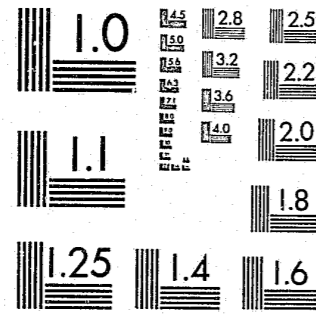


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



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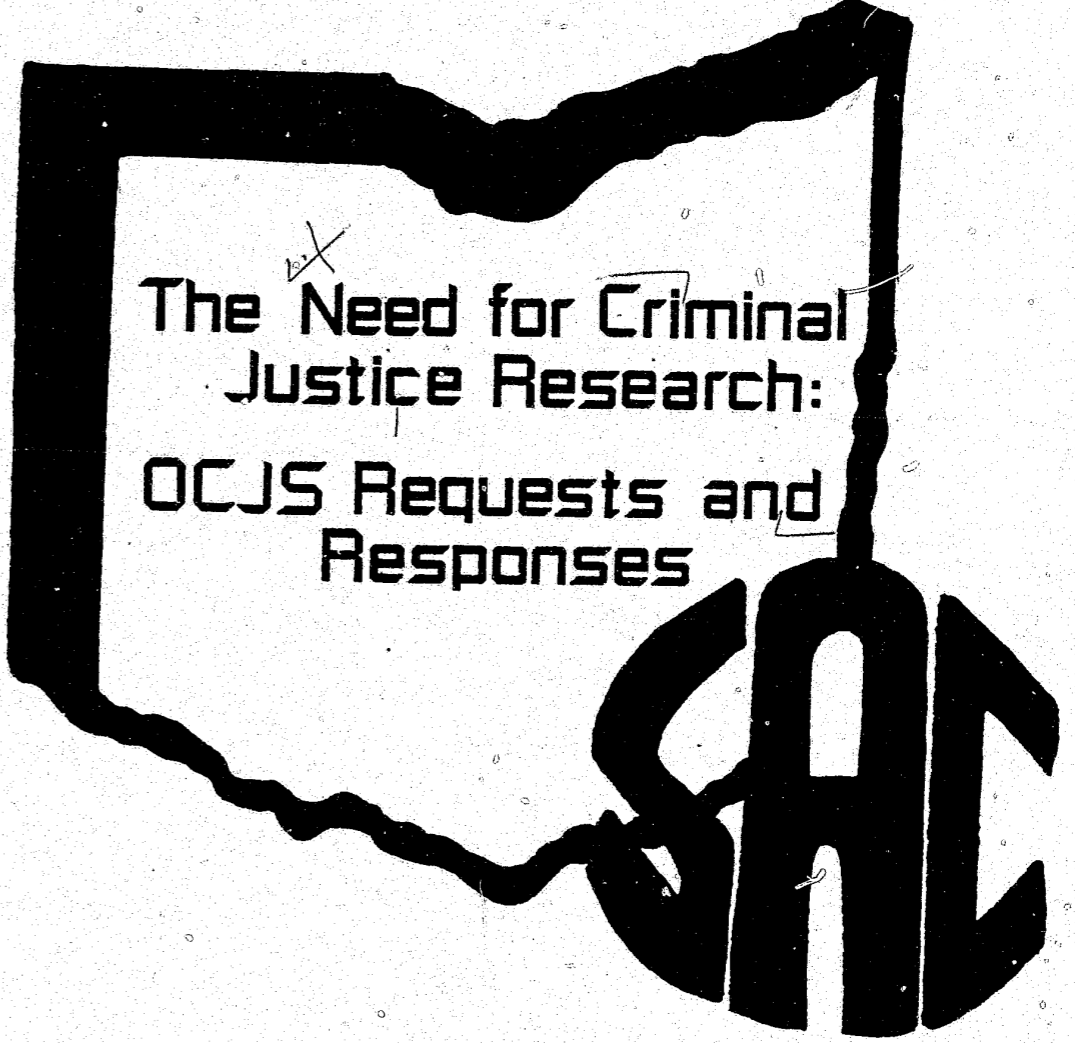
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OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

97105

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ACQUISITIONS

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THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER
OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

STATE OF OHIO
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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important functions of the Office of Criminal Justice Service's Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) is responding to criminal justice research requests from a variety of users in public and private life. These requests range from simple queries for existing crime figures or reports to complex and demanding analytical efforts which may require the building of entirely new criminal justice data bases. The vast majority of the requests come from government agencies, elected officials, private non-profit agencies, colleges and universities, the news media, out-of-state researchers and staff of the Office of Criminal Justice Services.

