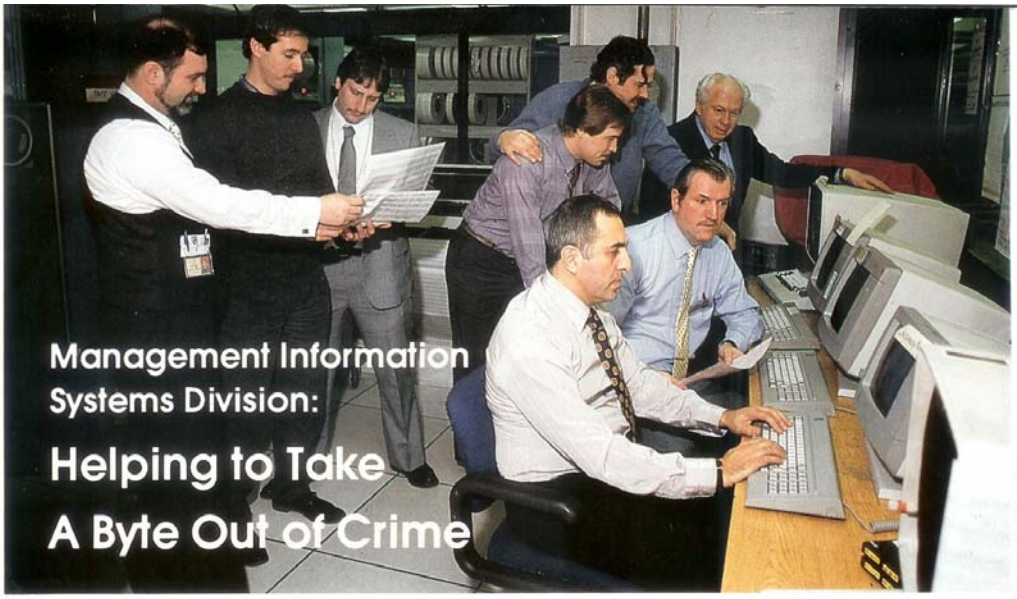


Management Information Systems Division: Helping to Take A Byte Out of Crime

All photos by Dave Cantor

The Systems Operations staff works as a team.

Police Officers Anita Matusiak and John Kenny use a personal computer at the temporary headquarters during the U.N.'s 40th Anniversary.

Police Officer Anthony Reitano, left, and Sergeant Thomas Mulligan instruct a class in the use of mobile digital computers at M.I.S.D.

By David A. Cantor

On the surface, the Management Information Systems Division (MISD) floor at One Police Plaza has the feel of any corporate data processing facility. Neatly attired men and women work at computer terminals, sort through printouts and load mag tapes on machines at a constant pace. But, after a brief conversation with anyone at MISD, it becomes evident that all the data processing is concerned solely with police work. From Uniform Crime Reports to Accident Investigation Applications, the data being processed is the statistical vocabulary of New York's Finest's efforts at policing the city. Yet for all of its law enforcement applications, the methods used and the rate of success enjoyed by the men and women of MISD are the envy of many a private sector data processing firm.

From his corner office which is furnished with the obligatory computer terminal, Edward Sharp, the director of MISD, points with pride to the division's reputation in the computer field. "The SPRINT (Special Police Radio Inquiry Network) is the NYPD's central nervous system," he points out, "and in 1986, running 24 hours per day, seven days per week, we had an up-time or working time of 99.74% making this one of the most reliable computer systems in the country."

The SPRINT computer is the information system that links 911 calls with officers on patrol. After determining the priority and location of the call, the computer directs the job to the appropriate division radio dispatcher at communications. SPRINT allows dispatchers to monitor availability of RMPs and patrol personnel, direct them to jobs and record the final disposition of the jobs. In the case of car stops, the dispatcher can access the Department of Motor Vehicles and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) to help the patrol officer determine whether or not a vehicle is stolen. The SPRINT system handles 3.5 million calls per year, all of which are recorded and secured for a minimum of one year, unless they are needed to help in an ongoing investigation in which case the records may be held for a longer period.

