

THE NCIC ARTICLE FILE:

**An Investigation and Demonstration of the Use of Serial Numbers
in the Identification and Location of Selected Property Items**



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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, INC.



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 Dallas, Texas Police Department
 Denver, Colorado Police Department*
 El Paso, Texas Police Department
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 Norfolk, Virginia Police Department*
 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Police Department
 Omaha, Nebraska Police Department
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Police Department

*Two of the agencies that assisted in testing the feasibility of routine entry and query of specific items in the NCIC Article File during the Demonstration Phase of the project.

Portland, Oregon Police Bureau
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San Diego, California Police Department

Dade County, Florida Public Safety Department
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Hennepin County, Minnesota Sheriff's Office
Nassau County, New York Police Department*
Polk County, Iowa Sheriff's Department

Florida Department of Law Enforcement
Michigan State Police
Oregon State Police
Texas Department of Public Safety
West Virginia Department of Public Safety

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It is fitting to recognize the members of the project whose diligent efforts are reflected in this report and in the results of the project.

Property Identification Manual

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*One of the agencies that assisted in testing the feasibility of routine entry and query of specific items in the NCIC Article File during the Demonstration Phase of the project.

PREFACE

Serial or identification numbers placed by manufacturers on property items have traditionally been useful to the law enforcement community in locating and identifying stolen property and in tracing the ownership or possession of property recovered during an investigation. This has been especially true in the area of motor vehicle theft where standardized numbering systems have provided a widely accepted basis for identification.

With the advent of modern, computerized information systems, the importance of using serial numbers in property theft investigation has become increasingly evident. It is now possible, for example, to store, search and retrieve information about serially numbered stolen property on a scale never before practical. The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) reported recently that information about more than 4,693,000 property items is currently contained in its seven files. While the total number of active records fluctuates on a monthly basis (reflecting new entries, clearances, and cancellations), the percentage of records in each file remains relatively stable: Wanted Persons File 2.8 percent, Vehicle File 23.5 percent (Vehicles 17.3 percent and License Plates 6.2 percent), Gun File 14.4 percent, Securities File 28.9 percent, Boat File .20 percent, Criminal History File 9.0 percent, and Article File 21.2 percent.* Inquiries on these files can be made by local, state and federal agencies throughout the United States as well as by Canadian law enforcement agencies. Eventually the network will be expanded to serve as a national index for all 50 statewide computerized law enforcement information systems.

There is continuing evidence, however, that this increased investigative capability is not being fully exploited by the nation's law enforcement agencies -- especially in the case of the NCIC Article File. A recent review of the NCIC revealed that, although there are approximately the same number of items in both the Article File and the Vehicle Files, the former receives only 4 percent of the daily inquiry activity while the latter nearly 50 percent. Lack of awareness of the investigative potential of identification numbers appears to be the major factor in the current under-utilization of the NCIC Article File.

To determine the reasons for this under-utilization, the Research Division of the IACP initiated two parallel studies designed to:

- review the methods used by manufacturers to serially number various products
- study the extent to which the Article File is utilized by selected law enforcement agencies in various parts of the United States.

The objective of the NCIC is "to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement through the more efficient handling and exchange of documented police

*NCIC Newsletter, January 1975.

information."* The Article File can contribute to the attainment of this objective only if it is completely understood and fully utilized by all participating law enforcement agencies.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, through its Research Division, undertook two parallel projects* designed to more effectively locate and identify serially numbered stolen property by increasing and improving the use of computerized information systems. The research activity included six major phases.**

- Analysis of NCIC Article File
- Field Investigation
- Demonstration
- Legislative Review
- Property Identification Manual
- Evaluation Design

The Project lasted one year and involved the efforts of 15 members of the IACP staff plus several outside consultants.

The first phase included a thorough review of the practices and procedures involved in utilizing the NCIC and the Article File. To accomplish this goal, liaison was established with the NCIC staff of the FBI and several preliminary coordinating meetings were held. This review resulted in the publication of a report entitled, An Analysis of the Utilization of the NCIC Article File by Various Law Enforcement Agencies. The report includes sections describing the entry criteria for the Article File; Article File methodology, composition and utilization; factors and problems influencing system effectiveness; recommendations for improvement; and appropriate excerpts from the NCIC Operating Manual. This analysis was submitted to the funding agency in November, 1974.

The second phase involved conducting field investigations in 25 municipal, county and state law enforcement agencies. The purpose of the investigation was to determine the reasons for the under-utilization of the Article File. This state-of-the-art review was completed in September, 1974 and is summarized in Section I of this report.

*LEAA Contract No. 74-SS-99-3304.

**After initial research and analysis of the NCIC Article File activity, several phases of the project were conducted concurrently. Project chronology can be summarized as follows: field investigation, legislative review, preparation of the Property Identification Manual (concurrent activity). The demonstration phase followed the field investigation and the evaluation followed completion of the field investigation and preparation of the draft Property Identification Manual.

*NCIC Operating Manual, p.1.

The third phase involved a demonstration exercise conducted in three of the previously visited agencies. Project staff made entries and queries of three types of items determined during the field investigations to have a high probability of theft but which were not currently being entered or queried in the Article File on a routine basis. The demonstration, which was completed in January, 1975, is summarized in Section II of this report.

Concurrently with these three phases, the Legal Research Section of the Research Division conducted a thorough legislative review of all state and federal statutes dealing with serially numbered property. This review resulted in the development of a model statute which requires all manufacturers to uniquely number all products having a value in excess of \$100. The report describing this model legislation was submitted to the funding agency in January, 1975.

At the same time a second research team visited 40 major manufacturers of selected items known to have a high probability of theft. The data collection effort involved identifying the various methods used by manufacturers to serially number these kinds of items. This information resulted in the development and publication of a Property Identification Manual, which was submitted to the funding agency in May 1975.

The sixth major phase of the project was the development of an evaluation design which was formulated to test two hypotheses:

- More efficient identification of serially numbered property will result from utilization of the Property Identification Manual.
- More effective utilization of the NCIC Article File will result from the efficient identification of serially numbered property.

Implementation of the evaluation design (which consists of a pre- and post-test of an experimental and control group of law enforcement agencies) is contingent on receipt of additional funds.

The various research activities related to the serially numbered stolen property project have resulted in a major contribution to the law enforcement community. The results have included identification of:

- Current practices and problems related to the investigative use of serial numbers on lost, found and stolen property.
- Guidelines to maximize the use of serial numbers in investigating cases involving lost, stolen and found property.
- The advantages of routinely submitting Article File identification numbers to NCIC for status verification.
- Areas requiring additional research, training, technical assistance or documentation.

Specific recommendations for improvement are outlined in Section III of this report.

SECTION I: FIELD INVESTIGATION PHASE

A. METHODOLOGY

Field investigations were conducted primarily to determine the extent to which:

- law enforcement agencies utilize identification numbers in handling lost, stolen or found property
- law enforcement agencies utilize the NCIC Article File in investigating cases involving lost, stolen or found property
- current practices and procedures prevent maximum utilization of serial numbers and the NCIC Article File.

Twenty-five law enforcement agencies were selected for field investigation. Grant requirements specified that 15 municipal, five county and five state agencies be visited. Actual site selection was made by project staff with LEAA approval. Sites were chosen on the basis of geographic representativeness, population size and degree of agency participation in law enforcement computerized information networks (See Table 1). Liaison was established with each agency prior to the site visit. The field investigations were conducted from May through September 1974.

The focus of the field work was on identifying current law enforcement practices and problems relating to the investigative use of serial numbers in connection with property that could be checked in the NCIC Article File. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to examine the reporting, investigative and property custodial procedures at each of the agencies visited. In addition, it was necessary to trace the reporting process from the source (initial burglary/theft report), through the agency computer information system, to the final entry into the NCIC Article File.

Data gathering was accomplished by means of a survey instrument* which was developed by IACP staff prior to the actual site visit. The instrument was designed to elicit specific quantitative information concerning:

Article File Use

- number of entries or inquiries made into the Article File
- types of articles most often queried
- status of prior entries into the system

*See Appendix A.

