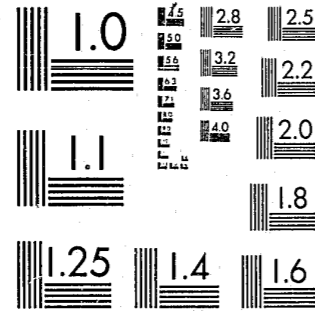


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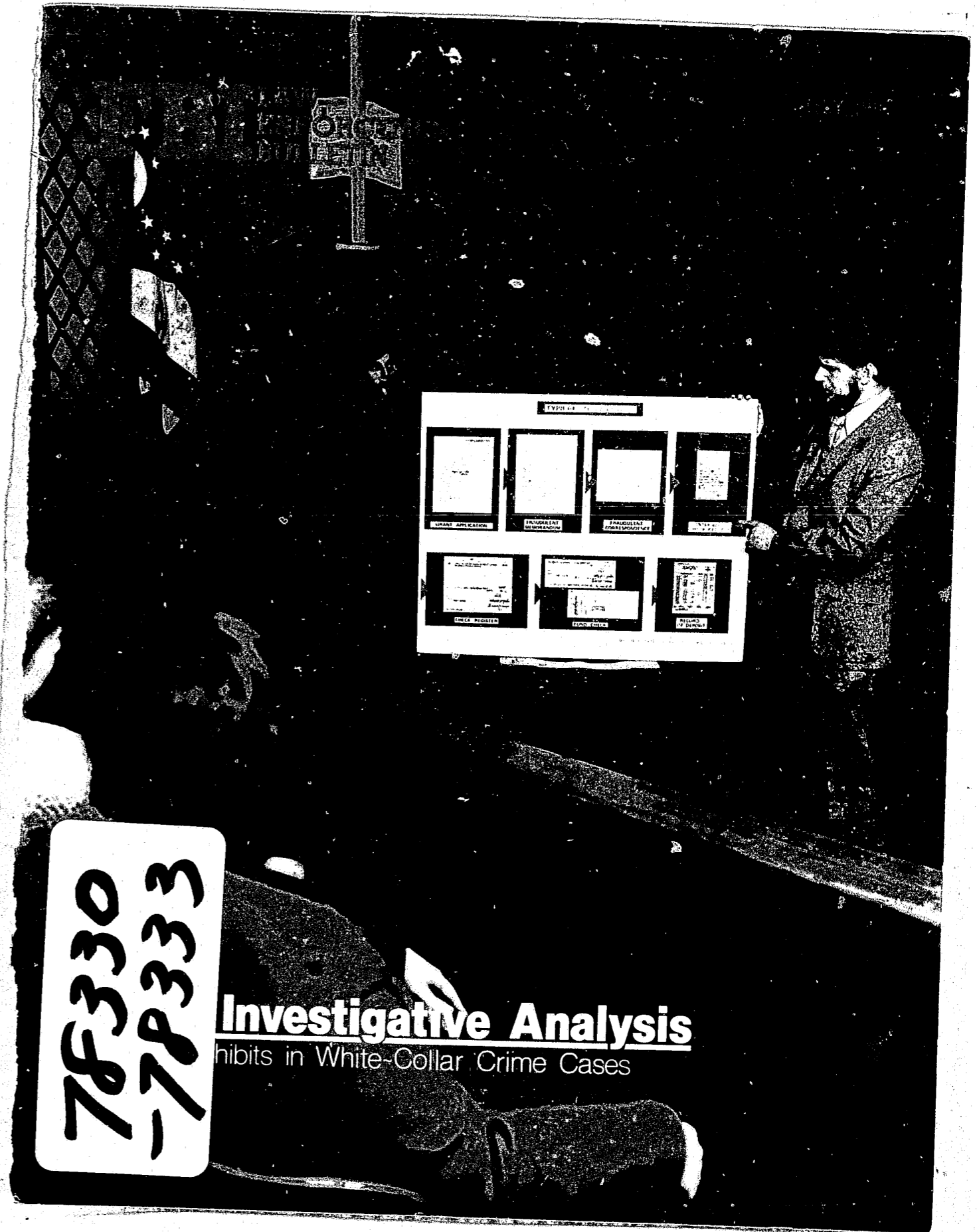
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Investigative Analysis
Exhibits in White-Collar Crime Cases

