

NATIONAL SCENE



Web-Based Crime Data Available at the NCOVR Data Center

(This article was written by Jacqueline Cohen, Research Professor, and Jerone Porter, Data Center Manager, at the National Consortium on Violence Research, Carnegie Mellon University.)

With support from the National Science Foundation, the Data Center of the National Consortium on Violence Research (NCOVR) at Carnegie Mellon University provides Web access to a number of data collections relating to violent offending and victimization. Currently this collection includes:

- **Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Data**
Police agency data on offenses and arrests for years since 1980.
- **Supplementary Homicide Report Data**
Incident-based reports of homicides since 1980.
- **National Incident-Based Reporting System Data**
Incident-based reports of offenses and arrests since 1997.
- **National Crime Victimization Survey Data**
National victimization survey data since 1973.
- **Census** data from the decennial census in 1980, 1990, and 2000 for geographical levels from census block groups to national totals.

While violent offending has been a substantive focus of NCOVR, understanding the shared and distinctive features of violence often involves comparisons among violent and nonviolent behaviors. NCOVR data resources include the full range of offending types available in each data collection.

Two Web-based tools for accessing the data are available at the Data Center. The first, Oracle's Discoverer® application, is a menu-driven query tool that allows users to customize an extract file to include user-selected variables and impose conditions on desired records. The Discoverer® tool allows the user to easily access subsets of variables and records without downloading the entire

dataset and then process the data through user-created data preparation programs. The second tool, Cognos Powerplay®, provides flexible access to structured data "cubes." Cubes are multidimensional tables that focus on a specific theme. Users can manipulate these cubes to aggregate or disaggregate data and focus on particular areas of interest

(See **DATA RESOURCES**, p. 7)

SAC SNAPSHOTS



New Idaho Strangulation Law Based in Part on Results of Illinois SAC Study

On April 6, 2005, Idaho's Governor signed a bill into law, effective immediately, making "choking" or attempted strangulation of a household member (or dating partner or former dating partner) a felony punishable by up to 15 years in the state penitentiary. The law specifically states that, "No injuries are required to prove attempted strangulation." The law also states that the prosecution is not required to prove the intent to kill or the intent to injure, but that the only intent required is the intent to choke or strangle. The law will be published as Idaho Code section 19-923. According to Idaho Deputy Attorney General Melissa Moody, "it is the toughest piece of legislation of its kind in the country. I believe it will save lives."

Results from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's Chicago Women's Health Risk Study (CWHRS) on the

role of strangulation as a risk factor for homicide in intimate partner violence provided support for the passage of this bill. Deputy Attorney General Moody obtained CWHRS results through an information request to Carolyn Block of the Authority, and then the Attorney General's Office provided the results to Idaho state legislators. CWHRS results are cited in the "statement of purpose" section of the Idaho bill, which may be viewed at <http://www3.state.id.us/oasis/S1062.html>

The CWHRS found that domestic violence incidents were significantly more likely to result in death when the man used "choking" or attempted strangulation against the woman. The relationship is significant and strong for all three racial/ethnic groups studied – Latina,

(See **SNAPSHOTS**, p. 2)

(SAC SNAPSHOTS, from p. 1)

black women, and other women. Further, a woman was significantly more likely to be killed by strangulation when the man had "choked" or attempted to strangle her in the previous year or "ever." For more information about the CWHRS, visit the Authority's Web site, at www.icjia.state.il.us.

Illinois SAC Receives NIC Grant to Evaluate Illinois' Evidence-Based Practices Initiative

The Illinois Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) recently entered into a three-year cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) in the amount of \$194,232 to evaluate Illinois' Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Initiative. This project will assist local probation departments participating in the EBP Initiative by providing them with data and analysis that gauges performance before and during the implementation of evidence-based practices, and will establish a process and protocol for ongoing assessment of probation performance

through an effective state and local partnership.

Maine SAC Releases 2004 Crime and Justice Data Book

The Maine SAC recently released the 2004 Maine Crime and Justice Data Book, which was authored by SAC Research Associate Mark Rubin. It includes national and regional data that compare Maine's trends with trends in the U.S. and northern New England on sentinel crime indicators.

