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Records Clerk Donna Schwab holds a microthin jacket in her left hand and the original record sheets used to fill this jacket in her right hand.

Microfilming Identification Records

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There comes a time when law enforcement agencies must re-examine their administrative operations. Chief Dobrovolny explains how his department dealt with a space problem.

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Space is a factor which must be considered in planning administrative operations of a law enforcement agency. As other professional services, police departments, too, often find that sufficient space is not available. When these conditions exist and operating efficiency is threatened, changes must be made.

A few years ago the Minot Police Department faced a space problem in its records division. At that time we decided to completely revamp our record-keeping system and regain some valuable space in the process.

Prior to 1951 the records kept by the department were inadequate and the system was cumbersome. At that time we installed the "packet" system using a 3- by 5-inch master card, a packet, and an identification number for each individual. The packet system proved to be satisfactory as long as space was available.

In 1957 the department moved into new quarters. The records division was assigned to a 12- by 28-foot room. From 1957 to 1965, the department accumulated a large number of records, and, as a result, the records office became crowded. Twenty-six 4-drawer filing cabinets and two desks, one for the identification officer and the other for his assistant, were squeezed into the room. Major revisions requiring considerably less filing space for identification records were obviously needed.

First System

The first system we considered in 1965 was the "open-shelf" filing process. After thoroughly checking the system, we discarded the idea as it did not appear to be the answer to our

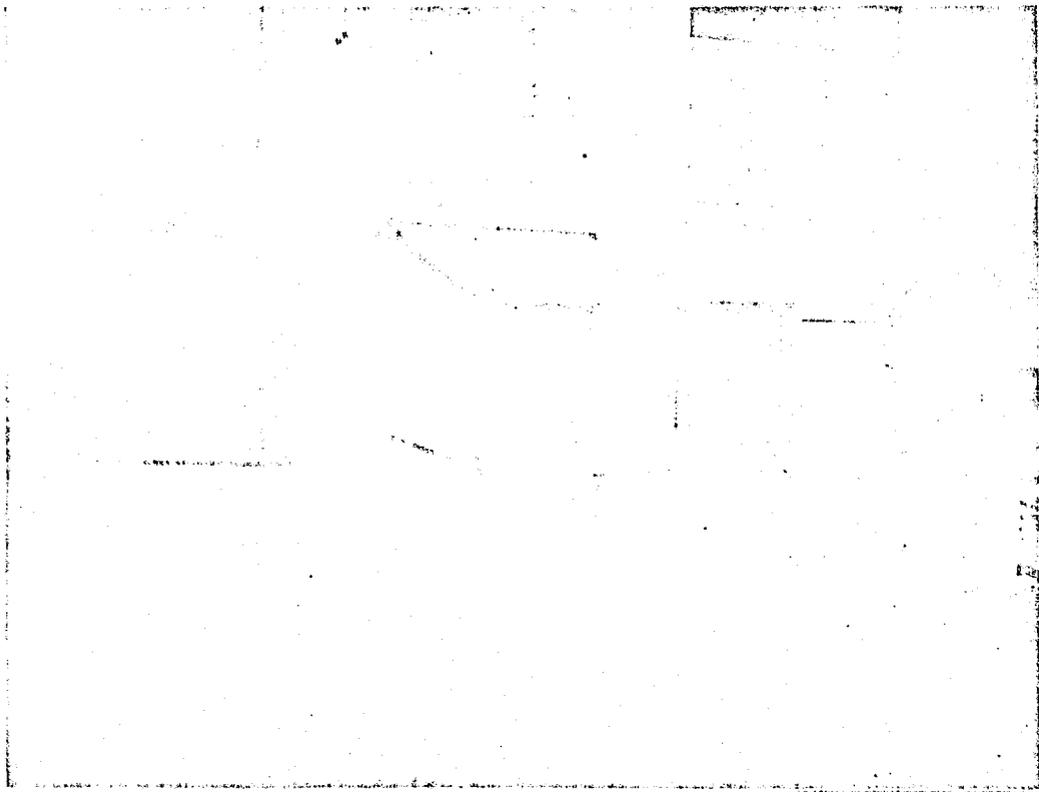
problem. We would have had to include covers for the shelves, and this would have reduced some of the space saved. We next considered microfilming and determined that this process would be more compatible with our needs.

