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Federal Probation

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Interagency Issues *John S. Dierna*

The Presentence Report, Probation Officer Accountability, and
Recruitment Practices: Some Influences of Guideline Sentencing *Harry Joe Jaffe*

Prison "Boot Camps" Do Not Measure Up *Dale K. Sechrest*

The Greatest Correctional Myth: Winning the War on Crime Through
Incarceration *Joseph W. Rogers*

Probation and Parole Malpractice in a Noninstitutional Setting: A Contemporary
Analysis *John C. Watkins, Jr.*

The Utilization of Technology in Correctional Institutions *Lawrence F. Travis III*
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Justice *Mark S. Umbreit*

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This Issue in Brief ^{ACQUISITIONS}

Guideline Sentencing: Probation Officer Responsibilities and Interagency Issues.—The recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the constitutionality of the sentencing guidelines system has provided the impetus for further legitimization of the Federal probation profession; yet problematic issues and difficult guideline decisions confront probation officers as they carry out the guideline presentence investigation. This article by U.S. probation officer John S. Dierna focuses on the important, challenging responsibilities placed upon the Federal probation officer conducting guideline presentence investigations and introduces a three-step process to assist probation officers assigned to these investigations.

The Presentence Report, Probation Officer Accountability, and Recruitment Practices.—Under guideline sentencing, the probation officer has become the “fixer of punishment,” according to Federal probation officer Harry J. Jaffe. This new role affects the drafting of the presentence report, heightens the degree of accountability, and argues for a change in the hiring protocol of new officers. As punisher, the probation officer must now function as an evaluator of knowledge rather than as a presenter of simple facts. This untraditional role requires a diversity of analytical skills and competencies, extending beyond the vistas of the social sciences.

Prison “Boot Camps” Do Not Measure Up.—This article by Dale K. Sechrest is about prison “boot camps,” or shock incarceration programs, which are proliferating in the United States and have generated great interest from the public and media. Typical programs provide a 90- to 120-day period of military-style recruit training designed to instill discipline and improve the self-respect of the individual participants, thus leading to improved future behavior.

System goals include reducing prison populations, reducing costs, and perhaps reducing recidivism rates for these offenders. Recidivism evidence to date, however, shows little improvement over national norms for these offenders. In fact, they may be doing worse.

The Greatest Correctional Myth: Winning the War on Crime Through Incarceration.—Reiteration of the futility of trying to win the Nation’s war on crime through overreliance on incarceration is essential, asserts author Joseph W. Rogers. Taken to extremes, the imprisonment solution has become

CONTENTS

Guideline Sentencing: Probation Officer Responsibilities and Interagency Issues	John S. Dierna	3
The Presentence Report, Probation Officer Accountability, and Recruitment Practices: Some Influences of Guideline Sentencing	Harry Joe Jaffe	12
Prison “Boot Camps” Do Not Measure Up	Dale K. Sechrest	15
The Greatest Correctional Myth: Winning the War on Crime Through Incarceration	Joseph W. Rogers	21
Probation and Parole Malpractice in a Noninstitutional Setting: A Contemporary Analysis ..	John C. Watkins, Jr.	29
The Utilization of Technology in Correctional Institutions	Lawrence F. Travis III Edward J. Latessa, Jr. Robert W. Oldendick	35
Prison Overcrowding: The Case of New Jersey	Edward W. Sieh	41
Crime Victims Seeking Fairness, Not Revenge: Toward Restorative Justice	Mark S. Umbreit	52
Departments		
News of the Future		58
Looking at the Law		63
Reviews of Professional Periodicals		67
Your Bookshelf on Review		76
It Has Come to Our Attention		84

The Utilization of Technology in Correctional Institutions

BY LAWRENCE F. TRAVIS III, PH.D., EDWARD J. LATESSA, JR., PH. D., AND ROBERT W. OLDENDICK, PH.D.*

GROWING concern with rapidly increasing inmate populations and crowding in existing facilities has precipitated an increase in prison and jail construction. Many of these facilities are utilizing new technologies, hoping to provide a safer and more productive environment for inmates as well as correctional staff. This "technological explosion" has created a need to systematically identify and assess new technologies, as well as evaluate their positive and negative consequences.

In October 1986, the National Institute of Corrections awarded the University of Cincinnati a grant to study the impact of technology in prisons. This study grew out of a national concern about the future of prisons in this country and the role and scope of technological developments. The major goal of this project was to investigate the effects of technology on the correctional environment; the physical, and human aspects of that environment. This article presents a summary of the findings of a national survey of technology in adult correctional institutions.

