCIS conceptual design. These concepts and data elements have been tested and refined in actual corrections environments in the states which undertook development and implementation of the original OBSCIS model. Early in the development of Basic OBSCIS, eight OBSCIS states with operational or



nearly operational OBSCIS systems were interviewed by a project team to gain further insight into the implementation and utilization of OBSCIS under varying state environments. This investigation provided a foundation for the development of a system structure and data base design which is compatible with the requirements of most states.

The Basic OBSCIS software is written to adapt to specific state needs through modification or expansion.

The system is highly modular, with module segmentation based both upon user applications and program functions. The Basic OBSCIS data base includes expandable code structures at the data element level, space within files for addition of data elements, and pointers which aid in expanding to additional files. Also, the use of Top-Down Structured programming and Hierarchical-Input-Process-Output (HIPO) documentation techniques greatly simplify the tasks of understanding and modifying Basic OBSCIS.

Basic OBSCIS is capable of operating on a wide range of computer sizes and configurations.

All Basic OBSCIS computer programs are written in ANS COBOL, not to exceed Level 2 of the ANSI-74 standard. Instructions not supported by most minicomputer COBOL compilers have been avoided. Each program can be compiled and run independently of any other program or external sub-routine. Memory requirements are small: all programs can be executed in 32K bytes or less. Record sizes are fixed; sequential file organization and processing are used where appropriate; and relative (or direct) file access is used whenever it is more efficient. Basic OBSCIS makes conservative use of disk space to permit its installation on relatively small computers. No proprietary software is utilized, and programs are written for batch operation to avoid dependence on any given vendor's teleprocessing monitor.

B. BASIC OBSCIS HARDWARE CONSIDERATIONS

The Basic OBSCIS Package is designed to operate on a wide range of computer sizes and configurations. The basic requirements are as follows:

1. A computer capable of supporting ANS COBOL, Level 2.

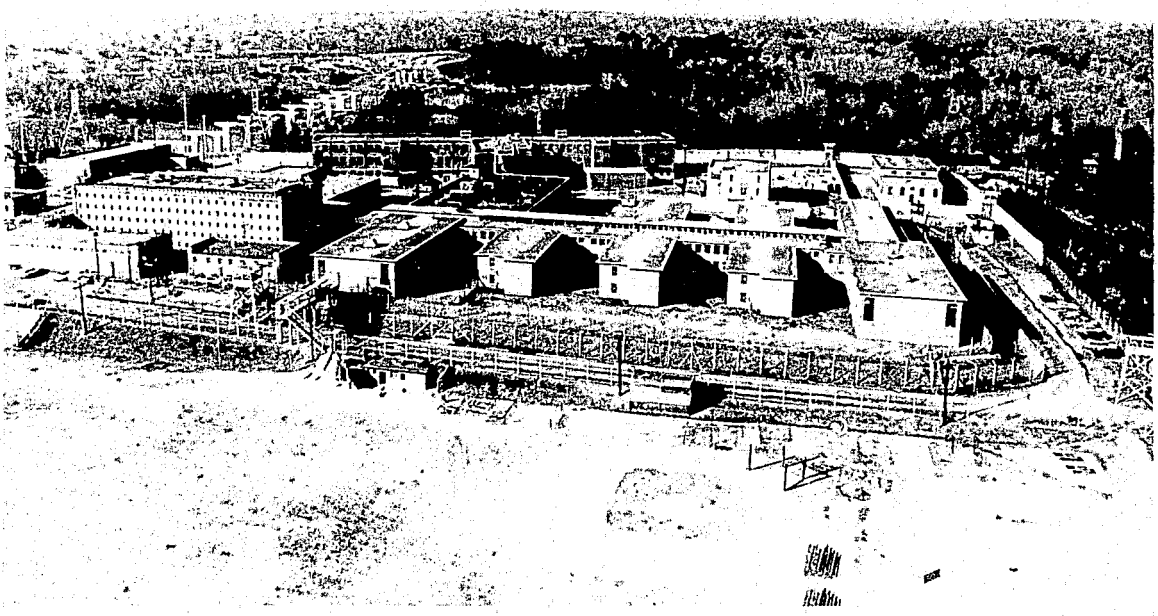
2. Sufficient memory to support the operating system and execute COBOL programs requiring up to 48K bytes. (Current maximum program size is under 32K but expansion capabilities should be built in.)

3. Facilities for preparing and inputting 80-character records (card images). For large scale machines, this will probably be a key-punch and card reader, or key-to-tape (or disk) unit. For a minicomputer, input will usually be via a CRT or hard copy terminal.

4. Disk storage capacity of approximately 10 megabytes (10 million characters) plus an additional 1/2 megabyte for each 100 inmates over 2,000. The system should have at least two disk drives, with a 3 megabyte minimum removable disk for use in backup of files and programs. (Magnetic tape could also be used for backup.)

5. A mechanism for producing output on an industry compatible medium is required for National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) and Uniform Parole Reports (UPR) output. This output can be magnetic tape (which is recommended), punched cards, or by making arrangements to copy the annually produced files from the system's removable disk to magnetic tape.

6. A 132-character-per-line printer with a minimum speed of 200 lines per minute.



Any computer configuration meeting or exceeding these specifications would be capable of supporting Basic OBSCIS. Further analysis of installation potentials are discussed in depth in the Basic OBSCIS Software Package Documentation available to states in limited quantity from SEARCH Group, Inc. Write:

OBSCIS Program
SEARCH Group, Inc.
1620 35th Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95822
(916) 392-2550

OBSCIS PUBLICATIONS

Volume 1: THE OBSCIS APPROACH

Volume 2: OBSCIS APPLICATION GUIDE

Volume 3: OBSCIS DATA DICTIONARY

Volume 4: OBSCIS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Volume 5: LAUNCHING OBSCIS: A COMPOSITE EXAMPLE

Volume 6: THE OBSCIS EXPERIENCE: A PHASE II SUMMARY

Volume 7: OBSCIS DATA DICTIONARY (Revised)

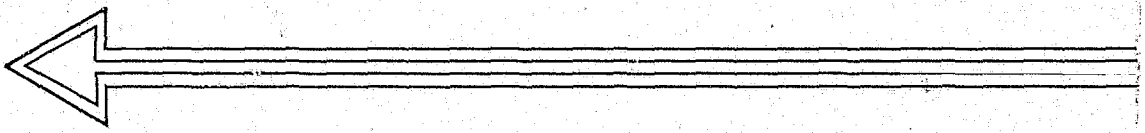
BASIC OBSCIS SOFTWARE PACKAGE DOCUMENTATION
(Available to state departments of corrections in limited quantity.)

THE OBSCIS COMPENDIUM: PROCEEDINGS FROM THE OBSCIS SEMINAR

BASIC OBSCIS 1: ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE

BASIC OBSCIS 2: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

BASIC OBSCIS 3: SMALL COMPUTER INSTALLATIONS



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