This report analyzes the more than three-hundred such requests which SAC has received and responded to since SAC's inception in mid-1978. As anticipated, better than two-thirds of these have been processed during the last twelve months, during which time SAC released a number of major research studies in Ohio.

SAC is in a unique position to provide this service. It is the only criminal justice research unit in Ohio whose mandate includes a statewide scope and all aspects of the criminal justice system (i.e., police, courts, corrections, juvenile justice and crime prevention). Hence, even when information requests cannot be satisfied by using SAC data bases, the SAC staff is still in a position to make an accurate referral.

It needs to be noted that this report analyzes only those information requests which:

1. were initiated by the requestor, and
2. required and received a formal follow-up response from SAC.

These definitional considerations are important in ensuring that the research requests are a true reflection of criminal justice data needs in Ohio and SAC's ability to respond to them. Therefore, requests were logged only if actually initiated by the requestor (i.e., none of SAC's several thousand proactive data mailings to decision-makers was included), and only if they required a substantial response from SAC staff (e.g., crime statistics conveyed by phone was not logged as a formal request).

Because SAC is more concerned with Ohio's criminal justice statistics than with its own operational figures the data presented herein lacks the rigid certainty of, for example, Uniform Crime Reporting data. Categories for the requests were created arbitrarily and, in some instances, could not adequately encompass complex requests which overlapped into several areas. This resulted in some subjective judgements in the compilation of this report. Nevertheless, even an admittedly arbitrary analysis of these figures reveals that SAC research requests are increasing rather dramatically as the Unit's service capabilities become better known, and that an increasingly higher number and percentage of criminal justice decision-makers in Ohio are availing themselves of that service.

The Demand for Criminal Justice Research

The capacity to provide statewide criminal justice research is less than ten years old in the United States. While colleges, universities and other study institutes have long been involved in criminal justice research virtually none of this has been formatted for the state level, concentrating instead on either specifically identified localities (eg. certain cities or even areas within those cities) or generic issues (eg. capital punishment, recidivism, restitution, etc.). Where state level research units do exist, such as those within the Ohio Youth Commission, or the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, these--by design--tend to specialize in single components of the criminal justice system.

The two years of the Statistical Analysis Center's existence have seen a rapid escalation in research and information requests from decision-makers and interest groups. Figure 1 illustrates the rate of this escalation, particularly during the past twelve months (November 1979-October, 1980). Predictably, there were few research requests during SAC's first six months of operation. Much of that time was spent in making potential Ohio information users aware of the Unit's existence and capabilities, a task which began to reap benefits during the second quarter of 1979. Despite the effort to publicize SAC, the number of information requests remained relatively level between the Spring of 1979 and January of 1980.

