Appendix A
Using the Library: Traditional and Computer-Based Information Sources

Throughout this book, we have assumed that you will be reading reports of criminal justice research. In this appendix, we want to talk a little about how you’ll find reports to read. You live in a world in which daily reports of criminal justice research are the norm. Most newspapers, magazines, and television and radio news programs and features include news items and factoids about or summaries of crime problems and possible solutions. A variety of technical journals treat the same subjects from a more professional or academic standpoint.

This appendix is organized into two general sections. First, we discuss using the library in the library. Going to your college or university library, or to a public or other library, is still an important starting point. The second section describes remote computer access to library and other information resources via the Web. This section is much less complete for two related reasons. First, computer-assisted information resources are changing daily. No published guide could hope to keep pace, so you should view our suggestions merely as starting points. Second, because of the phenomenal pace of development, the “virtual” library is a much less orderly place than the building where they keep the books. Web-based tools and guides are continually being developed, but information technology changes much more quickly than guides to that technology. This fact may seem disconcerting, but relax. We will guide you to specific sources of information that are likely to remain relatively stable.

Using the Library in the Library

Usually, you’ll begin to pursue your interest in a particular topic through your college or university library. We’ll give you just a brief overview here. Check your college or university library for customized guides to library and other resources.

Getting Help

When you want to find something in the library, your best friend is the reference librarian, who is specially trained to find things in the library. Sometimes it’s hard to ask people for help, but you’ll do yourself a real service by making an exception in this case.

Some libraries have specialized reference librarians—for the social sciences, humanities, government documents, and so forth. Find the one you need and describe what you’re interested in. The reference librarian will probably put you in touch with some of the many available reference sources.

You may find that your library does not own a copy of a specific book or other item that interests you. In that case, your librarian may be able to obtain the item through interlibrary loan. Most college and university libraries share their resources. Again, ask your librarians to help you; that’s their job.

Reference Sources

You have probably heard the phrase “information explosion.” Your library is one of the main
battlesfields. Fortunately, a large number of reference volumes offer guides to the information that’s available.

Here are two lists of reference sources that you should find especially useful. The first presents reference materials designed for criminal justice or criminology research. Following that is a longer list for other social sciences. Neither of these lists is complete, but each presents some good starting points.

**Criminal Justice and Criminology Reference Sources**
- Criminal Justice Abstracts
- Criminal Justice Periodical Index
- Criminology, Penology, and Police Science Abstracts
- Abstracts on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
- Abstracts on Police
- Police Science Abstracts

**General Social Science and Information Reference Sources**
- Social Science Index
- Social Science Citation Index
- Sociological Abstracts
- Psychological Abstracts
- Public Affairs Information Service Bulletin
- ABC Political Science
- Social Work Research and Abstracts
- New York Times Index
- Facts on File
- Business Periodicals Index
- Education Index

**Using the Stacks**
For serious research, you should learn to use the stacks, where most of the library’s books are stored. In this section, we’ll give you some information about finding books in the stacks.

**The Card Catalog**
Your library’s card catalog is the main reference system for finding out where books are stored. Traditionally, each book is described on three separate 3 x 5 cards. The cards are then filed in three alphabetic sets. One set is arranged by author, another by title, and the third by subject matter.

If you want to find a particular book, you can look it up in either the author file or the title file. If you only have a general subject area of interest, you should thumb through the subject catalog.

**Computerized Library Files**
Materials in most large libraries are now cataloged electronically. Some libraries have all their holdings in a computerized "card catalog," while others retain card catalogs for older library materials but enter all new acquisitions into online catalogs. Although there are different computerized library systems, here’s a typical example of how they work.

Sitting at a computer terminal—in the library, at a computer lab, or at home—you can type the title of a book and in seconds see a video display of a catalog card. If you want to explore the publication further, with a click or two you can see an abstract of the book.

Alternatively, you might type a subject name and see a listing of all the books and articles written on that topic. You can skim through the list and indicate which ones you want to see.

Many libraries now provide access to periodicals and books via the World Wide Web. Your library’s computerized system should enable you to see which materials are available online. Sometimes, entire books or other lengthy publications can be downloaded. Other databases allow you to search through hundreds of scholarly journals to find articles published in the subject area of interest. As a rule, each library Web site should have a list of the databases by discipline that you can visit, which may help you limit the number of titles related to specific keywords.

**Bibliographic Databases**
In addition to online catalogs, college and university libraries now offer access to other computerized reference tools. For example, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system allows you to search through hundreds of major educational journals to find arti-
articles published in your area of interest (within the field of education). Once you identify the articles you are interested in, the computer will print out abstracts of those articles. The publications Sociological Abstracts and Psychological Abstracts present summaries of books and articles—often prepared by the original authors—so that you can locate a great many relevant references easily and effectively. As you find relevant references, you can track down the original works and see the full details. The summaries are available in both written and computerized forms.