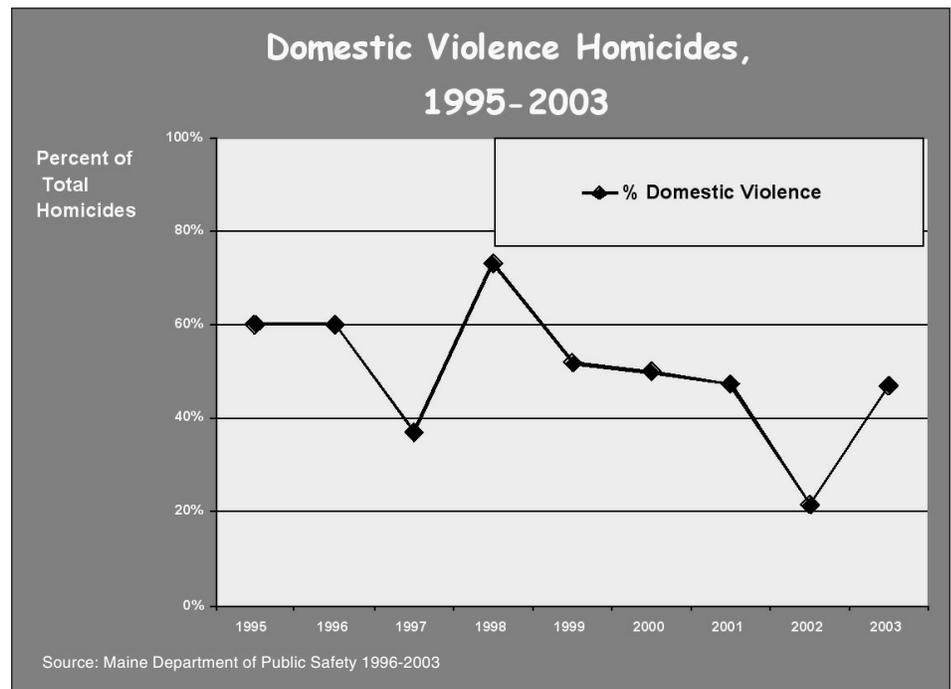
According to Paul Vestal, Chair of the Maine Criminal Justice Commission, "The manner in which the book presents data and trends makes it extremely user-friendly for state legislators, criminal justice practitioners, researchers, nonprofits and community members." The report found that while domestic violence assaults reached a 10-year high, Maine also reported the lowest rate of firearm use in violent crime in the country. For the 10th consecutive year, the number of adult female arrests increased, while juvenile arrests accounted for the lowest share of all arrests in the last 10 years. Similar to the upward trend in the state's prisons, the average in-house population of adults in Maine's county jails nearly doubled from 1995 to 2004.

Production of the data book was sponsored in part by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. The SAC is part of a network of state Statistical Analysis Centers supported by BJS and by the Justice Research and Statistics Association. The report is available on the Maine SAC Web site at http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justiceresearch/.

Maine Issues Policy Brief on Firearms and Domestic Violence

As part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) in Maine, the Maine SAC, located at the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine, is releasing a series of policy briefs examining different elements of firearm violence. This month the SAC released the first brief in the series, an examination of the relationship between domestic violence and firearms in Maine. Domestic violence is considered by law enforcement officials to be the number one crime problem in Maine, but few data have been gathered about how offenders use firearms to intimidate an intimate partner or family member. The brief includes data from research conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office, Maine District, for cases in which the offenders threatened the use of a firearm against their victims and a state court issued a

