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CRIME SPECIFIC PLANNING AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS

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During the course of this conference, we have had the opportunity to hear, discuss and understand the problems related to computerized criminal histories, offender based transactional statistics and many related developments and functional subsystems. I would like to continue on the line of the points raised in earlier sessions and suggest that crime specific planning can provide a valuable framework for evaluation of information systems.

One of the dangerous fascinations in the use of technology is the ease with which one can lose sight of goals and begin to develop technology for its own sake. We must *not* begin to develop ideas into systems for the same reasons that people climb mountains — because they are challenging.

It is a demonstratable fact that much of the Safe Streets money has been used to improve system efficiency without our being able to show a corresponding increase in system effectiveness. I would like to suggest that the notion of crime specific planning can keep our focus on the reduction of crime, as the single overriding reason for our systems efforts and as the ultimate criterion against which the effectiveness of our systems must be measured.

To explore this idea with you, I will first encapsulate the process of "crime specific" planning. The basic notion, and perhaps the greatest benefit of this approach, is its starting place with criminal acts. Crime specific planning is an attempt to develop strategies and tactics to overcome known crime problems and rapidly identify emerging ones. Thus, the determination of what crimes are occurring, when and where they are occurring and against whom they are being perpetrated is necessary to establish what the law enforcement response will be.

Because of this initial requirement to determine the type of crime, "crime specific" planning often appears to be "specific crime" planning. In fact, the specific crime is of primary analytic importance only until the offender is identified. Upon identification, there is a gradual change in emphasis that requires the offender to become the focus of crime specific planning. In other words, for crimi-

nal justice agencies to identify with certainty who is committing the crime, they must start with the complaint or report of the crime itself. Once the perpetrator of a crime is identified, the system response will be focused on changing the behavior of that individual. The gradual shift in emphasis from the crime as the unit of analysis to the offender as the unit of analysis comes about over the period of time from when the police identify a suspect to when that person is actually convicted in a court of law.

A "crime specific" approach recognizes this transition and attempts to develop strategies and tactics at all points in the system to overcome crime problems. The crux of crime specific planning is in considering the crime, the offender, the victim, the circumstances and determining what changes can be made in the offender, in the law, in the community, and in the criminal justice system response that will reduce the probability that similar additional offenses will occur.

Some rapid examples of the types of activity that might be undertaken by criminal justice agencies following a "crime specific" approach are as follows:

Police would be responsible, as they are presently, for collecting and analyzing crime occurrence information; determining locations, times of occurrence, types of structures or category of victim, kinds of articles taken, availability and use of protective devices by the victim and so on. Compilation and analysis of such basic information about the crime can suggest both strategies and tactics which may be applied.

Police strategies based on such information typically take the following appearances:

First, increase the knowledge of crime occurrence.

Second, reduce the probability of crime occurrence.

Third, increase the risk of apprehension.

Tactics, based on each of the above, can be brainstormed easily. They might take the following forms.

1. Encourage reporting of suspicious events and observed or known crimes.
2. Reallocate patrol strength based on crime incidence.
3. Improve information capture and analysis capability of specific MO's used for crimes such as method of entry, transportation and disposal of stolen items in burglary cases; types

of victims, locations and method of attack in rapes and robberies; and so on.
4. Analyze arrests to determine specific contributing factors in offenders such as drug use or dependence, member of juvenile gang or organized ring, ease of disposal of stolen goods and so on.
5. Improve training of men in investigative techniques, such as interrogation, evidence collection and preservation and so on.

For the prosecutor:

1. Insure greater flow of information on persons re-arrested while on bail, or parole or probation for earlier offenses.
2. Maintain files permitting easy cross reference for investigative purposes.
3. Make greater use of physical evidence in case preparation.
4. Provide priority calendaring or docketing in serious crime cases.
5. Use more experienced personnel in serious crime cases.
6. Provide greater inservice training to staff.
7. Analyze acquittals and nolle prossed cases to aid police and prosecutorial staff in determining where information was weak, evidence was lacking, testimony unconvincing, etc.