One specialized bibliographic database is of special interest to criminal justice researchers and students. Criminal Justice Abstracts is the best single reference tool for criminal justice journals and published books; this is also an excellent source of information on government documents. Each year, the Abstracts adds thousands of new records that can be searched on more than a dozen fields.

Here are some other bibliographic databases found increasingly in college libraries. Some of these include abstracts of articles, while others simply present citations for books, scholarly journals, or periodical articles.

- Newsbank. Selected articles from more than 460 local and regional U.S. newspapers. 1982–current.
- Social Sciences Citation Index. Index of leading social science journals by author, article or journal title, cited author, and cited title. 1981–current.
- County and City Databook. Computerized version of the Census Bureau publication, including social, demographic, and economic data on counties and cities with populations greater than 25,000. Revised every 5 years.
- LegalTrac. Scholarly journals and some specialized newsletters covering law and legal issues. 1980–current.

Government Documents

Many especially useful sources of data and information about crime and criminal justice are government publications. Larger universities have special departments for government publications; smaller institutions may house government documents in general collections.

Unfortunately, material published by federal, state, local, or foreign governments is often not included in card catalogs—printed or electronic. Instead, various published indexes, bibliographies, or computer databases must be consulted to search for government documents. These bibliographic resources are often difficult to use. Because of this, finding government publications in library stacks often requires help from a specialized librarian.

This situation is continually changing, however. Most federal agencies, and a growing number of state and local governments, make electronic copies of publications available on the Web. For example, Maxfield obtained crime data for Idaho (reported in Chapter 6) by connecting to the Idaho Department of Law Enforcement Web site.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

Criminal justice researchers are fortunate in having access to an exceptionally useful source of government documents and other unpublished materials through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). Appendix B presents more information on the NCJRS.
Remote Access to Libraries

Students and researchers traditionally have gone to libraries to use the computerized tools we have mentioned so far. However, rapid changes in computer and telecommunications technology have brought many library research tools to your desktop. With a personal computer, Web connection, and browser, you can use many university library resources from home. Again, because of the wide variety of systems and astonishing development of new technologies, we can only present examples. But many of you will find these tools available right now.

Calling Your Library from Home

If your college or university library has a computerized online catalog, you may be able to connect to it through remote access. For example, Maxfield can call up the Rutgers University Library online catalog by connecting to the university computing system. This does not require state-of-the-art technology, by the way; online library catalogs can be accessed with very simple software and computers.

At present, several Rutgers University resources are available to anyone who has a personal computer and a modem (http://wwwlibraries.rutgers.edu). The online card catalog can be searched according to author, title, subject, or keyword at home or in the library. Selected computerized indexes are also available. Most other large universities allow Internet users to access their card catalogs and certain other library resources.

The World Wide Web

Remote access to your library’s online catalog is just the beginning. By connecting to the Web, you can access library and other information resources at colleges and universities throughout the world.

The basic technology underlying the Internet—remotely connecting to a central computer facility—has existed for many years. But since the early 1990s, countless computers have become linked through sophisticated software that carries photographs, sound, and video images. All of this has made it possible for you to access a vast, almost unimaginable body of information from around the world.

Planning Your Internet Research

Once you’re on the Web, you have access to limitless sources of information. Wandering around is one way to find things on the Web. But when it comes time to do background reading for a research project or a class paper, you should have a more conscious plan about what you’re looking for and where to look. Librarians can be helpful here because they are trained to catalog and find information. Because more and more information is being placed on and retrieved from the Web, librarians have made it their business to learn efficient strategies for electronic searches.

Keep two things in mind before beginning your search of Web resources. First, Web sites and pages come and go. What we have identified here is current as of November 2003, but individual sites are frequently moved or discontinued without notice. So be prepared to hit some dead ends. Second, the Web can be a marvelous research tool, but it can also be a trap. It’s easy to get distracted by some famous case, for example, when you’re looking for information on the outcomes of murder trials. Just as going to a university library can be an intellectual or social experience, using the Internet to search for information can save time or waste time.

Basic Criminal Justice Sources

In this section, we list some sites that should serve as starting points in your research.

http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

This home page for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) includes BJS publications, news releases, and many useful links.

http://www.popcenter.org

Sponsored by the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services, this site includes a wealth of material on problem-oriented
policing and crime prevention. A large series of guides for tackling specific crime problems can be accessed here, as can other resources in the crime prevention library. This site is highly recommended.

http://www.ncjrs.org

Start here to search for documents and publications produced by the National Institute of Justice and other federal agencies. You’ll find some references to state and local documents as well. See Appendix B for more on the NCJRS.

http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/cjlinks

Florida State University Professor Cecil Greek has assembled a wide variety of criminal justice resources and links. You might want to start here, but be aware that the site includes many "bells and whistles" that look quite nice but tend to slow things down. All in all, this is an excellent resource.