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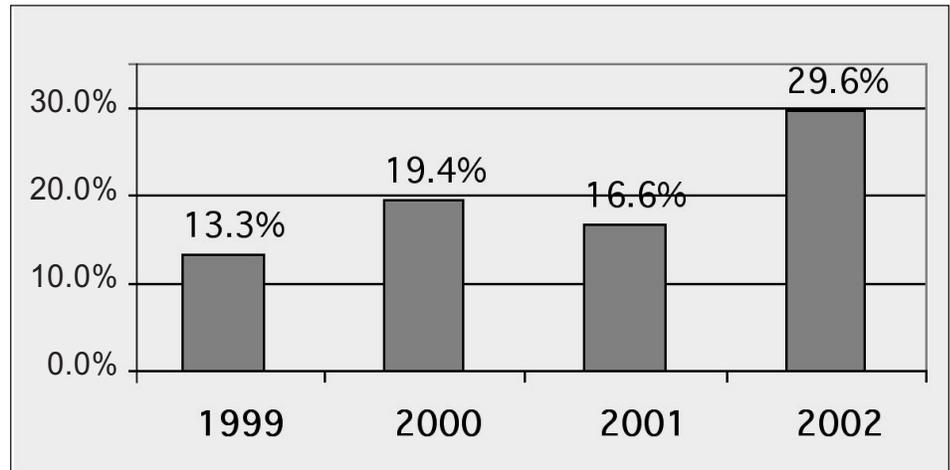


final Protection From Abuse (PFA) order. Among the findings were the following:

- In 2003, the number of reported domestic violence assaults in Maine reached a 10-year high.** In 2003, reported domestic violence assaults increased 11.4% to a total of 5,364 crimes. This is the highest number of domestic violence assaults reported in 10 years and is 30% higher than the total in 1994. These reported domestic violence assaults also represent a higher percentage of all assaults in the state today than over the last 10 years. In 2003, reported domestic violence assaults represented 45.8% of all assaults, 4.6% higher than 2001, the next highest year. Domestic violence also involves other crimes. The majority of murders in Maine over the last nine years have been committed by an individual against another family or household member.
- 54% of domestic violence homicides were committed with a firearm.** Intimate partner violence against women is all too common and takes many forms, of which the most serious is homicide. Guns in the hands of offenders can easily turn domestic violence into domestic homicide. In Maine, the link between domestic violence and the threat to use firearms remains strong. Between 1996 and 2003, nearly 30% of all homicides were domestic violence homicides committed with a firearm. Moreover, on average, 54% of homicides with a firearm are domestic violence-related. In 2000, domestic violence homicides accounted for all firearm murders in Maine. (See graph on page 2.)

Unfortunately, the relationship between domestic violence and firearms is not easily captured in statewide data collection. It is difficult to track the number of individuals who threaten the use of a firearm, particularly in abusive relationships, because the threat almost always occurs behind closed doors where there are

Percentage of NICS Denials in Maine for a DV Conviction or a PFA Order, 1999-2002



no witnesses. However, recent research conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maine suggests a significant percentage of domestic abusers use firearms to threaten their victims. This study reviewed orders issued in five district courts over a six-month period in 2003-2004 and found that in 18% of the cases in which a final PFA was issued, the defendant threatened to use a firearm against the victim. Applying the 18% firearm threat rate to the total number of final PFA orders issued (2,359) in Maine in 2004, it is estimated that 425 defendants threatened to use a firearm against their victims in 2004. Since PFA cases represent only a subset of households experiencing domestic violence, the number of victims threatened with a firearm is likely higher. By contrast, the number of violent crimes with a firearm reported under the Uniform Crime Report totaled only 92 in 2003.¹ The U.S. Attorney's Office study demonstrates that the threatened use of a firearm against an intimate partner or family member far exceeds the number of reported violent crimes with a firearm in Maine.

- The share of National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) denials for persons with a domestic violence conviction and/or a PFA order has increased since 1999.** Laws related to denial of firearms to persons with a domestic violence conviction and/or a PFA order are enforced in part by the Brady Law background checks performed on firearm transactions conducted through Federal Firearms License holders (FFLs). In 2002, the most recent year for which data are available, domestic violence accounted for approximately 18% of rejected firearm transfers across the country.² In Maine, however, that share is much higher (see graph above). Since 1999, the percent of NICS denials in Maine for persons with a domestic violence conviction³ and/or a PFA order has increased to nearly 30%.