For the courts:

1. Require indepth presentence investigations in all felony and serious misdemeanor cases.
2. Develop rapid retrieval capability for pretrial release concerning status of the accused, e.g. charged in another case, warrant outstanding, previous record, under supervision, escaped, AWOL, etc.
3. Str ff at levels that provide time for research into case law.
4. Require prosecution and defense to attend pretrial conference and adhere to court docket.
5. Develop more efficient methods of jury selection and use.
6. Demand greater sentencing alternatives.

For the rehabilitation agencies:

1. Institute case management and special supervision for violent offenders.
2. Increase capability of providing greater court services, e.g. screening, presentence investigation.
3. Provide intensive treatment capability for juvenile and youth offenders.
4. Provide more sentencing alternatives.

Any reasonably qualified person could continue listing potential programs. However, what the most qualified among us would have trouble doing is indicating which programs will bring about the greatest benefit. This is where we must turn to our information systems for support. If we accept the notion that our primary goal is crime reduction, then our information system can be evaluated on criteria that are related to the achievement of crime reduction.

Going to the goal of crime reduction, the next step is to specify the criteria by which the information delivery system will be evaluated. Generally, they may be listed as:

Accuracy
Completeness
Timeliness
Economy
and, because of the special constraints of criminal justice, Security and Privacy

Accuracy and *completeness* interact with each other to a considerable degree but real differences exist between them. To give an example, complaint reports may exist in a department for every actual complaint made, but many of them could be systematically upgraded or downgraded in seriousness so that their accuracy is seriously compromised, although they are complete. Alternatively, complaint reports in another department might be lacking in cases of minor violations, but where reports exist they are accurate. To clarify any problem in distinguishing between the two, completeness is the measure of existing records as a percentage of total records while accuracy is the measure of the correctness of the information that does exist. (I use the term record, but I might as easily talk about data element.)

Timeliness measures whether this information was available in time for a decision to be made based on it.

Economy does not necessarily measure direct dollar cost and should not be interpreted that way. A major reason is that our goal has been specified as crime reduction, not installing a computer. Or, to put it a little differently, if we have established a goal of crime reduction which requires the support of an information system, the question must be what is the most economical information system required to support the goal.

The criterion of economy must take into account such questions as the potential for routinization of data collection versus one-time or a periodic collection; the question of using sample data versus attempting to capture a universe and perhaps most importantly, the manner in which the information is delivered.

To elaborate on that point for a moment, a well-planned program of crime reduction requires a multitude of decisions to be made. In some cases, we know or can judge ahead of time what the effects of a particular decision will be. Decisions at this level might be termed operational; they have known parameters and a low probability of risk. At the next level, greater judgment or prudence must be exercised because the parameters or effects of the decision have not been fully identified or elaborated. We generally term these management decisions. In the most extreme cases, the effects are admittedly unknown and we generally decline any decision and call it "research."

Part of the economy of a system depends on proper identification of decision/risk potential and of insuring the delivery of information in an appropriate manner. For example, if we can specify the

parameters or effects of decisions ahead of time to a point where risk is negligible, then the computer can make the "decision." Where we cannot make this definition to an acceptable level of risk, the information system must deliver what information exists to the lowest ranking person who can make the decision at what we regard as an acceptable level of risk.

For Security and Privacy, I commend to you the SEARCH publication.

The methodologies for examining information systems in the light of the criteria suggested are constantly being refined. What we should be careful to avoid is failure to distinguish between the evaluation of a computer system, for which very detailed specifications and standards exist, and the evaluation of a statewide criminal justice information system, which only recently has become a necessity.

The methodologies of the latter must be developed in far greater detail, but some current work deserves wider publicity.