TABLE 1 - FIELD INVESTIGATION SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Field Investigation Sites	UCR Data			**System Data				Impact	Region	Population	Response to IACP Proposal		
	Property Crime	Burglary	Theft	NCIC Interface	Local	None	Routine Pawnshop Queries				City	Region	Population
Municipalities:													
Baltimore City P.D.	3.0K	1.3K	1.1K	X				X	S.A.	905K	X		
Portland, Oregon P.D.	3.9K	1.8K	1.5K		X			X	P.	382K			X
Omaha, Neb. P.D.	2.7K	.9K	1.1K	X					W.N.C.	347K			X
San Diego, Cal. P.D.	3.0K	1.3K	1.3K		X		X		P.	696K			X
Denver, Colo. P.D.	4.6K	2.0K	1.6K		X			X	M.	514K			X
Dallas, Texas P.D.	3.1K	1.6K	1.0K	X				X	W.S.C.	844K		X	
Chicago, Ill. P.D.	2.2K	.9K	.7K		X				E.N.C.	3,366K			X
Norfolk, Va. P.D.	2.8K	1.2K	1.1K		X		X		S.A.	680K			X
Boston, Mass. P.D.	3.0K	1.1K	.8K	X					N.E.	641K		X	
Kansas City, Mo. P.D.	2.8K	1.4K	.9K	X					W.N.C.	507K	X		
Albuquerque, N.M. P.D.	5.1K	2.4K	2.0K	X					M.	243K			X
Oklahoma City P.D.	2.7K	1.5K	.7K		X		X		W.S.C.	366K			X
El Paso, Texas P.D.	2.7K	1.4K	.6K	X					W.S.C.	322K			X
Salt Lake City P.D.	3.1K	1.2K	1.5K			X			M.	175K			X
Pittsburgh, Penn. P.D.	1.6K	.7K	.4K	X					M.A.	520K			X
Counties:													
Nassau County P.D.	2.0K	.7K	1.0K	X					M.A.	1,422K			X
Hennepin, Minn. County Sheriff's Office	3.1K	1.4K	1.1K	X					W.N.C.	960K			X
Metropolitan Dade County Dept. of Public Safety	4.2K	1.8K	1.8K	X					S.A.	1,287K	X		
Polk County Iowa Sheriff's Office	2.3K	.8K	1.2K	X					W.N.C.	286K			X
DuPage, Ill. County Sheriff's Office	2.2K	.9K	.7K		X				E.N.C.	491K			X
States:													
Michigan State Police	3.2K	1.5K	1.2K	X					E.N.C.	8.8M	X		
Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement	3.3K	1.6K	1.3K	X					S.A.	6.7M	X		
Texas Dept. of Public Safety	2.3K	1.2K	.7K	X					W.S.C.	11.1M		X	
West Virginia Department of Public Safety	.9K	.4K	.4K			X			S.A.	1.7M			X
Oregon State Police	3.1K	1.4K	1.2K		X				P.	2.0M			X

* Teletype Communication allows interface with NCIC.
 ** 1972 Directory of automated Criminal Justice Information Systems.

Agency Organizational Information

- number of persons assigned to NCIC-related activities
- number of persons assigned to investigative activities
- relationship or coordination of various activities related to serially numbered stolen property

Crime Patterns and Trends

- number of burglaries and larcenies reported to the agency
- number of articles recovered
- kinds of articles most often stolen

Agency Interface with Other Computerized Systems

- local
- state
- regional
- national

The survey instrument was organized in four components to correspond with personnel who are usually involved with Article File activity:

1. Investigative Division

- property crimes investigators
- pawnshops and junkyard details
- report review personnel
- youth bureau personnel (bicycles)
- Operation Identification* personnel

2. Computer System Operators and Supervisors

3. Property Room Custodians

4. Legal Advisors

*While beyond the scope of the project, it was decided to briefly examine the various "Operation Identification" activities during the field investigation phase. A detailed account of this review is included in Appendix B.

The questions were structured to permit open-ended interviews with these personnel; however, the design was sufficiently flexible to permit interviews with other personnel as necessary. The total number of interviews conducted in each agency varied, depending on its size and organizational structure.*

During each site visit, project staff interviewed at least one representative of each of the four components. To verify the accuracy of the data several of the same questions were asked of the respondents in all four components. These questions, generally, concerned the type of items most frequently reported stolen, each respondent's familiarity with the practices and procedures regarding use of the Article File.

Each was also asked a number of questions concerning his area of responsibility with respect to the investigative process and Article File activity. For example, the Investigative Division representative was asked for the approximate number of pawn shops, second-hand stores, etc. in the jurisdiction, the type of check (routine or "hot item"**) only) conducted for each stolen article, and the level of cooperation (excellent, good, fair, poor) extended to investigators by pawnshop personnel, second-hand store operators, etc. Property Custodians were asked about the average "shelf life"*** of property under their control and the procedures used to process property prior to auctioning. Systems Operators were asked to indicate the specific file and category codes which should be used when entering information about certain items in the Article File.**** Also, in order to establish baseline data for comparative purposes, operators were asked to supply the number of entries and queries made during April and May 1974.

After each site visit the completed questionnaires were reviewed and tabulated by project staff. At the conclusion of the field investigation phase all data were compiled into the four major categories each corresponding to the questionnaire design. The results of these analyses provide the basis for many of the recommendations for improvement outlined in Section III of this report.

*During each of the 25 investigation site visits, it was apparent that there was a major difference between municipal and large county agencies as contrasted with state and small county agencies. In the municipalities and large counties, many different sections within each agency were involved with the use of serial numbers in investigating lost, stolen or found property. In the state and small county agencies, however, there were far fewer specialized functions and individuals involved. It was also apparent that most state agencies had an additional responsibility beyond reporting and investigating property crimes. This responsibility concerned the monitoring and supervising of NCIC Article File traffic throughout the state. For these reasons, the data presented in the following sections were not arranged according to agency size but rather to the functional categories which were found common to all agencies.

**i.e., valuable items stolen with great frequency (TV sets, stereo equipment, cameras, etc.).

***i.e., the length of time that property is retained in police property rooms.

****These items (e.g., handguns, license plates, tractors, guitars, etc.) were identified during the preliminary analysis of the NCIC activity as being consistently mis-classified by systems operators.

B. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

It should be noted that the results of the questionnaire survey must be interpreted in the context of several important variables, including:

- total number of property crimes reported to the law enforcement agency
- total number of property crimes investigated
- population of the community
- socio-economic characteristics of the community
- size of the law enforcement agency
- caseload of each investigator

In addition, the nature of the survey technique (i.e., informal interviews and conversations with selected agency personnel) may have inadvertently introduced subjectivity as project staff reviewed and analyzed certain non-quantifiable responses.

These limitations notwithstanding, the survey data are valuable in constructing general conclusions about the state-of-the-art of law enforcement use of the NCIC Article File.

Investigative Activity. The utilization of serial numbers in the investigation of stolen property varies considerably from agency to agency. In general, however, obtaining identification numbers is the primary responsibility of the officer receiving the theft, burglary or found property report. Usually a patrol officer completes an incident/offense report and forwards it, after appropriate review, to the investigative unit. This procedure may take from two days to two weeks.

If the officer neglects to list serial numbers on the report, all of the property crime investigators surveyed stated that the victim/owner is recontacted in an effort to obtain this information. If the owner has failed to record the serial numbers of his lost/stolen property the investigator usually suggests that he contact dealers, distributors or manufacturers' representatives to secure the necessary numbers.

The survey revealed that only one-fourth of the investigators themselves initiate direct contact with distributors in an attempt to obtain serial numbers. Sixteen percent of the investigators contact repairmen and only .04 percent routinely contact manufacturers. All respondents indicated that such in-depth investigative inquiry is conducted only in the case of major wholesale thefts (i.e., cargo thefts).

Respondents attributed insufficient follow-up to:

- a lack of cooperation from dealers, distributors, manufacturers, and repairmen when contact is made
- a lack of adequate manpower to undertake such time-consuming effort

- a lack of understanding of how to proceed with the follow-up investigation
- a lack of consistent or sufficient positive results from such activity to warrant expending the necessary manpower and time.

Agency procedures for checking the number of potential fencing facilities* located in the community and the type of investigative check made (i.e., routine or "hot item" only) vary considerably. Few of the agencies surveyed have formalized guidelines outlining the rules and procedures for dealing with second-hand property sales operations.*** The survey showed that working relationships between investigators and these kinds of retailers are most often informal — based primarily on individual agreement developed on a one-to-one basis over long periods of time. The degree of cooperation extended by operators of potential fencing facilities is characterized as ranging from good to non-existent.

Of all possible fencing outlets pawnshops are most frequently checked for stolen items. Flea markets and garage sale activities are checked less frequently in spite of the fact that these appear to be a major outlet for the distribution of stolen merchandise.

Once the serial number of the item has been found, information about the item is entered into the NCIC Article File. While over one-half (58 percent) of the investigative units surveyed have published guidelines detailing the procedures for using the Article File as an investigative tool, informal conversations with these personnel revealed that custom and routine practice sometimes supercede official policy and mandate. For example, the survey revealed that over one-third (39 percent) of the investigative personnel are not notified when item records are purged from the Article File and one-third (33 percent) are not aware of the purge criteria.****

Over one-third (37 percent) of the investigative units contacted do not have the option to re-enter purged items. Those that do are restricted by agency policy which is frequently different from the guidelines found in the NCIC Operating Manual. Monetary value of the item is the most frequently cited local criterion for re-entry.

*e.g., pawnshops, second-hand stores, junkyards, flea markets, auctions, antique dealers, garage sales and repair shops.

**The survey showed that the type of check is generally contingent on the uniqueness or the value of the stolen property.

***All investigative personnel surveyed concurred that their efforts to recover stolen property are frequently hampered by inconsistent state and local statutes which generally regulate only pawnshops sales rather than all second-hand property sales operations. These problems are addressed in the Legislative Report.

****File records on items are retained for the remainder of the calendar year after entry, plus an additional twelve months. NCIC Operating Manual, Part I, p.10.