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm

This site is maintained by the British Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate. Here you will find information about the excellent series of publications produced by this organization, as well as information on the criminal justice system in Great Britain.


Maintained by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), this site gives access to the latest reports on drug abuse issues.

http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/ncipchm.htm

Another nonjustice government organization, the Centers for Disease Control have expanded research on violence. You will find useful information and links on this page.

http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/index.html
http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/INTRA/index.html
http://www.jrsa.org/ibrcc/index.html

http://www.data-archive.ac.uk
http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/

The first two sites will lead you to detailed information about criminal justice and other social science data held at the University of Michigan. The third site contains data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). You can also download data directly via links on these sites. See Appendix D for more information. The fourth address specifies the Data Archive, the most complete source of social science data in the United Kingdom. The fifth site provides access to data and publications compiled by the Correctional Service of Canada.

http://www.c-s-i.org/

Crime Stoppers International provides information about crime stopper programs around the world.

http://www.fbi.gov/

The Federal Bureau of Investigation site provides a link to the Uniform Crime Reports, as well as other interesting information.

Other Useful Sources

http://www.loc.gov

The Library of Congress card catalog is accessible from this location. You will also find the Library of Congress to be a good starting point for finding many valuable Internet resources. See especially the "Research Tools" link.

http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cas2/

The Center of Alcohol Studies provides information on alcohol use and abuse and links to articles on alcoholism, treatment, and research.

http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk/

The Center for Applied Social Surveys provides a question bank for survey researchers and other valuable information for anyone designing a survey instrument.
http://www.asanet.org
http://www.asc41.com
http://www.acjs.org

These sites are maintained by the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Society of Criminology, and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, respectively.

http://www.nytimes.com
http://www.washingtonpost.com
http://www.latimes.com

Here are home pages for three major newspapers. Access to each is free of charge as of this writing (November 2003), although each requires that you register. Hundreds of other newspapers can be found on the Web.

Additional Readings

Benamati, Dennis C., Schultze, Phyllis A., Boulokos, Adam C., and Newman, Graeme R., Criminal Justice Information: How to Find It, How to Use It (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1997). This guide to criminal justice information is prepared by respected scholars and reference librarians. It is an invaluable resource for criminal justice researchers.

Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph M., The Craft of Research, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Here is an excellent guide to how to find and read scholarly literature. The authors also provide great advice on how to make your note taking more efficient and useful. Read this book before you go to the library or log onto the Web.
Appendix B
National Criminal Justice Reference Service

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), established by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in 1972, is an especially important bibliographic resource. The NCJRS serves hundreds of thousands of criminal justice researchers and professionals from many different nations.

Although the NCJRS was established with the primary purpose of disseminating information on research and policy development to criminal justice professionals, its services are an important resource for researchers, students, and the general public. Many people, especially those who lack ready access to a library with an extensive government documents collection, find the NCJRS invaluable for keeping up with new developments in applied criminal justice research. In this appendix, we will describe some of the information available to you through the NCJRS World Wide Web site.

Document Collections
First and foremost, the NCJRS is the central repository and distribution center for a wide variety of publications. Books, articles, government reports, and other criminal justice documents are included in general and specialized collections.

The NCJRS traditionally distributed copies of publications in response to special requests by telephone or mail. Most documents published since 1995 by NCJRS sponsoring agencies are available in pdf or text format from the NCJRS Web site:

http://www.ncjrs.org

Many older documents can be obtained via mail from the NCJRS; some are free while others require paying a small fee for printed copies. Alternatively, libraries can borrow printed materials from the NCJRS through interlibrary loan.

Finding Documents
All NCJRS holdings—those available online and older printed materials—are indexed in a bibliographic database that can be searched from the NCJRS Web site. The database entry for each document includes a full bibliographic citation, together with a 100- to 200-word summary of contents. Many abstracts include links to related sites—a journal or document publisher, for example.

It is also possible to search the full text of documents maintained in electronic format. As we described in Appendix A, such tools can be very helpful in searching for specific types of documents in a large database. However, NCJRS searches are not as useful as they might be because the complete text of online documents is searched. This means that if you search for "crime prevention" your results will include documents in which the words "crime" and "prevention" appear anywhere in the text. Though the search will be fast, it will produce an unmanageable volume of material.

Documents from the NCJRS collection can also be found by browsing through different
topical areas. Here are the main areas presented on the NCJRS home page:

- Corrections
- Courts
- Drugs and Crime
- International
- Juvenile Justice
- Law Enforcement
- Statistics
- Victims of Crime
- More Issues in Criminal Justice

Clicking on one of these main topic areas produces a more detailed listing of subtopics. For example, the following are listed under the heading "Corrections":

- alternatives to incarceration
- boot camps
- community-based corrections
- correctional personnel
- corrections technology
- corrections—general
- death row inmates
- ex-offender programs
- families of prisoners
- female offenders
- inmate characteristics
- inmate drug treatment
- inmate education programs
- inmate health care
- inmate programs
- inmate vocational training
- intermediate sanctions
- jails and jail inmates
- mentally ill offenders
- prisoner reentry
- probation and parole
- recidivism
- sex offenders

Clicking on a subtopic heading produces a list of documents, with the most recently published materials listed first. For example, the following are among those listed under "prisoner reentry":


Engaging the Community in Offender Reentry. 2/2002, NCJ 196492.