The brief issues a series of recommendations that identify areas in which the state could do a better job at coordinating efforts to reduce firearm possession in households where domestic violence occurs. As PSN Maine continues its work, it will be dependent on the involvement of not only law enforcement officials, but the entire community to provide a safe environment for residents in their communities and in their homes. The brief is available on the Maine SAC Web site at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justiceresearch/>. For more information about the series, contact Mark Rubin, Maine SAC Research Associate, at mrubin@usm.maine.edu or (207) 780-5843.

¹ UCR only reports firearm totals for homicides, robberies and aggravated assaults.

² Bowling, M., Lauver, G., Hickman, M., and Adams, D., *Background Checks for Firearm Transfers, 2002*, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, September 2003, NCJ 200116.

³ In 1996, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) sponsored a provision prohibiting individuals with misdemeanor domestic violence convictions from purchasing or possessing firearms, strengthening the law that previously applied only to felony offenders. Twenty states have comparable state law prohibitions, but not Maine.

(SAC SNAPSHOTS, from p. 3)

South Carolina SAC Publication Makes the Top 10

The South Carolina SAC publication *South Carolina Murder Trends 1977 – 2002* was selected as a Notable State Publication by the South Carolina State Library. Each year the State Library announces the selection of the 10 most notable South Carolina state government documents at a ceremony on or near Freedom of Information Day, March 16, the birthday of President James Madison, an early proponent of citizen access to government information. Three judges from state documents depository libraries around the state selected the winners from electronic and print reports received during 2004. These awards seek to encourage governmental agencies to make widespread public distribution of important information in the belief that an informed citizenry is the best guarantee of freedom.

South Carolina SAC Participates in Juvenile Sex Offender Recidivism Study

The National Science Foundation recently awarded a three-year research grant to the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) to examine the effects of sex offender registration on the recidivism of juvenile sex offenders. The South Carolina Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) will participate as part of a multiagency collaborative effort with the responsibility for providing analysis of National Incident-Based Reporting System data to determine pre- and post-registry juvenile sex offending patterns. The SAC and MUSC will work in close collaboration to ensure that all the research conducted is accurate, thorough, and consistent with accepted standards of research, and that it meets the requirements of the MUSC and the National Science Foundation.

ASK JIM



Delivering Presentable Presentations

Both the bane and benefit of a professional career is delivering presentations to colleagues and other audiences. For some speakers, the suffering experienced may be equaled only by the pain inflicted on their listeners. However, a presentation is often one of the few opportunities for acknowledgment and professional reinforcement that researchers and analysts have available. This column does not have the space to address the larger question of how to improve one's speaking ability. It will focus instead on the goal of making better graphics to accompany talks, which can significantly contribute to a much warmer reception by audiences.

With the general availability of presentation software such as MS PowerPoint, Corel Presentations, and Lotus Freelance and the affordable cost of color printers and projectors, there is little reason for presentations to look like the old typewriter-produced, black and white overhead transparencies. However, many presenters either do not take full advantage of the features offered by these technologies or they overuse some capabilities and make bad design choices that detract from their overall message.

This latter problem prompted one SAC Director to call me for advice on improving the presentations being developed by one of her agency's staff. In this article, I will review some of the things I told her about basic presentation design considerations, as well as list some additional sources of information for those who want to explore this topic further.

