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CONSULTANT

CONTRACT NUMBER

DATE

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October 31, 1976

LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION (LEAA)

POLICE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

SUBJECT	A Study of the Police Records and Communication System
PROJECT NUMBER	76-152/085
FOR	Elgin, Illinois, Police Department
	Population = 56,937
	Police Strength (Full-Time) (Sworn) : 92 (Civilian): 21 113
	Square Mile Area = 18.75
CONTRACTOR	Public Administration Service 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D. C. 20036
CONSULTANT	Charles D. Hale
CONTRACT NUMBER	J-LEAA-002-76
DATE	October 31, 1976

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Elgin, Illinois, Police Department requested technical assistance in evaluating its current records and communications equipment and procedures in order to determine their suitability for accommodating present and projected needs. An on-site analysis of the present communications and records system was conducted during the period September 22-29 (three days total), during which time the operating procedures, report forms and processes, and information requirements of the Department were examined. Several persons were interviewed during the course of the study. These were:

Lt. Jack H. Whalen, Supervisor
Records and Communications

Lt. E. Christ, Commander
Major Investigation Division

Lt. E. Demmin
Assistant to the Chief for Planning

Sgt. J. W. Smith, Supervisor
Major Investigation Division

Sgt. A. Grantham
Patrol Supervisor

Sgt. E. Isom
Patrol Supervisor

Sgt. J. Lawrence
Traffic Coordinator

Special Patrolman J. Rouse, Supervisor
Crime Prevention/Community Relations

Patrolman J. McAtee
Crime Prevention Unit

Mrs. Carol Tucker
Records Clerk

Mrs. Ellen Ray
Records Clerk

Mrs. Ruth Norbraten
Communications Operator

Mrs. Lois Cheperka
Communications Operator

Mr. David Jepson
Assistant Finance Director
City of Elgin

It was not possible under the time limitation imposed by LEAA to conduct an exhaustive review and analysis of all aspects of the communications and records system, nor was it considered necessary. Rather, it was determined that a more constructive purpose would be served by conducting a general survey of the communications and records system, identifying problem areas, and proposing changes which will serve to improve both the short-term efficiency and long-range effectiveness of the two systems.

Accordingly, the study focused on the following principal areas:

1. Personnel staffing requirements, work distribution, and operating methods.

2. Space and equipment requirements.

3. Information user requirements.

4. Report forms, reporting methods, and report processing procedures.

5. Automated data processing capabilities and procedures.

The analysis did not extend to administrative records-keeping procedures, such as personnel management (i.e., performance evaluation, sick leave, vacation, etc.), nor did it include a review of the methods used to record and control the reception and disposition of evidence and found property. Thus, the present study concerned primarily the receipt, recording, processing, and dissemination of information concerning police activities (i.e., crime, arrests, traffic, and miscellaneous incidents) and the analytical and statistical data derived therefrom.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Elgin Police Department consists of 92 sworn officers and 21 full-time civilian employees. In addition, it employs a number of part-time civilians as police reserves, school crossing guards, and records clerks. The rank structure for the Police Department is shown below.

Chief of Police a/	1
Deputy Chief of Police b/	2
Lieutenant	6
Sergeant b/	11
Senior Patrolman	7
Patrolman	65
T o t a l	92

a/ Appointed by City Manager.
b/ Appointed by Chief of Police.

The Police Department is organized into two basic divisions: operations and administration. The Operations Division includes patrol, traffic, criminal investigation, juvenile, and animal control. The Administration Division includes records and communications, school crossing, personnel and training, court liaison, and parking control.

A lieutenant who reports directly to the Chief of Police is responsible for planning and internal affairs, and also supervises community relations and crime prevention functions.

The organization of the Department is shown in Figure 1.