Each entry includes "NCJ" and a number, which is the serial cataloging number used in the NCJRS. In addition, entries for most recently published materials include a link to a full-text version of the publication. In this way, the NCJRS Web site offers users access to thousands of published and unpublished materials in criminal justice.

We emphasize that the NCJRS is merely a starting point. Beginning here, you will find a large number of links to additional resources that will take you, virtually, around the world.

Accessing Specialized Resources Via the NCJRS

The NCJRS and its Web site are gateways to publications issued by different organizations within the Department of Justice. Many federal justice organizations maintain their own specialized information centers and publications. Here are three examples that will be useful to many researchers and criminal justice professionals:

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/
The BJS presents a variety of printed reports on victimization, corrections, and federal courts. In addition, the BJS Web site includes summary data series from many sources, presented in spreadsheet formats. Finally, as we have noted at a couple of points in the text, the BJS sponsors the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, which can be accessed at:
http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook


As the principal federal agency supporting criminal justice research, the NIJ issues periodicals and specialized publications. Most recent entries reflect the NIJ mission to present research in formats specially designed for public officials. This site also includes information on funding available for research and policy development.


This recent addition to the NCJRS is especially valuable in two ways. First, the COPS site includes a special series of publications on problem-oriented policing. These present best practices for addressing dozens of different problems, together with tools for evaluating problem-solving efforts. Second, the site includes a link to its own library of resources for crime prevention.

Each of these Web sites can be reached through the NCJRS home page.

Further Information

The best source of additional information on research resources available from the NCJRS is the NCJRS Web page. You can also subscribe to an electronic mailing list and receive a free copy of a bimonthly newsletter. The newsletter will be sent to an e-mail address you provide when registering for the service. Click on the link, “Subscribe to JUSTINFO” on the NCJRS home page.
Appendix C

The Research Report

See the Research Writer for Criminal Justice CD-ROM, bundled with your Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology, Fourth Edition text, to hone your writing skills and help you feel more confident about writing a research report. The CD-ROM provides step-by-step guidance through every phase of the writing process, and when you’re finished, the Research Writer can even format your report in Microsoft Word according to standard research report style guidelines.

Introduction

This book has considered the variety of activities involved in doing criminal justice research. In this appendix, we’ll turn to an often neglected subject: reporting the research to others. Unless the research is properly communicated, all the efforts devoted to procedures will go for naught.

Before proceeding further on this topic, we should suggest one absolutely basic guideline. Good research reporting requires good English (unless you are writing in a different language). We need to communicate our results clearly and precisely; nothing should be left to the reader’s imagination. Whenever we use unduly complex terminology or sentence structure, communication is reduced. Every researcher should read and reread (at approximately 3-month intervals) the classic book by William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White: The Elements of Style. If you do this faithfully, and if even 10 percent of the content rubs off, you stand a good chance of making yourself understood and your findings appreciated.

Research reporting has three functions, and it is a good idea to keep these in mind. First, the report communicates to an audience a body of specific data and ideas. The report should provide those specifics clearly and with sufficient detail to permit an informed evaluation. Second, the report should be viewed as a contribution to the general body of scientific knowledge. While remaining appropriately humble, you should always regard your research report as an addition to what we know. Finally, the report should stimulate and direct further inquiry.

Basic Considerations in a Report

Different reports serve different purposes. A report appropriate for one purpose might be wholly inappropriate for another. This section deals with some basic considerations in this regard.

Audience

Before drafting your report, you must ask yourself who you hope will read it. Normally, you should make a distinction between fellow researchers and general readers. If you are writing for the former, you may make certain assumptions about their existing knowledge and perhaps summarize certain points rather than explain them in detail. Similarly, you may use more technical language than would be appropriate for a general audience.

At the same time, you should remain aware that criminal justice, just like any other social science, is composed of factions. Terms and assumptions acceptable to your immediate colleagues may only confuse others. That applies
with regard to substance as well as techniques. A researcher describing an evaluation of pretrial diversion to a general audience, for example, should explain previous findings in more detail than would be necessary if he or she were addressing an audience of others who specialize in research on policing.

**Form and Length**

It is useful to think about the variety of reports that might result from a research project. To begin, you may wish to prepare a short research note for publication in an academic or technical journal. Such reports should be approximately one to five pages in length (typed, double-spaced) and should be concise and direct. In a short space, you will not be able to present the state of the field in any detail, and your methodological notes must be somewhat abbreviated as well. Basically, you should tell the reader why you feel a brief note is justified by your findings, then state what those findings are.

