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**CONSULTATION ON  
A JAIL INFORMATION SYSTEM  
FOR THE LA PLATA COUNTY JAIL**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT**



**Bureau of Justice Assistance**

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ADJUDICATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT  
The EMT Group, Inc.

Technical Assistance Report No. 42

CONSULTATION ON  
A JAIL INFORMATION SYSTEM  
FOR THE LA PLATA COUNTY JAIL

Consultant

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Site Work: February, 1987

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of Technical Assistance Request

LaPlata County (population approximately 35,000) is a largely rural county in Southwest Colorado. A new jail under construction is due to open in April or May in the county seat, Durango.

A forward-looking and compatible group of county officials are aware of the dangers attendant to the opening of new and larger jails and have been planning to forestall the overuse of the facility when it becomes available. The County's prosecutor applied for and received a \$10,600 Justice Assistance Act block grant from the Colorado State Criminal Justice Planning Office for establishment and funding of a pretrial release office. A coordinator was hired, and the office became fully operational by mid-1986.

On September 11 and 12th, 1986, the county judge, jail commander, and jail release coordinator attended a BJA-sponsored jail crowding workshop in Denver, conducted by faculty of the National Pretrial Services Resource Center. During the course of the seminar's sessions, the three-person team began developing an action agenda for managing their jail population.

Following the Denver seminar, the team was joined by other officials and continued their planning and program implementation activities in Durango.

Acting on the desire to improve their information system for case tracking and management purposes, the officials arrived at a decision to request BJA-sponsored technical assistance - which they learned about at the Denver seminar - to advise them how to improve, augment and integrate their existing manual and automated record keeping and accounting systems.

The individual selected by the Adjudication Technical Assistance Project to undertake this post-workshop technical assistance effort was Jerome R. Bush, a private consultant with extensive experience in developing and transferring automated jail information systems.

### B. Core Problem Presented

LaPlata County is scheduled to open a new jail within a month or two. The sheriff would like to use an Altos 586 microcomputer which he has as a tool for jail inmate management. Unfortunately, the sheriff does not have the applications software for a jail information system. The sheriff and other criminal justice officials want a system which has the capability of tracking all inmate transactions from booking at the jail to final disposition of all processes to which they are subjected.

C. Other Operational Problems Discovered At Client Agency During Site Visit

1. An Information Requirements Analysis has not been conducted to determine the usefulness of the current jail inmate record system that is used internally, and portions of which are utilized by criminal justice agencies external to the jail, i.e. the prosecutor and the courts. A Requirements Analysis is the first step in automating an inmate record system. Each individual inmate form (and its data elements) must be evaluated for current relevance in inmate tracking and processing.

2. The Wang Model 200 in the La Plata County Data Processing Department is being phased-out and would not be available as a backup for the Sheriff's Altos System. On the positive side, County Data Processing has purchased a VAX 8200 System with adequate central processing and memory storage capacity to serve as a backup or alternative to the Altos System (a dedicated system in the Sheriff's Department).

3. Neither the Sheriff's nor the Data Processing Department's budget would accommodate the cost of developing an inmate tracking system locally.

D. Consultant's Approach

1. Pre-Site Visit

Prior to his site visit, the consultant requested that all forms used in inmate recordkeeping be forwarded to him so that a comparison could be made between the current inmate information/transaction requirements (records), and the data elements, records, and reports stored and generated by existing software systems. The comparison between the current La Plata County Jail Inmate Record System and the Jail Information System/JAILTRAC, developed jointly by the American Justice Institute (AJI) and the Institute for Law and Social Research (INSLAW), showed close correspondence between the two systems in terms of individual inmate records (forms) and their data elements, with the exception of some special medical forms used in La Plata County.

Also prior to his site work, the consultant accessed the data base of the National Clearinghouse for Criminal Justice Information Systems, maintained by SEARCH Group, Inc., of Sacramento, California, to retrieve any information it might contain on inmate tracking/reporting systems operational on an Altos computer system. The Clearinghouse data base contains descriptive material on most of the computer-based criminal justice systems operational today in the United States. The consultant's search indicated that there are no inmate tracking/reporting functions operational on Altos equipment. (However, the data sheet abstracts for 10 non-Altos inmate accounting systems that had promise for replication were obtained from SEARCH Group for

distribution on site.) Therefore, no systems are available in the public domain for transfer to the La Plata County Jail's Altos hardware - that avenue is blocked for securing application software.