Background

Beginning in 1974, American prison populations experienced annual growth on the order of 6 percent, increasing to a growth rate of over 10 percent annually by the late 1970's. In the 1980's, prison populations increased at an average rate of 8.8 percent annually (Langan, et al., 1988). From a population of 187,274 in 1968, prison populations increased to over 546,000 in 1986 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1987).

A 1983 survey of criminal justice administrators revealed broad agreement among law enforcement, court and correctional officials that prison crowding was, "... the most important issue facing them today" (Gettinger, 1984:1). In 1987, 37 of 52 prison systems reported they were initiating or promoting alternatives to prison to lessen crowding pressures (Corrections Compendium, 1987). Correctional systems planned the expenditure of over \$3 billion to construct new prison capacity in 1986 (ACA, 1986:1).

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Spurred, at least in part, by this development of corrections as a growth industry, a number of technological aids to the operation and management of correctional institutions have become available. Over the past decade, technological innovation has spawned a proliferation of new devices which can be used to improve the efficiency of correctional institutions. These advances encompass many areas from management information systems to perimeter security. The technological explosion, however, has not been accompanied by systematic evaluation of various technologies for their impact on the correctional system as a whole. At its winter conference in 1985, the American Correctional Association ratified a recommendation to explore and evaluate recent innovations in design features, equipment technologies, and operating procedures. Camp and Camp (1987:2) reported that correctional administrators frequently cited the lack of comparison data as a hindrance in their efforts to select and employ perimeter security systems.

In an effort to provide information that would be useful to planners and policymakers in selecting technological equipment, the National Institute of Corrections supported the study of technology reported here. Using a multifaceted research design, the University of Cincinnati gathered data from across the country on types of technology available, and the impact of that technology on correctional institutions.

Methodology

To examine the impact of technology on correctional institutions, the research effort proceeded in four phases: a review of relevant research and literature; a survey of departments of corrections; a survey of correctional institutions opened or substantially renovated in the past 10 years; and site visits of seven institutions employing technologically advanced equipment.

Literature Review

An examination of available research and information provided by correctional technology vendors yielded a definition of technology in institutions and helped identify the focus of the study. We chose to concentrate on electronic, mechanical, and other "hardware" applications to institutional tasks as

"technology." Further, the research assessed the impact of technology in eight areas: perimeter security; locking systems; internal surveillance; internal security; fire safety; communications; management information systems; and new security technologies. Later phases of the research focused on these eight areas and sought information relative to the types of equipment in use, costs, maintenance and training requirements, selection procedures, and effects on officers and the institution in general.

Survey of Departments of Corrections

The second phase of the research was composed of a survey of corrections departments in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Government. A detailed questionnaire was mailed to the directors of corrections for each of these 52 jurisdictions. Several weeks later, interviewers from the University of Cincinnati called respondents and completed data collection over the telephone. Several jurisdictions returned completed questionnaires by mail. In all, 46 of the 52 surveyed agencies completed the questionnaire. This instrument asked for data concerning recent construction, purchasing procedures, use of technology in institutions, future construction plans, and litigation involving technological equipment.

Survey of Correctional Institutions

A random sample of 131 institutions opened or substantially renovated within the past 10 years was selected based on responses to the correctional system survey. This sample of institutions was mailed a detailed questionnaire asking about the types of technological equipment used in the facility, satisfaction with the equipment, and related factors. Institutions receiving questionnaires were also contacted by telephone and data collection procedures mirrored those employed in the survey of departments of corrections. Questionnaires returned numbered 117 (12 from jails and 105 from prisons).

Site Visits

In an effort to examine the impact of technology on the operations of correctional institutions, seven facilities were selected for site visits by teams of researchers. Data obtained from the first two surveys were used to determine institutions to be visited. Facilities were selected on the basis of types of technology in use, geography, security level, and willingness to cooperate in the research. The facilities visited were:

Dayton (Ohio) Corrections Institution; Augusta (Georgia) Correctional and Medical Institution; Erie County (Buffalo, New York) Correctional Facility; Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution; Lieber (South Carolina) Correctional Institution; Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, and The Southern Desert (Nevada) Correctional Institution.

Three or four member research teams visited each institution between November and December, 1987. In addition to touring the facility, the researchers conducted indepth interviews with about 15 staff members at each institution. Those interviewed held a variety of positions including the warden/superintendent, administrative staff, maintenance personnel, correctional supervisors, and correctional officers who worked in the control room, housing units, and perimeter security. In addition, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to correctional officers in each facility. Of these questionnaires, 351 were returned.