Often, researchers must prepare reports for the sponsors of their research. These may vary greatly in length, of course. In preparing such a report, however, you should bear in mind the audience for the report—scientific or lay—and their reasons for sponsoring the project in the first place. It is both bad politics and bad manners to bore the sponsors with research findings that are of no interest or value to them. At the same time, it may be useful to summarize the ways the research has advanced basic scientific knowledge (if it has).

Working papers or monographs are another form of research reporting. Especially in a large and complex project, it is useful to obtain comments on your analysis and interpretation of your data. A working paper is a tentative presentation with an implicit request for comments. Working papers can also vary in length; they may present all the research findings of the project or only a portion of them. Because your professional reputation is not at stake in a working paper, you should feel free to present tentative interpretations that you cannot altogether justify—identifying them as such and asking for evaluations.

Many research projects result in papers delivered at professional meetings. Often, these serve the same purpose as working papers. You are able to present findings and ideas of possible interest to your colleagues and ask for their comments. The length of professional papers may vary depending on the requirements of the particular meetings; however, it’s usually better to say too little than too much. Although a working paper may ramble somewhat through a variety of tentative conclusions, conference participants should not be forced to sit through an oral unveiling of the same. Interested listeners can always ask for more details later, and uninterested ones can gratefully escape.

Probably the most popular research report is the article published in an academic journal. Again, lengths vary; examine the lengths of articles previously published by a particular journal. As a rough guide, however, 25 typed pages is as good as any. A subsequent section on the organization of the report is primarily based on the structure of a journal article, so we will say no more at this point, except to indicate that student term papers should be written on this model. As a general rule, a term paper that would make a good journal article also makes a good term paper.

A book is the most well-known form of research report. It has the advantages of the working paper, but it should be a more polished document. Because the publication of research findings as a book gives those findings an appearance of greater substance and worth, you have a special obligation to your audience. Although you will still hope to receive comments from colleagues, possibly leading you to revise your ideas, you must realize that other readers may be led to accept your findings uncritically.

Finally, Web-based publications can assume a variety of forms and lengths. Many working papers and technical reports are presented on Web pages or circulated to an e-mail distribution list. Government agencies are increasingly
issuing book-length reports in only electronic formats. And even academic journals are now widely available online, either through individual subscription or as a resource available to library users.

Aim

Earlier in this book, we considered the different purposes of criminal justice research projects. In preparing your report, you should keep these different purposes in mind.

Some reports focus primarily on the exploration of a topic of interest. Inherent in this aim is the tentativeness and incompleteness of the conclusions. You should clearly indicate to your audience the exploratory aim of the study and point to the shortcomings of the particular project. An important aspect of an exploratory report is to point the way to more refined research on the topic.

Many studies have a descriptive purpose, and the research reports from these studies have a descriptive element. You should carefully distinguish for the reader those descriptions that apply only to the sample and those that are inferred to the population. Whenever inferential descriptions are to be made, you should give your audience some indication of the probable range of error in those descriptions.

Other reports have an explanatory aim; you wish to point to causal relationships among variables. Depending on the probable audience for your report, you should carefully delineate the rules of explanation that lie behind your computations and conclusions. Also, as in the case of description, you must give your readers some guide to the relative certainty of your conclusions.

Finally, some research reports have the aim of proposing action. For example, an evaluation of a program that sets alternative punishments for drunk driving may wish to suggest ways drunk driving may be reduced, on the basis of the research findings. This aim often presents knotty problems, however, because your own values and orientations may interfere with your proposals. Although it is perfectly legitimate for your proposals to be motivated by personal values, you must ensure that the specific actions you propose are warranted by your data. Thus, you should be especially careful to spell out the logic by which you move from empirical data to proposed action.

Organization of the Report

Although the organization of reports differs somewhat on the basis of form and purpose, it is possible to suggest a general format for presenting research data. The following comments apply most directly to a journal article, but with some modification they apply to most forms of research reports.

Purpose and Overview

It is always helpful to the reader if you begin with a brief statement of the purpose of the study and the main findings of the analysis. In a journal article, this overview may sometimes be given in the form of an abstract or synopsis.

Some researchers find this difficult to do. For example, your analysis may have involved considerable detective work, with important findings revealing themselves only as a result of imaginative deduction and data manipulation. You may wish, therefore, to lead the reader through the same exciting process, chronicling the discovery process with suspense and surprise. To the extent that this form of reporting gives an accurate picture of the research process, it has considerable instructional value. Nevertheless, many readers may not be interested in following your entire research account, and not knowing the purpose and general conclusions in advance may make it difficult for them to understand the significance of the study.