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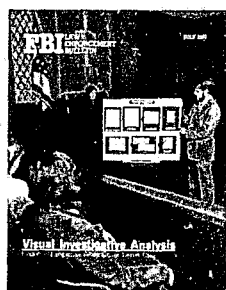
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William H. Webster, Director

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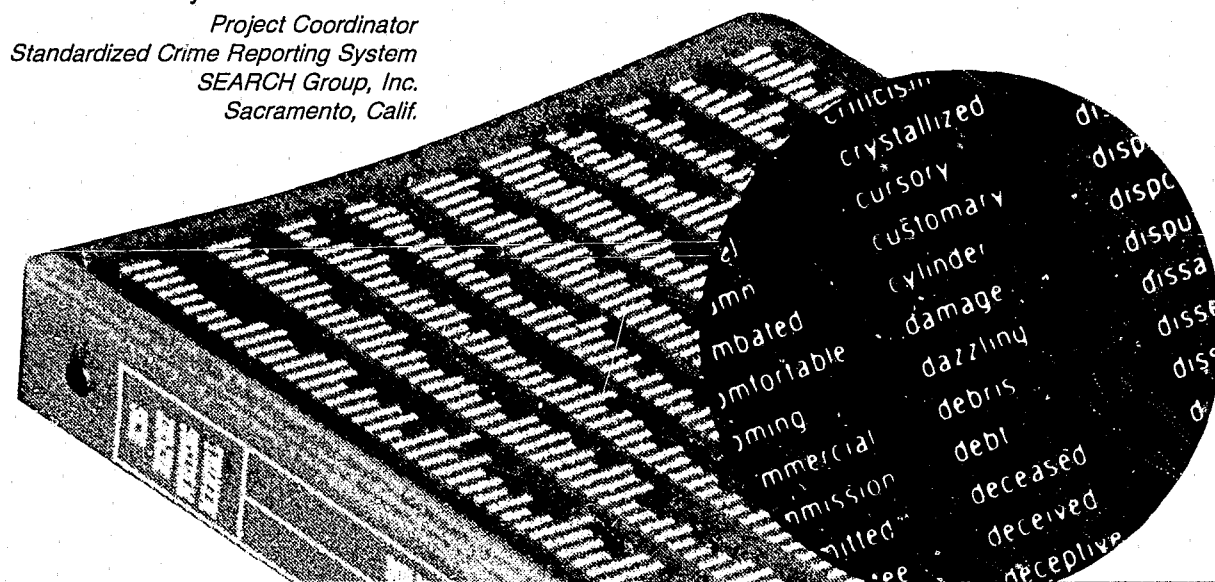
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Records

Police Report Writing Manuals Need Dusting Off

By JANE DUNCAN
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Standardized Crime Reporting System
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Sacramento, Calif.



Report writing manuals are reference books for field officers and should contain useful information in readily available form. This particular binder, used by the Durango, Colo., Police Department, is imprinted front and back with words commonly used in law enforcement, but frequently misspelled, using space normally wasted.

Do police officers use (or carry) report writing manuals? If not, why? While there are numerous answers to these questions—each dependent on the individual officer or agency—the nonuse of manuals can be attributed to two major causes—deficiencies in manual construction and faulty design. Officers go to great lengths to compensate for manual deficiencies and to avoid carrying these cumbersome manuals.

A well-designed report writing manual is most valuable. In essence, it is an extension of training, answering many questions that may have been inadequately discussed because of limited training time, or if covered, were forgotten with the passage of time. It fills training gaps, reinforces classroom instruction, and provides the unsupervised officer with the confidence that ready reference material can provide.

To provide essential information in a useful form, the needs of those using the manual must first be determined. Police officers often make difficult decisions and perform complex tasks while working without direct supervision. They sometimes work under adverse lighting and climatic conditions. Agency policy may dictate assuming a variety of tasks unique to the local agency, in addition to the routine law enforcement role. Also, officers are expected to respond intelligently to citizens' requests for information and directions. All these responsibilities and job conditions must be considered when designing a useful field officer's manual.

Organizing a Manual Revision Project

Once a decision is reached to remodel an agency's report writing manual into a more efficient tool for the field officer, a formalized project should be initiated. A well-organized project will ensure orderly development of a new manual and promote user acceptance. Project organization includes the following five steps: Planning, analysis of present manual, design of new manual, development/implementation, and monitoring/assessment.

