139473–
139476

**U.S. Department of Justice**
**National Institute of Justice**

# Law Enforcement
## B · U · L · L · E · T · I · N
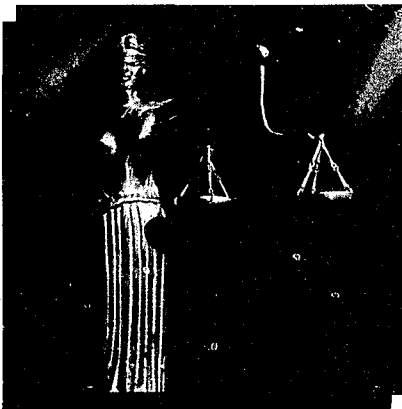
**Page 22**

**Page 25**

## Features

NCJRS

NOV 17 1992

ACQUISITIONS
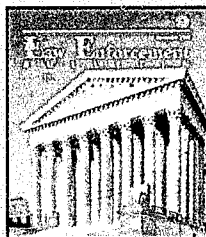
## Departments

*On the Cover:* During the 1991-1992 term,
the U.S. Supreme Court handed down
several decisions of particular interest to law
enforcement. See article p. 25. (Cover photo
© Pete Saloutos, 1992, Tony Stone
Worldwide.)

# UCR's Blueprint for the Future

By
VICTORIA L. MAJOR
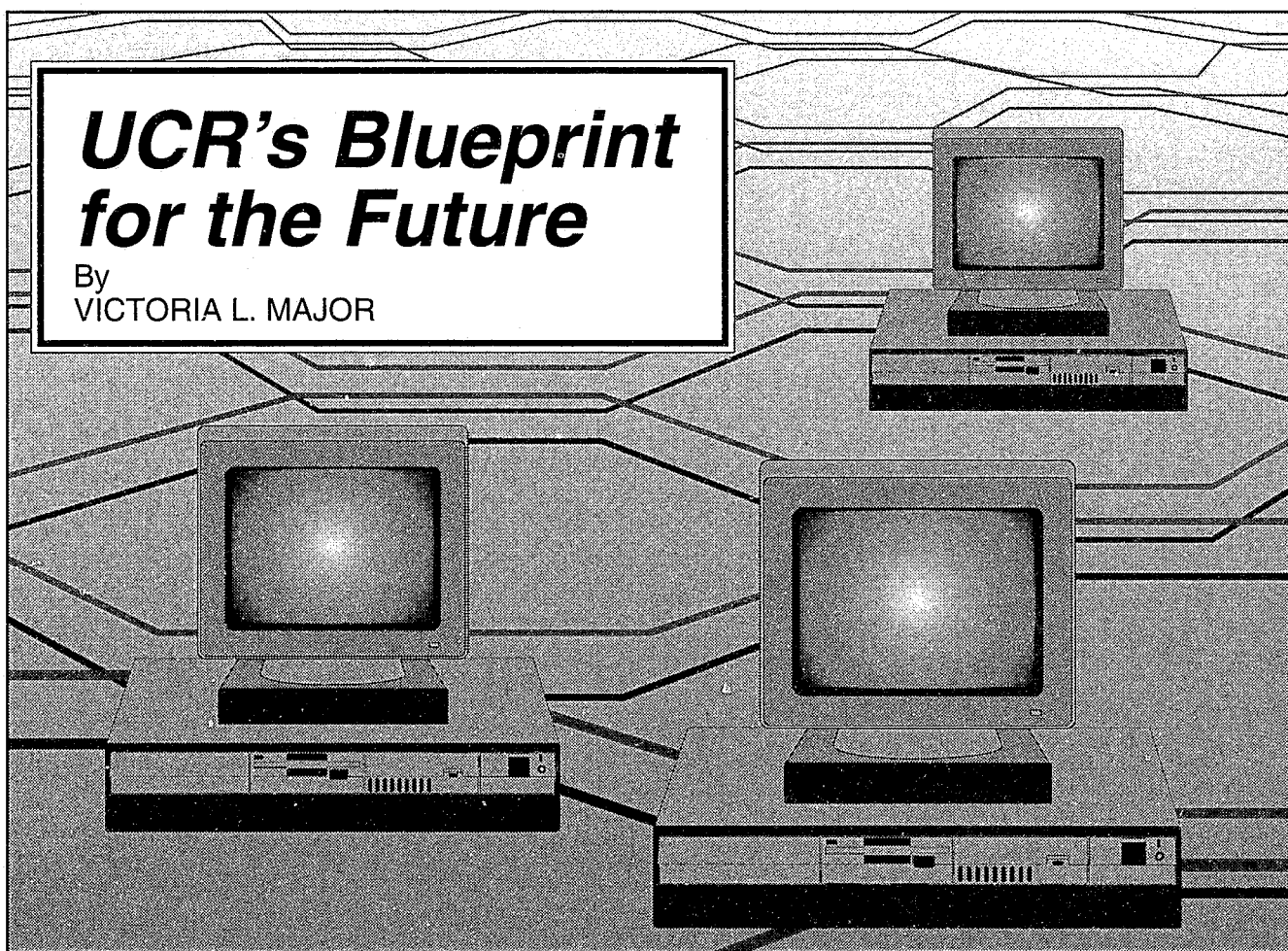
**E**ach month, for over 60 years, law enforcement agencies across the country tallied crime, clearance, and arrest statistics and sent them to the FBI. The FBI, in turn, combined the reports of thousands of agencies and published periodic assessments on the amount, type, and trends in crime known to law enforcement. Soon, however, this cumbersome manual process used by law enforcement agencies to record crime data will be relegated to the annals of law enforcement history.