Factors Considered

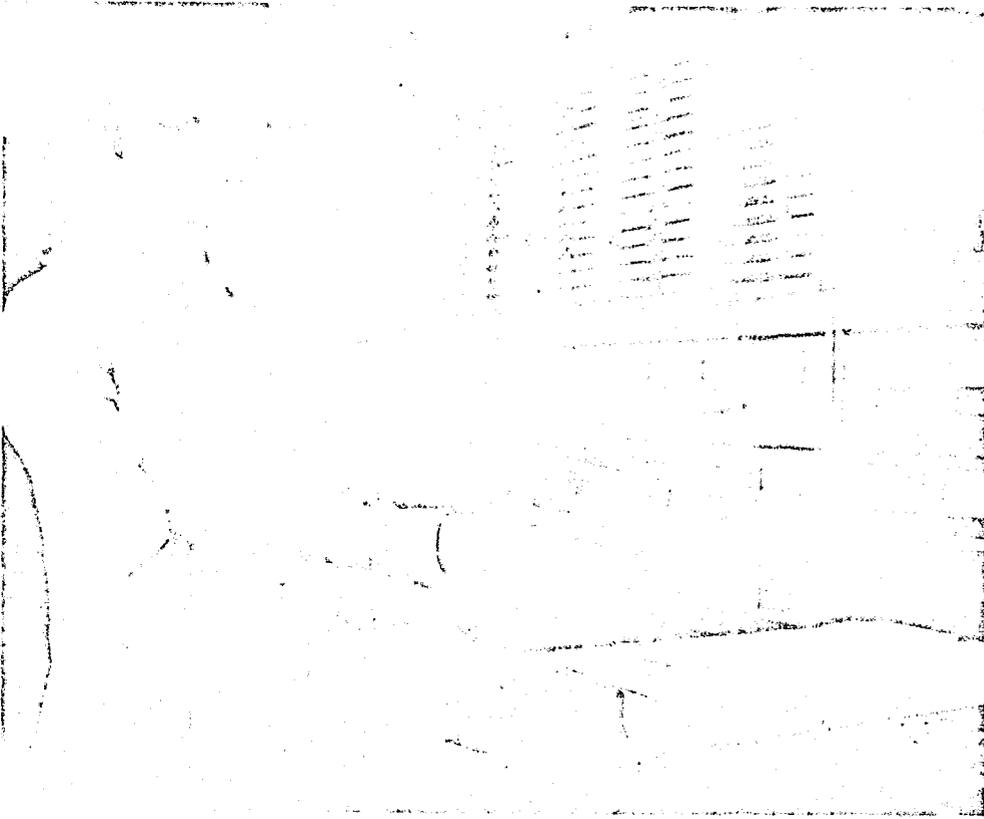
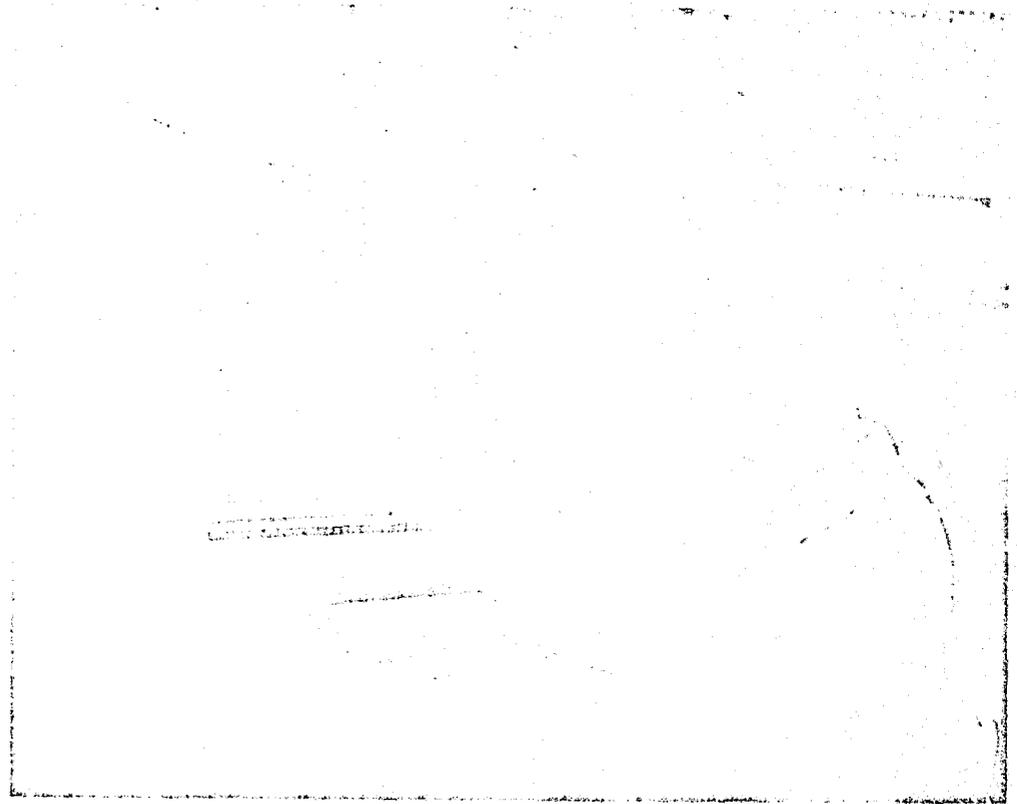
Three factors we considered were: (1) the compactness of the system; (2) an easy method for making necessary additions to each record; and (3) the cost.