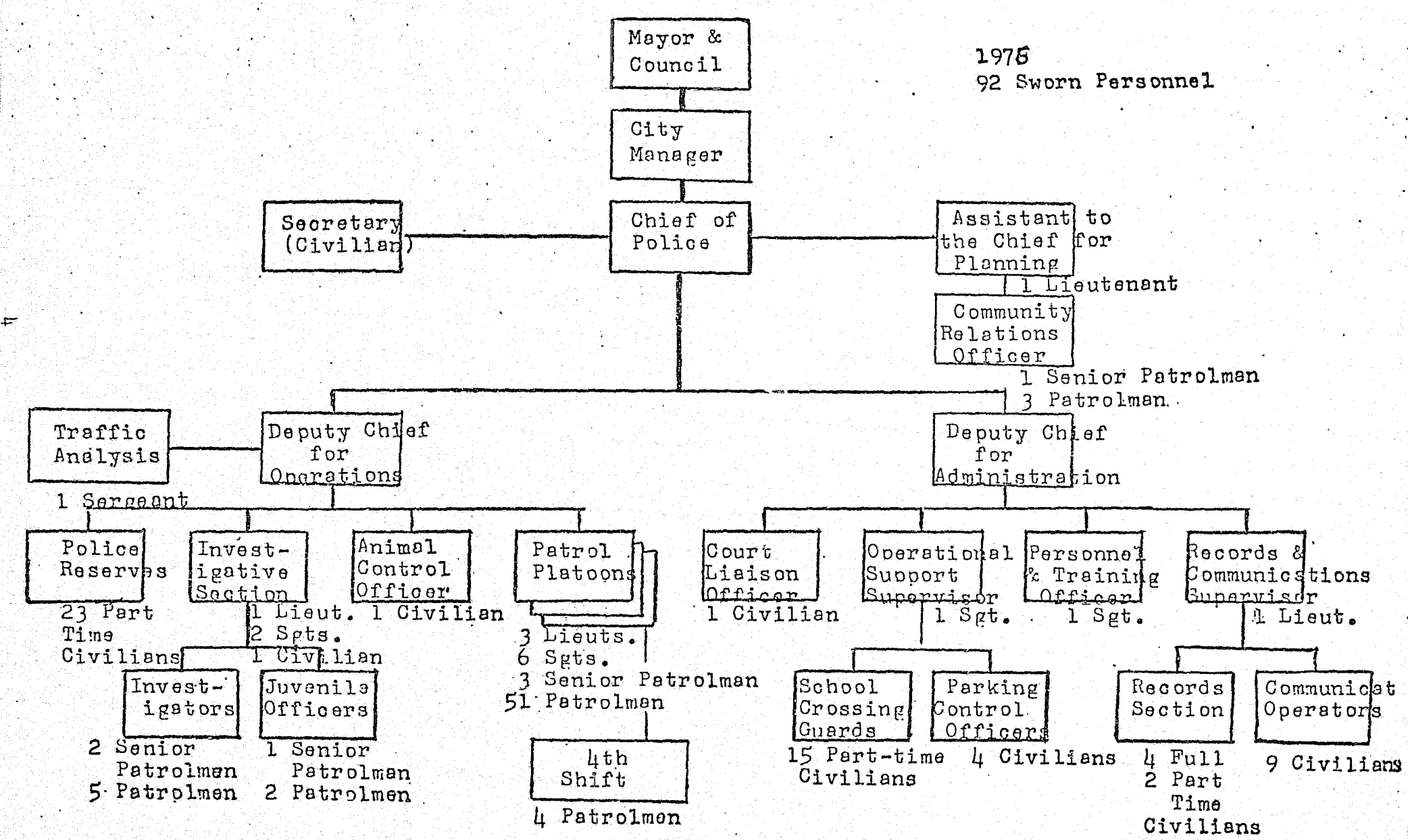
Communications Operations

Information received by the Police Department is typically routed through the communications center. Normally, two communications operators (civilian) are on duty at all times, although a third operator may be on duty from time to time due to infrequent schedule overlaps. One operator is primarily responsible for receiving and dispatching police calls, which

Figure 1

Present Organization
ELGIN, ILLINOIS, POLICE DEPARTMENT

October, 1976



consist of the bulk of the communications center activity, while the second operator is primarily responsible for answering and dispatching fire and ambulance calls. The City maintains its own Fire Department-operated ambulance service. However, the two-position console is set up in such a manner that either operators can back up the other. When a third operator is on duty, he/she will assist the two primary operators, answer incoming telephone calls, and perform miscellaneous clerical and administrative duties.

The communications center is located on the first floor (ground level) of the building that houses both Police and Fire Departments, as well as the court room, and space for the state's attorney and court clerk. (See Figures 2A and 2B.) The entrance to the communications center, which is located just off a hallway leading into the police complex from the lobby area, is locked at all times, and only authorized personnel are allowed access.

Adjacent to the communications center is an office occupied by a complaint officer, who is a uniformed police officer assigned from the patrol force. The duty of the complaint officer is to provide information and assistance to persons entering the lobby area. The complaint officer may also be required to take police reports from persons coming to the police headquarters, since it is the practice of the Department not to send a police car to take a report in all cases (primarily those of a relatively minor nature, or where a considerable time delay has taken place since the incident occurred). The complaint officer position is normally staffed from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. or 2:00 a.m.

Organizationally and administratively, communications operators are under the supervision of the records and communications supervisor. Functionally, however, the communications operators are supervised by the patrol shift commander (lieutenant) whose office is located immediately adjacent to the communications room (see Figure 2A). By contrast, the office of the records and communications supervisor is on the second floor of the police facility, next to the records room. Additionally, communications operators may receive informal supervision from patrol field supervisors (sergeants), who also occupy an office next to the radio room, and who must frequently enter the radio room to review police reports left there by patrol officers.

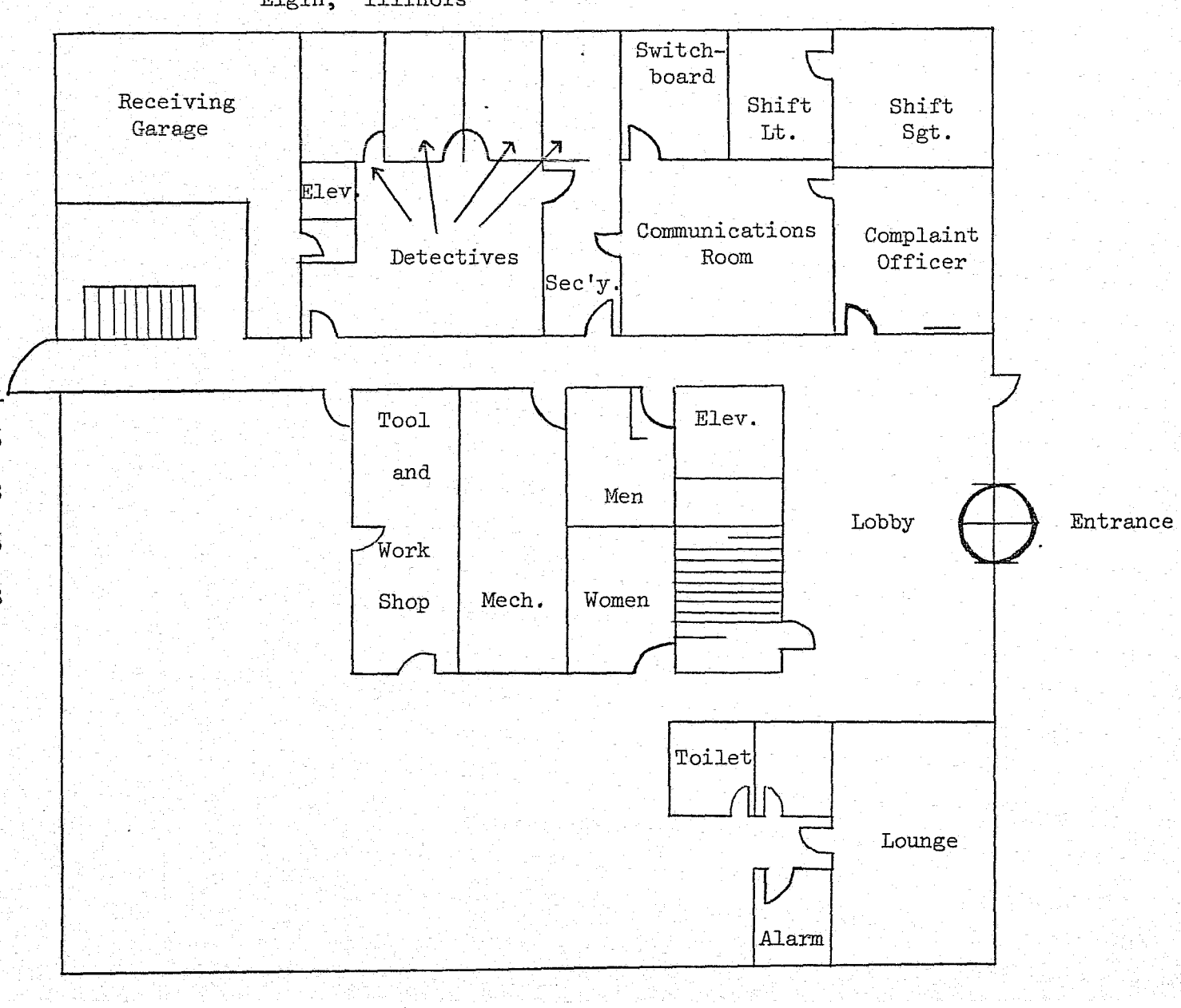
As a rule, only emergency police, fire, and ambulance calls are received in the communications center. Non-emergency administrative calls for police, fire, and other City departments are received by a City switchboard operator, who is situated in a room adjacent to the communications center. Five trunk lines are available for incoming police emergency calls and two for fire calls. In addition, there are two intercom lines for inter- and intra-departmental communications.