To illustrate the importance of serial numbers in investigating property crimes, interviewees were asked to list the 15 items most frequently reported stolen* and the percent of these stolen items which have serial numbers. Figure 1 depicts a list of the 15 items most frequently reported stolen.

Figure 2 depicts three items with the greatest and three with the lowest potential availability of serial numbers at the time the original report is made. These data indicate that television sets, stereo equipment and stereo components, while being the items most frequently reported stolen also have the highest potential for recovery. In other words, the recovery potential is closely linked to the availability of serial numbers.

Computer Systems Operators Activity. The survey revealed that the majority (74 percent) of the computer terminal operators receive only on-the-job-training in matters pertaining to NCIC and Article File use. This method of instruction, while perhaps practical in terms of cost, may be detrimental in that operating errors tend to be perpetuated. Uncertainty after these informal training sessions encourages experimentation and inhibits maximum use of the NCIC system as an investigative tool in recovering stolen property.

Another important factor contributing to the inefficient utilization of the NCIC Article File is the lack of interface between the agency computer and the state, regional and national systems. The survey revealed that over one-third of the agencies visited do not automatically and immediately pass local entries on to the NCIC. This deficiency affects the agency's ability to successfully clear stolen property cases since:

- the scope of the search is limited to a local rather than the national file
- local entry precludes inquiry from agencies from other parts of the country.

Moreover, the longer the delay between computer entry and the ability to access data files, the greater the possibility that the property will not be recovered.

All of the terminal operators in the surveyed agencies are provided with some form of written guidance for information system utilization. All have copies of the NCIC Operating Manual, a locally developed manual, a state developed manual, or a combination of these three. Nevertheless, terminal operators are frequently reluctant to refer to these manuals. Bulkiness along with confusing language and format were the most frequently cited reasons for avoiding these operating guides.

The re-entry procedures followed by the terminal operators interviewed during the field investigation phase vary considerably. As a rule, re-entry is generally achieved within 14 days after receipt of the purge. In spite of the fact that official policy dictates that investigators should make the decision to re-enter purged items, 54 percent of all terminal operators surveyed indicated that this decision is

*It should be noted that only one-half (56 percent) of the investigation divisions surveyed maintain a current listing of stolen property. Others must rely on memory and investigative experience to produce such a list.

made by an individual other than the investigators. Where such practice has been followed for a long period of time, new members of the organization may be unaware of the official policy (or may believe that custom is official policy) and thus perpetuate the error.

The survey revealed that over one-third (38 percent) of the terminal operators are correctly clearing the file of information describing stolen articles, however, an almost equal number (33 percent) are not. These operators simply allow the retention time to lapse, thereby automatically purging the recovered item rather than initiating the clearance.

In order to review the article categorization file and to better understand the agency rationale for specific entry criteria, a list of 24 items* was presented to terminal operators during the course of the interview. Table 2 depicts the appropriate category for each Article File item, along with the categories selected for these 20 items by terminal operators. With few exceptions, there was a wide variety of categorization for each item. Individually, the entry criteria were logical but inconsistent. The NCIC system will not operate at maximum efficiency unless all participants follow the same entry criteria.

To illustrate, consider the following examples:

- Automobile license plates and tractors (Vehicle File) and hand gun (Gun File) were included in the list. All (100 percent) of the systems operators correctly identified the appropriate entry criteria for these items. Credit cards, which are currently not permitted to be entered into NCIC were inappropriately categorized in the "P" category by all agencies.
- The survey also showed that confusion exists with the proper entry of lawnmowers and tractors. If they are motor-driven and designed to carry an operator, these items should be entered in the Vehicle File.**
- Finally, almost one-half (48 percent) of the terminal operators indicated they had never seen any NCIC Quality Control Memos.*** This may indicate that these documents are received at an administrative or supervisory level and are not being transmitted to the operating personnel most in need of such information.

*Only 20 of these items meet Article File entry criteria.

**Correct NCIC entry of credit cards, lawnmowers, and tractors was clarified in the July 1974 issue of the NCIC Newsletter.

***Distributed by NCIC to those agencies that, during a given period of time, consistently make inappropriate or incorrect entries in the system. These memos serve to insure efficient utilization of the system and, as a management tool, to point out the need for additional training of terminal operators.

Property Custodian Activity. Items in police custody constitute a major problem for law enforcement, primarily as it relates to warehousing, inventorying, and merchandising of recovered and found property. The problem is further compounded by an inability to return property to the owner because the recovered items cannot be properly identified either by the agency or the owner.

The survey revealed that nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of agency property room personnel do not query the NCIC system* to determine the theft status of an item at the time the item is sent to the property room. Failure to fully utilize this capability has an inevitable result: found and recovered property are not being returned to owners in a timely fashion. Similarly, over one-half (63 percent) of property room personnel surveyed neglect to query the NCIC prior to auctioning property. In these cases, the possibility of auctioning stolen property is compounded.

Legal Advisors. Questions asked of legal advisors concerned actual or pending legislation in the area of serially numbered property. Sixty-five percent of those contacted indicated their agency was involved in some form of state or local legislation related to the identification of stolen property. Based on the reluctance to produce drafts of such legislation, it would appear that these activities are still primarily in the conceptual or planning stages. A more detailed discussion of legislation dealing with serialized property is contained in the Legislative Report that was prepared as part of this project. The Legislative Report and model statute were submitted to the funding agency in January 1975.

C. SUMMARY

A review of these data collected during the Field Investigation phase supports the initial hypothesis that the NCIC Article File is not being utilized to its full capacity by the law enforcement community.

The survey revealed that the typical agency relies on the patrol officer assigned to the initial investigation to obtain serial numbers of all stolen property and to record these numbers in the case report. However, serial numbers are obtained in less than half of all thefts and burglaries reported to the police. Without verifying the uniqueness of the numbers provided, these items are selectively** entered into local or regional information systems, and even more selectively, into the NCIC Article File.

A copy of the initial report is then forwarded to the investigative unit that conducts the follow-up investigation. If serial numbers are not listed in the report, an investigator will contact the property owner/victim and suggest that the owner attempt to obtain the serial numbers by contacting dealers, distributors, repairmen, or manufacturers. Serial numbers are obtained less than one percent of the time through this method. Direct contact with dealers, distributors, or manufacturers by the investigator only occurs with items of extremely high value,

*The survey revealed, however, that agencies that access local or regional information systems do query the NCIC system to determine theft status.

**Selectivity is generally based on locally established informal policy concerning those items which are and are not to be entered into computerized information systems networks.

ARTICLE FILE CATEGORIZATION

TABLE 2

Item	Appropriate Category	Inappropriate Categories Selected	Percentage Categorization In Error
Adding Machines	O	None	0
Amplifiers	R	M	20
Bicycles	B	S, Y*	42
Calculators	O	E	5
Cassette Tape Recorders	R	None	0
Food Stamps	Y	P, R	50
Golf Clubs	S	O, P, Y	15
Guitars	M	R	5
Gun Scopes	V	C, E, H, S	73
Lawnmowers	E	H, P, S, Y	42
Motor Vehicle Inspection Stickers	Y	P, R	100
Outboard Motors	S	None	0
Parking Meters	E	Y	75
Police Credentials	Y	P	45
Sewing Machines	H	E, O	10
Sheep	Y	O, P	18
Television Sets	R	None	0
Typewriters	O	E	4
Vacuum Cleaners	H	E, P, S	15
Xerox Machines	O	Y	4

*While the Y categorization is not specifically incorrect for these items, it is an inappropriate categorization. Programming for the Article File facilitates the automatic search of the Y category as well as the inquired category on all items. This would result in a system hit on an item entered in the Y category even though the originating agency used the incorrect category.

unique items, or in the case of shipment or cargo thefts. The decision to enter a serial number that has been located is based primarily on local custom and tradition, which tends to exclude any item not previously entered.

Once an item is entered into the system, the investigator is usually unaware of the length of time that the item is retained in the system and is not informed when the retention time has expired. If the investigator is notified that an item is about to be purged from the system, he usually does not have the option to re-enter the item.

In cases where property has been recovered, information on the item is retained in the file until it is automatically purged. In those cases where found property bearing an appropriate serial number is turned over to police property custodians, little effort is made to query the Article File about that item either at intake or prior to its being auctioned.

The results of these practices are obvious:

- limited activity in all phases of stolen property investigation
- limited activity in the storage and retrieval components of the NCIC information system
- limited activity in the use of serial numbers in all phases of stolen property investigation
- limited activity in the storage and retrieval components of the NCIC information system.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the specific problems and findings noted during the course of the 25 field investigations. These findings can be viewed as representing the state-of-the-art of these agencies' utilization of the NCIC information system for investigating serially numbered stolen property. While many problems can be addressed within each agency, other solutions will depend on a nationwide multifaceted effort. Moreover, it should be recognized that the solution to many of these problems is beyond the purview of the criminal justice system. For example:

- the manufacturer who fails to serially number his product;
- the manufacturer who inadequately serializes his product;
- the property owner who fails to keep accurate records of all items,

are all indirectly responsible for the current under-utilization of the NCIC Article File. Therefore, any plan which will result in the improved use of serial numbers in connection with the investigation of lost, found or stolen property will require the cooperation of manufacturers, property owners, local and state law enforcement agencies and the NCIC. Specific recommendations for change are outlined in Section III of this report.