Planning

Planning brings order to a complicated process. It defines the project's beginning, end, and purpose and tells everyone concerned what they will be doing and when and how they will be doing it. Planning involves staff selection, staff direction, workplan development, budgeting, and documentation.

The careful selection of personnel is most important for success and should reflect the candidates' interest in the project as well as their operational knowledge. The key team member, the project manager, should be knowledgeable in all operational aspects of the agency and have sufficient stature within the organization to work well with others involved in the project. The team members' background should reflect a wide variety of operational experience.

At the outset, a conference should be convened to provide direction and spark the enthusiasm of team members. Topics for the conference could include: A project overview, including its scope and objectives; a discussion of the areas of responsibility, authority, and relationship of all project participants; the development of a workplan, time schedule, and budget; the assignment of duties for all team members, with due dates for completion; and the identification of all persons and agencies that should be kept informed of project plans and progress.

		WORKPLAN																			
		Project Design A Revised Report Writing Manual (IN WEEKS)																			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. PLANNING	SELECT PROJECT STAFF	---																			
	CONDUCT START UP CONFERENCE	---																			
	DEVELOP WORK PLAN	---																			
	DEVELOP PROJECT BUDGET	---																			
	MANAGEMENT REVIEW/DOCUMENT	---																			
2. ANALYSIS OF PRESENT MANUAL	GATHER/SORT MATERIAL IN USE		---																		
	IDENTIFY REQUIREMENTS		---																		
	DETERMINE ADDITIONAL NEEDS			---																	
	DETERMINE STOCK INFORMATION				---																
	MANAGEMENT REVIEW/DOCUMENT					---															
3. DESIGN OF NEW MANUAL	DESIGN MANUAL FORMAT					---															
	WRITE MANUAL CONTENT						---														
	IDENTIFY WRITTEN DIRECTIVES NEEDS							---													
	ARRANGE FOR PRINTING/PRINT								---												
	MANAGEMENT REVIEW/DOCUMENT									---											
4. DEVELOPMENT/IMPLEMENTATION	SELECT IMPLEMENTATION DATE																				
	PLAN/CONDUCT TRAINING PROGRAM																				
	PLAN FOR DISTRIBUTION																				
	MANAGEMENT REVIEW/DOCUMENT																				
5. MONITORING/ASSESSMENT	MONITOR MANUAL USE																				
	ASSESS MANUAL EFFECTIVENESS																				
	MANAGEMENT REVIEW/DOCUMENT																				

Figure 1—A workplan for a manual revision project.

The workplan will guide the project from beginning to end and show all tasks and subtasks to be accomplished during the specified time period. Figure 1 is a sample workplan for a manual revision project. Notice that a management review point is incorporated at the end of each of the major project steps. By reporting on a regular basis, the agency administrator is kept apprised of project development, thus assuring the continued management support and personnel allocation necessary for successful project completion.

A budget should be prepared that includes the cost of printing the manual and purchasing tab dividers and binders. Along with the budget, other documentation should be prepared for review by the police administrator whose approval to continue the project is required. Additional documentation should include minutes of project staff meetings, workplan, project roster, project team assignment schedules, and future meeting schedules.

Analysis of Present Manual

The purpose of this task is to gather all materials used by the field officer and to sort according to essential material, marginally useful material, and unnecessary information.

The primary users of report writing manuals—the field officers—should be consulted to learn of the main problems in report writing and to decide what manual changes will correct these problems. Their advice should also be sought for needed additional or revised information. This information should then be evaluated for inclusion in the new manual.

At this time, the remaining stock of manuals, inserts, tab dividers, and binders should be collected in one location for quick disposal once the new manual is ready for distribution.

Documentation can now be presented for management review, reflecting the work accomplished in the analysis step. This includes minutes of project staff meetings, samples of all report writing materials presently in use, evaluation of all materials collected, a report on deficiencies, a listing of additional needs, and a report on personnel and units contacted for information and a listing of their suggestions and ideas.

Design of New Manual

The improved manual must be designed as a concise reference book covering particular subjects that the field officer needs for ready reference. Such a design considers both format and content.

Manual Format

Reference material should be readily available. The size, general makeup, and organization of the manual all contribute to its usefulness in the field. Design features can include:

- 1) A looseleaf format so that additions, deletions, and revisions can be easily made;
- 2) Numbered and dated pages to identify the most current information;
- 3) Use of color coding on index tabs to indicate appropriate sections;
- 4) Detailed table of contents for quick reference; and
- 5) A smooth, plastic cover that can be used as a writing surface.