An old forensic dictum says: "Tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; and then tell them what you told them." You would do well to follow this dictum in the preparation of research reports.
Review of the Literature
Because every research report should be placed in the context of the general body of scientific knowledge, it is important to indicate where your report fits in that picture. Having presented the general purpose of your study, you should then bring the reader up to date on the previous research in the area, pointing to general agreements and disagreements among previous researchers.

In some cases, you may wish to challenge previously accepted ideas. You should carefully review the studies that led to the acceptance of those ideas and then indicate the factors that were not previously considered or the logical fallacies in the previous research. When you are concerned with resolving a disagreement among previous researchers, you should organize your review of the literature around the opposing points of view. You should summarize the research supporting one view, then summarize the research supporting the other, and finally suggest the reasons for the disagreement.

To an extent, your review of the literature serves a bibliographic function for readers by indexing the previous research on a given topic. This can be overdone, however, and you should avoid an opening paragraph that is three pages long and mentions every previous study in the field. The comprehensive bibliographic function can best be served by a bibliography at the end of the report, and the review of the literature should focus only on those studies that have direct relevance to the present study.

Avoiding Plagiarism
Whenever you are reporting on the work of others, it is important that you be clear about who said what. It is essential that you avoid plagiarism: the theft of another’s words or ideas—whether intentional or accidental—and the presentation of those words and ideas as your own. Because this is a common problem for college students, let’s take a minute to examine it in some detail. Here are the main ground rules regarding plagiarism:

• You cannot use another writer’s exact words without using quotation marks and giving a complete citation, which indicates the source of the quotation so that the reader could locate that quotation in its original context. As a rule of thumb, taking a passage of eight or more words without citation is a violation of federal copyright laws.

• It is not acceptable to edit or paraphrase another’s words and present the revised version as your own work.

• Finally, it is not even acceptable to present another’s ideas as your own—even if you use totally different words to express those ideas.

The following examples should clarify what is and is not acceptable in the use of another’s work. Following is an excerpt from a piece by John Gall.

The Original Work
Laws of Growth
Systems are like babies: once you get one, you have it. They don’t go away. On the contrary, they display the most remarkable persistence. They not only persist; they grow. And as they grow, they encroach. The growth potential of systems was explored in a tentative, preliminary way by Parkinson, who concluded that administrative systems maintain an average growth of 5 to 6 percent per annum regardless of the work to be done. Parkinson was right so far as he goes, and we must give him full honors for initiating the serious study of this important topic. But what Parkinson failed to perceive, we now enunciate—the general systems analogue of Parkinson’s Law.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Uses
First, let’s look at some of the acceptable ways you might make use of Gall’s work in a term paper.

Acceptable: John Gall, in his work on systematics, draws a humorous parallel between systems and infants: "Systems are like babies: Once you get one, you have it. They don’t go away. On the contrary, they display the most remarkable persistence. They not only persist; they grow."²

Acceptable: John Gall warns that systems are like babies. Create a system and it sticks around. Worse yet, Gall notes, systems keep growing larger and larger.³

Acceptable: It has also been suggested that systems have a natural tendency to persist, even grow and encroach (Gall, 1975:12). [Note: This format requires that you give a complete citation in your bibliography.]

Here are some unacceptable uses of the same material, reflecting some common errors.

Unacceptable: In this paper, I want to look at some of the characteristics of the social systems we create in our organizations. First, systems are like babies: Once you get one, you have it. They don’t go away. On the contrary, they display the most remarkable persistence. They not only persist; they grow. [It is unacceptable to quote someone else’s material directly without using quotation marks and giving a full citation.]

Unacceptable: In this paper, I want to look at some of the characteristics of the social systems we create in our organizations. First, systems are a lot like children: once you get one, it’s yours. They don’t go away; they persist. They not only persist, in fact: they grow. [It is unacceptable to edit another’s work and present it as your own.]

Unacceptable: In this paper, I want to look at some of the characteristics of the social systems we create in our organizations. One thing I’ve noticed is that once you create a system, it never seems to go away. Just the opposite, in fact: they have a tendency to grow. You might say systems are a lot like children in that respect. [It is unacceptable to paraphrase someone else’s ideas and present them as your own.]

These unacceptable examples are plagiarism—a serious offense. Admittedly, there are some "gray areas." Some ideas are more or less in the public domain, not "belonging" to any one person. Or you may think of an idea on your own that someone else has already put in writing. If you have a question about a specific situation, discuss it with your instructor in advance. We have discussed this topic in some detail because it is important that you place your research in the context of what others have done and said, and yet the improper use of their materials is a serious offense. Mastering this matter, however, is a part of your "coming of age" as a scholar.

Study Design and Execution

A research report that contains interesting findings and conclusions can be frustrating to the reader who is unable to determine the methodological design and execution of the study. The worth of all findings depends heavily on the manner in which the data were collected and analyzed.