The field investigation phase demonstrated that current under-utilization to the NCIC Article File can be attributed to the following problem areas:

1. Absence of serial numbers. There are no serial numbers on many items which qualify for entry into the Article File. Many inexpensive items (e.g., most tires, cameras, hand tools and bicycles) are simply batch numbered or date coded for warranty purposes and bear no unique product identification number.

2. Duplicate serial numbers. There are duplicate serial numbers used on similar brands and models produced by a single manufacturer. Many manufacturers repeat a series of serial numbers after a specified time interval. Also the same serial number may be used on different models of the same product produced by the same manufacturer. Therefore, for some manufacturers, the serial number is unique only when used in combination with the model number. In these cases, the duplication of serial numbers on different models makes it imperative that both the model number and the serial number be entered into the NCIC system in order to obtain a unique product identification number.

3. Impermanently affixed serial numbers. Serial numbers are not permanently affixed to many items. Manufacturers simply attach adhesive serial number labels to less expensive products. These labels are easily removed, thereby obliterating product identification. On some items, the number is more permanently affixed in another location, however, property owners and police are frequently unaware of these secondary locations.

4. Confusion between serial, model and lot numbers. Many products have two or more numbers affixed in different places. It is easy to mistake a lot or model number for a serial number. It is therefore necessary for property owners to differentiate between the numbers affixed to products when listing property records. Also, police must necessarily become more familiar with the various numbering systems used by manufacturers.

5. Public apathy concerning recording serial numbers. Law enforcement agencies report that apathy is one of their most serious problems in investigating property thefts. Property owners seldom have accurate, descriptive records of stolen property, including serial numbers. Although a growing number of people are participating in some form of "Operation Identification," too often these programs do not include the recording of factory serial numbers by property owners or police — numbers which are necessary for tracing stolen property in computer information systems.

6. Unrecognized investigative potential of serial numbers. The full potential of serial numbers is seldom exploited by law enforcement agencies in investigating stolen property. Too often the detailed identification of property is considered to be the duty of the "Pawn Detail" or other specialized unit within the investigative unit.

7. Insufficient intra-agency coordination. Lost, found, stolen, recovered, and pawned items may fall within the purview of several different units within the agency. Poor communication and coordination between these sections can inhibit the prompt recording and identification of stolen property and the return of this property to the victim/owner.

8. Disproportionate ratio of personnel assigned to property custody rooms and investigative activity. It was noted during most of the field visits that, as the stolen property recovery rate increased, so did the number of personnel assigned to storing, processing, and auctioning activities. By contrast, most agencies visited did not reflect a corresponding increase of investigators assigned to property crimes, pawnshops, and second-hand sales operations. In some cases, there was actually a decrease of personnel in these activities.

9. Confusion in law enforcement agencies concerning NCIC entry criteria. These misunderstandings generally concern the type and dollar value of the articles which may be entered. The guidelines for entering item information into the Article File are contained in the NCIC Operating Manual. Some agencies have expanded these guidelines to include information on articles which should not be in the system, such as credit cards. Other agencies have imposed more restrictive guidelines, which limit the entry criteria to information on several specific items. Also, different criteria are sometimes imposed for entering articles into local systems. These variations in entry criteria are counter-productive to efficient system utilization.

10. Inadequate training of systems terminal operators. The primary method of instruction for these operators is "on-the-job-training." While in most cases this training has been satisfactory, there are shortcomings. Departmental decisions about what to include or exclude from the file and in what category to place articles have been handled informally. In some cases, these instructions have been incorrect. A major contributing factor to this "informal" training appears to be the bulk and complexity of system operating manuals themselves.

11. Lack of confidence in the Article File utility. Policemen lack confidence in the system because, in their opinion, it has produced very few "valid hits." More often, the system produces no hits or false hits. This lack of confidence is somewhat justified, not through any fault of the system, but more a fault of the problems of effective serial number utilization.

12. Delays in use of the Article File. There are delays in entering information about articles into the file. Many different reasons were noted. The length of time from a report of theft or recovery to its entry into the Article File ranges from a few hours minimum to a maximum of nine months. The causes for delay are primarily the result of departmental laxness, confusing administrative procedures, and the problems of verifying and tracing the serial number reported to the police. Also, the responsibility for entering items may rest with a few individuals who are faced with a large backlog of reports. As a result of these entry delays, field investigation revealed that some departments make inquiries on stolen items prior to their entry into the file by another agency.

13. Local policy supercedes NCIC entry criteria. Local guidelines sometimes prohibit the entry of information on articles which otherwise meet NCIC entry criteria. Some departments maintain very restricted lists of items which are the only items that may be entered into the Article File. These restrictions on entry criteria are counter-productive to efficient, uniform system utilization.

14. Inconsistency in re-entry of purged items. It is NCIC policy that agencies have the option to re-enter items into the file. The ideal method is for individual investigators to decide which articles should be retained and which should be purged from the system. In reality, it is not always feasible to contact each investigator,

or review each specific case. As a result, departments have established arbitrary guidelines for re-entry. Usually a designated individual makes the re-entry determination. This procedure cannot be faulted except that it is not universally practiced by all agencies.

15. Inadequately distributed purge lists. Participating agencies in a regional or state network do not always receive the Article File purge list. Some departments were unaware of the existence of the purge list. It was found that lists were normally retained at the state level or that only the larger agencies were contacted in regard to re-entering articles.

16. Inadequate processing of recovered property. Personnel who staff property rooms sometimes accept serially numbered property without insuring that an inquiry has been made with the NCIC or some other computerized information system. This property is stored and, in some cases, auctioned without adequate verification of its status.

17. Lack of uniform legislation monitoring second-hand retail operations. There is a lack of comprehensive, uniform legislation which regulates and controls all second-hand activities and other real or potential fencing operations. While many localities have ordinances and laws pertaining to pawn activities, most do not have similar legislation regulating second-hand stores, junkyards, flea markets, auctions, and garage sales.

18. Limited quality control within the NCIC system. The NCIC Article File presently does not have the capability to reject Article File entries which may be incorrectly categorized but which are properly coded. The file accepts erroneous entries as long as they are in the proper format. Also, if information on articles has not been placed in categories, the file will accept the information and place it coincidentally according to the first letter in the name of the article. As examples of erroneous coding, "rifles" appear in the miscellaneous category of the Article File (YRIFLE), "tractors" appear in the same category (YTRACTOR), and "television sets" appear in the personal accessories category (PTELEV). As examples of coincidental errors, information on "police badges" appears in the bicycle file (BADGE), "lawnmowers" in the musical instrument file (MOWER), and "outboard motors" in the office machine file (OUTBOARD).

19. Failure to reclaim recovered property. While the owners of recovered property are often identified through effective police use of serial numbers, because of apathy, inertia, or other reasons, these owners fail to reclaim the property.

SECTION II: DEMONSTRATION PHASE

The Demonstration Phase of the project consisted of the entry and query of property items which have a high probability of theft but which are not currently being entered or queried by law enforcement agencies on a routine basis. Selection of the three categories of items used in the demonstration — pawned items, items stored in police property rooms, and stolen bicycles — was based upon data collected during the Field Investigation phase of the project.

The purpose of the demonstration was to determine whether or not routine entry and inquiry had any impact upon the recovery rate of stolen items which are reported to the police in great numbers. The results of the demonstration are discussed in greater detail below. Final recommendations specify how to maximize the use of the Article File and the NCIC system.

A. METHODOLOGY

The results of the Field Investigation phase indicated that there are three categories of items which are not routinely entered or queried in the NCIC Article File:

- Stolen Bicycles
- Pawned Items
- Items Stored in Police Property Rooms.

Although some agencies do enter and query such data selectively, most agencies do not, and none of the agencies surveyed does so routinely.

To achieve the objective of the Demonstration Phase an experimental sampling process was undertaken in three law enforcement agencies. This process consisted of entering data into the Article File describing items which are not entered routinely (e.g., stolen bicycles) and querying the Article File for records on items which are not routinely queried (e.g., pawned items and items in police property rooms).

Three sites were selected for implementation of the Demonstration Phase of the project. Selection criteria included:

- Previously Visited. The sites were selected from the list of sites previously visited during the field investigations. (See Table 1).
- Population Base. A major metropolitan area having a relatively high property crime rate.
- Agency Size. A relatively large agency having specialized investigative, pawn, computer information system, and property custodial activities.

- Positive Attitude. A demonstrated positive attitude, an understanding of the project, and a desire to improve current practices and procedures dealing with property crime investigation.
- Proficiency. A demonstrated ability to deal with property crimes in terms of the investigation, pawn, computer information systems, and property custodial activities.

The demonstration site visits resulted in the initial entry of bicycle theft data by each agency — a total of over 1,000 stolen bicycles. A procedure was also established to enable NCIC personnel to evaluate the outcome of these entries at a later date.