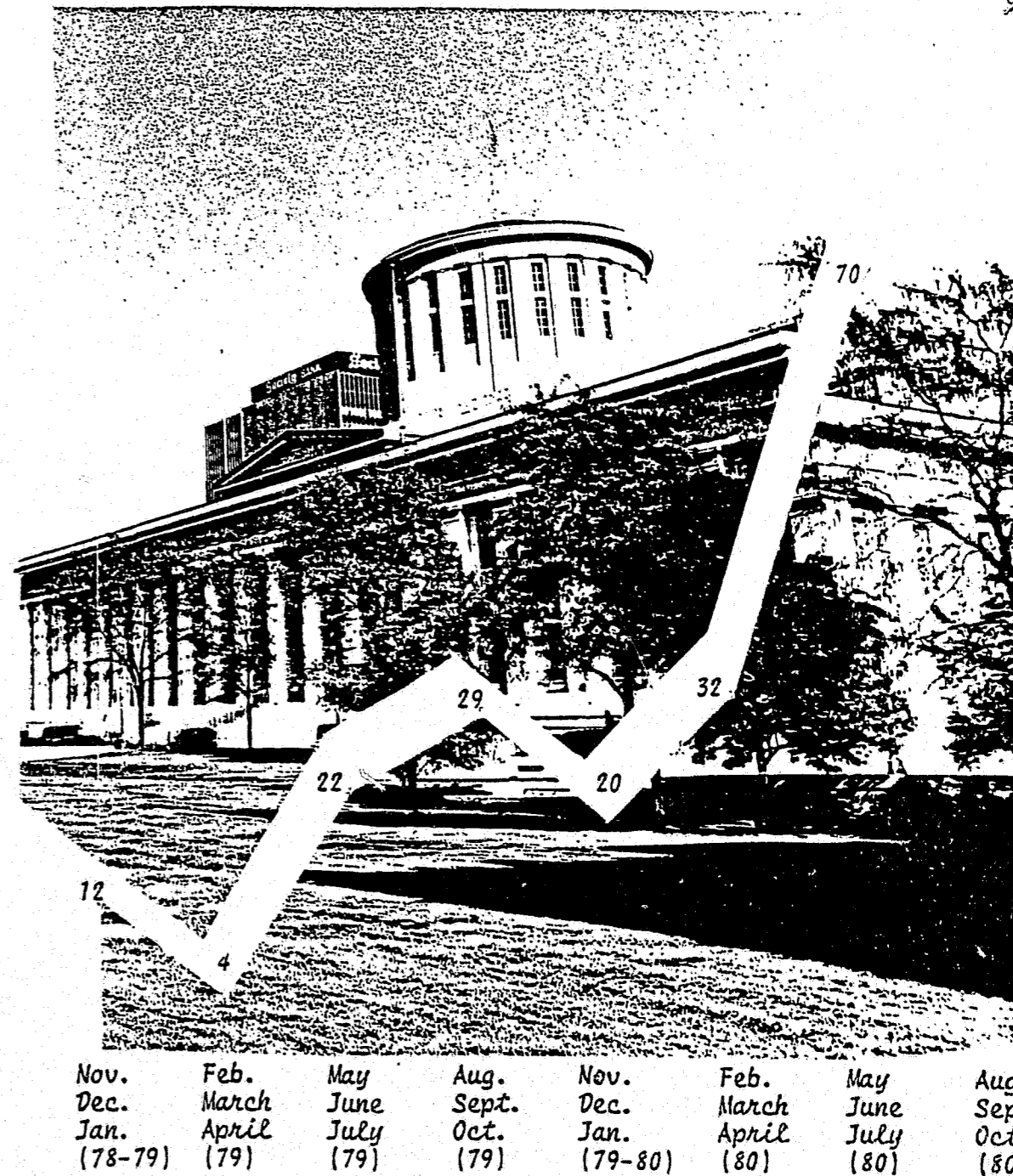
In the Spring of 1980, however, SAC released the first of four major research studies published between May and October, 1980. As anticipated, these reports greatly stimulated the flow of SAC research requests, specifically because they spawned new questions and interest in heretofore unexplored areas, and generally because they identified SAC a unit uniquely and exclusively involved in statewide criminal justice research. In the nine month period between February and November, 1980, SAC research requests nearly tripled.

Who Requests Information?

The effectiveness of the SAC research effort can be measured as accurately in terms of the sources of research requests as it can in regard to the number