The advent of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) marks the transition to a modern automated system of retrieving crime data directly from law enforcement records. With NIBRS, law enforcement agencies can transfer directly crime information needed at the national and State levels from local computer systems through automated processes. The crime statistics database becomes much more comprehensive and flexible than it ever was under the old-fashioned system that used standardized reporting forms.

While it will, of course, take time for the more than 16,000 law enforcement agency data contribu-

tors to institute NIBRS, remarkable progress continues to be made. As a result, the criminal justice system can look forward to a wealth of crime-related data in the foreseeable future.

**Background**

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is a nationwide cooperative effort, the objective of which is to provide a reliable set of criminal statistics for use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management. The data produced through the program over the years represent one of the Nation's leading social indica-

tors, providing valid assessments of the nature, extent, and fluctuations of crime in the United States.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) conceived the program in the 1920s when it recognized a need for national crime statistics. Unlike other free world countries, no nationwide criminal code for "common law"-type offenses existed in the United States. That is, each State possessed a unique criminal statute, thus precluding an aggregation of State statistics to arrive at a national total. There was, therefore, no common language by which to measure the nature and extent of crime in the country or from one jurisdiction to another.

To respond to these needs, the IACP established a Committee on Uniform Crime Records, and after years of study, the committee developed a system that constituted the UCR Program for over 6 decades. The system included a set of standardized definitions by which law enforcement agencies nationwide voluntarily submitted crime data on a monthly basis.

Establishing crimes reported to law enforcement as the measurement, the committee selected seven offenses to comprise a Crime Index that would be used to gauge changes in the nature and extent of crime. In 1930, approximately 400 law enforcement agencies started reporting crime statistics, and in that same year, Congress passed legislation authorizing the U.S. Attorney General to collect these statistics. The Attorney General, in turn, designated the FBI to act as the national clearinghouse for crimes known to law enforcement. Today, over 16,000 agencies offering law enforcement service to over 96 percent of the Nation's population voluntarily participate in the program.