The results obtained in the two other categories are presented for each demonstration site separately and are depicted in terms of the number of inquiries, the number of system hits,* the percentage of system hits to inquiries, and the relationship to the national average.** Automatic notification of hits for this period resulted in 3,054 notifications on 730,123 inquiries. These figures produce a mean average of .41 percent. All results obtained were compared to this average.

It was the initial plan to control the demonstration by entering the same number of inquiries for the same period of time during each of the site visits. This plan was abandoned, however, because of local variations in records-keeping practices and the unavailability of certain data. Comparison of available data with the national average appeared to be the most meaningful way to evaluate the demonstration results.

Demonstration Site A. The data collected during the demonstration site visit are categorized into two groups: a list of pawned items known to the police for the month of August, 1974, and a list of items stored in the agency's property room for the period, August through November, 1974.

Pawned Items. A list of 336 items was developed from agency records with the assistance of agency personnel. The list was processed to facilitate off-line inquiry later at NCIC Headquarters.

The list consisted of data on a wide variety of items including television sets, stereo equipment and components, and other items identified during the Field Investigation phase as having a high potential for theft.

*System hits are defined as positive when the serial number, make, and brand of the inquired item match data previously entered in the Article File.

**The national average of system hits used for this experiment was based upon data collected by NCIC for the period January through October 1974.

Property Room Items. A list of 301 items for the period August through November 1974 was obtained. This list was similarly processed to permit off-line runs later at NCIC Headquarters.

Results. Four-hundred-fifty-six of the total 637 items identified at the demonstration site were queried off-line at the NCIC Headquarters in mid-January 1974.* Of these, 195 were pawned items and 261 represented items stored in property rooms.

Pawned item inquiries revealed one system hit on a check writer. Property room item inquiries revealed 28 system hits: one on an adding machine, (the entry having been made by another agency within the state) another on an outboard motor (the entry having been made by an agency from another state) and 26 on bicycles. The latter represented entries made by another unit within the same agency.

These 29 system hits reflected an average of 6.4 percent. This represents a significant increase in the percentage of system hits when compared with the national average of .41 percent. The difference represents more than a 15 to one ratio increase in system hits in Agency A. These data are depicted in Table 3.

Demonstration Site B. Two types of data were obtained during the visit to demonstration site B: a list of pawned items known to the police for the period January through December, 1974, and a list of items stored in the agency's property room for the same period of time.

Pawned Items. A list of 1,575 items for the period January 1 through December 31 1974 was obtained from the Burglary Section. This list comprised high value items having the greatest potential for theft as noted during the Field Investigations. These items include: television sets, stereo equipment, cameras, business machines, etc.

It should be noted that the agency at the present time routinely queries its "pawned" list, but only through its regional computer information system. This regional system includes twelve municipal agencies. The system links these agencies with a state information system, the National Law Enforcement Teletype System (NLETS), the state's Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Property Room Items. A list of 295 items for the period January 1 through December 31, 1974 was obtained. From this list, computer cards were prepared on site by agency personnel. These cards were turned over to project staff's NCIC liaison for query later at NCIC Headquarters.

Results. The off-line query of the total 1,870 items identified at the demonstration site was conducted at NCIC Headquarters in late January 1975.

*Technical difficulties related to programming, key-punching, and processing resulted in an inability to query the total 637 items.

The pawned item inquiries resulted in six system hits. One was on a tape recorder (the data had been entered by FBI Headquarters). Four were on cameras (the data had been entered by an agency from another state, a state agency, and two different FBI field offices). The sixth system hit was on a typewriter (the entering agency could not be determined at the time this report was completed).

Property room item inquiries revealed two system hits. One was on an adding machine (the data had been entered by an agency from another state) and the other was on a bicycle (the data had been entered by another agency within the state).

These eight system hits reflect an average of .42 percent which equals the national average of .41 percent. The significance of this, however, is that without the subsequent query activity conducted during this demonstration, the agency would reflect a system hit percentage below the national average. These data are depicted in Table 4.

Demonstration Site C. The data collected during the demonstration site visit are categorized in two groups: a list of pawned items known to the police for the period December 1974 through January 1975, and a list of items stored in the agency's property room for the period October 1974 through January 1975.

Pawned Items. A list of 454 items for the period December 1974 through January 1975 was obtained from the Pawnshop Records Unit. This list was given to project staff's NCIC liaison for key-punching. This list comprised high valued items having the greatest potential for theft as revealed by the Field Investigation survey. These included: television sets, stereo equipment, cameras, tape recording equipment, etc. It should be noted that the agency routinely queries items on its "pawned" list but only through its local and state information systems. No NCIC query of these items is currently being undertaken.

Property Room Items. A list of 343 items for the period October 1974 through January 1975 was obtained from the Property Bureau. This list was given to project staff's NCIC liaison for key-punching.

Results. An off-line query of 797 items identified at the demonstration site was conducted in early February 1975 at NCIC Headquarters. Of these, 454 represented pawned items and 343 were property room items.

Pawned item inquiries revealed three system hits — all were on radios. Two of these had been entered by different agencies from another state; the other reflected an entry by an FBI field office in another state.

Property room item inquiries revealed 32 system hits. Of these, 27 were on items that had been entered by different units within the same agency. These included: television sets, stereo equipment, power tools, musical instruments, cameras, etc. The remaining five items included a record player, a television set, an electric saw, and a stereo set. Information on each had been entered by agencies from four different states. Information on the fifth item, a stereo set, had been entered by an FBI field office in another state.

These 32 system hits reveal an average of 4.4 percent system hits. This represents a significant increase in the percentage of system hits when compared with the national average of .41 percent. The difference represents more than a ten-to-one increase. These data are depicted in Table 5.

B. SUMMARY

Collectively, in all sites there were 72 system hits on 3,123 inquiries. These figures produce a mean average of 2.3 percent, and represent a significant increase in the percentage of system hits when compared with the national average of .41 percent. The difference represents more than a five-to-one ratio increase in system hits. These data are depicted in Table 6.

C. CONCLUSION

The most significant conclusion that can be drawn from the Demonstration Phase of the Serially Numbered Stolen Property Project is that routine, repeated inquiry of the NCIC Article File significantly increases the "hit" potential. Conversely, irregular, inconsistent use of this computerized information system yields irregular, inconsistent results. As an investigative tool, therefore, maximum utilization of the NCIC Article File cannot be over-stressed.

DEMONSTRATION SITE A

TABLE 3

Activity	Number of Transactions	Number of System Hits	Percentage of Hits to Transactions
Pawned Item Queries	195	1	.51
Police Property Room Item Queries	261	28	10.7
TOTAL	456	29	4.4

DEMONSTRATION RESULTS

TABLE 4

Activity	Number of Transactions	Number of System Hits	Percentage of Hits to Transactions
Pawned Item Queries	1,575	6	.38
Police Property Room Item Queries	295	2	.68
TOTAL	1,870	8	.42

DEMONSTRATION SITE C

TABLE 5

Activity	Number of Transactions	Number of System Hits	Percentage of Hits to Transactions
Pawned Item Queries	454	3	0.66
Police Property Room Item Queries	343	32	9.3
TOTAL	797	35	4.4

DEMONSTRATION RESULTS

TOTAL INQUIRIES

TABLE 6

Inquiries	System Hits	Percentage of Hits to Queries	National Average	Ratio Demo Results to National Average
3,123	72	2.3	.41	5.1

SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

During the course of this project a number of problems relating to the use of the NCIC Article File in investigating serially numbered stolen property have been identified. Correspondingly, suggestions for improvement are offered. Implementation of these suggestions should help to eliminate or significantly reduce many of the problems which contribute to the under-utilization of the NCIC and the Article File.

Problem solving, however, is not an easy task — especially when the solution involves the coordinated efforts of many elements of society; law enforcement agencies, state legislators, manufacturers, insurance companies, the news media and the consumer.

The following suggestions and recommendations represent an effort to develop guidelines to maximize the use of serial numbers in the investigation of lost, stolen and recovered property. These guidelines may eventually form the foundation for the increased cooperation required to improve this critical area of the criminal justice system.

1. Model Statute. The enactment of the Model Statute will help to reduce the problem of traffic in products without serial numbers, with duplicate numbers, with impermanent numbers, and with possession of products with altered or removed serial numbers. State legislators should be encouraged to enact legislation similar to the recommended Model Statute.

2. Property Identification Manual. The use of the Property Identification Manual will aid investigators in locating serial numbers on a wide variety of items currently manufactured. The manual will enable investigators to determine what combination of model, lot, and serial number constitutes unique product identification and will provide sources of further inquiry concerning product identification. Law enforcement administrators should encourage property crime investigators to use the manual to maximize the investigative potential of serial numbers.

3. Increase Training. The expansion of recruit and in-service training programs will help to better prepare key sworn and civilian personnel who perform tasks related to investigation, computer systems operation and property room activities. Training sessions should combine classroom time as well as practical, simulation exercises. Subjects covered in any overall program should include material about criminal justice information systems (particularly the NCIC Article File) their utility, capabilities, applications and interface. Material about product identification through serial numbers and their significance in property crime investigation should also be stressed.