- **Minimize text.** Presentation slides should augment your talk rather than substitute for it. Direct your audience's attention to key concepts or major points through the visual impact of your slides. A general guideline is to use no more than six words per line and six lines of text per slide. A related concern is that too much text will render a slide unreadable to most of the audience. To do a quick check of your slides' legibility, stand four or five feet away from your computer screen and try to read them. If you cannot easily read the text, your audience probably will not be able to either.
- **Maintain good contrast between text and slide backgrounds.** Bad color choices, such as light text against light backgrounds, can result in illegible slides. A general guideline is to use a light text against dark backgrounds for computer slides and dark text with light backgrounds for printed copy. The situation may be worsened by the transition between media. Colors will appear brighter on a computer screen than when they are shown via a projector or printed copy. This is because the light source for a computer monitor is behind the display screen, while with a projector and paper, the light is reflected from the front of the surface being viewed. The various technologies used in computer monitors and projectors can also affect how specific colors are rendered. Consequently, it is always safest to preview a slideshow with the equipment that will be used for a presentation to confirm its final appearance.
- **Be aware of the effects of certain colors.** Color choices can also affect how your audience perceives your presentation. Colors can have psychological effects, e.g., the use of black and red draws attention to text or graphic elements such as bars or slices in a chart. Selecting blues and greens for backgrounds is soothing, while bright reds and yellows can be tiring or irritating, especially for prolonged viewing. Some combinations, e.g., red/green and blue/yellow, can be difficult to see for color-blind individuals, while oth-

- **Establish design goals for the presentation.** Begin your planning by identifying what it is that you need to accomplish. If the purpose is purely informational, decide what knowledge the audience should take away from the presentation. If the goals are policy oriented, what are the conclusions, ramifications, or other concerns that should be emphasized? Focus on your message and choose the content and design that contribute to making your points.

ers, e.g., red/blue, can appear to vibrate and are visually distracting.

- **Use legible typestyles and be consistent throughout the presentation.** A presentation will appear more professional and organized when the text can be easily read and a consistent style is evident. Generally a sans serif typeface such as Arial, MS Sans Serif, or Verdana is preferred, because the thin strokes used in serif typefaces like Times Roman will be more difficult to see from a distance. If you choose a relatively unusual typeface, it should be embedded in the presentation when you save it. This avoids visual difficulties if the slides are presented or displayed on other computers that may not have the same fonts available. Keeping the size of the type consistent for the various elements in your slides, i.e., titles, bullet text, and chart labels, provides a more ordered overall look. Usually the smallest type size used should be no less than 20 point.

Several Web sites are devoted to tips for improving presentations, although some of the design advice can go to extremes as well. Generally, you should try to focus on what will work for a given audience and what the message is. Slide design should contribute to achieving this goal rather than distract or hinder this effort. Attractive and well-planned slides can help maintain audience attention even when the subject matter is otherwise dull.

Since most presentation products like MS PowerPoint include slideshow templates that were created by professional designers, they usually have good color and type choices and suitable backgrounds. I usually suggest that new users start with these. Additional templates can be downloaded (many for free) from Microsoft's Web site (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/CT011323751033.aspx>) as well as from others that can be found through a Google search. Using these templates will allow you to avoid using the same backgrounds and designs for every presentation. Below are three Web sites that offer additional resources for improving presentations. There is also a link to articles on presentation design concerns.

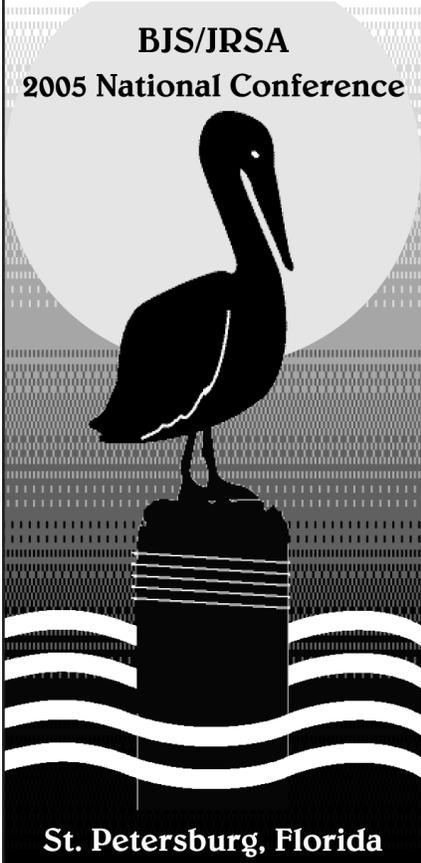
- **Presentations.com.** This Web site has sections on creating presentations as well as delivery and technology options.