Findings

What follows are summary findings from all four phases of the data collection effort.¹ Results are presented for each of the eight areas of inquiry and incorporate important findings from the total research project.

Perimeter Security

- The majority of states reporting new prison construction indicate that some form of electronic perimeter security system will be installed.
- About half the institutions surveyed reported having some type of electronic intrusion system.
- Corrections staff are generally satisfied with electronic perimeter security systems, although some voiced concern over perceived high rates of "false alarms."
- The mean cost reported for electronic perimeter security systems was \$225,000, with a median cost \$125,000.

The cost of an electronic perimeter security system depends upon several factors. Different types of detection systems are available including fence-mounted shaker systems, microwave or magnetic fields, and buried cables. Each type of system operates on the detection of movement through a disruption of a "steady state signal." All perimeter security systems are affected by weather and environment. Planners must be careful to consider factors such as average annual snowfall, temperature fluctuations, and rainfall when selecting a perimeter security system. Several institutions noted problems resulting from lightning strikes, and grounding the system appears effective in overcoming most of these problems.

False alarms were reported as being the major

¹ This paper presents a summary overview of the project and its findings. Persons interested in a more indepth coverage are encouraged to read the final report of the project. See, Edward J. Latessa, Robert W. Oldendick, Lawrence F. Travis III, Susan B. Noonan and Barbara E. McDermott, *Impact of Technology on Adult Correctional Institutions*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Corrections, 1988.

flaw of electronic perimeter security systems. Staff morale and confidence in the detection system hinges on the perceived "false alarm" rate. Perimeter systems can be sensitive to weather changes, animals, wind, and other factors. To the extent that correctional staff view these nonescape-attempt causes of alarms as "false alarms," staff confidence is lessened.

Respondents indicate that it is critically important to inform staff of the practical limits of the perimeter security system, and to view these alarms as evidence of the systems's functioning, rather than as "false alarms." Maintenance problems were generally reported as a major concern, although it is advisable for the institution to maintain a stock of replacement parts to avoid delays in making necessary repairs. Manufacturer and installation procedures appeared to be related both to performance of perimeter security systems, and to staff satisfaction with the systems.

Locking Systems

- About 80 percent of facilities surveyed use some type of electronic or pneumatic locking system.
- Correctional staff are generally satisfied with locking systems and report that these systems make their jobs easier and safer.
- The data do not support a conclusion that either manual or electronic locking systems are superior. Maintenance costs for electronic locking systems are higher, but such systems are more easily operated by correctional staff.

Electronic or pneumatic locking systems make the jobs of housing officers and other custody personnel easier by allowing officers to operate a number of locks from a single location, and to check the status of locks by referring to an indicator panel as opposed to a manual testing of each door. Regardless of whether an automated locking system or manual lock operation is employed, locks in prisons receive extremely heavy use and abuse.

It is important for planners to select durable locks which are designed to suit the particular needs of the institution. We observed several instances in which lighter duty locks were installed in maximum security areas. These locks were not able to withstand the frequent use and the levels of inmate abuse, requiring a great deal of maintenance. If an institution selects a locking system with which replacement keys must be ordered from the manufacturer, it is advisable that spare keys be kept in inventory to reduce the "down time" awaiting replacement parts.

Electronic locking systems seem prone to switch failures from heavy use. Planners should consider traffic patterns and the anticipated number of lock operations in selecting a locking system. Membrane switches (pressure sensitive) and "hamburger panels" which control lock operations frequently fail under

conditions of heavy use. The number of times a lock will be opened and closed in a correctional facility generally far exceeds normal usage in other settings. To the degree that it is possible, planners should seek heavy duty switching components in their locking systems.

Staff general report satisfaction with both manual and automated locking systems. Especially in institutions operating with direct supervision or unit management, where inmate cells are left open, or inmates are issued keys to their cells, automated locking systems reduce the burden on correctional officers. Officers appreciate the fact that automated locking systems relieve them of much of their "turnkey" function. They further report that indicator lights which show the locked/unlocked status of doors enhance their feelings of control and safety on the job

Fire Safety

- Approximately two-thirds of the institutions surveyed reported having some sort of electronic fire detection/suppression system.
- The average cost of electronic fire detection/suppression systems was reported to be \$210,000.
- Corrections staff were generally satisfied with fire detection/suppression systems, although concerns were voiced about false alarm rates.

Staff confidence is a major concern with the fire safety systems. Officers surveyed in the site visits tended to rate their fire safety systems as either "very good" or "very bad." The rating appeared to depend upon staff perceptions of reliability of the detection systems. Some institutions reported false alarm problems caused by lightning, dust, inmate tampering and faulty smoke detectors. Many correctional officers indicated that they were not adequately trained in the operations of the fire detection equipment (e.g., how to clear and reset alarms).