4. NCIC Policy and Procedure Review. A complete review of policy and procedure employed at the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal levels will help to insure consistent and coordinated directives relating to operating practices and systems interface. Such reevaluation should help to eliminate many problems

related to the inability to promptly transmit information between agencies and between divisions within an agency. Improvements in policy and procedure will help reduce problems related to the inappropriate categorization of entries in the NCIC Article File, unnecessary and excessive entry delays, the failure to promptly clear recovered property, and the failure to cancel erroneous or inaccurate entries from information systems. Agencies at all levels must insure that local policy and procedures are compatible with the entire computer information system — local, regional, state and national.

5. Reassessment of Personnel Assignments. Law enforcement management should reassess their priorities and establish guidelines for the assignment of sworn personnel. It appears that because of the increased volume of activity of Police Property Rooms, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of sworn personnel assigned to the storage, warehousing, inventorying, and merchandising of property, often at the cost of a reduction of personnel assignments in other agency components, most significantly, the investigative duties (e.g., property crime investigators, and pawnshop and second-hand details.) It would appear that a more efficient means of reducing the volume of property storage activity would be to place an emphasis on developing better investigative techniques (e.g., increased use of the Article File) and devoting more manpower to the investigative functions of an agency. The results should be more efficient identification, recovery and return of stolen property to owners.

6. Reassessment of Property Room Activities. Agencies should make a complete reassessment of their practices related to the storage, warehousing, merchandising, inventory, and disposition of goods in police property rooms. In many agencies the property room is a forgotten entity where personnel may at times be assigned for disciplinary reasons. Huge volumes of property, the dollar value of which often rivals that of private industry inventories, are often efficiently warehoused and managed, but items are rarely returned to the owner. Although the need to retain evidence may be closely linked to legal considerations, an effort should be made to return victims' property whenever possible. The use of photographs, consistent with court approval, will help in reducing the need to retain physical evidence, which is frequently held throughout a lengthy appeal process.

7. Public Information Programs. The expansion of public information and education programs will help to focus attention on the seriousness of the problems related to stolen property (e.g., public apathy, the apparent indifference of manufacturers and insurance companies, and the inadequacies of "Operation Identification" programs). Information and education programs should be well-publicized in the news media in order to reach the schools, civic organizations, and public interest groups. Operation Identification programs should be administered and operated in a logical, coordinated fashion. Efforts should be undertaken to bring about the cooperation of manufacturers and the insurance industry to help police deal effectively with the problems related to serially numbered stolen property.

A P P E N D I X A

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

(FIELD INVESTIGATION PHASE)

THE NCIC ARTICLE FILE:

AN INVESTIGATION AND DEMONSTRATION OF THE USE OF SERIAL
NUMBERS IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION OF SERIAL PROPERTY ITEMS

NAME OF AGENCY _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ COUNTY _____

STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

NAME OF AGENCY CHIEF _____

REPORT PREPARED BY _____

TITLE _____

DATES OF VISIT _____

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY

1. List the authorized and existing number of full-time employees in the Department.

	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>Existing</u>
Sworn Personnel	_____	_____
Civilian Personnel	_____	_____
Cadets	_____	_____
<u>Total:</u>	_____	_____

2.* Indicate what activity investigates stolen property, Detective Bureau _____, Detective Squad _____, Investigations Section _____, Other _____.

3. Indicate composition of the investigative activity.

- _____ Inspector
- _____ Deputy Chief
- _____ Major
- _____ Captain
- _____ Lieutenant
- _____ Sergeant
- _____ Corporal
- _____ Patrolman
- _____ Civilian
- _____ Other _____
(Specify)

*If there is no separate investigative activity, use the patrol division or whatever division investigates stolen property.

4. How are cases referred to the investigative activity? Reports, forms, complaints, other _____.

5. If sample copies of referral forms are available, obtain one of each.

6. What do investigators do routinely to secure serial numbers not available on referrals? (contact owner _____, contact dealer _____, contact distributor _____, contact repairmen _____, Other _____).

7. What are the local procedures for checking the following.

	# Of Stores	Type of check Routine, Hot Item, Other	Owners cooperation Excellent, Good Fair, Poor
a. Pawnshops	_____	_____	_____
b. Second- hand stores	_____	_____	_____
c. Junkyards	_____	_____	_____
d. Flea markets	_____	_____	_____
e. Auctions	_____	_____	_____
f. Antique dealers	_____	_____	_____
g. Garage sales	_____	_____	_____
h. Repair shops	_____	_____	_____

8. Are these activities mentioned in 7 above operating in surrounding communities which present a problem? Yes _____ No _____ If so, what are the problems? _____

13. At what point in the investigative process are items entered into the NCIC Article File?

14. Is written guidance to investigators published outlining procedures for entering items into the NCIC Article File? Yes ___ No ___ If so, obtain a copy.

15. Are investigators notified when stolen property items are purged from computer files? Yes ___ No ___.

16. Do investigators know the NCIC retention (purge) criteria of one year, plus remainder of present calendar year? Yes ___ No ___.

17. How do investigators feel about the length of time items are retained in the Article File?

_____ excessive
_____ insufficient
_____ sufficient

18. Do investigators have the option to reenter items? Yes ___ No ___ If so, approxiamtely how often is this done? ____%. Under what circumstances?

19. Ask investigators to rank the 15 Article File items in 9 above from those having the best chance of a hit in the computer files to those having the worst.

20. How many reports of stolen property were made to police during:

	Burglaries	Larcenies
April 1974	_____	_____
May 1974	_____	_____

SYSTEMS OPERATORS

1. Are terminal operators specifically designated for this job? Yes ___ No ___

2. Identify the terminal operators.

- _____ Captain
- _____ Lieutenant
- _____ Sergeant
- _____ Corporal
- _____ Patrolman
- _____ Civilian
- _____ Policewomen
- _____ Other _____
(Specify)

2a. Describe the training program for terminal operators, i.e., classes, practical training exercises, on-the-job training, none.

3. What Interface Systems are available to the department?

Indicate Name of System

- _____ NCIC
- _____ Interstate
- _____ Intrastate
- _____ Inter-community
- _____ Local community only
- _____ Other _____
(Specify)
- _____ None

4. What written guidance is available to terminal operators?

- _____ NCIC Operating Manual
- _____ Other Manuals _____ (specify)
- _____ Other Written Guidance _____ (specify)

5. Are items which are entered into local systems automatically passed to NCIC? Yes ___ No ___ If not, what differences exist?

6. If NCIC Operating Manual is used, is it posted with all twenty (20) applicable revisions? Yes ___ No ___

7. If a local manual and the NCIC Operating Manual are used, are the two compatible? Yes ___ No ___ If not, what discrepancies were noted?

8. What is the agency identifier (ORI)? _____

9. How many Article File entries have been made as indicated?

Type of Transaction	April 1974	May 1974
EA	_____	_____
MA	_____	_____
XA	_____	_____
QA	_____	_____
LA	_____	_____
CA	_____	_____
ZA	_____	_____

10. Is a copy of the NCIC purged items printout available? Yes ___ No ___.

11. How many items from the above printout were reentered? _____.

12. What is the agency's policy regarding the reentry of purged items? _____

13. Who makes the decision to reenter items? _____

14. When are items reentered into the system? _____

14a. What are the criteria for making CA entries? _____

15. How do systems operators feel about the length of time articles are retained in the Article File?

_____ excessive
 _____ insufficient
 _____ sufficient

16. Where is the system(s) located? _____.

17. How long has the system(s) been operational _____.

18. Do police or cadet training classes routinely observe terminal operations?
 Yes ___ No ___ If so, how often? _____.

19. Are Article File entries made during this training? Yes ___ No ___.

20. Has local FBI representative been present during training? Yes ___ No ___.

21. In what file and/or category are the following items placed by the terminal operator?

ITEM	FILE	CATEGORY
Handgun	_____	_____
Auto license plate	_____	_____
Tractor	_____	_____
Guitar	_____	_____
Amplifier	_____	_____
Cassette tape recorder	_____	_____
Portable television	_____	_____
Bicycle	_____	_____
Outboard motor	_____	_____
Calculator	_____	_____
Lawn mower	_____	_____

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>FILE</u>	<u>CATEGORY</u>
Gun scope		
Sewing machine		
Typewriter		
Vacuum cleaner		
Golf clubs		
Adding machine		
Sheep		
Xerox machine		
Police credentials		
Credit cards		
Parking meter		
Motor vehicle inspection stickers		
Food stamps		

22. What five Article File items have had the best record of hits? List for each system used.

- NCIC
- #1. _____
- #2. _____
- #3. _____
- #4. _____
- #5. _____

23. What five Article File items have had the worst record of hits? List for each system used.

- NCIC
- #1. _____
- #2. _____
- #3. _____
- #4. _____
- #5. _____

24. What five Article File items are easiest to identify, code, and place in categories?

- | <u>ITEM</u> | <u>CATEGORY</u> | <u>BRAND NAME</u> | <u>MODEL</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| #1. _____ | | | |
| #2. _____ | | | |
| #3. _____ | | | |
| #4. _____ | | | |
| #5. _____ | | | |