At MISD, a staff of 14 people support the system's impressive up-time statistic. "Trouble shooting is a prerequisite to our success," says Police Officer Raymond Finn, the PBA delegate at MISD, as he introduces some of the officers in the SPRINT room. "We get a beeper alert at the first sign of trouble. The next step is to determine whether the problem is in software or hardware, and finally find the solution to the problem as quickly as possible," adds Police Officer Edward May. Besides keeping the system up as much as possible, the staff of the SPRINT room investigates new software applications for their system.

From the SPRINT room, Ray Finn leads the way to the Systems Operations Section. Here, over 50 people maintain and oversee the entire computer system of the NYPD, in a room where the SPRINT, Management Information System and the Mobile Data International are housed. A separate security system safeguards this section and can be accessed only by personnel with the proper clearance. Besides the computer main frame, this section houses a control center, a computer help room for user information and direction, tape drive and storage and even an old card key-punch machine which has been outmoded by on-line entry systems. Like the computer systems themselves the operations section is manned continuously around the clock. One need only examine the amount of information stored here to determine the scope of MISD. "Each of the 150 mag tape discs here holds

Police Officers Don DeStefano and Alexander Favuzzi, Highway 1, use their Mobile Digital Computer to enter the imminent departure of their V.I.P. motorcade during the U.N.'s 40th Anniversary.

Police Officers Brian Boll, Joe Tooley and Zandra McNeil man the consoles in the help room at Systems Operation. The officers help the on-line users of M.I.S.D.

one million bytes of information," says Police Officer Timothy Finn. "Computers touch every aspect of the police officer's job, helping him perform a specific task and recording the pertinent information of that task," states the manager of the Operations Section, Lieutenant Anthony McAllen. "Our job is to keep the equipment running to help those officers in the field," adds Police Officer Frank McGuire.

The Management Information System side of MISD has 31 different applications ranging from applicant investigation through warrant on-line file. For the patrol officers the first working contact with MISD comes through the Customer Information Control System (CICS) and The Finest Network. The Finest Network is an administrative switching network that allows communication from headquarters to all precincts, precinct-to-borough, and precinct-to-precinct, through MISD. Besides the color of the day and missing persons and other city-wide information, this network enables the police officer to access the New York State Police Inquiry Network (NYSPIN), DMV, NCIC and the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Network (NLETS), the last of which facilitates state-to-state communications. Also available at the precinct level is the Beta fingerprint system, for name search and fingerprint classification. By the end of this year, NYPD will be tied into the New York State fingerprint system.

Police Officers Antonio Villanueva, Edward May, Gerard Brady and Carl DeNonno keep an eye on the ever-busy SPRINT system in the SPRINT room.

Additional Management Information System applications include personnel, payroll, CCRB, on-line booking, and the warrant systems. The warrant on-line file allows investigators the availability of reviewing outstanding warrants to aid in their cases. The Central Warrant System keeps track of some 400,000 local warrants and automatically interfaces with the NYSPIN and NCIC warrant systems. With the advent of on-line booking in 1981, arresting officers no longer have to repeatedly enter the same information on fingerprint cards as the computers prepare the cards at the city's five central booking locations.

As programming needs arise, the men and women in the Systems Development Office at MISD create and test new programs. "Right now we are finishing up our latest program — on-line roll call," says Police Officer Teddy Loschiavo, "and by the summer every precinct should be on-line." "This system will help the department establish a calendar to manage future manning needs and manpower requirements and availability," adds Sergeant Carmine Moschella. The attitude of the 50 members of Systems Development is best summed up by Police Officer Mike Littman who quipped that, "People should understand that our computer capability is not up to *'War Games'* standards, but give us a little time . . ."

From Systems Develpment, Ray Finn proceeds to his assigned section, Systems Programming. In this office a staff of 15 maintains the operating systems and telecommunications. "We are the glue that helps to hold all of the MISD components together," he points out.

Yet another area of MISD is the Micro-Computer Section. A staff of five is in the midst of evaluating software in an effort to help precincts computerize their work. "We hope to develop programs for every precinct's personal computer to handle clerical functions such as precinct and communications logs," says Police Officer Dan Grasser. "We also hope to get precinct personnel to utilize the PC for the analysis of 61 reports to establish crime patterns and repeat offenders, which will lead to more efficient response by patrol officers and anti-crime units," he adds. The staff of the Micro-Computer Section also offers a hot-line to help precinct

Police Officer Timothy Finn scans a printout in Systems Operation. Behind him are the tapes on which computer information is stored.

personnel with program and repair problems as well as installation service.