This consultant also discovered during his visit to the company that SEARCH Group is nearing completion of programming for a super-micro application of its Jail Administrators Management System with the acronym of LOCKUP. System specifications will be available by the end of February, at which time the consultant will obtain and transmit the specifications to La Plata County, as well as compare the specifications (records, data elements, and outputs) with the La Plata County Jail Inmate Record System. This new jail inmate information should satisfy the jail's basic inmate recordkeeping needs, if the software is compatible with the Altos microcomputer. Since this software will be in the public domain, it should be available to La Plata County at no cost. The system was developed under a grant from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Justice.

## 2. On-Site Contacts

Upon his arrival in Durango, the consultant met with the following La Plata County criminal justice system personnel to gain a clearer perspective on the problem and thereby provide better focus for the technical assistance during and after the site visit:

- Mr. Steve Jones, L Plata County Jail Release Coordinator, who requested the technical assistance under his contract with the county.
- Mr. Albert Bell, the Undersheriff and Jail Commander, who has been responsible for the architectural design of the new jail and the layout of computer terminals and printers.
- Mr. Victor Reichman, La Plata County District Attorney, recipient of the state block grant funds that provided for the contractual services of the Jail Release Coordinator.
- Judge Patricia Hall, presiding judge of the La Plata County Court, to whom the Jail Release Coordinator presents recommendations for Personal Recognizance bond.
- Mr. Robert Siverson, Director of La Plata County Data Processing who will provide technical-programming support for the software system that is installed.

## II. FINDINGS

Through the vehicle of the above discussions with criminal justice personnel, which resulted in clearer problem definition, the following technical assistance/problem resolution was provided:

- o La Plata County has the following computer hardware:
  1. WANG Model 200 which is under the control of the county's Data Processing Department. This equipment is being passed out and is being replaced by a
  2. VAX 8200 which has adequate central processing and memory storage capacity beyond what is required by other county departments to serve as a back-up or alternative to the
  3. Altos 586, a microcomputer acquired by and dedicated exclusively to the needs of the Sheriff's Department (including jails) and currently used only for limited purposes in the absence of appropriate software.
- o The JAILTRAC Inmate Tracking and Management Systems developed by INSLAW would be the software of choice for La Plata County. However, the consultant, after reviewing INSLAW's specifications with La Plata officials, concluded that the \$30,000 it would cost the county to purchase the source code, documentation and technical assistance in implementation for the microcomputer version of INSLAW's proprietary product is well beyond the sheriff's budget capabilities.
- o The Jail Commander had previously contracted with the Rocky Mountain Computer Co. in Durango for some programming time to store some of the inmate records on the Altos computer. He indicated dissatisfaction with the piecemeal effort to date. He envisions a comprehensive system with all inmate transaction records included in the system design. Since La Plata County would/could not fund the considerable expense of systems analysis and programming to develop its own inmate tracking system, the only alternative is to transfer an existing system compatible with available computer hardware. Mr. Siverson, the Director of Data Processing, made it very clear that he would not commit programmer time to the development of a new system, but he would provide technical support for the implementation and maintenance of an existing transferable software package. He also indicated that a DEC UAX

8200 with a VMS operating system, had recently been purchased by the county to replace the WANG 200. An VLTRIX-32 operating system is also available for the VAX which would be compatible with the Altos Zenix operating system so the VAX could be used for system and data base storage, and central processing. Disk storage space is currently available on the VAX to support an inmate tracking system if Altos compatible software cannot be located and transferred. Mr. Siverson recommended using the Altos computer in the Sheriff's Department as a dedicated system rather than sharing the VAX with other county users. Criminal justice data on a shared system presents security and privacy problems in addition to time sharing and priority problems.