Over 70 percent of the institutions surveyed reported problems with false alarms. The most common causes of false alarms were inmate tampering and overly sensitive smoke detectors. Planners must consider the location of smoke detectors, for example, in inmate lounges where a great deal of tobacco smoke may accumulate. While fire safety equipment did not materially affect the operations of the facilities, the presence of these systems was felt to improve safety and the ability of the staff to respond to fires.

Communications

- These institutions made extensive use of communications equipment, including telephones and radios. Almost all institutions used walkie-talkies, 83 percent issued pagers to command

and administrative staff, and 69 percent had a public address system.

- Corrections staff are generally satisfied with communications equipment and would like more extensive distribution of radios.

Large majorities of correctional staff reported that available communications equipment makes their jobs easier and safer. Most would like to have walkie-talkies issued to every officer. Institutions also reported high levels of satisfaction with available communications equipment. Relatively few institutions reported using "man down alarms" or emergency locators, indicating problems with "false alarms" as a reason for their relative lack of use.

Problems with communications systems included inadequate range, interference with signals caused by geographic or structural barriers near or in the institution, battery failure, and lack of sufficient equipment. Some problems with telephone communications were reported, and generally attributed to a "second class" telephone system. Planners should carefully consider the number of radio bands required for the institution, whether or not the facility radios share radio bands with law enforcement agencies, and the distribution of equipment to staff. A common complaint was that there were either not enough radios to "go around," or there were not enough battery packs in stock to insure that fresh batteries would always be available.

Internal Security

- About 90 percent of the institutions in our survey reported using some sort of internal security equipment (metal detectors, magnetic scanners, x-ray or fluoroscope machines, etc.).
- There is a considerable variation in the types of internal security equipment used in correctional institutions with the most common being metal detectors (85%).
- Correctional staff reported that problems with internal security equipment were most common with "walk-through" metal detectors.

Both institutions and correctional staff reported being satisfied with available internal security equipment most of the time. Different types of equipment are used in different settings. Walk-through metal detectors and hand-held magnetic scanners/friskers are most commonly used at the main entrance and in industrial areas. Fluoroscopes and x-ray machines are normally used in the mail room, and body alarms and other devices are used throughout the institution.

Some concerns were voiced about the inability of these devices to detect plastic, drugs, and nonmetallic contraband. The sensitivity settings of metal detectors caused problems for staff in that detectors were

often reported to be either too sensitive, emitting false alarms, or not sensitive enough. The extensive use of steel reinforcement in prison construction causes some problems for the use of metal detectors. Nonetheless, most staff reported that the availability of this equipment made their jobs easier, more efficient, and less dangerous.

Internal Surveillance

- Half of the institutions surveyed reported using some type of internal surveillance equipment (closed circuit television, listening devices, etc.). The higher the security level of the institution, the more likely it is that internal surveillance equipment will be used.
- Correctional staff generally report being dissatisfied with available surveillance equipment, largely because they believe there is not enough equipment.
- Internal surveillance systems are positively evaluated because they provide for close observation and extra coverage in key areas.

Internal surveillance equipment is most frequently used at the institution's main entrance and in the visiting areas. Some institutions also use television monitoring in the rear sallyport as well, and several use closed circuit television to monitor hallways, recreational areas and housing units. Staff generally appreciate this equipment and feel safer when it is used. Most staff do not like to use mirrors, as inmates can also rely upon mirrors to monitor staff.

Planners should carefully consider where monitoring devices will be located to avoid blind spots and problems of insufficient illumination. Listening capabilities were reported in some institutions through reversing the transmission of the public address system. Supervisors and officers tended to support such systems as added protection for officers. It is important to note, however, that surveillance is of no value unless there is sufficient staffing to monitor screens and listening devices.

Planners must also consider the ratio of monitoring screens to cameras. In some institutions many cameras feed a few screens, requiring the monitoring officer to select cameras and making it impossible to monitor all areas at once. Similarly, camera housing units must be appropriate to the location of the cameras. Exterior cameras should be protected from the weather, and all cameras should be protected from tampering. Planners should also consider the need for recording surveillance information, and whether or not zoom or panning capability on cameras would be desirable.

Management Information Systems

- Most correctional systems report having a centralized management information system and being satisfied with that system.
- Eighty-five percent of the institutions surveyed have some type of management information system used primarily for inmate tracking, and these systems are rated positively.
- Comprehensive management information systems do not exist at the institutions we visited, largely as a result of a lack of qualified staff.