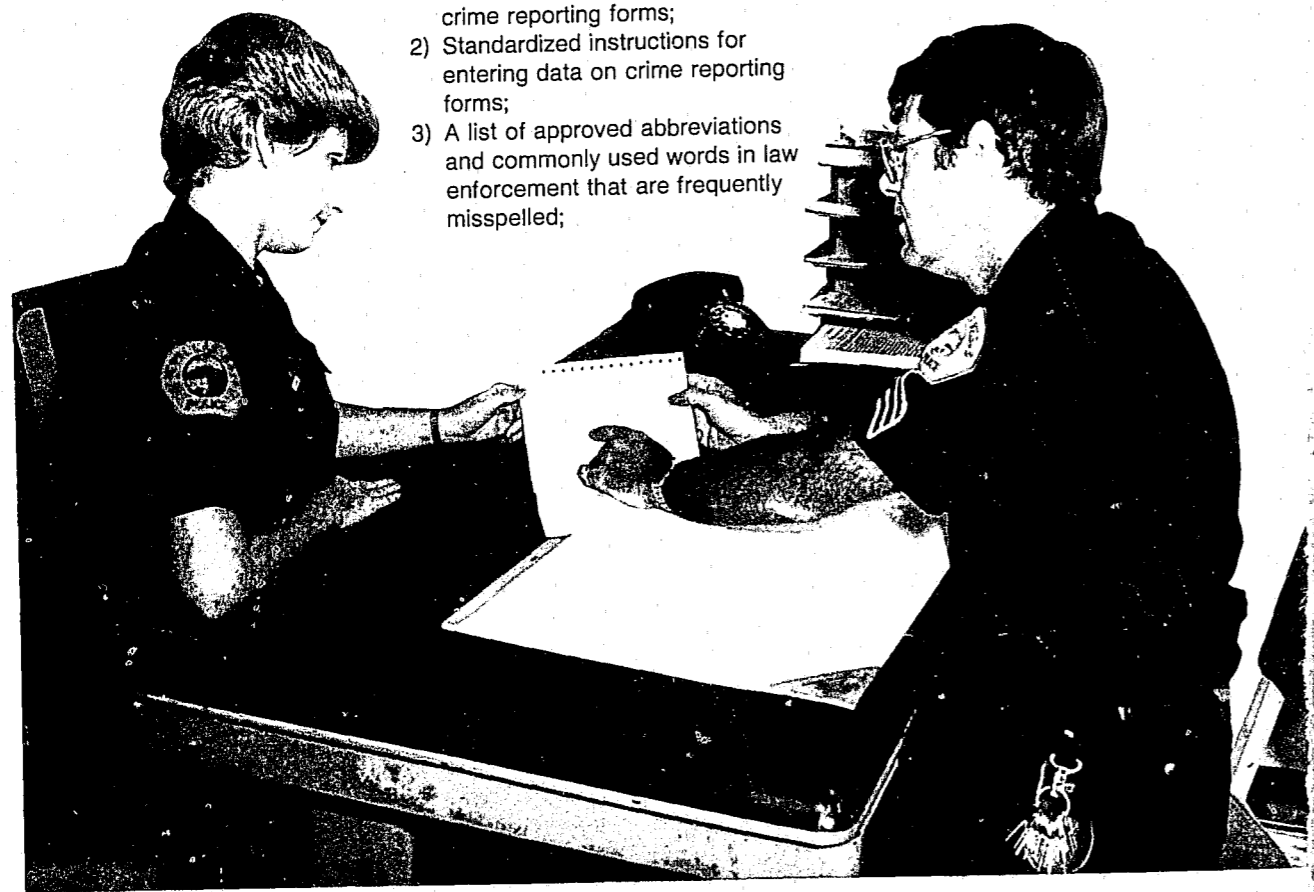
"The type and quantity of information presented is largely dependent on local needs and policy."