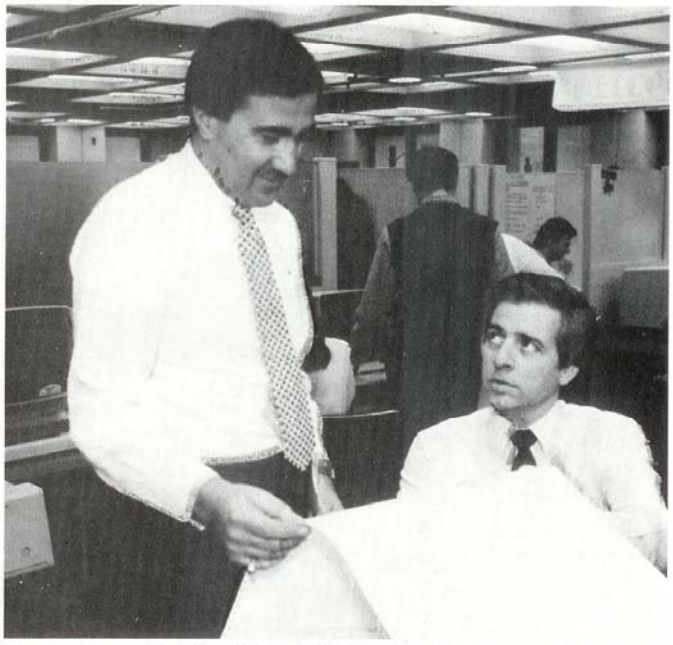
With the help of the dozen members of the Telecommunications Section, the Micro-Computer section uses personal computers for security purposes for special events including the opening of the United Nations every Fall and the successful Liberty Weekend of this past summer. Along with computer programmers from PBMS, including Police Officer John Kenny, new programs were utilized to project computerized sectional maps of target areas and to organize manning needs. The Telecommunications officers also provided back-up systems in the event of hardware problems. To insure that trained operators are readily available, there is a computer training room at the Police Academy with approximately a dozen PCs.

In the field, police officers are now seeing "computer cars" in every precinct. Initially supplied to the Highway and Auto Larceny Units for more efficient and faster plate checks, the program has been successfully expanded to the precinct level. "The Mobile Digital Training Session takes four hours of classroom time," says Police Officer Anthony Reitano, "and the similarity to The Finest Network terminals means that most officers adapt easily to the system." The most innovative use of the Mobile Digital units occurred during the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. "For the first time we were able to track VIP motorcades without relying on voice radio transmissions. This stand-alone system afforded more secure travel routes than ever before," states Sergeant Thomas Mulligan. "Our digital communications were received solely by designated terminals at the temporary headquarters where they were manned by auto larceny and other personnel who had received MDI instruction," adds Reitano. Ultimately, these MISD officers hinted at a mobile digital unit in every sector car for the greatest efficiency.

While a computer background is helpful to an officer interested in joining MISD, it is not a necessity. Ray Finn points out that "We are most successful at the trainee level, since 15 percent of the applicants to this section pass the entry tests, which include interviews with the seven department managers. But once a person joins us, we do provide a satisfying internal career path from computer applications to programming areas," declares Director Edward Sharp. "Beyond the department, our personnel are much sought after in the private sector due to the complexity of technical aspects and the broad technical knowledge one learns here.

Lieutenant Anthony McAllen, far left, discusses a program with Police Officer Frank McGuire while Police Officer Ray Finn works with Sal Ardizzone on a printout.

This learning experience is best demonstrated by events that occurred before and during Election Day 1986. "At the request of Chief Johnston, MISD created a program to transmit election results from the precinct to headquarters for early release to the media. With MISD personnel aiding precinct personnel, 90 percent of election precinct results were reported by midnight of election day and this practice may be repeated in the future," says Officer Finn. "We spent six to eight weeks for program development and were able to provide an efficient reporting service for the city's voters. This illustrates one of the best aspects of working at MISD," Finn relates. "No one will ever exhaust the possibilities of service the men and women of this office can provide to the NYPD, the city of New York and to law enforcement.



Sergeant Carmine Moschella and Police Officer Teddy Loschiavo discuss a printout from the newly developed on-line roll call.