Communications operators also monitor an alarm board containing 100 police alarms and a slightly less number of fire alarms.

Figure 2 A

Floor Plan - Ground Level
POLICE/FIRE FACILITY

Elgin, Illinois



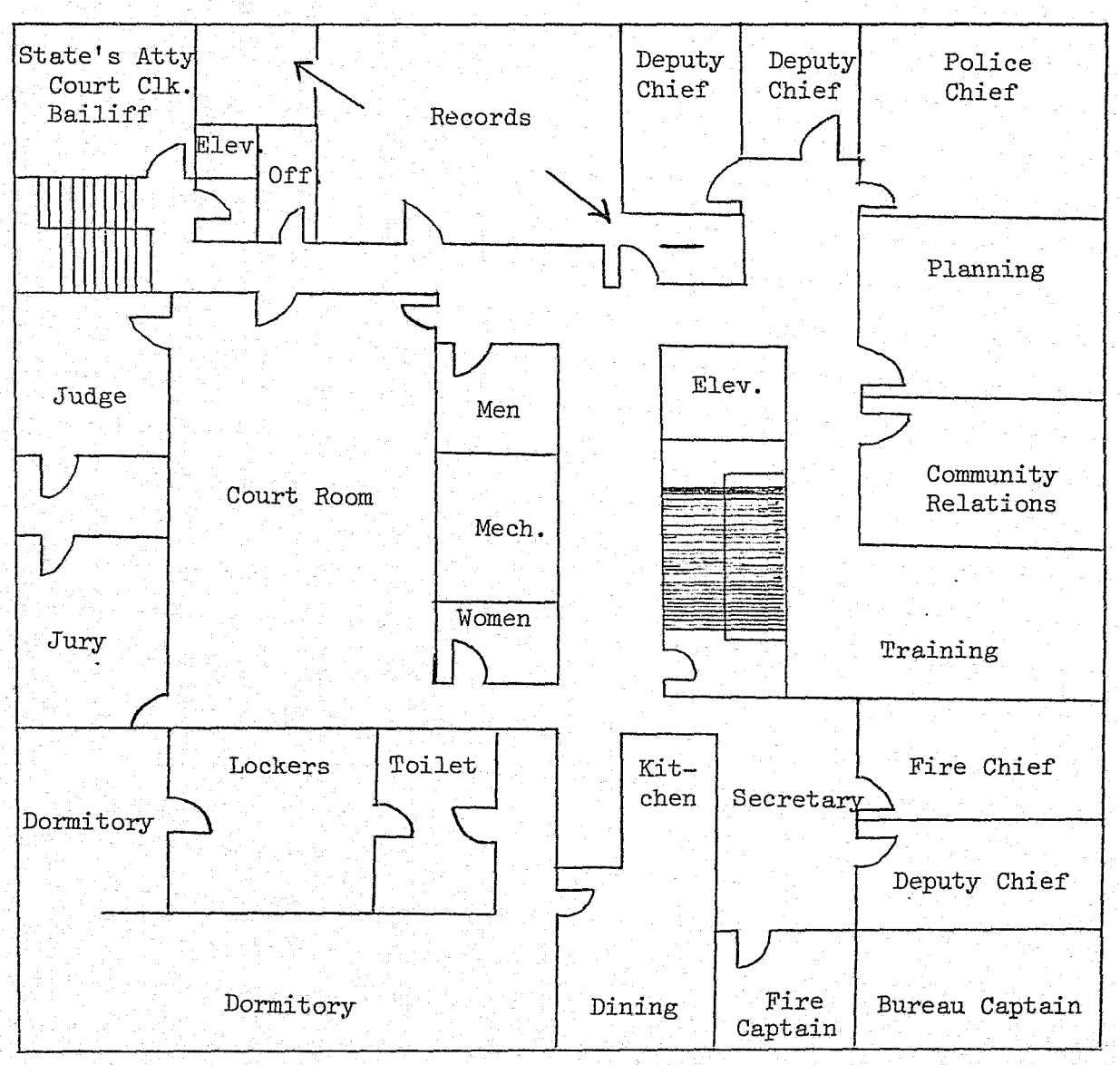
Space Allocation:	Sq. Ft
Police Garage:	336
Investigation Division:	1,043
Communications Room:	196
Patrol Offices:	403

(Not to Scale)

Figure 2 B

Floor Plan - 2nd Level
POLICE/FIRE FACILITY

Elgin, Illinois



Space Allocation:	Sq. Ft.
Police Administration:	1,207
Police Records:	613
Court Room and Offices:	1,911

(Not to Scale)

Several overlays have been prepared to show different beat configurations, varying from 6 to 10 patrol beats, depending upon the number of cars on duty. A new overlay is placed over the status map at the beginning of each shift. Beat boundaries were originally determined upon an analysis of workload based upon calls for service, but have not been changed for some three or four years.

Dispatchers are required to periodically ride as observers with patrol officers in order to acquaint them with the geography of the City. This appears to have made them more sensitive to the more subtle problems faced by patrol officers in responding to calls for service and is a commendable program that deserves to be continued and emulated by other police agencies where civilians are assigned to dispatch duties.