SAVE THE DATE

Bureau of Justice Statistics/Justice Research and Statistics Association

2005 National Conference • October 27 – 28
Hilton St. Petersburg Hotel • St. Petersburg, Florida

Plans for the 2005 BJS/JRSA National Conference on October 27-28 in St. Petersburg, Florida, are rapidly taking shape. Take a look at the preliminary agenda and hotel and travel information at <http://www.jrsa.org/events/conference/index.html>. You may also want to consider enhancing your conference experience by attending one of the eight pre- and postconference professional seminars:



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- Multivariate Data Analysis (MDA): Logistic Regression Analysis (LOGIT)
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- Basic Evaluation Concepts and Methods
- Assessing Program Performance: Considerations for Selecting a Method
- Introduction to Spatial Crime Analysis
- Practical Approaches to Producing Strategic Intelligence
- Contemporary Issues in Evaluation: Focus on Cost-Benefit Analysis and Evaluation-Specific Methodology
- Forecasting Prison Populations

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We look forward to seeing you in St. Petersburg!

http://www.presentations.com/presentations/creation/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000543356

- **Presentation-pointers.com.** Similar to the above Web site but also gets into conducting meetings, good speaking skills, and using various delivery media.
<http://www.presentation-pointers.com/showarticle.asp?articleid=78>
- **Presenters University.** Another Web site loaded with tips for presenters. Also has lots of free downloads.

http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals_Deadly_sins.php

Many books are also available that provide advice for improving presentations as well as in-depth guidance and examples. A sample chapter from one such recently published book on this topic, *Constructing Knockout Presentations in PowerPoint*, can be viewed at: <http://www.informit.com/articles/article.asp?p=381918>.

—Jim Zepp

Jerry Lee Symposium Focuses on How to Evaluate “What Works”

On May 2-3, The Jerry Lee Foundation hosted the fifth annual Crime Prevention Symposium entitled, *Systematic Evidence on What Works in Crime and Justice: Raising Questions and Presenting Findings*. The meeting explored the most recent ideas and work of the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Coordinating Group (www.campbellcollaboration.org), a group created in 2000 with the broad mission of conducting systematic reviews of social science research. The Campbell Collaboration is comprised of researchers from around the world who are leaders in the field of criminology. It is a key voice in the call for increased reliance on empirical study of the effectiveness of interventions in the behavioral and social sciences. The Campbell Collaboration contributes to this effort by developing and circulating systematic reviews of various interventions.

The first day of this year’s symposium consisted of presentations by methodologists, economists, and criminologists on the broad topic of the appropriateness of randomized control trials as the gold standard for evaluating crime and justice interventions. Presenters posed the question of whether randomized control trials are superior to all other approaches. This is a timely topic, as criminal justice policymakers, researchers, and practitioners are relying more heavily on evidence-based interventions. Presenters drew comparisons among randomized control designs, quasi-experimental designs, participant

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observation studies, and meta-analyses, noting the advantages and drawbacks of each method in terms of depth, accuracy, and breadth. Shortcomings of randomized control trials, such as their lack of depth when compared to observational studies, were identified, but presenters considered these shortcomings to be outweighed by the accuracy and generalizability that they allow. Presenters also made suggestions about techniques to circumvent some of the difficulties that accompany random assignment, such as using instrumental variables, and noted that while randomized control trials are imperfect, they are the best approach to

determining what works in the field of criminal justice.

Day one of the symposium also included a call for more comprehensive statistical reporting. Presenters discussed the use of statistical techniques in the criminology and criminal justice literature, and noted the overreliance by academics on simple significance tests (p-values) as the primary means of reporting the effects of various interventions. Instead, they suggested reporting outputs that present a fuller picture of intervention effects, such as confidence intervals, mean outcomes, standard effect sizes, and percentile rank of mean intervention group member versus percentile rank of mean control group member. These kinds of outputs inform readers on the magnitude of the effect(s) of an intervention and the confidence one should have in the findings, rather than just the presence of an effect.