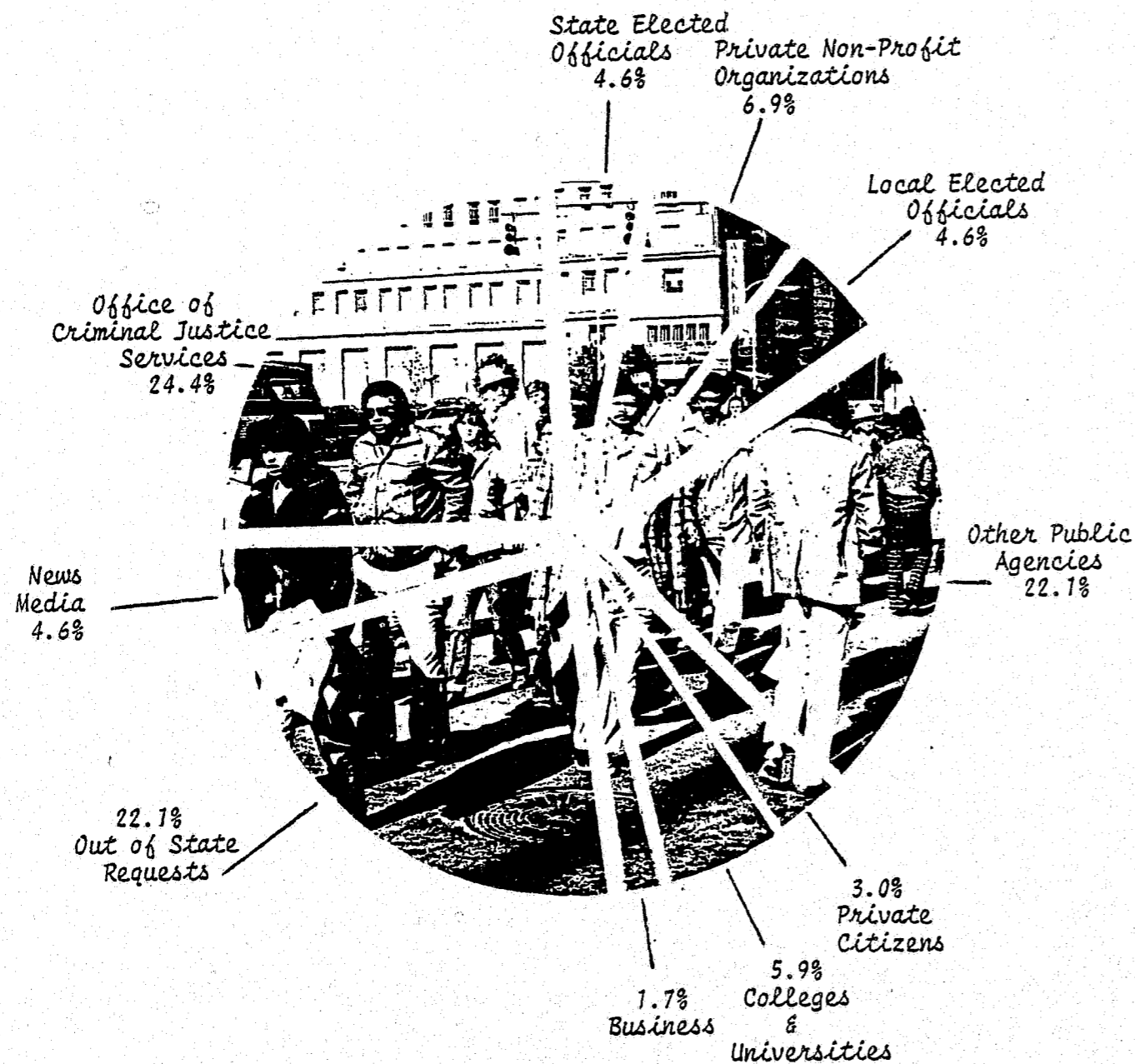
FIGURE 1

SAC RESEARCH REQUESTS
NOVEMBER 1, 1978 - OCTOBER 31, 1980
(by quarter)



of those requests. The research mission of the Office of Criminal Justice Services includes not only the production of accurate and relevant criminal justice research, but also assurance that such research will find its way to key decision-makers in state and local government in Ohio. Had most of the 303 requests come from private citizens or out-of state researchers it could be assumed that SAC research was being used ineffectively. In fact, only about one-fourth of the research requests came from these two sources (see figure 2).

FIGURE 2
SOURCE OF SAC REQUESTS
1978-1980



The largest single request source during the two-year period* was the staff of the Office of Criminal Justice Services. This is logical since SAC is a part of that agency, and it could be expected that staff members** would be more immediately aware of SAC's research capabilities than would other potential users. The staff requests should not, however, be viewed as outside the above stated mission to reach key decision-makers since:

- The Office of Criminal Justice Services has been integrally involved in the state level criminal justice decision-making over the past decade, and
- many of the staff requests were originally initiated by outside agencies and officials who contacted planners or field staff instead of SAC staff.

Close behind the Office of Criminal Justice Services staff requests were those emanating from other public agencies (eg., Legislative Services Commission, crime laboratories, local treatment facilities,) and out-of-state sources (eg., universities, federal officials, other state SACs), each of which accounted for 67 requests. In aggregate, these top three source categories accounted for better than two-thirds of all SAC requests received since 1978. The public agency requests are very significant as they reflect research needs in a myriad of state and local government agencies, not all of which are directly concerned with criminal justice. While government agencies, per se, are not usually viewed as key decision-makers, their subtle impact on policy cannot be denied. Concerning the out-of-state requests, several of these are routine, generic queries directed to the State of Ohio from students and federal agencies, but most came as a result of the Ohio SAC's increasingly active role in the national Criminal Justice Statistics Association, a professional association of state SAC directors.

Of critical importance were the 28 requests from state and locally elected officials. The majority of the former were Ohio State Senators and Representatives who were particularly interested in SAC's criminal justice public opinion research. Local officials included mayors, county commissioners, sheriffs and others. Again, many of these requests came in response to SAC products disbursed throughout the State.

Private non-profit agencies such as the YMCA, youth advocacy groups and various professional associations, constituted approximately 7% of the total requests. The two other "private" categories, citizens and business, accounted for an additional 4.7% of total requests. In general SAC did not directly include the private sector on its research mailing list, except to the extent that SAC studies were regularly released to the news media throughout the State. All but one of the 14 media requests for information were in response to the major SAC studies published since May, and generally included taped interviews for radio,*** additional or background information for newspapers, and both a

*The 303 figure includes 24 requests processed between July and November 1978, prior to SACs formal start-up.

**These do not include SAC researchers.

***On two occasions the SAC director was taped by Ohio radio Associated Press which, in turn, makes the tape accessible to stations throughout the State.

taped interview and general coverage on television. At least one major daily and one television station used SAC research as a basis for lead editorials.