Report Procedures

Patrol officers exercise considerable latitude in determining whether or not to initiate a police report on an incident to which they have been assigned. When the officer determines that a report will be made, he will so advise the dispatcher, who will assign a report number and enter the call on a "run sheet", which lists all assigned reports in numerical order. The "run sheet" shows the report number, the type and location of the incident, and the time dispatched. A review of the "run sheet" indicates that many reports are initiated on relatively minor incidents, thus suggesting that the emphasis is on initiating reports wherever there is any question about the need for a written report.

Dispatch Procedures

When a request for police service is received, the communications operator records the basic information, such as name and address of complainant, nature of incident, and so forth, on a status card. The time the call is received and dispatched is then stamped on the status card with a date/time stamp. The communications operator then determines which patrol units are available for service and assigns the call to the appropriate unit. A lighted status board above the communications console shows the status of all on-duty units at any given time.

When a patrol unit is assigned to a call, the status card is placed in a slotted receptacle corresponding with that unit's beat assignment, thus changing the unit's status on the status board. When the patrol unit arrives at the scene of the call, the card is again stamped and returned to the slotted receptacle. When the officer advises the dispatcher that the assignment has been completed, the card is removed and date/time-stamped, and the dispatcher will record disposition information on the card.

When more than one car is assigned to or responds to the same call, a status card will be created for each car.

Status cards are also prepared for all officer-initiated calls, such as traffic stops, security checks, and so forth. Additionally, status cards are used to show out-of-service time, such as that required for meals, station service, and so forth.

Status cards are also prepared for all reports originated by the complaint officer to account for the time required to write the report.

Reports are prepared by patrol officers in the field on single-copy report forms. The Department currently utilizes seven report forms:

- Miscellaneous Incident Report
- Motor Vehicle Incident Case Report
- General Case Report
- Vice Case Report
- Crimes Against Persons Case Report
- Robbery-Burglary Case Report
- Traffic Accident Report

In addition, the Department utilizes a Supplemental Report to record any information recorded after the initiation of the original report, as well as a continuation sheet. The Department is in the process of consolidating its reports as follows:

- General Incident Report
- Vehicle Incident Report
- Property/Evidence Report
- Supplemental Report

After the patrol officer (or complaint officer, in the case of reports taken out of the police headquarters) has completed the original report, it will be reviewed by the patrol supervisor (a sergeant) and taken to the communications center, where it will again be reviewed and approved by the shift supervisor (a lieutenant). The shift supervisor signs the report and indicates the proper routing, which may be:

- Major Investigation Division--
  for reports requiring follow-up
  investigation (including juvenile).

- Patrol--for cases requiring follow-up work by patrol, such as abandoned autos, etc.

- Traffic--for traffic accident reports and other traffic-related matters.

In addition, a copy of all arrest reports goes to the court bailiff.

Report Processing

At 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. each workday (Monday-Friday), a clerk will pick all reports which have been approved and take them to the record room where copies will be made and distributed according to the routing indicated by the patrol shift commander.

The original report will then be checked by a clerk for accuracy and completeness.

Offense and arrest data are then extracted from the report and entered on the State Uniform Crime Report (UCR) forms, which are compiled daily and submitted monthly to the State Bureau of Identification.

After being recorded on the UCR, the reports are given to another clerk who then prepares name index cards for individuals mentioned in the report. A card is not made on every individual named in a report, however. Usually, only victims, suspects, and occasionally witnesses, are recorded in the name index file. Other categories of persons are not usually indexed.

After reports have been indexed, they are filed in numeric order by report number.

Records Operations

Organization and Staffing

The records operations is commanded by a lieutenant, who also supervises the communications operators. The records section consists of six clerks: four classified as full-time and two classified as part-time. The distinction between full-time and part-time is rather artificial, however, since the part-time clerks work only one hour per day less than the full-time clerks.

Record clerks are organized by function, with the following functions or combination of tasks representing the manner in which the work is distributed.

Clerk Number	Hours	Duties
1	7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Pick up reports; check for accuracy; prepare UCR; compile miscellaneous statistical reports.
2	7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Index reports; prepare warrant index cards; file reports.
3	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Code traffic tickets for computer processing; prepare monthly and semi-annual traffic accident summaries.
4	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Record checks; audit status cards.
5 a/	8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Work counter; make copies of reports; assist with filing reports.
6 a/	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Prepare and file arrest cards, file arrest photos, etc.

a/ Part-time positions.

There are, of course, a variety of other duties performed by the record clerks. The above enumeration serves merely to indicate how the work is distributed by functions.

Record clerks are also required to provide relief for the City switchboard operator who is located in an office next to the communications center. This accounts for about two hours per day of lost time. In addition, record clerks must fill in for the City switchboard operator from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturdays, even though there are no City departments (except, of course, police and fire) open for business during those hours. This is mainly provided as a service to the public even though most of the calls received could probably just as well be taken care of during the week. The duty is rotated among several of the record clerks and accounts for an additional four hours a week lost time. Thus, the records section loses 14 hours per week as a result of providing coverage for the City switchboard position.

Since there is no one on duty in the record room after 5:00 p.m. during the week, and no one at all on the weekend, patrol personnel and investigators are sometimes frustrated in their attempts to obtain required

information. The patrol shift commander has access to the record room, but must interrupt his own duties to obtain the required information. For example, patrol officers frequently need to have information on current bicycle registration, which is kept in the record room.

Report Files

The following is a summary of the report file maintained in the record room:

- Master Name File--Index cards prepared on prominent individuals named in reports.
- Arrest File--Index cards on all persons arrested.
- Arrest Report--Face sheet containing basic details of circumstances of arrest.
- Traffic Tickets--Copy of all traffic tickets issued.
- Juvenile File--Name Index of all juveniles arrested or investigated.
- Rap Sheet--FBI and State Bureau of Investigation rap sheet of all persons arrested.
- Offense Reports--Copy of all offense reports.
- Accident Location File--Duplicate copy of all traffic accident reports, filed by location.
- Bicycle File--An index file containing bicycle registration by name of registrant, license number, and model.