## Looking Toward The Future

Throughout its first 60 years of operation, the UCR Program remained virtually unchanged in
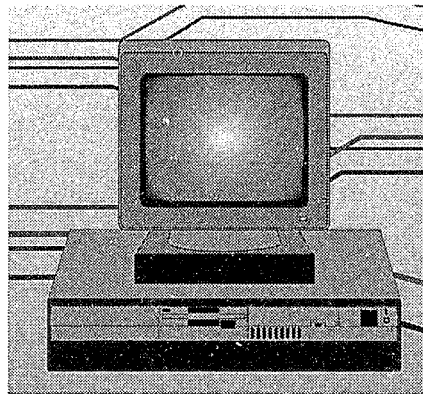


terms of the data collected and disseminated. As time passed, a broad application evolved for UCR, and law enforcement expanded its capabilities to supply information related to crime. In the late 1970s, the law enforcement community called for a thorough evaluation of UCR, with the objective of recommending a revised UCR Program to meet law enforcement needs into the 21st century.

The FBI fully concurred with the need for an updated program to meet contemporary needs and lent its support by formulating a comprehensive redesign effort. Following a multiyear study, the FBI developed a "Blueprint for the Future of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program."

Using the "blueprint," and in consultation with local and State law enforcement executives, FBI personnel formulated new guidelines for Uniform Crime Reports.

The new system offers law enforcement more comprehensive data than ever before available for management, training, and planning.

## National Incident-Based Reporting System

NIBRS is an incident-based reporting system. This means that law enforcement agencies collect data on each single occurrence by viewing a crime and all its components as an "incident." The FBI designed NIBRS to be generated as a byproduct of law enforcement records systems. Thus, reporting agencies build their crime records systems to suit their individual needs, with computer processes extracting NIBRS information.

UCR's goal in the redesign effort was to modernize crime information by collecting data currently maintained in law enforcement records. The FBI evaluated all facets of NIBRS by determining whether the information being considered for inclusion was likely to come to law enforcement's attention and ascertaining whether good law enforcement records systems already captured the data.

NIBRS collects data on each incident and arrest within 22 crime categories, including 46 specific offenses. For each offense reported, law enforcement agencies gather facts about the crime, e.g., victim and offender characteristics, type of property stolen, weapons used, location, etc., depending on the availability of such information.

Information on persons arrested will be gathered for an additional 11 offense categories. Above all, however, NIBRS supports the integrity of UCR's long-running statistical series.

NIBRS retains many of the general concepts for collecting and reporting UCR data. For example, the basic measurement remains crimes reported to law enforcement, and standardized definitions and guidelines exist for reporting all offenses and facts about them. However, as previously stated, the most significant difference is that NIBRS is incident-based. This means that instead of tallying offense, arrest, and other crime-related data on a monthly basis, law enforcement agencies report NIBRS information for each individual crime incident and arrest through automated data processing means.

As added features, the new reporting system exhibits other major differences. For example, NIBRS involves expanded offense reporting, increasing the number of categories from 8 to 22. It also provides greater specificity in reporting, up to 53 facts about each offense, while allowing for more correlation among offenses, property, victims, offenders, and arrestees.

**Benefits of Participation**

An indispensable tool in the war against crime is law enforcement's ability to identify with precision when and where crime takes place, what form it takes, and the characteristics of its victims and perpetrators. Armed with such information, law enforcement agencies can better make their case to acquire the resources needed to fight crime. After obtaining these resources, agencies can then use them in the most efficient, effective, and economical manner.

NIBRS provides law enforcement with this tool. Because of its capabilities, it stores more detailed, accurate, and meaningful data than what the traditional UCR Program captured.

Many individual law enforcement agencies employ very sophisticated records systems capable of producing the full range of statistics on their own activities. NIBRS takes the process of data collection one step further by allowing common denominator links among agencies. It provides law enforcement agencies with extensive, specific crime information concerning similar jurisdictions which, in turn, facilitates the identification of common problems or trends. Agencies can then work together to develop possible solutions or proactive strategies for addressing the issues.