The remaining source category, Colleges and Universities, while small in number, provided some of the more significant requests. In part, the academic interest was stimulated by the growing relationship between the Office of Criminal Justice Services and the Ohio Higher Education Council, composed of professors from Ohio colleges and universities offering criminal justice degree programs. The Council is on SAC's mailing list and SAC staff have addressed meetings of the Council. On two occasions, SAC staff were invited to teach senior level undergraduate classes (single session) at Ohio State University (October, 1979) and the University of Dayton (October, 1980).

In themselves, the source figures do not reflect the rather dramatic changes in trends during the past two years. Table 1 displays some noteworthy changes in this regard. For example, requests from the Office

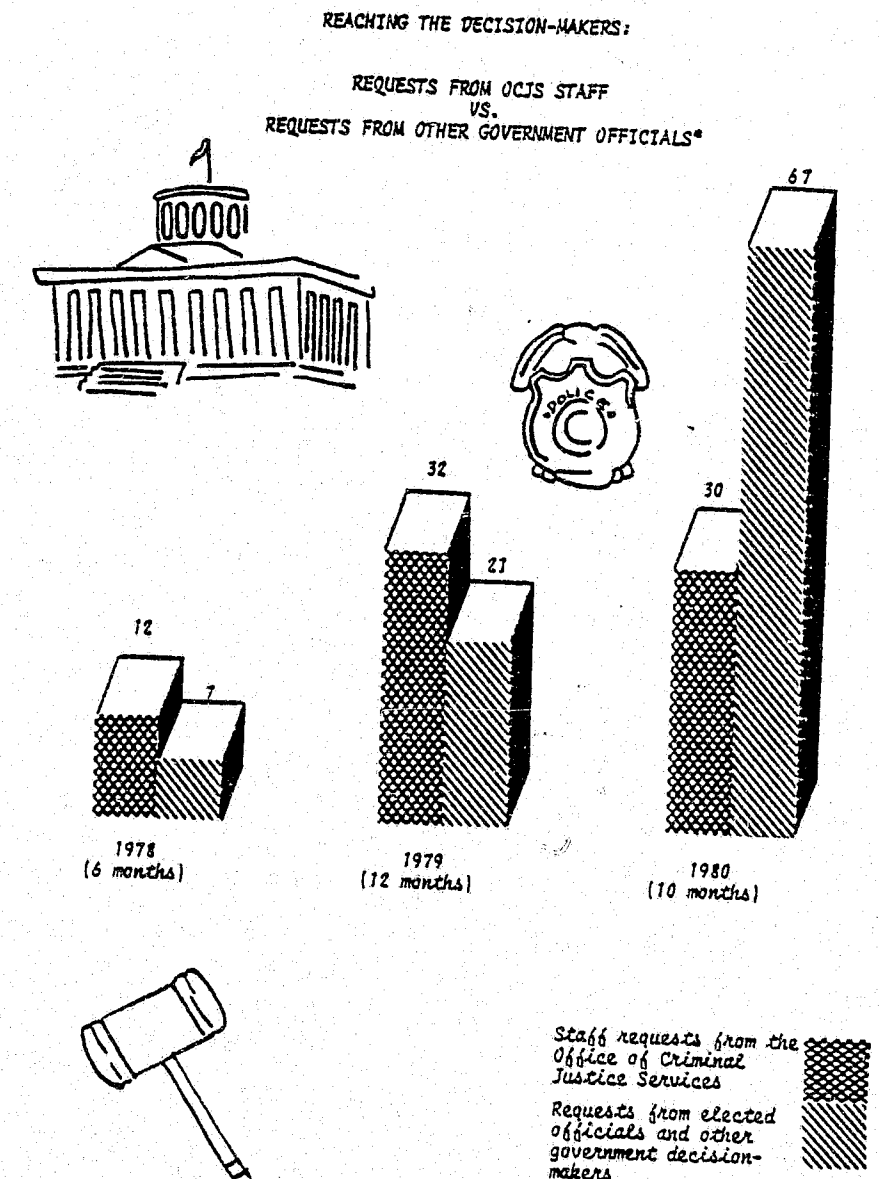
TABLE 1

SAC RESEARCH REQUESTS: SOURCE
(a comparison between the first two years)

REQUESTING SOURCE	NOV/78- OCT/79	NOV/79- OCT/80	PERCENT CHANGE
Office of Criminal Justice Services (Staff)	30	33	+ 10%
Other Government Agencies (state and local)	16	47	+194%
State Elected Officials	3	11	+267%
Local Elected Officials	1	13	+1200%
Private Non-Profit Agencies	4	14	+250%
Private Citizens	3	6	+100%
Colleges and Universities	2	16	+700%
News Media	0	13	
Businesses	1	4	+300%
Out-Of-State Sources	7	55	+686%
TOTAL	67	212	+216%

of Criminal Justice Services' staff showed the smallest increase of any of the source categories between the first and second year of SAC operations. Staff requests increased by only 10% at the same time that overall requests increased by 216%. In marked contrast, key decision-makers in public agencies and state and local elected offices tripled their number of requests during the same time period. (figure 3).