There was never any question as to the amount of space saved by microfilming; however, we encountered some difficulty in finding an easy way to make additions to the records. Finally this problem was solved by the use of a microthin jacket. The microthin jacket is a 3- by 5-inch card made of clear plastic with a small strip of paper on the top. The strip of paper can be used for the name and the identification number of the individual. The small strips of microfilm are placed into this card. Each card holds 25 to 30 strips. Rather than file 25 to 30 sheets of paper, we

Machines purchased for the microfilming process included (left to right) a reader-printer, a jacket-filler, and a jacket-reader.



A reader-printer reproduces reports from microfilm to their original size.



Saved space is a definite advantage in microfilming, for one file drawer now holds 6,000 records.

can file merely one 3- by 5-inch card containing the same amount of information. An addition to the person's record is simply inserted into the card.

In studying the cost factor, we concluded that if all the equipment were purchased, the cost would be approximately \$4,500. This figure included a \$1,200 camera; a reader-printer for \$1,250; a reader-filler for \$1,400; a \$150 jacket-reader; and a filing cabinet for \$210. At the time of the revision, we decided not to purchase the camera, but to rent it for \$32.50 a month. Since then, however, a decision has been made to purchase the camera.

The camera used for our work is a portable type, approximately the size of a small typewriter. This camera holds two rolls of film at one time, one for permanent storage and the other for cutting into strips for the jackets. Each roll of film takes from 2,200 to 2,500 records. At the present time the cost of a roll of film is \$5.15.

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This price includes the film processing, which is done by the company. We have always received excellent service and the company usually returns the film 4 days after we mail it. The quality, too, of this film is excellent. The camera films the material as quickly as the operator can insert it into the machine. Actually, it took longer to prepare and arrange the material than to photograph it. In order to process the material for filming, we reviewed all the records. The department favors periodic review of all records as an aid in locating missing records and making any necessary corrections.

Second Machine

The second machine, the reader-printer, is primarily used for reading the microfilm; however, it has one other valuable capability, the reproduction of the records from microfilm to their original size. This wet-copying process takes approximately 20 seconds to complete and costs 6 cents a copy. After due consideration, we decided that we would not put accident reports into an individual's microthin jacket. Instead, the accident reports are left on rolls and the reader-printer is used to check these reports and furnish copies of them when necessary. The same procedure is now used for complaints, which are left in a roll and filed numerically. Only complaints appear on one roll and accident reports on another.

The third machine purchased was a jacket-filler. After the microfilm strip has been cut with scissors, it may be inserted between the two layers of the plastic jacket; however, this practice is very time consuming. Using the filler reduces the amount of time required and also lessens the chances of error as the operator can observe the

information as it is put into the jacket.

The fourth machine obtained was a jacket-reader. This implement magnifies the information on a jacket to a size large enough for reading. The reader-printer can also serve this purpose; however, the jacket-reader is simpler and more convenient to operate.

All in One Drawer

Approximately 500,000 sheets of paper were filed in our records division when we bought these machines. We purchased a file cabinet containing six drawers, four to store 3- by 5-inch cards and two larger drawers at the bottom. In one of these storage drawers, we have filed the microfilm for the original 500,000 records. After filming these records, we dispensed with 18 four-drawer filing cabinets. To illustrate further how microfilm saves space, we have on file over 22,000 five-page vehicle accident reports on rolls of film in a space 22 inches deep and 5 inches wide.

Microfilming the 500,000 records took approximately 18 months. Additional personnel were required to accomplish this. We assigned one person to this job permanently, and we used headquarters personnel to assist whenever possible. All this work was done without any interruption in the normal operation of the records division.

Fill One Roll

At the present time we microfilm when we have amassed enough sheets to fill one roll of film. One roll of accident reports contains 2,500 sheets of paper or 500 accident reports. Records not yet filmed are kept in the same manner as before the microfilming process began. The department also uses a photocopying machine to reproduce original records prior to microfilming.

After the records have been micro-

filmed, they are placed in "dead storage." The records are baled and placed in boxes; in the event we have to recover the original for some reason, we have an orderly system for this research. No requests for originals have been made as of this writing.

Under the old system each year we had to buy six file cabinets at \$90 each, or a total of \$540, and we spent \$150 annually for file packets. Under the new system we spend approximately \$50 a year for film and \$100 for the microthin jackets. Thus, we have realized a savings of almost \$540 a year on cabinets. With this savings, the cost of the machinery, when compared with present building construction prices, is far less expensive to the department. Therefore, we feel that the use of microfilming is a definite advantage, particularly where space is a problem.

RACK 'EM UP!

Recently a bank in the West discovered a shortage of several thousand dollars from the cash carts of two drive-in tellers. Upon investigation, FBI Agents learned that one bank employee had become addicted to playing pocket billiards and that he was obsessed with a determination to beat the "sharks," although he was fairly new at the game and greatly lacking in ability.

Further investigation disclosed that the bank employee, apparently stimulated by a combination of pep pills and diet pills, lost several thousand dollars in a matter of hours. One spectator told Agents that the would-be Willie Hoppe, undaunted by his losses, kept going out to his car for more money and returning to the game with the cry, "Rack 'em up!"