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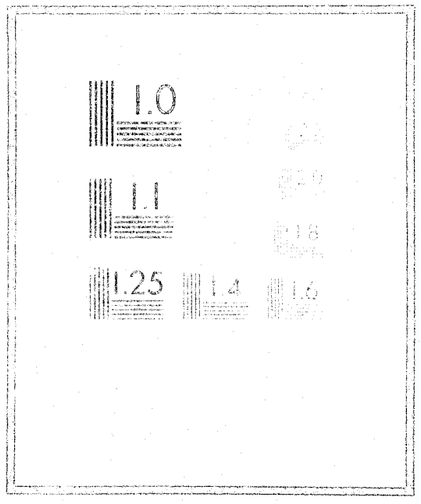

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REPORT ON JUVENILE COURT

INFORMATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

FOR

MARICOPA COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

CRIMINAL COURTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT
Institute for Advanced Studies in Justice
The American University Law School
Washington, D.C.

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REPORT ON JUVENILE COURT INFORMATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT FOR MARICOPA COUNTY JUVENILE COURT PHOENIX, ARIZONA

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ACQUISITIONS

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February 28, 1973

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Dr. Albrecht made an on-site visit to Phoenix on January 28th and 29, 1973. The specific purpose of this consultation was to assist Maricopa County Juvenile Court authorities in determining the most efficient way to develop and implement a computerized information system for the Maricopa County Juvenile Court.

Dr. Albrecht conferred with many officials concerned with the development of this computerized information system during his visit to Phoenix. Among those interviewed were:

Hon. Robert C. Broomfield	Presiding Judge, Maricopa County Juvenile Court
Hon. Gerald J. Strick	Judge, Maricopa County Data Processing Center
Mr. Bud Cheney	Director of Research and Evaluation, Maricopa County Juvenile Court (MCJC)
Mr. Ernesto Garcia	Director of Court Services, MCJC
Mr. Donald Shaw	Assistant Director of Court Services MCJC
Mr. Ray Krane	Intake-Service Division, MCJC
Mr. Larry Johnson	Special Probation Service Division, MCJC
Mr. David Raner	Administration Service Division, MCJC
Mr. Charles Rose	Probation Service Division, MCJC
Mr. Zig Maciekowich	Superintendent, Detention Services Division, MCJC
Ms. Linda Harnga	Probation Supervisor for Volunteers, MCJC
Mr. Brian Cady	Marketing Representative for Honeywell Computers
Mr. John Aliese Mr. Frank Galos	Correction Specialists, Arizona State Judicial Planning Agency
Mr. Larry Endres	Director, Maricopa County Data Processing Center

During these meetings, Dr. Albrecht studied many aspects of the organization and delivery of services in the juvenile court center as well as specific problems regarding a computerized information system arising out of the current building program. The major programs of the court were reviewed, analyzed and compared with other juvenile court systems throughout the country, and the specific problems and nature of the Phoenix juvenile population were discussed. In addition, Dr. Albrecht studied the various stages of juvenile court process from the viewpoint of systems analysis and interviews with the court personnel involved. Discussions of the information needs of the juvenile court were conducted in the context of the information needs and computerized systems of the adult courts as well. Hardware, staff, capabilities, equipment and potentialities of the Maricopa County Data Processing Center were taken into account. In addition to this extensive on-site study, Dr. Albrecht reviewed both the proposal of the Lawrence-Leiter Corporation for a computerized information system based on the JURIS system in St. Louis, Missouri as well as the computerized information system currently used in Pima County Juvenile Court in Tuscon, Arizona.

II. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING SITUATION

The Maricopa County Juvenile Court has many resources. It is a large juvenile court processing over 25,000 juvenile cases a year. It has a competent, well-trained staff. The judges and the administration seem goal-oriented, cognizant of recent trends in juvenile justice and successful in generating community support for their building program. They are able to launch a la volunteer probation officer program.

On the other hand, there is no one at the juvenile court or, for that matter at the county data processing center, who is knowledgeable in juvenile court information systems. In fact, there is no one in either institution who has first hand experience with on-line computer systems. Although a large computer is on order, the machine in use at the Maricopa County Data Processing Center is a small one. It is essentially batch processing oriented and not designed for on-line computer systems. The staff at the computer center has very little experience with on-line systems. One of the major problems in Maricopa County is that there has been much money, time and energy spent in planning, but very little execution. In addition, there does not seem to be anyone in the county who is willing to say, "Now we are going to begin; I will take the responsibility and I will execute the program." While there are money and resources available, strong leadership is needed to make decisions, follow them through, organize

people, define goals and execute them. In other words, there are sufficient resources available in the county to undertake a computerized information system for the juvenile court, but the decision to go ahead must be made. Someone must be put in charge, goals defined and projects executed.

Once these decisions are made, the problem of system translation will have to be considered. To date, on-line juvenile court information systems throughout the country have utilized the IBM Court Systems Package which is about fifteen years old at this time. For example, the juvenile court information systems in Pima County, in Atlanta, and in St. Louis all use IBM computer systems. The Court Information System of IBM is based on FASTER, an IBM processing language. Although the IBM Computer System is not the most efficient system in the country, it has been available. Most people used it or adapted it to their own needs. This IBM Court Systems Package, of course, only works on IBM Computer Systems. The Maricopa County Data Processing Center has made a decision to either buy or lease a Honeywell 6000 Series Computer. While the other systems that have been developed utilize FASTER or the IBM Court Systems Package, they are not directly transferable to the Honeywell Computer; some translation will have to be done.