Responses to both the survey of departments of corrections and the general survey of correctional institutions revealed that management information systems are in use in corrections. Central office staff and corrections department administrators appreciate the ready access to data and the ease of maintaining records and accounts. Most information systems include linkages to institutions and are primarily used for the collection and dissemination of inmate record and location information.

Institutions having management information systems use this technology to maintain inmate records, payroll, and inmate accounts. The most frequent problems with these systems were reported to be downtime and delays in reporting data. The installation of a management information system usually entails an increase in the number of administrative staff, particularly the addition of technical staff.

In the institutions visited, the average correctional officer was unaware of the existence of a management information system. For the most part, these institutions have not yet "scratched the surface" in regard to the potential of electronic data processing for the operations of the institutions. Administrators generally reported satisfaction with the hardware available, but decried the lack of qualified operators and insufficient funding for more equipment and staff training.

New Security Technology

- Only a small percentage of the institutions surveyed reported using new technologies such as nonlethal weaponry or infrared scopes.
- Where new equipment is in use, staff report generally high levels of satisfaction asserting that the equipment makes them feel safer on the job.

As a final consideration in the study, institutions surveyed, and facility staff interviewed during site visits were asked about other technological equipment not specifically covered in the survey. Most of the items mentioned here included drug testing equipment, vision enhancement devices and nonlethal weapons. Respondents indicated a need for technological

advances in the detection of contraband such as drugs which might be smuggled into the institution, and improvements in existing technology such as metal detectors. No single technological need or theme could be identified from responses regarding new security technology.

Conclusions

After reviewing the data gathered in each of the four phases of the study of the impact of technology on the operation of adult correctional institutions, it is possible to state several general conclusions:

- While the impact of these various technologies has been generally positive, changes produced by technology have been incremental rather than dramatic. Technology has not been shown to produce major changes in staff size, staff composition, or in the operation of institutions.
- Technological systems need to be adapted to the correctional environment. There seems to be a gap between those who know technology and those who know the correctional environment. Improved communication between users and providers of technology are needed.
- Planning is critical. Those who devoted considerable attention to researching technological systems and who monitored installation were most satisfied with their systems.
- Satisfaction is based on expectations. If staff are led to expect more from technology than it can provide, they are likely to be dissatisfied. Training of staff tends to be "on-the-job" and does not adequately familiarize them with what the technology is capable of accomplishing.

In selecting technological systems for use in correctional institutions, designers, planners, and purchasing officers should act much like private consumers. The purchase of an electronic perimeter security system, or fire detection system is not unlike the purchase of an automobile by a private citizen. The person most likely to be satisfied with an automobile purchase is the one who reviewed consumer reports, knew his or her needs, and shopped around for the best deal.

Planners need to consult with those who will operate the institution. They must understand the uses to which the technology will be put, and the goals to be served by that technology. In the end, it is a matter of matching the needs of the operating institution to the available technology. If a particular system cannot meet the needs of the institution, then it is probably a wiser move not to purchase it, than to attempt to adapt an inappropriate tool to the job.

The staff who operate the equipment must be knowledgeable in its limitations and capabilities. All

staff who use a given technological system should be given instruction on how that system operates as well as how to perform their specific functions. Maintenance personnel should be present at the installation of equipment to monitor the process and to enhance understanding of the system's configuration and applications.

Purchasing procedures that rely on "low bid" probably result in the purchase of inferior equipment and increased maintenance costs. Performance specifications as criteria for the selection of a particular technology hold more promise of successful adaptation to the correctional environment than do mere low bid constraints. Similarly, the cost estimate for a technological system should include the costs of maintaining an adequate inventory of spare parts, staff training, and sufficient maintenance and support personnel.

Technological advances available today can improve the operations of correctional institutions, but not materially change them. It is unlikely that technological systems will replace staff, but they are able to increase staffing flexibility. Electronic perimeter systems, for example, allow for direct supervision by removing officers from towers and making them available for assignment to housing units.

Perhaps the most seriously underutilized technology in all of corrections, at both the central administration and institutional levels is electronic management

information systems. Inhouse programs to develop computer literacy among correctional staff at all levels will greatly enhance the ability of correctional organizations to profit from available management information system technology.

In all areas, it is important to remember that the key ingredient to corrections is people. These people include both staff and inmates, and the technologies adopted for correctional operations must be assessed, in part, on how well they improve the lot of the people involved. Investigations into the possible use of technological devices in correctional settings must proceed from an initial recognition of the primacy of people as the business of corrections.

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