25. What five Article File items are the most difficult to identify, code, and place in categories?

- | <u>ITEM</u> | <u>CATEGORY</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|
| #1. _____ | |
| #2. _____ | |
| #3. _____ | |
| #4. _____ | |
| #5. _____ | |

26. Are items entered into local computers automatically entered into NCIC? Yes ___ No ___.
27. If the answer to 26 is no, what differences exist in entering items into local computers and the NCIC? _____

28. Have any NCIC quality control memos been received? Yes ___ No ___.
29. Are NCIC Newsletters on file? Yes ___ No ___.
30. Is there a procedure for disseminating information in NCIC Newsletters to terminal operators? Yes ___ No ___.
31. What is the average time between inquiry and response from the NCIC Article File?
 Less than 30 seconds 30 seconds - 1 minute 1 to 5 minutes 5 to 10 minutes
 10 to 15 minutes 15 to 30 minutes 30 to 60 minutes Longer than 60 minutes
32. Is instruction given about the NCIC in police and/or cadet training classes? Yes ___ No ___.
33. Who gives the instructions? _____
34. Are copies of instructional materials used in classes available? Yes ___ No ___.
35. Is there a local "operation identification" or similar operation in effect? Yes ___ No ___.
36. If so, has it been effective? Yes ___ No ___
 How? i.e., reduced burglaries Yes ___ No ___
 Reduced larcenies Yes ___ No ___
 Improved identification of property Yes ___ No ___
 Improved recovery of property Yes ___ No ___

37. Is there a local program to notify police of unoccupied dwellings? Yes ___ No ___ If so, has it been effective in reducing burglaries? Yes ___ No ___.
38. What does this agency believe to be the most difficult problem in identifying stolen property? _____

39. What does this agency believe to be the most difficult problem in the computerized reporting of stolen property? _____

40. Diagram the flow of information from the report of theft to the patrolman thru entry into NCIC.
41. What is agency reaction to the following possibilities?
 a. Dictionary for police and systems operators to facilitate the categorization of items.
 _____ highly favorable favorable unfavorable
 b. Computer coached responses for police and systems operators to facilitate the categorization of items.
 _____ highly favorable favorable unfavorable

14. How does the custodian feel about the length of time articles are retained in the Article File.

_____ excessive
_____ insufficient
_____ sufficient

AGENCY LEGAL ADVISOR

1. Identify the agency Legal Advisor primarily concerned with stolen property.

Name _____

Title _____

Phone No. _____

2. Is there state or local legislation that is applicable to the identification of stolen property? _____

3. If so, obtain copies.

4. Is there any peripheral legislation which aids or restricts the identification of stolen property? _____

5. What legal problems or innovative legislation is this agency experiencing?

6. Is there any local legislation concerning fencing operations in the receiving of stolen property which aids or inhibits police investigations? Yes ___ No ___

7. If so, obtain copies.

8. Does the agency have a bicycle licensing/registration program? Yes ___ No ___

9. Is it ___ Voluntary/___ mandatory?

10. Has it been successful in reducing bicycle larcenies? Yes ___ No ___

11. Identify Paul Keller and Doug Miller as the IACP points of contact for legislative study portion of Project 2607.

A P P E N D I X B

OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

BACKGROUND

A detailed examination of the various "Operation Identification" programs as they are conducted throughout the country was not within the scope of this project. However, their widespread use and varying claims of relative success indicate that a brief discussion of Operation Identification be included in this report. The conduct of an Operation Identification program in the areas visited during this project varies from the mere loaning of an engraving tool to property owners to elaborate programs requiring detailed property inventories and record keeping. A typical program usually involves the following sequence of events:

- a citizen is loaned an electric etching tool to engrave an identification number on the surface of his valued possessions.
- he prepares a personal property inventory list of the marked items or an identification card with his name, address, and identification number.
- he returns the tool and card or list to the police department.
- he is provided decals to display in the windows and doors of his premises identifying him as a participant in "Operation Identification," and that his personal items are traceable.

TYPES OF NUMBERING SYSTEMS

The following list represents the types of identification numbers which are presently used in the various Operation Identification programs:

- DLN (Drivers License Numbers)
- SSN (Social Security Numbers)
- DPI (Departmental Personal Identifiers)
 - a number assigned to an individual by the local law enforcement agency
- SIN (State Identification Numbers)
 - a number assigned to an individual by the local law enforcement agency forwarded to the state for use in their Article File
- NCIC+ (National Crime Information Center Numbers Plus Five Digits)
 - the marking agency's originating agency identification number (OI) plus an individual number such as a DPI

● PNS (Private Numbering System)

- a commercial effort to provide private business and sometimes individuals with a number to place on all their property. Records are kept of the PNS and property marked for reference and recovery purposes

Of these numbers, the DLN and the SSN are the two most popular. The types of articles which are marked and the recommended location of the marking vary from program to program and are sometimes left to the discretion of the property owner.

None of the numbering techniques listed was considered to be capable of replacing the unique serial numbers placed on articles by the manufacturer. The major shortcoming of all systems observed is that they generally have only local or regional utility with limited ability for use in nationwide computerized information systems. The social security number is often used in Operation Identification programs but has some serious drawbacks. Among these are the estimated two million duplicate numbers, the inability to secure names and addresses from the Social Security Administration, and the lack of follow up records of forwarding addresses for social security number designees. To further compound the problem, engraving the same social security number on more than a single item effectively eliminates unique product identification.

The key requirement for entering information on an item into the NCIC and, therefore, the measure of the effectiveness of the system, is that each item must have a separate, distinct, and unique serial number placed on the item by the manufacturer of that item. For this reason, all current Operation Identification programs are incompatible and, therefore, unacceptable for use in NCIC.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OPERATION IDENTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Unfortunately very few programs have tangible, documented results to justify claims of success regarding the prevention of burglary, reduction of larcenies, improved property identification, and improved ability to trace and return property to its rightful owner. Those programs with the best record keeping and most efficient methods make the following claims:

- Operation Identification appears to have a positive deterrent effect in that the losses experienced by program participants are fewer than those experienced by non-participants.
- There has been a positive effect on police-community relations in communities which have an effective Operation Identification program.

From the standpoint of enhancing the law enforcement capability to investigate the loss or theft of property, and to aid in the return of property to its rightful owner, Operation Identification can be an asset. Operation Identification can be most helpful to law enforcement agencies when provisions are made to include factory serial numbers in any Operation Identification record keeping procedure together

with the number used by the property owner to mark his property. The following suggestions are offered to optimize the effectiveness of Operation Identification programs:


- encourage maximum use of media to publicize the program
- encourage business as well as private citizen participation
- make engraving tools easily accessible to the public, e.g., fire departments, libraries, store fronts, etc.
- require a signed engraving tool loan agreement
- provide simple written instructions to property owners on how to mark their property
- require property owners to provide police with a listing of their property, including factory serial numbers, before furnishing protection decals
- provide property owners with decals to identify their residence/business as being protected by Operation Identification
- encourage surrounding communities and suburbs to participate in existing metropolitan programs rather than starting separate programs
- keep records of burglary, larceny, and returned property of Operation Identification participants for comparison with similar data of non-participants
- make provisions for recording the re-sale or trade-in of property bearing property identification markings.

FIGURE 1

NOTICE

We have joined **OPERATION IDENTIFICATION**

All items of value on these premises have been marked for ready identification and recorded with the Denver Police Department.



CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

ENGRAVING PENCIL LOAN AGREEMENT

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 (Please Print)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER _____ DATE _____

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of one electric engraving pencil which I agree to return within two days, to allow its use by others. (Date of return: _____) The engraver remains the property of the Denver Police Department and I shall be responsible for it and shall not use it for anything other than to mark my valuables against possible theft. I agree to return the engraver in good condition and to call the appropriate office if I cannot return the engraver by the date stated. I further agree to mark all valuable items I own such as sporting goods, tools, appliances, etc., with the identification number listed above. BY RETURNING THIS ENGRAVER AND INVENTORY COPY, I GUARANTEE THAT I HAVE MARKED MY PROPERTY FOR PROMPT IDENTIFICATION.

FIRE STATION TELEPHONE _____

SIGNED: _____

DATE RETURNED: _____

FIGURE 2

THINGS TO
 REMEMBER WHILE
 ENGRAVING:

"OPERATION IDENTIFICATION" INSTRUCTIONS

1 The Denver Police Department has loaned you an electric pencil which can engrave your Social Security Number or Identification Number on almost any substance or surface. The instructions for use of the pencil are enclosed. READ THEM BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

2 Your engraving should be placed as close to the appliance label as possible--- otherwise use the upper right hand corner. A smooth and unpainted metallic surface works best---although paint doesn't present any particular problem. The more solid the backing of the surface, the easier the engraver works. Your number does not have to be in an orderly horizontal line. For example, on a bicycle or motor bike, you can string the numbers out in a vertical line on some tubular part of the vehicle frame. KEEP A CAREFUL RECORD OF EVERYTHING YOU MARK.