This need for translation makes the decision for the Maricopa County Juvenile Court somewhat more complex. For example, the JURIS System used in St. Louis is not immediately adaptable to a Honeywell Computer System. The proposals by the Lawrence-Leiter Consulting Company did not take this into account. When Lawrence-Leiter Consultants

were confronted with this fact, they estimated the cost of translation at $10,000. Dr. Albrecht seriously questions this figure, since the consulting firm did not have sufficient facts, figures, and time to make an intelligent decision; and this translation has not previously been done. Pima County has solved this translation problem by hiring its own programming and systems staff to design its own system -- which still uses the IBM Computer System. These problems should be taken carefully into account by Maricopa County Juvenile Court officials before the final decision is made.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Recommendation 1: Make initial decision to develop on-line computerized juvenile court information system.

The Maricopa County Juvenile Court and the County Governing Agency should make a firm public decision to go ahead with an on-line computerized juvenile court information system. All indications in Maricopa County point to the fact that this system would be the most efficient way to solve the information processing problem. Resources for this computerized information system already exist; what is needed now is a decision to act -- not more planning.

B. Recommendation 2: Coordinate juvenile court information system development with Maricopa County Computer Center and Data Processing System

The Maricopa County Juvenile Court should work closely with the County Computer Center in putting in an on-line computer system. The individuals at the Maricopa County Computer Center are reluctant to move quickly in developing an on-line computer system and, it is suggested, the Juvenile Court should exert pressure on them to service the MCJC needs. If careful planning is begun now, there is no reason why the equipment at the Computer Center would not be ready to receive and handle such a system by the time the software is prepared. In addition, the Juvenile Court should attempt to improve relations with

the Maricopa County Data Processing Center and should meet frequently with its staff. This contact will facilitate the equipment problems that are involved in the transition from a small computer to a large, powerful computer at the County Computing Center. The County Computer Center will also be in a better position to appreciate the urgency and the nature of the problems at the Juvenile Court.

C. Recommendation 3: Appoint Administrator and Staff to Develop Maricopa County Juvenile Court Information System.

The Maricopa County Juvenile Court should appoint an administrator and staff to be in charge of designing, implementing and carrying out the Juvenile Court Information System. In addition to this administrator who will be full-time on this project, the staff should consist of a full-time systems analyst and a full-time programmer. These individuals will be planning and designing the system from the initial stages. This staff will also serve as a liaison with the court administrators, judges, computer center and computer company officials.

D. Recommendation 4: Have MCJC Information System Staff conduct on-site studies of other operative juvenile court information systems and receive appropriate additional training.

This computer staff at the Maricopa County Juvenile Court should make on-site visits with the court administrator and the juvenile court

judges to the Pima County Juvenile Court, to the St. Louis Juvenile Court and possibly to the Atlanta Juvenile Court to carefully inspect these other operative juvenile court information systems. In addition, these same people should go to Honeywell or IBM Computer Training School to become as knowledgeable as possible in judicial on-line computerized information systems.

E. Recommendation 5: Involve entire Juvenile Court staff in forms design and staff training procedures.

At the time the computerized information system is being designed, the staff at the Juvenile Court should be intimately involved in forms design and staff training procedures. The staff of the Juvenile Court should be very closely involved in the development of such a data processing system. Otherwise they will be alienated from it, will not like the forms being used, and will not use them accurately.

F. Recommendation 6: Utilize forms that are behaviorally oriented.

The information system forms should describe the behavior of the juvenile individuals involved in the case. When the case comes to the court, the judge and other individuals involved in the case will then be able to take a look at the behavioral performance of the individual involved rather than at someone else's prejudgment of the case.

G. Recommendation 7: Develop behavioral reporting forms with the assistance of individuals knowledgeable in juvenile court process.

These individuals should be intimately involved in the development of the behavior reporting forms from the beginning. Without their cooperation, the quality of information that is put into the system will be poor and the system will be quite burdensome and ineffective.

H. Recommendation 8: Request Assistance of the Honeywell Computer Company in developing a Juvenile Court Information System similar to the IBM Court Systems Package.

This computer company should be quite interested in providing this assistance, since the potential market for such a system is quite good.

I. Recommendation 9: Design and purchase equipment with long-term usage in mind.

Great care should be taken in the design and purchase of equipment so that the maximum utilization of the equipment will occur. There are some benefits to IBM in that one printer and one terminal can be located at a remote location. If in the future the Juvenile Court wishes to disperse some of its personnel geographically, then care must be taken to plan the dispersement of control units, terminals and printers accordingly.

J. Recommendation 10: Design forms on the basis of current information and outside consultation if necessary.

In the process of designing forms care should be taken to utilize the most current available information and perhaps a knowledgeable outside consultant used. The forms should reflect the 1970 census tracts and the 1970 income breakdowns given by the Census Bureau. The codes used for offense and disposition should be compatible with the state legal code, LEAA guidelines and Project Search. Care should be taken that the forms and categories be compatible with legal codes and the latest social research. If this is done, the data will be in the most useable form for all interested parties.

K. Recommendation 11: Allocate minimum of three to four years for information system development.

The officials at the MCJC should realize that the planning, development and complete implementation of a computerized juvenile court information system is a three to four year project.

L. Recommendation 12: Allow for anticipated information system uses.

Future juvenile treatment and administrative decision-making should be planned so that maximum use is made of a computerized information system.

IV. SUMMARY

This report is the result of an on-site visit to the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and careful study of three on-line computer systems in the Tuscon, St. Louis, and Atlanta juvenile courts. The report also reflects recent juvenile court legislation, treatment, and prevention ideas. There is a definite need for a computerized information system in the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. The court and the county have sufficient resources to support the development of such a system. The entire county would benefit from the system.

END