In reporting the design and execution of a survey, for example, you should always include the following: the population, the sampling frame, the sampling method, the sample size, the data collection method, the completion rate, and the methods of data processing and analysis. Comparable details should be given if other methods were used. The experienced researcher is able to report these details in a rather short space without omitting anything required for the reader’s evaluation of the study.

Analysis and Interpretation

Having set the study in the context of previous research and having described the design and execution of it, you should then present your data. A few general comments are in order.
The presentation of data, the manipulations of those data, and your interpretations should be integrated into a logical whole. It is frustrating to the reader to discover a collection of seemingly unrelated analyses and findings with a promise that all the loose ends will be tied together later in the report. Every step in the analysis should make sense—at the time it is taken. You should present your rationale for a particular analysis, present the data relevant to it, interpret the results, then indicate where the results lead next.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Following the forensic dictum mentioned earlier, you must summarize the research report. You should avoid reviewing every specific finding, but you should review all of the significant ones, pointing once more to their general significance.

The report should conclude with a statement of what you have discovered about your subject matter and where future research might be directed. A quick review of recent journal articles will probably indicate a very high frequency of this concluding statement: "It is clear that much more research is needed." This is probably always a true conclusion, but it is of little value unless you can offer pertinent suggestions about the nature of that future research. You should review the particular shortcomings of your own study and suggest ways those shortcomings might be avoided by future researchers.

We will conclude with a point made at the outset of this appendix, because it is extremely important. Research reports should be written in the best possible literary style. Writing lucidly is easier for some people than for others, and it is always harder than writing poorly. You are again referred to the Strunk and White book.

A perfectly designed, carefully executed, and brilliantly analyzed study will be worthless unless you are able to communicate your findings to others. This appendix has attempted to provide some general and specific guidelines toward that end. The best guides are logic, clarity, and honesty. Ultimately, there is probably no substitute for practice.

**Additional Readings**


Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph M., *The Craft of Research*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). This is an excellent and highly readable source of tips and information on thinking, researching, and writing. In addition, the authors offer valuable advice on how to present data, including the relative strengths of tables and different styles of graphs. Finally, you will find more guidance on how to avoid even inadvertent plagiarism.


Much of Chapter 11 described how data and information collected by other researchers or routinely gathered by government organizations can be used in criminal justice research. Using data collected by other researchers was called secondary analysis. Data gathered by government organizations were included under the general label of agency records.

Criminal justice researchers are fortunate in having access to a vast array of data produced by other researchers, government agencies, and other organizations. Available data represent every method for collecting information we have described in this book and just about every conceivable type of design.

Our discussion of how to obtain secondary data focuses on central repositories—most notably, the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) and the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), both maintained at the University of Michigan. As we will see, NACJD and ICPSR holdings are rich and varied; we estimate that data from at least two-thirds of the studies mentioned in this book are available from these sources.

However, as you learn more about what data are out there, do not lose sight of two limitations. First, central repositories are incomplete; data may also be available from the original source. Second, recall our discussion of reliability and validity as it applies to secondary data. We have no control over the measurement and data collection process, which can mean that measures and variables used in available data don’t match our own needs well. We also have no control over measurement reliability and other quality control issues in data collection. We do not mean to scare you away from secondary analysis. But researchers should always be careful and not assume that because data have been collected by a respected researcher or by a government agency, there are no problems.

Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research

We begin by describing the ICPSR, because it is the "parent" organization that includes the NACJD as a subset. Founded at the University of Michigan in 1962, the ICPSR has evolved into the world’s largest central repository for machine-readable social science data. Its holdings include thousands of data resources collected by researchers and by government agencies. Many of the latter are ongoing data series such as the decennial census, national election studies, summary-based Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).

The word "consortium" is significant, denoting an association or partnership of hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the world. These member institutions provide financial support to the consortium in return for unlimited access to its data archives. In many cases, official representatives are linked to political science departments, reflecting the ICPSR’s roots in that social science discipline.
The ICPSR’s holdings are grouped into the following general categories:

- Census Enumerations
- Community and Urban Studies
- Conflict, Aggression, Violence, Wars
- Economic Behavior and Attitudes
- Education
- Elites and Leadership
- Geography and Environment
- Government Structures, Policies, and Capabilities
- Health Care and Facilities
- Instructional Packages
- International Systems
- Legal Systems
- Legislative and Deliberative Bodies
- Mass Political Behavior and Attitudes
- Organizational Behavior
- Social Indicators
- Social Institutions and Behavior

For a complete listing of subjects and data files, you can search or browse ICPSR data holdings online at this URL:

http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/access/index.html

The ICPSR also provides summer training programs in advanced quantitative analysis techniques, both generally and those of special interest to criminal justice researchers.