FIGURE 3



* includes state and locally elected officials as well as other government agencies.

*NOTE: Time periods for Table 1 and Figure 3 do not match up exactly because of the delay in SAC's formal start date, as noted in an earlier footnote. Using the exact time frames, the comparison produces something closer to a quadrupling effect for this figure.

Two of the most significant increases occurred within Colleges and Universities and News Media. The expanded interest from these sources is illuminating because they hold the greatest potential of any users for generating more demand for SAC research. This self-perpetuating cycle is critical in ensuring that SAC research gets used. Furthermore, the policy impact of the news media and academic institutions cannot be overlooked.

Another significant source jump took place within Out-of-State requests, which escalated 686% during the one year period. Most of these requests reflected a relatively high degree of interest in other state SACs for the four Ohio SAC products completed in 1980.

Type of Requests

Predictably, the types of requests received by the SAC tended to reflect existing SAC research which had been disseminated in Ohio. Many of these concerned additional or clarifying information, such as several requests from State legislators for home district profiles of their constituents' responses to the Citizen Attitude Survey. Two of the top three type-request areas, information about public attitudes toward crime and law enforcement data, were reflective of prior SAC research, in these instances the Citizen Attitude Survey (June, 1980) and preliminary findings from the Law Enforcement Survey (July, 1980). Together, these two types of requests accounted for better than one-third of all requests received during the twenty-eight months of SAC's existence.

Of the remaining eight categories only two provided as much as ten percent (10%) of the total requests, those being juvenile justice (17.5%) and general crime information requests (10.9%) (see figure 4). Many of the Juvenile Justice requests were initiated by staff of the Office of Criminal Justice Services during the annual monitoring efforts in 1978 and 1979, and appear to have moderated considerably during the past year (see Table 2). Perhaps the least significant of all the requests were those of General Reference, which usually consisted of computer-generated mailing labels or address lists. Once again, these were usually associated with in-house staff needs. The miscellaneous requests involved a variety of issues, often a call for the expertise of a particular SAC staff member in a selective area (eg., computer statistical packages, questionnaire development, etc.). Another rather loosely defined category, Background Research, included requests for two or more types of information, or which concerned information indirectly related to crime and criminal justice (eg., population statistics).

A dramatic change in the types of SAC data being requested over the past two years can be seen in Table 2. All 67 of the public attitude research requests have come within the past twelve months, a direct testimony to the heavy volume of attitude testing conducted by the SAC in recent months. There was a similar surge in the number of law enforcement data requests which can be directly traced to SAC's Law Enforcement Survey publication.

In the opposite direction juvenile justice requests, which accounted for the second-highest total for the 28-month period, actually declined during the past year while total requests were increasing by 216%. General reference requests also declined during the period. Both of these figures can probably be attributed to the previously noted "leveling" effect of the request flow from the staff of the Office of Criminal Justice Services (see figure 3).

The second most significant increase for the two-year period occurred among requests for Ohio criminal justice employment and expenditure data. These also came in the wake of a special SAC study released in the Fall of 1980 and, like the two other referenced studies, generated new information in a previously unexplored area.