Police records are kept in several metal filing cabinets located in the central records room. Due to an ever-growing volume of reports, the limited available storage space is gradually reaching capacity. The Department has placed some reports on microfilms, but this effort has been somewhat sporadic and has been suspended due to a lack of clerical support.

The Department does not have its own microfilm equipment, but must use the equipment available at the City Finance Department, located in the adjacent City Hall. A microfilm reader-printer is located in the central record room, however.

There has been no effort to destroy old reports, even those which have been microfilmed, although the Department has received a formal recommendation from the state commission on official records retention concerning disposition of police records. As a result, all case reports over three years old are stored in boxes in the basement of the police facility. All other reports are maintained in the central record room.

Related Considerations

The true worth of a records system must be measured not in how efficiently information is collected and stored, but rather in the extent to which that information is useful in supporting the operational elements of the police organization. Accordingly, the manner in which police information is used to support line operations was analyzed in the present study.

Crime Analysis

Crime analysis is the process of collecting and analyzing information pertaining to offenses, arrests, and related events, and using the results of these analyses to predict crime trends and modes, identify perpetrators, and deter and intercept criminal acts. The Elgin Police Department currently has no viable crime analysis program. While the lieutenant assigned to planning asserts that his responsibilities include a form of crime analysis, the duties he performs cannot be construed as crime analysis in its true sense.

Crime data are recorded and collected according to type, area, and time, but there is no evidence that this information is used effectively to design pro-active patrol strategies or to identify crime trends and modes.

Crime Prevention

The Department has a two-man crime prevention unit which is financed by an LEAA grant supplied by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission. The crime prevention unit actively solicits citizen support in a variety of crime prevention programs, but its attempts to collect and analyze crime data are rather basic and unrefined. The data that are gathered are used primarily for the purpose of providing relevant background information to citizens groups in order to solicit their support for anti-crime efforts.

Traffic Enforcement

The Elgin Police Department does not have a specialized traffic unit. Instead, traffic accident investigation and traffic enforcement duties are the responsibility of the patrol force. The Department does have a Traffic Coordinator (a sergeant), whose duty it is to collect and analyze traffic data and develop enforcement strategies to be employed by the patrol force.

To this end, all traffic citations are coded and machine-tabulated to provide a monthly summary of traffic enforcement efforts. Although considerable time is devoted to producing this information, it is not used to any extent by the traffic coordinator.

In addition to machine-processed tabulations, one record clerk spends considerable time (about two hours per day) manually recording essentially identical information in a log which is used as a "productivity" record for all patrol officers.

Traffic accident reports are reviewed by the Traffic Coordinator, who also plots them on a pin map. These data are intended to be used to develop selective enforcement programs, but there is no evidence to indicate that this effort produces any real benefit in terms of enforcement programs.

Criminal Investigation

The Major Investigation Division (MID) receives copies of all reports requiring follow-up investigation. The commander of the MID (a lieutenant) reviews all reports referred to the MID and determines whether or not a follow-up investigation will be conducted. As a rule, relatively minor crimes in which there are no investigative levels will not be assigned for follow-up, but will merely be filed. The remainder of the cases are assigned to a particular investigator and a case file is prepared. Through the first nine months of 1976, some 950 cases were referred to 11 investigators (including juvenile investigators), indicating an average of 10 referrals per month per investigator. By comparison, in the first six months of 1976, the Department recorded 1,440 Part I offenses and 1,925 Part II offenses for a total of 3,365 offenses. Assuming that most of the cases investigated by the MID are Part I offenses, it can be estimated that approximately 40 per cent of all Part I cases reported to the police are assigned to the MID for follow-up.

After the commander of the MID has determined whether or not a case will be investigated, he will assign the case to a particular investigator and will write the investigator's name on the report. At the same time, he will indicate on a copy of the run sheet which he receives from the communications center that a case file has been prepared and will write the name of the investigator to which the cases have been assigned on the run sheet.

The investigator to whom a case has been assigned then receives a copy of the police report. A secretary then goes to central records, makes a second copy of the case report, and prepares a case file jacket, which is a large manila file folder on which is written the pertinent facts of the case. The second copy of the report is then placed in the case file jacket, which is then filed in the MID by case number. Copies of all follow-up reports, statements, and the investigator's notes are placed in the case file jacket. The original copy of all follow-up reports and official case materials will be filed with the original police report in central records. Thus, a duplicate set of files is maintained. After two years, all closed and inactive cases are transferred to storage in the basement of the police facility, thereby, further aggravating the Department's records storage problem.

The MID also maintains its own name index file, which is essentially a duplicate of the Name Index File maintained by central records, although it is not as complete since it does not, generally, contain the names of persons listed in non-criminal reports.

Individual detectives do not maintain work logs, although their supervisors (shift sergeants) do keep records of all cases assigned to each investigator and the status of those cases. Investigators are expected to turn in a follow-up investigation of each case assigned within 10 days of receipt.

There is no stolen property file maintained either by the MID or by central records. The MID secretary does record items of stolen property in a spiral notebook, but the notebook is not organized by type of property and thus is of questionable value in terms of enabling investigators to determine whether or not a particular piece of property has been reported stolen.

The MID has no analytic capability to enable its members to identify crime trends and modes, although each investigator is probably aware of perpetrator and offense characteristics which may lead to the solution of one or more cases. Since members of the MID are assigned to one of two shifts, and rotate shifts each 28 days, there is little opportunity for communications between members of the two shifts, thus further inhibiting the effective coordination of investigative efforts.

Patrol Activity

As indicated previously, all reported patrol activity, whether or not associated with a particular case, is documented on a status card prepared by the communications operator. These status cards are later coded and machine tabulated, using the City-owned IBM System 3 computer operated by the City Finance Department. Each month a series of computer printouts are produced which portray all patrol activity by time of day, day of week, area, type, and by individual officers. These printouts provide useful information for management and supervisory personnel to evaluate officer performance, as well as to determine appropriate manning levels, patrol

schedules, beat assignments, and so forth. For several reasons, however, these computer readouts do not appear to be worth the effort required to produce them. The reasons for this will be assessed in the next section.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

Nearly all operations can be evaluated in terms of their efficiency and their effectiveness. Efficiency may be defined as the extent to which something is accomplished with a minimum of waste and duplication, thus producing maximum output for minimum input. Effectiveness, on the other hand, is the degree to which an operation or activity produces a desired state or objective, regardless of its relative efficiency. It is against both these measures--efficiency and effectiveness--which the communications and records system of the Elgin Police Department will be evaluated.