Accuracy of the very first data to enter the system — the complaint and the police response to it — requires a systematic type of audit. The St. Louis Police have been undertaking such an audit, utilizing personnel from their internal inspection unit in conjunction with knowledgeable auditors from outside of government since the late 1950's.
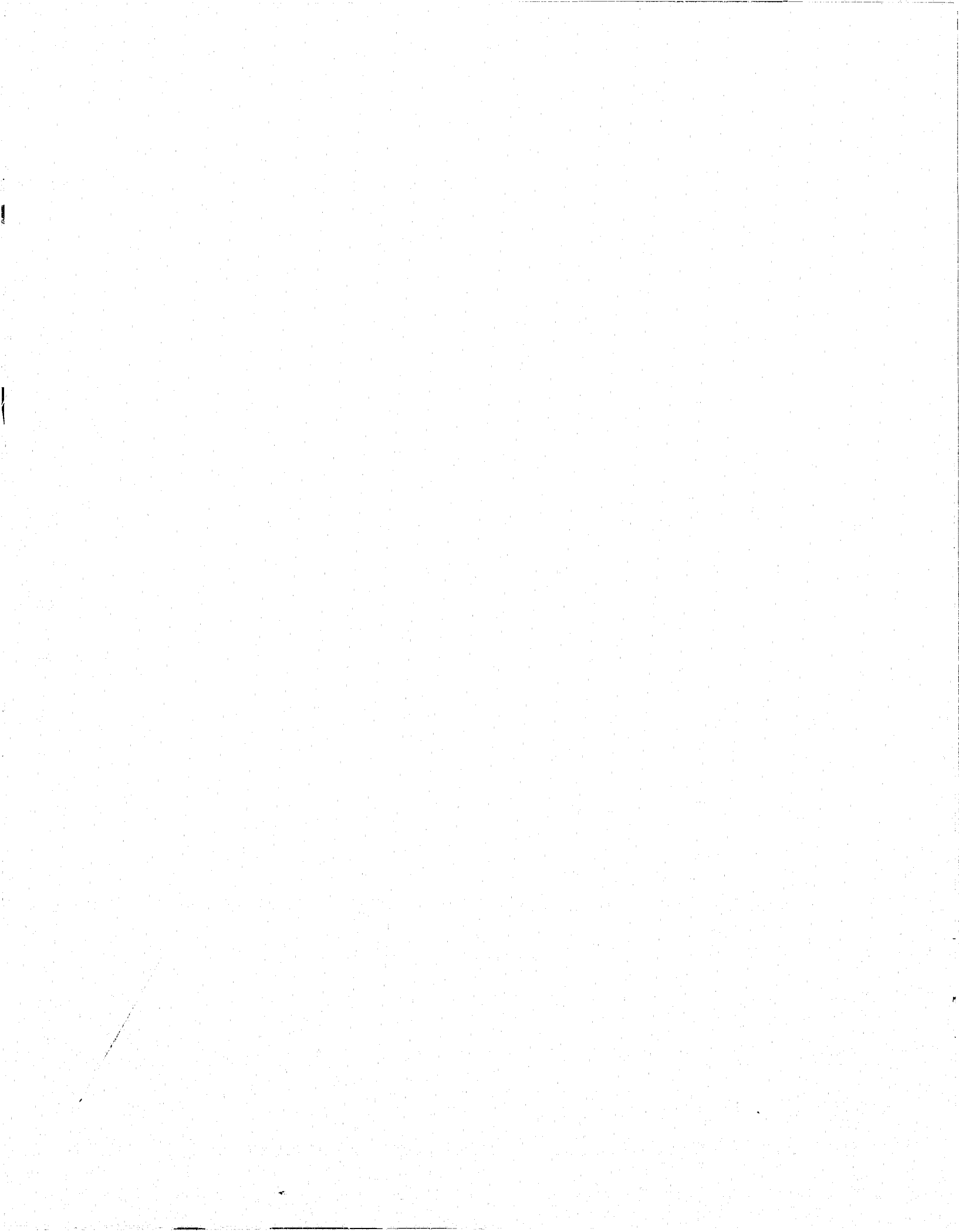
Their program deserves to be copied throughout the country.

Completeness of crime data can be measured in part through victimization studies similar to the one being undertaken by the Census Bureau for LEAA.

The much discussed OBTS will contribute tremendously to our knowledge of data completeness even if, as has been predicted, it doesn't provide us with its full potential of data for several years to come.

Measuring economy of information systems, as well as security and privacy will remain a largely judgmental effort since decision levels in the former case will be organizationally specific and the shifting tides of opinion will be a heavily weighted factor in the privacy area. As an aid in the setting of appropriate levels of performance, the work of the National Advisory Commission or Criminal Justice Standards and Goals should prove invaluable.

While each of these segments will aid in the development of better evaluation of information systems, the key point that cannot be neglected is that the information vstem is a tool, whether computerized or not, an l as such should be judged or evaluated against its usefulness and productivity in the reduction of crime.

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