Manual Content

The type and quantity of information presented is largely dependent on local needs and policy. One certainty, however, is that neglecting to keep the information current causes a loss of confidence in the system. Other deficiencies that cause problems include the mixing of policy statements and procedures with report writing instructions, making the needed information difficult to find, and the lack of clear, concise language that prevents easy reading under field conditions. Important features for manual content include:

- 1) Basic instructions on when and how to complete the appropriate crime reporting forms;
- 2) Standardized instructions for entering data on crime reporting forms;
- 3) A list of approved abbreviations and commonly used words in law enforcement that are frequently misspelled;

- 4) Criteria for offense classifications;
- 5) Criteria for property valuation; and
- 6) A separate reference section containing additional information helpful to the field officer (e.g., beat maps; lists of buildings and landmarks and their locations; agency and city or county telephone numbers; lists of all neighboring criminal justice agencies, hospitals, and other agencies the officer may need to contact; matrices to show which report forms to complete, where extra copies should go, and appropriate notifications for unusual or infrequent situations; a guide to using the proper report form; VIN location guide; list of common local ordinances; vehicle code violations and State penal code violations; lists of common abbreviations and commonly misspelled words).



In addition to deciding the manual's format and content, a directive should be written to introduce and control the new manual. This directive should cover the function and description of the new manual, its control and distribution, use and maintenance, and procedures for revisions and inspections.

The completely assembled manual should now be reviewed for subject matter, accuracy, and form. The review should be formal, accomplished within a specified time period, and documented. Review tasks should be assigned to supervisory personnel of user groups and to a legal officer. Any problem areas uncovered by reviewers must be resolved and necessary revisions made. A final review should be made by an administrator with good language skills. This is a final check to ensure that ideas, parts, and/or sections are arranged in logical order and that all relevant material is stated clearly and concisely. When all revisions are completed, printing arrangements in accordance with agency procedures can be made.

Documentation for the design phase should include minutes from project staff meetings, a complete printer-ready copy of the manual, copies of all approved forms, a report on any recommendations made on approved forms and the decisions made on each, all arrangements for printing (including delivery dates), and a draft copy of the agency directive covering the manual. The final draft and accompanying documentation can now be presented for management review and authorization for printing.

Development/Implementation

While the manual is being printed, an implementation date can be selected, and training and manual distribution planned. All of these activities must be conducted for a smooth conversion process.

A sergeant in the North Las Vegas, Nev., Police Department discusses report writing needs with a police officer. A well-designed report writing manual acts as an extension of training and supervision.

The implementation date chosen must allow sufficient time for printing and use of the new manual for training purposes. The date should be announced in advance and directions given for personnel to return the manuals presently used.

Once printing is completed, the staff can now be trained using the revised manual as a text. In addition to field officers, other personnel should be trained whose tasks will be affected by procedural changes reflected in the report writing manual and related agency directives.

The issuance of the new manual and its accompanying directive should be supervised, and storage provided for extra copies and future revisions.

Management review for this step should include reports on the training conducted, recommendations for inservice training, and progress of the implementation. Documentation should include minutes of project staff meetings, lesson plans, training rosters, a copy of the printed manual, a copy of the agency directive covering manuals, plans for inservice training, a distribution plan, signature sheets of personnel receiving manuals, and a copy of the assessment instrument to be used in the next step.

Monitoring/Assessment

There is a tendency at this point for project team members to breathe a sigh of relief and go back to their regular assignments. However, the project team should not be disbanded at this time. In fact, increased participation by all team members will improve user satisfaction. Following implementation, a detailed examination should be conducted to assess how well the manual satisfies user requirements and meets management needs. Monitoring should be conducted during all shifts and on all days.

Deficiencies and/or recommendations for improvement should be reported in writing to the project manager to be eventually resolved at future project staff meetings. Personnel who missed initial training must be identified and arrangements made for makeup classes or on-the-job training.

A formal assessment should be conducted after a reasonable period of manual use. The assessment should include provision for answers to the following types of questions:

Are manuals being carried?
Are they being used?

Do users believe the information is useful?

Do users have suggestions for improvement?

Are users satisfied with the manuals?

All responses should be evaluated and the results presented for project team consideration.

Management review at this point should be based on reports of the monitoring, assessment, and decisions on any needed additional work for the project team. A librarian should be selected to maintain and control the project documentation, and instructions given to the unit responsible for future revisions. Documentation for this step should include minutes of project team meetings, reports of monitoring staff, copies of completed assessment reports, a copy of the assessment analysis, a copy of the letter to the selected librarian outlining responsibilities for storing and updating the documentation file, and a copy of the letter to the unit responsible for stocking and revising the manual, outlining responsibilities for contributing to the documentation file.

Conclusion

The use of an effective report writing manual will increase the field officer's productivity. It will improve recording of data, reduce reinterview time, and enable the officer to provide information and guidance to citizens with questions and problems. **FBI**

END