Communications

The consultant possessed neither the time necessary nor the required technological capabilities to evaluate the technical operations of the communication system. Rather, the consultant was concerned with the overall manner in which the communications functions were performed.

Two problems were identified with respect to dispatching operations. Both are related to the location of the communications center and its physical separation from the record room. A third problem relates to the lay-out of the communications center.

Physical Location

Proximity to Records. Records and communications are related functions, and are typically combined under a single supervisor, as is the case in Elgin. The problem arises, however, in the fact that the two functions are physically separated, thus diminishing the working relationship that should exist between the two operations. Dispatchers, for example, are often requested to provide information to patrol officers, investigators, as well as other police agencies. More often than not, this information must be retrieved from central records. With the situation as it now exists in Elgin, it is physically impossible for communications operators to obtain such information during evenings and on weekends. Instead, the patrol supervisor must be called upon to go to central records and obtain the information, which may result in considerable and unnecessary delay.

Supervision. It is extremely difficult for a supervisor to oversee the operations of his subordinates if he is physically separated from them. The Lieutenant in charge of communications operations is not able to exercise effective supervision over the dispatchers simply because he is not in close proximity to them. As a result, he is not available to answer routine questions of procedure, nor is he able to effectively review and evaluate the performance of the communications operators.

Physical Layout

The design of the communications center is not ideal, in that it permits unnecessary walk-through traffic that hinders effective dispatching procedures. For example, patrol officers routinely enter the communications center to obtain additional information for their reports. Patrol supervisors frequently enter the radio room to obtain information from dispatchers or check reports. Shift commanders may also enter the dispatch center with some regularity. Record clerks, too, must enter the communications center to obtain completed police reports. Moreover, there are entrances to the radio room from both the MID offices and from the City switchboard operator's office. The net result is that there is insufficient control over access to the dispatch center, thus resulting in unnecessary confusion and distraction which impedes the overall efficiency of dispatching operations.

Report Procedures

The report procedures of the Police Department with respect to field reporting of offenses, traffic accidents, arrests, and miscellaneous incidents are generally sound. However, some weaknesses were detected.

Field Reporting

There is some evidence that insufficient supervision is exercised over reports completed by patrol officers. Some reports contain inaccurate and incomplete data, thus necessitating additional work by records personnel and investigators. It is the responsibility of the field supervisor, initially, and of the shift commander, ultimately, to review all reports to ensure their completeness and accuracy. It would appear that this responsibility is not being fully met.

The Department has taken a step in the right direction by providing for supplemental reports to be taken over the telephone by the complaint officer. The policy of allowing the complaint officer to take other non-emergency reports in person at the station is also commendable. This policy could be extended further, however.

Routine reports concerning thefts and miscellaneous non-criminal incidents could be taken over the telephone. Most of these are "information only" type reports and require no on-site investigation. Many are simply for insurance purposes. However, if complaining parties and/or witnesses are requested to come to the police station to make their reports rather than having a patrol car come to their residence, there is a likelihood that some people will elect simply to forget the incident. As a result, there is a probability that many crimes may go unreported, thus reducing the reliability of reported crime statistics.

Report Processing

A great deal of time and expense is involved in copying reports and distributing the copies to the appropriate divisions (i.e., traffic, patrol, MID, etc.). This expense and effort could be eliminated by adapting multiple-copy form sets which automatically provide additional report copies. Generally, at least one additional copy of each report is required. It would seem to make good sense, therefore, to produce all reports in duplicate, thus eliminating the need for manually producing additional copies.

Records Operations

Organization and Staffing

The records operation is generally well-organized. Work is distributed according to specific function, and duties and responsibilities appear to be clearly defined and well-understood by employees. There is a singular lack of duplication of effort and all employees appear to understand their respective roles.

The records operation is hampered, however, in the need to provide relief for the City switchboard operator. This is not a legitimate police function and rightfully should be performed by City Hall personnel. Similarly, the City Hall switchboard operation should not even be located in the police facility, but as long as it remains there, the Police Department will probably be required to provide relief assistance. It must also be questioned whether there is a bona fide need to keep the switchboard open half day on Saturday, although this matter is beyond the legitimate concern of the present study.

The distinction between part-time and full-time personnel in the records unit is an artificial one, the difference in work schedules being only one hour per day. This, too, though is rather indirectly related to the subject under analysis in this report.

One obvious problem is the fact that the hours of the records operation do not permit full access to vital records by patrol and investigative personnel. With the number of personnel assigned to the records section, it would be a simple matter to extend the hours of operation until 12:00 a.m., midnight, and to provide one record clerk on Saturday. Thus, this might require a realignment of some duties and responsibilities, but the net benefit of extending the hours of operation of the records section would certainly surpass the relatively insignificant consequences that might attach to such a change. As noted earlier, the true worth of the records operation can only be measured in the extent to which it enhances the operation of line units.

Record Storage

Storage of police reports and miscellaneous files proves to be a major problem in the immediate future. The Department should act affirmatively to alleviate the storage problem before it becomes even more acute. Several solutions should be considered, both separately and collectively.

First, a systematic and continual program of microfilming old records and reports would serve to reduce storage problems created by old and little-needed reports.

Second, the Department has not attempted to develop a comprehensive plan for records retention and document destruction, even though it has received guidelines to this point from the cognizant state authority. The implementation of these guidelines would also serve to alleviate impending storage problems.

Third, more sophisticated file storage equipment, including rotary power files for both card-size and letter-size documents would expand existing storage capabilities and require no increase in space. For example, the three "mini" rotary power files which now house the 3" x 5" Name Index Files, have a collective storage capacity of 4,032 file inches. A single modern rotary power file is capable of providing up to 7,500 3" x 5" storage inch capacity, an increase of nearly 100 per cent. Thus, the Department could purchase a single file cabinet to replace the existing three and still have considerable potential for expansion. The same can be true for letter-size documents and other reports and files.

