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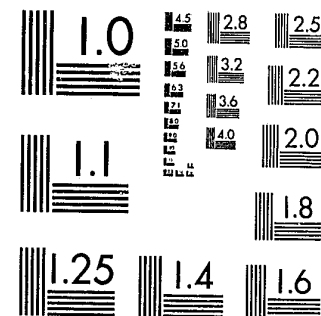
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ST. LOUIS COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
Word Processing Center

By establishing a Word Processing Center in its Division of Criminal Investigation, St. Louis County Police Department has increased the productivity of its criminal investigators by 14 percent, and decreased clerical costs by 44 percent, thus enabling the Division to handle a significant increase in the number of investigations. This has been done with a savings to County taxpayers of over $250,000 annually without a reduction in services!

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ACQUISITIONS

I. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM/PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In July 1978 the St. Louis County Police Department assessed the secretarial and clerical functions in its Division of Criminal Investigation. The Division has as its mission the investigation of all major crimes (such as homicide, rape, robbery, burglary) reported to the Department. Faced with annual increases in the number of crimes which must be investigated and no funds available to hire additional investigators, the Department was experiencing a problem similar to police departments across the nation--how to meet the increased need by citizens for services when revenues were barely keeping pace with inflation? Managers within the Division assessed the situation, and the decision was made not to seek funds for additional investigators but rather to seek a means of more effectively and efficiently using the services of the current staff. Managers in the Division then set out on the task of developing a strategy to deal with the problem.

In examining how the investigators were spending their time and what area could be targeted for increased efficiency, it was found that investigators were devoting approximately 28 percent of their work hours to the completion of investigative reports. Due to the fact that the investigative report is integral in the successful prosecution and conviction of the criminal offender, reports are necessarily long, detailed, and time-consuming. Reports were often handwritten and then typed by clerical personnel or investigators which further increased time spent.

The reduction of the time spent by investigators in preparing investigative reports was then targeted by the Department for increased efficiency. In researching how this could be accomplished, it was found that the establishment of a Word Processing Center would provide the best solution to this problem. Word processing, which is defined as "a system which combines people, procedures, and equipment in order to transform ideas into printed form and to facilitate the flow of related office work," is a relatively new management system which has had little application in the law enforcement field.

Subsequently, a plan for a Word Processing Center was developed and implemented. The objectives of the Center were:

A. Reduce time spent by investigators in completing reports.

B. Produce reports and correspondence in a more timely manner.

C. Improve the quality of reports and correspondence.

D. Increase the effectiveness of secretarial and clerical personnel.

E. Stimulate secretarial and clerical employee initiative through enhancement of job responsibilities.

F. Save money for the citizens of St. Louis County which can be returned through increased services with no additional taxes.

The Word Processing Center, which became operational in October of 1979, has been successful in achieving its objectives. Investigators have reduced the time spent writing and typing reports by 53 percent and have thus had more time available for investigations. The Center, with its Supervisor and three Word Processing Secretaries is producing the work

product formerly produced by seven secretaries, with an additional work load being produced as well.

Also, the Center is capturing source data for future management information needs. The statistical data is enabling Division managers to analyze their operations and provide information relevant to future operational and budgetary needs.

II. BACKGROUND OF PROGRAM/PROJECT

A. Role of the County

The St. Louis County Police Department directly serves the needs of some 429,000 residents in the unincorporated area of St. Louis County. Additionally, the Department provides specialized services such as laboratory analyses, helicopter assistance, and investigative (detectives) services for the 64 municipal police departments, as well as the unincorporated area. Therefore, the Division of Criminal Investigation within the St. Louis County Police Department serves over one million County residents and 64 police departments with its staff of 72 investigators.[1]

During the past five years, Index crimes reported in St. Louis County have increased 13 percent, up from 42,134 to 47,647 crimes. During this period no additional investigators have been authorized. As indicated earlier in this report, this increase in crimes

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[1] A 1979 St. Louis County Fact Sheet on Police Services, which gives detailed data on police departments served and crime rates within each municipality, is included in supportive data.

reported and subsequent need for investigative support services had seriously strained the effective capabilities of the Division of Criminal Investigation. Managers in the Division developed the Word Processing Unit to help in dealing with this increased work load.

After the research was conducted on implementing a Word Processing Center, software specifications were researched and equipment was selected which would be compatible with the Department's current data processing equipment.[2] Programs were developed which would improve the quantity and speed of the Department's written communications. Training programs were prepared by equipment vendors for the commissioned and clerical personnel who were to use the Center. A "shared logic" system of Word Processing was then chosen which would allow text to be entered, stored, edited, printed, and communicated from many terminals while "sharing" the same computer.