FIGURE 4
TYPE OF SAC REQUESTS
1978-80

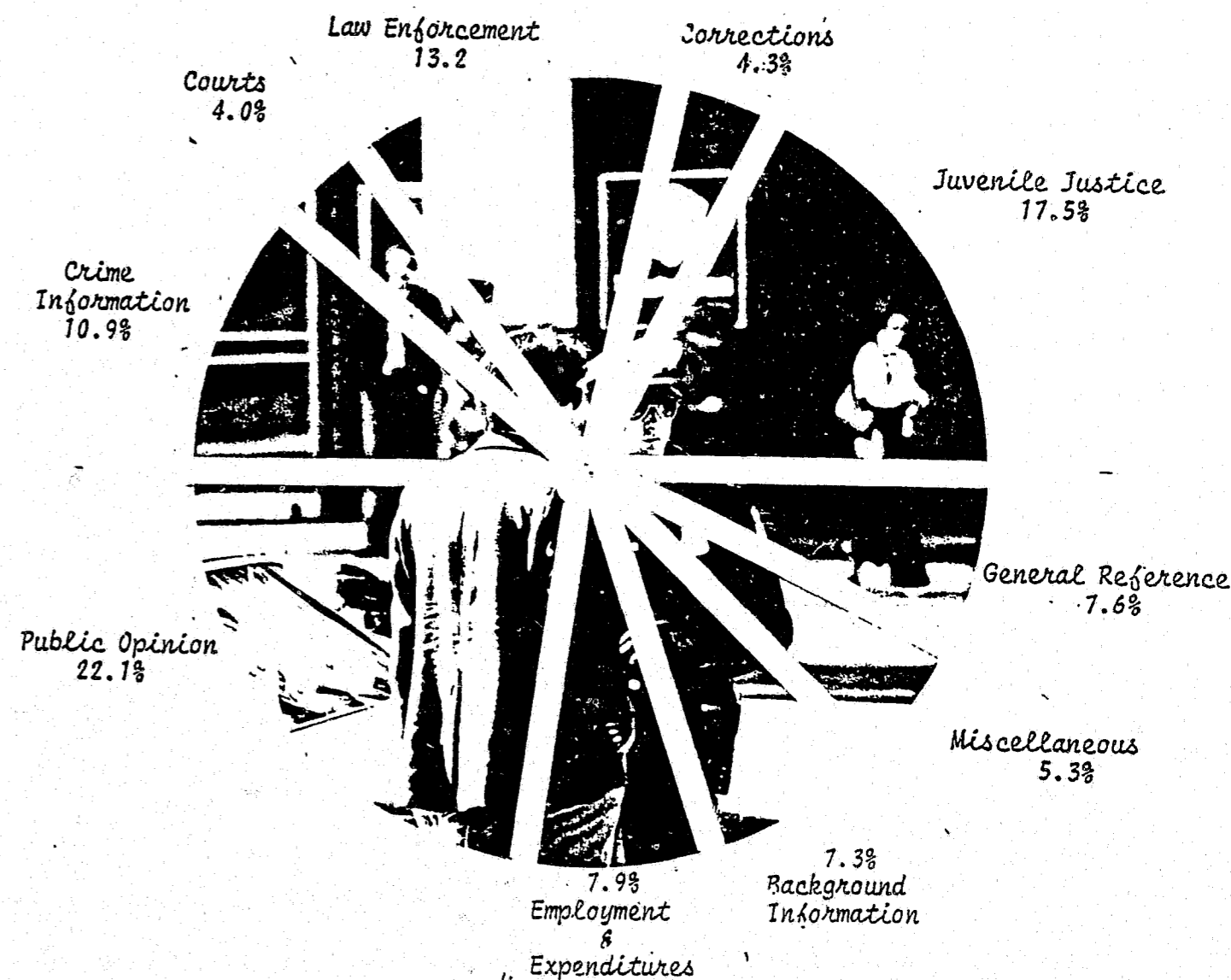


TABLE 2

SAC RESEARCH REQUESTS: TYPE
(a comparison between the first two years)