Related Considerations

Data Analysis and Utilization

Very little statistical and descriptive data collected and compiled by the Department is put to use meaningfully in support of line operations, such as traffic enforcement, preventive patrol, and criminal investigation. Nor is the information available used effectively by auxiliary support functions, such as crime prevention and crime analysis. Moreover, the Department has failed to take full advantage of the automated statistical and analytical support available to it (in the form of the City's computer facilities and technical expertise). As a result, much individual effort is wasted in performing manual statistical functions which could be done by computer. In some cases, manual tabulations produce information which is nearly identical to data which are produced automatically. In other cases, deficiencies in system design and programmatic problems have created the need for time-consuming coding, sorting, and auditing functions which could be eliminated. Combined, these problems are the most significant weakness of the existing records system, and immediate steps should be taken to correct them.

Common to all the problems just mentioned is the fact that the Department lacks anyone in a key staff position with necessary skills and abilities relating to computerized information, processing, and analysis. As a result, the Department must rely heavily on personnel in the City Finance Department, who lack an awareness of police information needs and data collection and analysis problems. While the Finance Director has attempted to serve the needs of the Department in the best way possible, the task has been made more difficult than necessary due to the fact that the Police Department does not have the "in-house" capability needed to make full use of available computer capabilities. Consequently, information that would be used to more effectively utilize resources, analyze crime trends and modes, and support community-based crime prevention programs is not employed to its full advantage.

Criminal Investigation

Record-keeping in the Major Investigation Division (MID) is deficient in three respects. First, individual investigators are not required to maintain daily activity reports. As a result, there is no record available of the manner in which investigators spend their time. If it is important to record this information for the patrol force (and it is), then it should be equally vital to record the same type of information for investigators.

Second, the files maintained by the MID are duplicative of those maintained by central records. Rather than being merely temporary "working" files, they contain essential information that should, as cases are closed out, be transferred to central records for permanent retention. There should be no reason for the MID to maintain a second, complete set of files on any cases other than those currently being investigated.

Similarly, the practice of making case jackets on all reports assigned to an investigator is unnecessarily expensive, time-consuming, and wasteful. A more logical practice would be to leave the matter of preparing a case file jacket to the discretion of the individual investigator. A case file jacket is merely a convenient manner of storing reports and follow-up documents concerning a particular case in a single place. In many cases, however, if not in most, there will be very little follow-up investigation conducted (due to the absence of investigative leads). Thus, the matter of centrally locating all information concerning a particular case is not considered particularly critical.

Third, the lack of a comprehensive, easy-to-use stolen property file, arranged in sections by property type, obviously affects the operating effectiveness of the Department. Such a file, whether it be located in the MID or in central records, would be an obvious advantage in terms of increasing the Department's ability to trace items of stolen property.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the records and communications systems of the Elgin Police Department exhibit many commendable features. Incident reporting and records processing are relatively uncomplicated and efficient operations. Information is processed promptly and with a minimum of undue delay and duplication.

The basic problems identified are the following:

- Physical separation of the records and communications function, leading to inadequate supervision, control, and coordination.

- In some cases, incomplete and inaccurate field reporting, due apparently to a failure on the part of some supervisors to carefully review reports and to demand a high level of quality from their subordinates.

- Failure to arrange the work schedules of records personnel in such a manner that will allow for the expansion of the hours of the records operation beyond the regular (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday) workday.

- Unnecessarily requiring record personnel to provide relief for the City switchboard operator.

- A lack of storage space created by a failure to develop a comprehensive plan of retention and disposition, and to utilize available microfilming equipment.

- Failure of the Department to take full advantage of existing computer capabilities, due largely to the absence of anyone on the staff with a background in computerized information systems.

- Failure of the Department to develop a fully operational and effective crime analysis capability which would support line and auxiliary support operations.
- The absence of any means of obtaining statistical data on investigative activities.
- Unnecessary duplication of records within the Major Investigation Division, thus adding to the problem of records storage requirements.
- Lack of a stolen property file.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the records and communications operations. With few exceptions, the recommendations offered below can be implemented with little or no expense to the City. No particular priority is attached to the manner in which the recommendations are listed, although it is obvious that some can be accomplished more easily and sooner than others. This is a matter more properly left to the discretion of police and City officials.

Facility Considerations

The records operation should be relocated on the ground floor of the police headquarters, immediately adjacent to the communications center in the space now occupied by the MID. The MID should be moved to the second floor of the building, and should be located in the space now occupied by the records section. Minor alterations may be required to provide suitable office space in both instances, but the total area of the two locations would not change significantly.

This recommendation is proposed in order to:

- Afford better supervision and to enhance operational coordination of the records and communications functions.
- Provide easier public access to the records room.
- Make needed information more readily accessible to patrol personnel and their supervisors.

In addition, steps should be taken to reduce unnecessary pedestrian traffic through the communications center. This may be accomplished by eliminating the practice of leaving incoming reports in the communications center for review by the shift commander. Instead, they should be left in the shift commander's office.

To speed up the records processing procedure, approved reports could be taken immediately to central records by the shift commander once approved. This would pose little problem with the records room located on the first floor.

Field Reporting

Steps should be taken to improve the quality of reports prepared by patrol officers. In particular:

- Patrol officers should receive periodic refresher training in report procedures. Such training should be supplemented by a field reporting manual. (It should be noted that the Department does have a good field reporting manual, but it is apparently not used.)

- Field supervisors and shift commanders should be more diligent in their review of reports. Command staff at the division level have a responsibility to see that this duty is not neglected. Report preparation should be considered when evaluating the performance of individual offices.

- The Department should consider referring relatively minor theft and miscellaneous service reports to the complaint officer so long as a patrol unit is not required at the scene. These reports should be taken over the telephone if possible.

- The Department should evaluate the possibility of utilizing multiple-copy report forms to eliminate the necessity of manually copying all reports. Since at least one additional copy of all reports is required, a two-part report form should be considered. The number of copies required should vary with the type of report and the distribution desired.

- The Department should proceed with its intent to consolidate report forms. The forms presently under consideration would appear to be adequate and should be used.

Records Operations

- The hours of operation of the records unit should be expanded to provide better service to patrol and investigative personnel. During the week (Monday through Friday), the hours of operation should be extended to between 10:00 p.m. and midnight. At least eight hours should also be included on both Saturday and Sunday. In addition to providing better service to line units, this will also speed up the records-processing procedure and reduce the backlog of reports that normally accrues on Monday morning.