The second day of the symposium took place in the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the second day was to help bridge the gap between research and policymaking. Opening remarks were made by Larry Sherman of the University of Pennsylvania, during which he reiterated the growing reliance on randomized control trials in many fields and the encouragement of the use of this method by the federal government (notably the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice). Researchers presented findings from recent research in three areas of crime control: police interventions to reduce illegal firearm possession, drug courts, and mentoring programs. At the conclusion of each presentation, various invited guests, including advisors to members of Congress, police chiefs, other researchers, prosecutors, and federal agency administrators, provided feedback. This reopened the much-needed dialogue between policymakers, practitioners, and researchers about the constraints that each party faces when making decisions regarding the implementation of crime prevention and intervention strategies. Notable among these constraints were fiscal limitations and barriers to understanding complex research analyses.

(See **SYMPOSIUM**, p. 7)

JRSA Survey Library Seeks Instruments

JRSA has a survey library, which it makes available in the “Resources” section of the JRSA Web site (www.jrsa.org/resources/survey.htm). This collection of survey instruments is used by SACs and other justice-related agencies and organizations. Topics include public attitudes, law enforcement; management, victimization, schools, and domestic violence, to name a few. These instruments are requested by researchers and practitioners to help them develop their own surveys. To keep our collection current

and provide users as much information as possible, we are always seeking new instruments. If you have recently conducted surveys, please send us a copy of the instrument(s) used, either in electronic format or hard copy. Contact Karen Maline (kmaline@jrsa.org) or Marylinda Stawasz (mstawasz@jrsa.org) to submit an instrument or request more information. Thank you for helping us maintain an important resource for justice professionals everywhere.

(DATA RESOURCES, from p. 1)

by changing the dimensions displayed and filtering the contributing data through a graphical “drag-and-drop” user interface. Users only need an Internet connection and standard browser to access the data with either tool. The NCOVR Data Center can be accessed in one of two ways:

- Go to <http://www.ncovr.heinz.cmu.edu/docs/home.htm> and select “Access to NCOVR Data Sets,” or
- Go directly to the data access page at: http://www.ncovr.heinz.cmu.edu/docs/Data_Docs/Direct_access_data_cubes_and_discoverer.htm

“ The NCOVR data collection includes several enhancements to the raw data available from original sources. UCR data since 1980 are combined into a single file, permitting direct access to trends. ”

Once on the data access page, users find links to tutorials on how to use data cubes and make Discoverer queries, background information on the various data sets, and links to access individual data sets. Users can log on as a guest using the “Log on as guest” link or by entering user ID “Guest” and password “NCOVR” (without quotes). For expanded capabilities, users can register for a personal account. This free service establishes a personal directory on the NCOVR server where users can save queries for their own future use or to share with others. New users can register directly from the data access page. The user’s customized table can also be exported in *csv* or *pdf* format for use in other computer applications or printing.

The NCOVR data collection includes several enhancements to the raw data available from original sources. UCR data since 1980 are combined into a single file, permitting direct access to trends.

Yearly UCR data include counts of offenses and arrests provided by police agencies reporting to the FBI’s UCR program, along with the population covered and the number of months included each year. The latter are used to report population rates both from the raw data and also after straightforward adjustments for incomplete reporting by some agencies during an annual reporting cycle. In addition to total population covered by each agency, place-linked census data for 1980, 1990, and 2000 are available for the same demographic categories found in UCR arrest data.

NCVS and NIBRS data are available as multiyear linked files. NCVS data are grouped for collections of years that use

a common survey design. Current NCVS and NIBRS data cubes report incident counts—providing both sample and population counts for NCVS data. The current cubes focus on features of incidents and participants especially relevant to violent offending. These will be expanded to include cubes organized around property incidents, population-based victimization rates, costs of crime, and offender and victim participants.

NCOVR invites returning and potential users to contact Jacqueline Cohen (jc63@andrew.cmu.edu) or Jerone Porter (jerone@andrew.cmu.edu) for further assistance in accessing NCOVR Data Center resources.