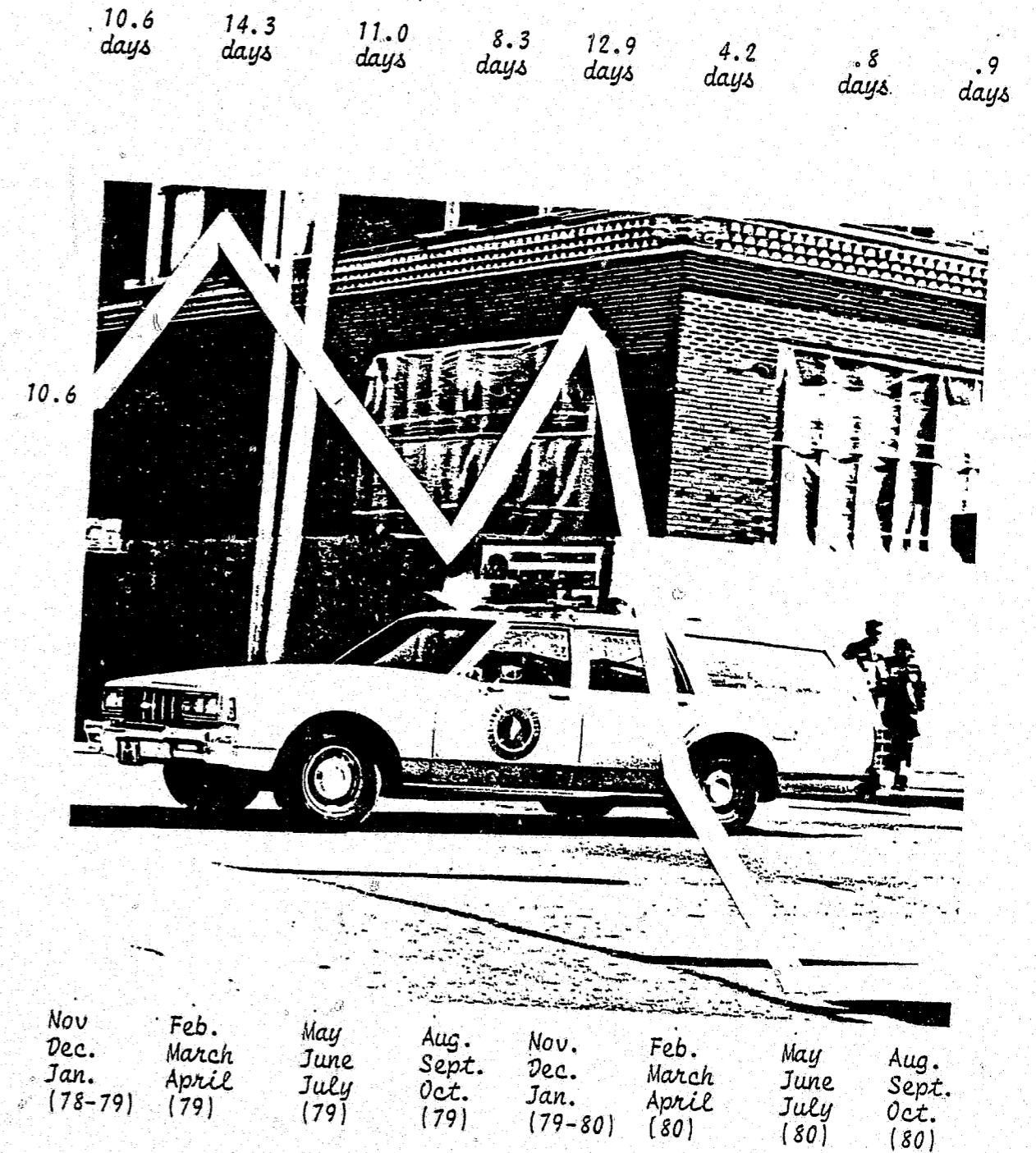
TYPE	NOV/78- OCT/79	NOV/79 OCT/80	PERCENT CHANGE
Crime Information	11	17	+ 55%
Juvenile Justice	24	21	- 13%
Law Enforcement	1	38	+3700%
Courts	3	9	+ 200%
Corrections	3	8	+ 167%
General Reference	10	7	- 30%
Public Opinion Data	-	67	
Ohio Criminal Justice Employment and Expenditure Data	2	21	+ 950%
Background* Research	8	13	+ 63%
Miscellaneous**	5	11	+ 216%
TOTALS	67	212	+ 216%

* generally includes requests which cannot be confined to one of the above categories
 ** may include tasks peripheral to criminal justice research, such as providing data processing or statistical expertise

Response Time

Two sections of the SAC request/response log are devoted to ascertaining the time required to respond to each request. The data displayed in Figure 5 reveal the average number of days SAC staff took in responding to requests during each of the Unit's nine operational quarters. This was a date entered/date delivered span of time, and often included delays encountered with the computer, or other aspects of the response not directly under the control of the SAC. A more meaningful statistic, for purposes of this report, is the actual SAC staff time required to fill the request (i.e., "work time" rather than "waiting time"). The request/response log, amended to reflect this time measurement in April of 1980, revealed a mean time of 5 3/4 hours per request.

FIGURE 5
SAC REQUEST RESPONSE TIME
(in average days, by quarter)



This figure tends to be supported by Figure 5 which revealed an average total response time of less than one day during the same approximate period (May-October, 1980).

While the low response time figures are encouraging they are not, in themselves, precise performance measurements. One problem in this regard is the time variance among the many responses which tended to be either high or very low (i.e., the medium figure was below the figures shown). A second and more important point is that there is no particular virtue in a simple, easily answered data request. Conversely, the weeks which might be required to answer a difficult request should not be viewed in negative light simply because of the time required to respond. (One might even make the case that the more complex and, hence, time-consuming requests reflect greater user need and greater reliance on SAC.)

In the event that SAC cannot answer a data request within two to three days, the requestor is made aware of that fact. Under all circumstances SAC gives priority to meeting the schedule demands of the requestor.

OTHER STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER PUBLICATIONS

"OHIO CITIZEN ATTITUDES: A SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION ON CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE" (June, 1980)

"CONCERNING CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE: ATTITUDES AMONG OHIO'S SHERIFFS AND CHIEFS OF POLICE" (July, 1980)

"IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE: MONEY AND MANPOWER" (September, 1980)

"STATE OF THE STATES REPORT: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTERS" (EMPHASIS OHIO) (September, 1980)

"SURVEY OF OHIO PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS: REPORT" (November, 1980)

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