**❝**

## NIBRS...enhances data quality assurance and virtually eliminates opportunities for inconsistent reporting from one jurisdiction to another.

**❞**

But the availability of accurate, detailed crime data does not benefit only law enforcement. With NIBRS, lawmakers, academicians, sociologists, penologists, and the American public can now better assess the Nation's crime problem by using the extensive data supplied by the law enforcement community.

Law enforcement as a public service requires a full accounting by criminal justice executives as to the administration of their agencies and the status of public safety within their jurisdictions. With full participation in NIBRS, these executives can access the information necessary to enable law enforcement agencies to fulfill this responsibility. In fact, NIBRS possesses the capability of furnishing information on nearly every major criminal justice issue facing law enforcement today, including terrorism, white-collar crime, weapons offenses, missing children, drug/narcotics offenses, drug involvement in all offenses, spouse abuse, abuse of the elderly, child abuse, domestic violence, juvenile crime/gangs, parental kidnaping, organized crime, pornography/child pornography, driving under the influence, and other alcohol-related offenses. All levels of law enforcement—Federal, State, and local—can access the data, aggregated at the level and in the manner that best meet the informational needs of the data user.

**Implementation Progress**

The implementation of NIBRS will be at a pace commensurate with the resources, abilities, and limitations of the contributing law enforcement agencies. The FBI steadfastly maintains that NIBRS' adoption should be, as UCR has always been, voluntary on the part of the data providers.

Thus, only when a law enforcement agency modifies or updates its records system in the normal course of business should NIBRS' capabilities be included. Until that time, the FBI will continue to accept and publish the traditional UCR data, as well as to produce interim NIBRS reports addressing data available from those jurisdictions that completed conversion. These interim

reports serve as a supplement to UCR's current publication series.

The FBI began accepting NIBRS data as of January 1989, and law enforcement agencies in six States (Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Carolina) now supply data in the NIBRS format. Data for agencies in an additional 13 States and the Department of the Interior are currently being tested by the FBI, and planning and development are underway in 25 other States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

## NIBRS Reporting Guidelines

Four documents contain information to guide law enforcement agencies in implementing NIBRS.[1] Volume 1, *Data Collection Guidelines*, provides a system overview and descriptions of the offenses, offense codes, reports, data elements, and data values used in the system. Volume 2, *Data Submission Specifications*, is for the use of State and local computer systems personnel responsible for preparing magnetic tapes for submission to the FBI. Volume 3, *Approaches to Implementing an Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) System*, is for use by computer programmers, analysts, etc., responsible for developing a system that meets NIBRS' requirements. The use of this volume, intended only as a guide, is optional. Volume 4, *Error Message Manual*, contains designations of mandatory and optional data elements, data element edits, and error messages.

Also available is a NIBRS edition of the *Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook*. This document, de-signed for use by local law enforcement agencies, combines the traditional UCR rules retained in NIBRS with the new NIBRS guidelines.

## Conclusion

The development of Uniform Crime Reports in the 1920s led to the recognition of recordkeeping standards for law enforcement throughout the Nation. NIBRS implementation offers today's law enforcement agencies the opportunity to modernize their recordkeeping practices to meet ever-growing informational needs.

NIBRS heightens an agency's ability to document and easily retrieve information about crime known to law enforcement, leaving less room for speculation. It also enhances data quality assurance and virtually eliminates opportunities for inconsistent reporting from one jurisdiction to another.

The FBI remains committed, along with law enforcement at all levels, to the successful implementation of NIBRS. Through NIBRS will come a greater understanding of law enforcement problems, and that understanding will lead to the development of the most effective strategies and countermeasures for the solution of these problems. ✦

### Endnote
[1] All NIBRS documents can be obtained by writing the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC 20535.

Mrs. Major is a supervisory writer assigned to the Criminal Justice Information Services Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC.