3 The underside or back of most appliances offer ample room for engraving your number without defacing the finished side. Don't mark your number on removable parts such as lids, doors, plates, etc. It is advisable that you engrave your number near the manufacturer's serial number plaque. If the item has no serial number (or you can't locate it), mark the item in an easily accessible place--- preferably near the upper right hand corner. Don't mark cameras; binoculars; veneer; telescopes; china; porcelain; glassware; antiques or any item which may be chipped, cracked or broken by action of the pen. Mark only guns which have no serial number.

4 To give you a better idea of the items you should mark for prompt identification, we suggest you include: Adding machines; appliances; bicycles; check protectors; fishing tackle; power lawnmowers; outboard motors; photography equipment; including projectors and enlargers; power tools; radios; record players and stereos; small hand tools; tape recorders; televisions;-----

----typewriters; automobile accessories such as wheel covers; tape decks; radios; batteries etc.; and any other item of value which can easily be taken from your premises. While engraving, don't let the pencil scare you! It makes noise because it vibrates at an average of 7,200 strokes per minute. If you make a mistake---no problem! Just begin again. Remember you will be doing your engraving on the bottom or back of valuable articles where no one but you will know the results. The job doesn't have to be artistic, just readable. With a little organization of what you want to mark, you should be able to complete the job of identification in one or two evenings. Thieves don't steal items they can't sell---engraved identification numbers on your property will make it very difficult if not impossible to be sold.

5 Once you have marked all items of value in your home and recorded each item on the Inventory Record Form, file the form in a safe place. If any of the listed items are stolen or lost, notify your police department immediately. Show the Inventory Form to the investigating officer. This information will increase the law enforcement agencies' chances of recovering your property and returning it to you. As you purchase additional items of value, engrave them at once with your Social Security or Identification Number and add them to your Inventory Record Form. By staying up to date, you increase the chances of recovering your property in the event you are burglarized.

6 When you return the engraving pencil, you will be given four decals which indicate that items of value in your home have been marked for prompt identification by law enforcement agencies. Post these decals immediately on windows and doors that thieves are most likely to enter when you are away. This step is most important because it tells the would-be thief he's wasting his time---You're Protected!

OPERATION I.D.

Identify your property

This is your "Operation I.D." inventor, form. The form is designed for one copy to be filed with the Police Department in addition to your personal copy. Keep your copy in a SAFE PLACE away from your valuables.

The tear-off sheet must be retained by the Police Department where it will be placed in a confidential file. This copy will be used only if we discover your marked and recorded items under suspicious circumstances...; we could conceivably identify articles marked with your numbers before you even know they have been stolen!

To better protect your property and belongings, carefully follow the instructions below:

1. Bear down strongly with a ball point pen (preferably black ink.)
2. Fill in each block as completely as possible (including serial numbers, if any.) List each item by noun, make, and unit size, i.e., (Power Tool) Drill, Sear's, 3/8", Serial Number 000000.
3. Use your Social Security number or your initials with your birth date, i.e., ABC-1-5-30. Businesses should use the firm's name.
4. Mark your property in an obvious location, preferably on the back upper right corner.
5. Take photographs of items that cannot be marked, i.e., paintings, statues, jewelry, etc. Keep one set of photographs with this form in a safe place.
6. When an item is disposed of - or sold, scratch a line across your I.D. number, i.e., ~~ABC-1-8-30~~, upper left to lower right. Give the recipient a bill of sale and inform him that the item is listed with "Operation I.D."

After your property has been scribed and the inventory form completed, you will be issued decals that indicate you have joined "Operation I.D." Place these at your front and rear doors or at other locations where possible break-ins may occur. We also suggest at this

time that you examine the locks on your doors and windows. Consider replacement if necessary with modern locking mechanisms that discourage illegal entry.

Call 534-3280 -- "Operation I.D." answering service for assistance in keeping your inventory up to date. We want to help you and assure your maximum protection.

REMEMBER... if you are victimized, CALL THE POLICE:


EMERGENCY..... 911
Denver Police Dispatcher .. 297-2011

In your burglary report, include a complete description of the stolen items and photos, if applicable.

Inform the officer making the report that you are a member of "Operation I.D." If you have lost or mislaid your inventory list, the tear-off copy is on file and the information is available to the investigators.

Thank you for participating.

TO SERVE



AND PROTECT

DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT
1257 CHAMPA STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80204
PHONE 534-3280
EMERGENCY DIAL 911

Publication made available through L.E.A.A. funds



- Record all serialized valuables.
- Mark all non-serialized property with your number.
- Keep this list in a safe place.

Valuable Property

AUTOMOBILE, MOTORCYCLE, SCOOTER

	Make	Color	Lic. No.	Serial No.
A-1				
A-2				
A-3				
A-4				
A-5				

BICYCLE

	Make	Color	Lic. No.	Frame No.
B-1				
B-2				
B-3				
B-4				
B-5				

GUNS

	Make	Caliber	Serial No.
C-1			
C-2			
C-3			
C-4			
C-5			

TELEVISION, TAPE RECORDER, RADIO, STEREO, etc.

	Item	Make	Serial No.
D-1			
D-2			
D-3			
D-4			
D-5			
D-6			
D-7			
D-8			
D-9			
D-10			

DISHWASHER, STOVE, MIXER, TOASTER, REFRIGERATOR, etc.

	Item	Make	Serial No.
E-1			
E-2			
E-3			
E-4			
E-5			
E-6			
E-7			
E-8			
E-9			
E-10			
E-11			
E-12			
E-13			

CAMERA, BINOCULARS, WATCHES SPORTING GOODS, SEWING MACHINE, etc.

	Item	Make	Serial No.
F-1			
F-2			
F-3			
F-4			
F-5			
F-6			
F-7			
F-8			
F-9			
F-10			
F-11			

POWER TOOLS AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

	Item	Make	Serial No.
G-1			
G-2			
G-3			
G-4			
G-5			
G-6			
G-7			
G-8			
G-9			
G-10			
G-11			
G-12			

Name	_____	_____	_____
	Last	First	Initial
Address	_____		
Zip	_____	Phone	_____
I.D. Number/Name	_____		

OTHER PROPERTY MARKED

	Item	Make	Serial No.
H-1			
H-2			
H-3			
H-4			
H-5			
H-6			
H-7			
H-8			
H-9			
H-10			
H-11			
H-12			
H-13			
H-14			
H-15			
H-16			
H-17			
H-18			
H-19			
H-20			
H-21			
H-22			
H-23			
H-24			
H-25			
H-26			
H-27			
H-28			
H-29			
H-30			
H-31			
H-32			
H-33			
H-34			
H-35			
H-36			
H-37			

HOMEOWNER'S COPY

(Please print plainly.)

FIGURE 4
Valuable Property

AUTOMOBILE, MOTORCYCLE, SCOOTER

	Make	Color	Lic. No.	Serial No.
A-1				
A-2				
A-3				
A-4				
A-5				

BICYCLE

	Make	Color	Lic. No.	Frame No.
B-1				
B-2				
B-3				
B-4				
B-5				

GUNS

	Make	Caliber	Serial No.
C-1			
C-2			
C-3			
C-4			
C-5			

TELEVISION, TAPE RECORDER, RADIO, STEREO, etc.

	Item	Make	Serial No.
D-1			
D-2			
D-3			
D-4			
D-5			
D-6			
D-7			
D-8			
D-9			
D-10			

DISHWASHER, STOVE, MIXER, TOASTER, REFRIGERATOR, etc.

	Item	Make	Serial No.
E-1			
E-2			
E-3			
E-4			
E-5			
E-6			
E-7			
E-8			
E-9			
E-10			
E-11			
E-12			
E-13			

CAMERA, BINOCULARS, WATCHES SPORTING GOODS, SEWING MACHINE, etc.

	Item	Make	Serial No.
F-1			
F-2			
F-3			
F-4			
F-5			
F-6			
F-7			
F-8			
F-9			
F-10			
F-11			

POWER TOOLS AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

	Item	Make	Serial No.
G-1			
G-2			
G-3			
G-4			
G-5			
G-6			
G-7			
G-8			
G-9			
G-10			
G-11			
G-12			

Name _____
Last First Initial
 Address _____
 Zip _____ Phone _____
 I.D. Number/Name _____

OTHER PROPERTY MARKED

	Item	Make	Serial No.
H-1			
H-2			
H-3			
H-4			
H-5			
H-6			
H-7			
H-8			
H-9			
H-10			
H-11			
H-12			
H-13			
H-14			
H-15			
H-16			
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H-24			
H-25			
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H-27			
H-28			
H-29			
H-30			
H-31			
H-32			
H-33			
H-34			
H-35			
H-36			
H-37			

POLICE DEPARTMENT COPY

(Please print plainly.)



CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

All items of value on these premises have been marked for ready identification and recorded with the Denver Police Department.



We have joined OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

NOTICE

FIGURE 5

END