(SYMPOSIUM, from p. 6)

Finally, a talk on how to get policymakers to use research was given by Phil Davies, Deputy Director, Government Chief Social Researcher’s Office in London. Mr. Davies provided several suggestions for improving the communication between researchers and policymakers:

- Integrate research into professional competence and create a culture of research in professional practice.
- Get evidence-based research into the decisionmaking process so that it’s on same scale as policymaking.
- Emphasize ownership of the evidence; encourage contractual relationships between researchers and policymakers.
- Use incentives and disincentives to strengthen the culture of research in policymaking.
- Create shared notions of evidence; common language is needed between researchers and policymakers.
- Ensure that findings and resources are available beyond the Campbell Collaboration and academics.

- Develop a strategic, integrated approach to research, policy, and practice; cultivate a unified message from policymakers, researchers, and practitioners.
- Move away from opinion-based policy and toward evidence-based policy.
- Move away from the discussion of what we do not know and toward what we do know.
- Use different products for different audiences so that every audience understands.

As noted above, the main charge of the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Coordinating Group is to produce and maintain systematic reviews of interventions in juvenile and criminal justice. The first of these systematic reviews will be presented at the upcoming 14th World Congress of Criminology in Philadelphia on August 7-11, 2005. For more information on this conference, please visit: <http://www.worldcriminology2005.org/>.

—Ashley Nellis

ASUCRP Annual Conference Set for Little Rock

The Association of State Uniform Crime Reporting Programs (ASUCRP) is holding its annual conference September 18-21, 2005, at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas. Sessions will include an update on the FBI’s N-DEx initiative, an examination of the common errors of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and how to fix them, infor-

mation on data security, where to find crime statistics both locally and nationally, and what happens to the data sent by UCR program managers to the FBI. The conference will also feature a tour of the new William J. Clinton Presidential Library. For more information, contact Gwen Ervin-McLarty at gmcclarty@acic.state.ar.us or call (501) 682-7421.

University of Maryland Heads Broad Effort to Study Terrorism

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced a \$12 million, three-year grant earlier this year to the University of Maryland, College Park and its academic partners to establish a center to study terrorism and counter-terrorism. Its research will focus on areas such as how to disrupt the formation of terror networks and minimize the impact of future attacks. Gary LaFree, professor of criminology and former director of the New Mexico Statistical Analysis Center, is the director of this new center, the National Center for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terror (START).

START, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, has been tasked by the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate with using state-of-the-art theories, methods, and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics, and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. START aims to provide timely

guidance on how to disrupt terrorist networks, reduce the incidence of terrorism, and enhance the resilience of U.S. society in the face of the terrorist threat.

To achieve this goal, START has been working with its five major partners—the University of Colorado, University of Pennsylvania, Monterey Institute of International Studies, University of South Carolina, and the University of California, Los Angeles—as well as other institutions in the United States and abroad. It has assembled a team of more than 30 researchers to conduct research related to the terrorist threat. These researchers represent a range of disciplines within the social and behavioral sciences, including sociology, criminology, political science, psychology, communication, geography, economics, and anthropology. Adding to this interdisciplinary endeavor are the efforts of experts in public policy, history, public health, foreign languages, and engineering working as part of the START research team.

Through individual research projects and in-depth collaborative efforts, this research team provides the homeland-security community as well as the public at large with insights about how and why terrorist groups form, the decisions and behaviors of individual terrorists and terrorist groups, and how societies can best respond to and prepare for known and unknown terrorist threats.

START researchers use a variety of approaches in their projects, including analyses of statistical data, in-depth examinations of individual case studies, survey-based analyses, and reviews of public documents. This range of methods will help provide both a broad and deep understanding of the dynamics of terrorism and terrorists, allowing for more effective counter-terrorism measures. START will also launch a wide-ranging educational program and has plans to serve as a clearinghouse for resources on teaching about terror and counter-terrorism to all audiences.

The JRSA Forum is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. JRSA is a national nonprofit organization. For membership or other information, call (202) 842-9330, e-mail cjin@jrja.org, or visit our Web site: <http://www.jrja.org>.

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