Since implementation the program has accomplished the following:

1. A reduction of 53 percent in the time spent by investigators in writing and typing investigative reports. This effectually results in a 14 percent increase in available time for each of the 72 investigators. Further, this has the net effect that would be obtained by adding ten additional investigators to the Division. With an average annual salary (including fringe benefits) of $21,876, the Center has saved approximately $218,000 in additional salaries.

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[2] See supportive data for vendors used.

2. Investigative report clarity and quality have been improved.

3. Reports and correspondence are being generated in a more
   timely manner.

4. The need for clerical staff has been reduced through attrition
   by 44 percent with a resultant savings of approximately
   $50,000 per year.

5. The image of the clerical staff has been enhanced as they
   have become Word Processing Secretaries and have acquired the
   additional skills necessary to operate the system.

Of course, the real benefit of the Word Processing Center is being
realized by the citizens in St. Louis County. The savings and
increased effectiveness within the Division will be returned to the
citizens in increased quality in the investigation of crimes--without
an increase in cost to the citizen.

B. Means of Financing

The financing for the Center has been entirely obtained from the
Department's budget. The first year equipment costs were $12,000
with second year costs to be at $6,000 and third year costs will
be considerably less. These funds were readily obtained through
transfer of funds from the personnel category. Prior to the
installation of the system, three of the Division's clerical staff
had left the Division. Since the Center's operation began, the
loss of these three employees has been absorbed; and the work
product has been increased 20 percent in addition to the savings
provided by the staff reduction. With the current salary for a

clerical employee at $12,679 (including fringe benefits), the
resultant savings more than pays for equipment costs. A fourth
clerical position within the Division is scheduled to be deleted
through attrition with the resulting work load absorbed by the
Center. Therefore, of the nine clerical employees on the
Division's payroll prior to the Center's operation, four are to be
replaced by the word processing equipment.

III. FUTURE PROSPECTS

Following a one year field test of this system in the Division of
Criminal Investigation, the Department has plans to proceed with
further development of word processing in other Divisions of the
Department. Currently on the drawing board are plans for a second unit
which will serve the correspondence needs of the Department's four
other Divisions.

This second phase which is tentatively scheduled for start-up in the
latter part of 1980 will allow such items as the Department's Written
Directive System (including policy statements and Departmentwide
operating procedures), management audits, operating budgets, personnel
action information, and numerous other pieces of written information
to be produced by the system. It is anticipated that the system will
be particularly useful in producing the innumerable form letters that
the Department must send, such as letters to citizens requesting police
reports, licensed watchman renewal reminders, gun permit correspondence,
and letters to police applicants. Current correspondence concerning

police applicants is presently of a voluminous nature as the Department processes police officer applicants for 58 police departments in St. Louis County through its Central Police Register. Thus, in addition to maintaining its own current authorized strength of 552 commissioned officers, the Department is generating the correspondence necessary for maintaining approximately 1,317 municipal officers. Further, additional correspondence is generated in the training and licensing of the County's almost 2,000 licensed security officers.

In the second phase, secretarial and clerical staff will be drawn from several of the Department's Divisions to create a unit serving the four Divisions. Management strategies are being planned to give careful attention to organizational and physical placement of this unit in such a manner that it will be able to efficiently serve its users. Currently, some secretarial and clerical positions are being deleted through attrition in readiness for the second phase. As in the first phase, it is anticipated that the Word Processing Center will require only 60 percent or less of the secretarial and clerical support formerly needed. Strategies are also presently being developed to aid administrators who will be contributing secretarial support to the unit in the handling of telephone answering and filing.

A third phase of the Department's Word Processing System is in the conceptual stage. This phase would involve the receipt of all police reports (possibly telephonically recorded) at the Word Processing

Center where the reports would be entered and copies produced for review and signature by the officers. This, it is anticipated, would greatly reduce the time currently being spent by police officers in completing numerous reports and allow the officer to devote this additional time to preventive patrol, follow-up investigation of crimes, or interacting with the citizens in his beat. Further, this would serve to relieve some of the repetitive, boredom creating tasks that currently plague police officers in completing "paperwork" forms in the increasingly complicated criminal justice system.

It is anticipated that the two future phases mentioned above will increase both effectiveness and efficiency in the St. Louis County Police Department. Effectiveness will be increased through improved quality of correspondence and reports and through more effective use of Department secretarial and clerical staff. It is hoped that through the enhanced image, somewhat increased salary, and challenging work of the Word Processing Unit staff that employee motivation and initiative will be promoted. As well, effectiveness will be increased for the police officer who can turn his or her attention from repetitive report writing to the citizens being served. Efficiency will be increased through the 40 percent reduction (through attrition) in secretarial and clerical personnel. These savings in police officer time and personnel costs can then be returned to the citizens of St. Louis County through increased police services without an increase in taxes. The citizens of St. Louis County will see the ultimate benefit of Word Processing in the more efficient use of their tax dollar.

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