## Lip Prints

By
Dr. Mary Lee Schnuth

Investigators often gain evidence through the use of odontology, anthropometry (measuring the body), fingerprints, and other techniques that determine gender, approximate age, height, and blood grouping. Today, however, investigators can also rely on lip prints to identify possible suspects or to support evidence gained in specific investigations.

As with fingerprints, experts can lift lip prints from objects found at crime scenes and compare these prints to a suspect's lip pattern. Lip prints can also support dental record comparisons in homicide cases where dismemberment makes identification difficult or when victims do not have teeth or readily available dental records.

### Background

In 1970, Japanese researchers reported their findings on a lip print study. During the study, researchers examined the lip prints of 1,364 individuals, ranging from 3 to 60 years of age. They prepared the prints by using both photographs and a fingerprint system.[1] They then classified the prints according to their distinguishing features.

In 1991, the author conducted a lip print study, comparing the lip prints of 150 individuals, ranging in age from 4 to 85 years of age. This study included both genders,

as well as five pairs of identical twins, and applied the same methods of classification and recording as those in the previous study.

However, in the second study, researchers transferred lip prints by using lip rouge rather than a fingerprint system. In addition, two findings from the first study were not considered in the 1991 study: Lip inflamation can alter lip prints, but the prints return to normal when the condition is relieved; and lip prints do not change with age.[2]

Although methods for obtaining prints differed somewhat in the two studies, the results were the same. Findings indicated that:

- Every individual has unique lip prints—no two were identical in any case

- Heredity plays some role in lip pattern development (Similarities were found between parents and children.)

- Unique features are distinguishable (Although parents and their children have similar groove traits, the prints are not identical, even in the case of identical twins.)

## Classification Method

When classifying lip prints, experts divide distinguishing labial wrinkles and grooves of the lips into two categories—simple and compound. Simple wrinkles and grooves are subdivided into four groups: Those with a straight line, a curved line, an angled line, or a sine-shaped curve. Compound wrinkles and grooves are classified into bifurcated, trifurcated, or anomalous.[3]

Six types of distinguishing features exist in lip prints:

> **"...the criminal justice community must look seriously at any new method that provides the evidence necessary to gain convictions."**

- Type I—clear-cut lines or grooves that run vertically across the lip

- Type I/—straight grooves that disappear half-way into the lip instead of covering the entire breadth of the lip

- Type II—grooves that fork

- Type III—grooves that intersect

- Type IV—grooves that are reticulate (netlike)

- Type V—grooves that do not fall into any of the above categories and cannot be differentiated morphologically.[4]

Experts cannot categorize a lip print as a single type, since combinations of groove types exist in nearly all cases. Instead, they designate a single lip print type based on the prominance of groove type.

## Recording Method

Once experts classify lip patterns, they record them by noting the combinations of groove types found in each print. A horizontal line divides the upper lip from the lower lip, and a median line partitions the right and left sides. Experts then record the combinations of groove patterns for each quadrant of the print.[5]

## Conclusion

Findings from lip print studies make a strong case for their use in solving crimes. Although not useful for identification under conditions where only skeletal structures remain, intact lips provide prints that can provide valuable legal evidence.

Many law enforcement agencies remain unaware of the usefulness of lip prints when attempting to identify suspects, and as a result, important evidence is lost. With the increasing number of unsolved crimes, the criminal justice community must look seriously at any new method that provides the evidence necessary to gain convictions. Law enforcement personnel should begin to consider lip print analysis as yet another tool to use for solving crimes. ✦

**Endnotes**

[1] K. Suzuki and Y. Tsuchihashi, "Personal Identification by Means of Lip Prints," *Journal of Forensic Medicine*, 1970, 52-57.

[2] Y. Tsuchihashi, "Studies on Personal Identification by Means of Lip Prints," *Forensic Science*, 1974, 233-248.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

Dr. Schnuth is an associate professor at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.