To the extent possible, this change in work schedules should be accomplished without disrupting the present functional organization of the records unit in terms of individual tasks and assignments.

- The Department should endeavor to rid itself of the responsibility to provide relief assistance for the City switchboard operator.

- No additional record personnel are recommended at present. Rather, the elimination of some of the time-consuming duties described elsewhere in this report should result in added time not now available. Part-time help may be required to enable the Department to commence microfilming reports on a full-time basis.

Records Storage

The Department faces a record storage problem that will reach unmanageable proportions very soon unless positive efforts are taken to reduce storage requirements. The following actions are recommended:

- The records supervisor should be instructed to develop a practical and comprehensive records disposition plan which should provide for the systematic and timely disposition and/or retention of records in accord with existing statutory requirements and the recommendations and approval of cognizant state authorities.

- The Department should provide for the microfilming of police reports as soon as possible. If necessary, funds should be requested for part-time clerical assistance for up to 12 months. Case reports should be given the highest priority, commencing with the oldest reports which are required to be retained. Traffic accident reports should be given the second highest priority. Until the Department can justify the need for a computer-indexed microfilm retrieval system, operating files, such as name index cards, arrest files, bicycle registration, and so forth should not be microfilmed, since they are needed on a daily basis. Only those files which can be classified as historical in nature should be microfilmed at present.

Automated Data Processing

The real value of the records maintained by the Department will not be realized until a speedy and efficient means of processing and analyzing statistical data are developed. Such a capability now exists, but has not been fully utilized. Accordingly, the Department should:

- Acquire sufficient technical expertise on staff to ensure optimum utilization of existing automated data processing capabilities. This can be accomplished by either:

  - Training an existing staff member in data processing techniques and information systems design, or

  - Recruiting expertise from outside the Department.

  In either case, the individual selected should be thoroughly versed in both information systems design and should have a good working knowledge of police operations and procedures. Practical police experience should not be required, however.

- Create a special staff position to assist in the design and development of a computerized information system. This position should include responsibility for determining both short-term and long-range information needs and working with command staff in the design and development of an information system that will suitably meet the needs of all operating units.

- Consider applying for a federal grant to support the development of an information system. Since sufficient equipment already exists, the grant would be necessary to cover only personnel costs and miscellaneous personal costs. A sum of $35,000 - $50,000 for a period of 18 months should be sufficient for this purpose.

- Establish a closer working relationship with the Finance Director and his staff in order to enhance the usefulness of existing equipment and programmatic capabilities. A "user's committee" composed of key staff members should be designated to meet regularly with the staff of the Finance Director to determine specific information needs and system capabilities.

- The records supervisor should immediately review the manual statistical tabulations being performed by records personnel and eliminate those that are either unnecessary or that can be replaced by automated data processing. A case in point is the monthly traffic enforcement summary described earlier.

Auxiliary Support Functions

Immediate attention should be given to increasing the usefulness and utilization of existing statistical data.

- Specifically, a concentrated attempt should be made to analyze crime, traffic, and service incident data and to periodically revise beat configurations and work schedules in order to equalize workload and optimize individual performance.

- The Department should develop a viable crime analysis capability which can be used to support preventive patrol, investigative, and crime prevention efforts. In general, the same remarks directed toward the acquisition of a "systems development" capability described above apply equally to the acquisition of crime analysis skills.[1/]

1/ The following publication should be consulted in defining the role of the crime analysis unit: George A. Buck, et al., Police Crime Analysis Unit Handbook (Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, 1973).

Criminal Investigation

The efficiency and effectiveness of the Major Investigation Division can be improved by:

- Requiring individual investigators to submit daily reports summarizing their activities. This will provide for a better understanding of how investigators spend their time and will generate useful data which can be employed to better evaluate individual and organizational performance and operating techniques. An example of an Investigator's Activity Report is shown in Figure 3.

- Eliminating files which duplicate those maintained in central records. MID files should contain only "open" cases which are being currently investigated.

- Preparing case jackets only for those cases which require extensive investigation. Routine cases which will result in only a brief follow-up investigation do not require case jackets, which are quite expensive and time-consuming to prepare.

- The Department should take steps to develop a stolen property file which would consist of a card index file arranged by type of property and by serial number, if known. The stolen property file could properly be maintained either in the MID or in central records, depending upon local preference.

Figure 3 A

INVESTIGATOR'S ACTIVITY LOG

Date: _____ Investigator: _____

Car Number: _____

Ending Mileage: _____ Hours: From: _____

Starting Mileage: _____ Gallons Gas: _____ To: _____

Total Miles: _____ Quarts Oil: _____ Total: _____

From	To	Location	Case Number	Activity	Code	Time

Case Summary															
New Cases Assigned		Cases Cleared													Active Cases
Today	This Month	Unfounded		By Arrest		Exceptional		Total							Inactive Cases
		Today	This Month	Today	This Month	Today	This Month	Today	This Month						Total Cases

(over)

Figure 3 B

INVESTIGATOR'S ACTIVITY LOG

(reverse)

Activity Code	Activity	Number	Time (Nearest ¼ Hour)	Activity Code	Activity	Number	Time (Nearest ¼ Hour)
100	Crime Scene Investigation			300	Arrests		
110	Part I (Original)			310	Part I (On-View)		
120	Part I (Follow-Up)			320	Part I (Follow-Up)		
130	Part II (Original)			330	Part II (On-View)		
140	Part II (Follow-Up)			340	Part II (Follow-Up)		
150	Other			350	Other		
190	Total			390	Total		
200	Interviews/Interrogations			400	Court Appearances		
210	Part I (Suspects/Arrestees)			410	Part I		
220	Part I (Victims)			420	Part II		
230	Part I (Witnesses)			490	Total		
240	Part I (Other)			500	Preventive Patrol		
250	Part II (Suspects/Arrestees)			600	Administration		
260	Part II (Victims)			610	Processing Evidence		
270	Part II (Witnesses)			620	Report Preparation		
280	Part II (Other)			630	Conferences and Visits		
290	Total			640	Other		
Signature	Time/Date	Approved	Time/Date	690	Total		

END

7 [illegible]