National Archive of Criminal Justice Data

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in cooperation with the ICPSR, established the NACJD in 1978. This archive is now maintained as one of the ICPSR’s special topic archives. Criminal justice data are routinely deposited in the archive from a variety of sources, including organizations within the Department of Justice: the BJS, National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS), and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

NACJD resources most useful to criminal justice researchers are grouped into three areas:

Access data. The core mission of the NACJD is to facilitate and encourage research in the field of criminal justice by preserving and sharing data resources. NACJD does this by archiving and organizing computer-readable data files. Data holdings are grouped into the following general areas:

- Community studies
- Corrections
- Court case processing
- Courts
- Criminal justice system
- Crime and delinquency
- Official statistics
- Police
- Victimization
- Drugs, alcohol, and crime

Education and training. In addition to general ICPSR courses on statistical methods, the NACJD presents summer workshops on the quantitative analysis of criminal justice data, sponsored in previous years by the BJS and the NIJ.

Online data analysis. The most recent addition to NACJD resources for researchers is a cluster of online data analysis tools specially formatted for use with selected data files. With these tools, researchers can perform the simple descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses we discussed in Chapter 13. As of this writing (November 2003), almost 100 data series were available for online data analysis.

What this means to criminal justice researchers is that a wide variety of criminal justice data is available for an equally wide variety of purposes. The best way to learn about what’s available is to visit the NACJD Web site and browse through the holdings.

Start at the home page (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/nacjd), then click on the link “Access Data.” Next click on “Browse by Subject,” which
will take you to a list of the subject areas listed above. If you click on the link labeled "VII. Crime and delinquency," you will encounter an alphabetical listing of study titles, together with links that will take you to brief descriptions of each study and the actual data.

For now, simply page down through the "Crime and delinquency" listings. You should see some familiar names—researchers whose work we have considered in other parts of this book. Notice the classic "Delinquency in a Birth Cohort" studies, under the leadership of the late Marvin Wolfgang. You should also recognize Cathy Spatz Widom’s study on child abuse and the study of residential burglars by Richard Wright and Scott Decker.

Find out more about Wright and Decker’s data by looking for the study labeled "Exploring the House Burglar’s Perspective: Observing and Interviewing Offenders in St. Louis, 1989-1990." If you click on the link labeled "description," you will next see more detailed information about this study. Notice the information under "DATA SOURCE"—personal interviews. The summary discussion of sampling for this study should remind you of what we said about snowball sampling in Chapters 8 and 10. The comment "COLLECTION NOTES" for Wright and Decker indicates that the data are transcripts from interviews. So you could review burglars’ "verbatim answers to interviewers’ questions," excluding identifying information and profanity. You might then develop a content analysis (see Chapter 11) plan to systematically study what burglars told Wright and Decker.

This should give you some idea of what kind of information is included about each study in the NACJD holdings. By browsing through the major categories listed on the first "Access Data" screen, you can learn more about the scope of topics covered. That scope is extensive, and we invite you to learn more by visiting the NACJD. You should also explore the "Analyze Data" link from the NACJD home page. There you will find links to data in several areas—corrections, hate crime, homicide, NIBRS, victimization, and even United Nations surveys of crime and criminal justice in other countries.

**National Institute of Justice Data Resources Program**

The initial collaboration between the BJS and the ICPSR to establish the criminal justice data archive reflected the organizational mission of the BJS: to collect, analyze, and disseminate statistical information about crime and criminal justice agencies. Following this example, in 1984 the NIJ established its own data resources program through the ICPSR.

Researchers like Widom, Wright, and Decker, whose projects we funded by the NIJ, are required to submit copies of machine-readable data when their project is completed. These data are then sent to the ICPSR for inclusion in the criminal justice data archive. In contrast to most BJS data series, the NIJ program archives data from specific research and evaluation projects. This means that data from virtually any NIJ-funded study completed in the last 20 or so years are available from the ICPSR for secondary analysis by researchers.

**How to Get Data from the ICPSR and NACJD**

It is now possible to download copies of virtually all data files archived through the ICPSR and NACJD sites. Simply work your way through the links under "Access Data" to find a study of interest. Then click on "downloads" to gain access to data files and documentation. Notice that before being able to download data you will find a page headed "Authorized Download from NACJD. WARNING! DATA USE RESTRICTIONS. Read Carefully Before Using Data from NACJD." Reading this screen should remind you of ethical issues we covered in Chapter 3. Users are then asked to provide their e-mail address to indicate that they agree to the detailed description of permissible uses for NACJD and ICPSR data.
Be aware that some very large files will require a high-speed Web connection, or infinite patience. You should recognize that some criminal justice data files can also be very complex. Using the NCVS, for example, presents formidable challenges that will test the computer skills of many researchers and tax the resources of many computers. Because of this, the ICPSR regularly offers summer courses on working with large criminal justice data files such as the NCVS.

We suggest that before downloading any data file from the ICPSR or NACJD you carefully study the information provided under "description" for each data file. This will alert you to file size, case organization, and other important details on data formats.