- o The specification for the Sheriff's Altos 586 microcomputer were obtained from the vendor in Durango, the Rocky Mountain Computer Company. These specifications will be compared with the hardware requirements for supporting the SEARCH Group LOCKUP software (under development) for inmate tracking during post-site visit technical assistance. The Altos 586, with upgraded options of a 40MB Winchester disk, 512KB of memory expansion, and a 4 serial port expansion board, will support 9 users. This should be adequate, with terminals and printers in the booking area, control room, and in the room adjacent to the jail commander. Printers shared to terminals could be used to reduce point utilization. This upgraded system will continue to support the other Altos users in the Sheriff's Dept., e.g. Investigations.
- o The magnetic computer tape and tape documentation for the Jail Information System (JIS) developed by AJI and INSLAW, were made available to site personnel. This system could potentially be supported on the VAX but not the Altos 586. During the site visit, this consultant contacted Mohave County, Arizona Data Processing, where the JIS tape had been provided for implementation during a previous TA assignment, to see if the system were operational and potentially transferable to La Plata County. The system was awaiting installation at this time.
- o Documentation for the JAIL STAR microcomputer inmate tracking system was also provided to site personnel. This proprietary system is available at a cost of \$7,000 for the three work-station version. Some potential exists for purchase if the Altos system could be upgraded to 40 MB disk storage, 640K CPU at each terminal, and a 3.1 DOS.

- o An information requirements analysis is the usual prerequisite for system design or transfer. In a requirements analysis, each record (form) and its data elements are examined for completeness and relevance to the inmate transaction being conducted, e.g. booking, property, medical, pretrial release, classification, etc. Site personnel were provided with Task, Document, and Data Field Worksheets to assist them in completing at least a preliminary requirements analysis. Examples of completed worksheets were also included to provide guidance for this process. Since a requirements analysis is a large, complex task involving concurrence by all users of each component of the record system, follow-up technical assistance will probably be required for its successful completion.

### III. POST-SITE VISIT ACTIVITIES

The following post-site visit technical assistance has been completed or is currently in process. The results will be transmitted by mail to the requesting agency in La Plata County.

1. The consultant accessed SEARCH Group's Automated Index of Criminal Justice Information Systems to determine if any inmate tracking systems are operational on VAX hardware. One system was retrieved that is operational on a VAX-750 under ULTRIX Control: the police booking system in San Antonio, Texas. The system appears to be restricted to booking (arrest, confinement, and charge) data, without inmate management data. A copy of the data sheet abstract will be sent to La Plata County. This consultant plans to search the data base for any inmate tracking system under Zenix or Unix control regardless of the hardware manufacturer.

2. The consultant is conferring with SEARCH Group personnel responsible for the development of their microcomputer-based LOCKUP inmate tracking system to determine software compatibility with the Altos 586 in the Sheriff's Dept. in La Plata County. A trip to Altos Computing systems in San Jose, California, may be required to make this assessment, and approval for the necessary increase in the consultant's authorized level of effort for the current assignment has been received from ATAP. Results will be transmitted to Mr. Steve Jones, the Jail Release Coordinator. If the SEARCH Group LOCKUP software will operate on the Altos, the consultant will: (1) obtain the system specifications and documentation, when

they become available, for transfer to La Plata County, (2) determine if on-site TA is available from SEARCH Group for system implementation, (3) determine the availability date for the complete LOCKUP software package, and (4) compare system specifications with the La Plata County Jail Record System, following completion of the requirements analysis, to determine the functional coverage of the LOCKUP software system.

3. At Mr. Jones' request, the consultant will send a copy of the "Jail Population Checklist: An Assessment Survey" developed by the NIC Jail Center. This will be used to evaluate the strategies employed in La Plata County for reducing the jail population.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to facilitate the implementation of an automated inmate tracking/management system at the La Plata County Jail.

1. Further research should be conducted to find appropriate software for transfer and implementation on the Sheriff's Altos 586 microcomputer. Hopefully, the SEARCH Group LOCKUP software will prove to be compatible with the Altos hardware. The use of the Altos to support the LOCKUP inmate tracking software is probably the optimum resolution of the jail record problem.

2. The Altos capacity that is currently being used for non-jail functions, such as the Investigations Division records, should be determined. Remaining capacity on the Altos for the jail software may necessitate hardware upgrade.

3. A systems manager should be appointed to conduct and oversee: (a) the requirements analysis and its documented findings, (b) software selection, implementation, and maintenance, (c) system documentation - training manuals, and (d) training jail personnel in system use and problem resolution. Mr. Steve Jones would seem to be a good candidate for the role of systems manager.

4. Further investigation into the use of the County DP VAX system should be made to determine its value in supporting inmate tracking software if none can be found that is Altos-compatible.

5. The information requirements analysis should proceed to completion no matter what software system is used. This procedure will identify what information is essential to inmate management and tracking, and what data currently being recorded is superfluous.