

JANUARY 2022

Our September 2021 article, "[Do you work for your RMS or does your RMS work for you?](#)", laid bare the pervasiveness of both poor vendor support and troublesome software, and the importance of due diligence when buying a new system. While there are a few newer vendors in the marketplace with better systems, it is equally important to remember that even with one, the software cannot be relied upon to do everything for you, particularly when it comes to quality control.

The quality of a police agency's records and data is highly contingent upon having consistent, repeatable business processes which ensure the production of accurate, timely and error-free information. The responsibility to produce such information falls equally on the reporting officer, the reviewing supervisor, and records personnel. It is a mistake to rely on, as one example, the NIBRS error-check feature in an RMS which, with the click of a button, is supposed to reveal all NIBRS errors within a report.

There are certain errors that no system can catch. Knowing whether the incident involved one offense or multiple, one suspect or two, and whether it involved property or vehicles can only be determined by reading the report, not by pressing an error-check/validation button- a feature that is too heavily relied upon. When reviewing incident reports, consider the following and how the answers to these questions are determined:

- Does the Time and Place rule apply?
- Were the offenders acting in concert?
- Was the report classified correctly by the reporting officer?
- Is the status and disposition correct?
- Was a new report written when it should have been a supplement?
- Will the offenses be counted correctly for NIBRS purposes (and not include lesser included or mutually exclusive offenses)?

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT NIBRS

Yet quality control is not just about checking incident reports or checking records after the fact. It's about reducing the opportunity for errors to begin with. This requires less duplication of information, having fewer places where mistakes can be made, and ensuring you are using the systems as they were intended.

CROSSROADS COLLISION REPORTING AND YOUR RMS

Crossroads software is a user-friendly well known system for crash reporting and electronic citations. These kinds of traffic reporting systems provide the ability to write, maintain, and send reports electronically, and pull traffic statistics with ease. Why then do so many agencies also create an incident report in their RMS for every crash (usually for hit and runs)? Not necessary.

This kind of duplication is not only time-consuming and rather inefficient, but also creates opportunity for mistakes to be made and disparities to occur between the two systems.

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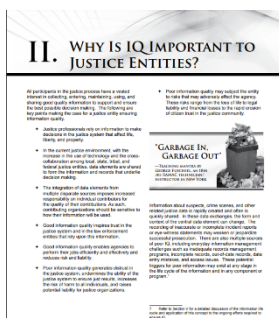
The evidence.com system is another widely utilized application designed for management of digital records. One Records Manager whom PRI recently worked with revealed she created three additional copies of the information saved in the evidence system because...she didn't trust it.

As standard practice, the records saved in the evidence system were also attached to the RMS, saved in a network folder, and were printed and filed, "just in case". It was no wonder then, at least for us, why this small agency had over 1100 outstanding reports pending review in the RMS, and a stack of public records requests which were months old.

Quality control is much more than checking for mistakes. It requires having a systematic approach to organizational information management through a highly organized operation in which goals are set, key performance indicators are tracked, and everyone understands its importance through policy, training, and oversight. Consider this mission statement developed by the Coral Gables Police Department's records unit:

"Practicing sound records management through teamwork, technology, and individual pride, the Records Section serves to collect, process, maintain, and disseminate information in a timely, appropriate, and consistent manner to the citizens of our community, the employees of the Coral Gables Police Department, and our law enforcement partners".

HOW DOES YOUR AGENCY COMPARE?



PRI recommends two key resources for assessing your department's information quality practices:

[Information Quality Program Guide](#)

U.S. Department of Justice

[Agency self-assessment](#)

PRI Management Group

How PRI Can Help

Through our collaborative audits, PRI can identify areas of risk, resolve backlogs, and build policy and re-engineered processes to achieve compliance. We also provide records management inventories and purging services, NIBRS audits, and procurement services.

Since 2008, PRI has been exclusively helping law enforcement agencies procure, manage and implement their systems, records and data in the most cost-effective and efficient manner while ensuring their compliance with the maze of governing public records, NIBRS and technology standards. Contact us for assistance with your records and technology needs at info@policerecordsmanagement.com.