

Impact of data collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis on criminal justice s...

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Abstract

This paper briefly discusses importance of data collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis on the criminal justice system. It also discusses impact of computer and Internet and how technology in general helps enhance law enforcement.

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Impact of Data Collection, Storage, Retrieval, and Analysis on Criminal Justice System

Data was, is and will always be cardinal to criminal justice investigation and law enforcement. Processing data, however, is a question open to debate based on prevailing law enforcement thought, power balances between constituents and, not least, advances in technology. The impact of data collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis on criminal justice system cannot in fact be overemphasized given unparalleled advances in Internet technologies and computer-managed systems.

Indeed, as early as mid-1990's criminal justice constituents such as law firms, independent lawyers, national agencies and law enforcement personnel have had an eye on emerging potentials of Internet and computer not only as tools for cost effectiveness and performance enhancement but also as tools for wider community awareness and decision making. A 1997 keynote speech by Jeremy Travis - Director of National Institute of Justice Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences - for example, has addressed, among other issues, IT question as of deep impact on criminal justice and law enforcement practices (" Technology in Criminal Justice"). Specifically,

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With the click of a mouse, we can enter the libraries of the research institutions of the world, retrieve a document in foreign language, have it translated into English, and print it in our home. Police officers responding to a 911 call can access the crime history of a particular location [online], check the background of a particular suspect using fingerprints, fill out what we used to call paperwork in the squad car by using a

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hand-sized computer, and return to patrol. Probation officers can track the movements of probationers using electronic monitoring devices; victims of domestic violence or stalking can be alerted when monitored individuals get within a specified range; community groups can access computerized crime maps to understand the patterns of crime and disorder in their neighborhoods; investigators can quickly scan hundreds of databases to learn about the most intimate details of people under investigation. (Travis) This is apt ultimately, according to Travis, to spread knowledge and awareness about crime and justice within and between constituents.

Interestingly, new breeds of law firms have been emerging specifically offering advice on retrieval of electronic legal data as well as training for law enforcement personnel on managing electronic resources. According to one authority - Michael Arkfeld - on electronic document retention, discovery, production and admissibility of electronic information, Arizona has been a leading state in providing Internet access to justice system data, forms and legal tools to citizens and practitioners free of charge. Moreover, State Bar of Arizona has provided fully searchable ethics opinions as of 1985 online as well as an online facility for clients to locate lawyers by last or first name,

firm/organization, practice area, area of specialization, section membership, language spoken, city, or state.

Arkfeld suggests a range of ideas for a more effective crime and justice system such as settlement and pretrial conferences on-line, ordering court documents over Internet, electronic filing, actual court documents searchable on-line, witness appearances via Internet, e-mail

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notification of court orders, jury instructions on-line, law enforcement officer scheduling, paying fines and other court costs, and clerks on-line to assist lawyers and citizens during navigation through an integrated justice system (Arkfeld, 1996) .

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