REAL-TIME JUSTICE INFORMATION SHARING MAKES SAN DIEGO SAFER

By Jeffrey Piszczek, Software AG

More than 11,000 law enforcement officers, adjudicators, investigators and analysts at 81 agencies rely on the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) to protect lives. To keep the system state of the art, the public safety committee of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) wanted ARJIS to improve how information was integrated, shared and re-purposed.

ARJIS selected Software AG's webMethods platform to move off the mainframe to a service-oriented, process-centric Web-based solution to meet the dynamic needs of law enforcement. The solution re-used existing logic, helping to preserve SANDAG's IT investments. Modern interfaces, instead of green screens, make ARJIS solutions easier to use. The end result: increased information accuracy, timeliness and availability at less cost.

Where ARJIS got its start

Getting the right information at the right time makes all the difference to law enforcement on the street. Because suspects can travel across city and county lines, they can be tough to track—unless a region has a system like ARJIS.

President's Message
My Fellow Criminal Justice Practitioners…

One of the most productive times for us as criminal justice practitioners is when we share our successes (and failures) with each other in a group setting. We learn from each other. We gain new ideas for applications and/or information that make our cities, states, and nation a safer place to live. Some of the greatest assets we have are what **we learn from each other**.

NAJIS offers our Annual Training Conference for the purpose of learning. We learn and share ways to improve our technology and information sources for greater public safety. NAJIS has spent the last 30 years sharing and improving criminal justice information systems. With a goal of serving the entire criminal justice community, we intentionally move the location of our conference around the country to insure that everyone has a chance to participate.

I just arrived back from the location of our **2013 NAJIS Conference** and I must tell you that <u>**San Diego is THE place to be!**</u> In September during our conference the weather will be perfect and the things to see and do are endless. <u>I hope you will attend!</u> I promise that you will go home with new ideas and new solutions to better serve your Public Safety Community, regardless of where you fit in the puzzle.

On the first morning of the conference we hold a "roundtable" where each and every practitioner has a chance to stand up and tell us who they are and what they "have" or "need". During this two hour experience, **IF** you can write fast enough, you will pay for your trip. You will bring back to your agency a new solution that will help them be more successful at whatever they do. We cover law enforcement, prosecution, courts, probation, parole, corrections, and all the

Improving Criminal Histories Using Non-Biometric Data— A Modest Proposal

**By Steve Prisoc,
Chief Information Officer,
New Mexico Judiciary**

This article explores the idea of including criminal history records that were not fingerprint verified into state and federal criminal history repositories. Of course, fingerprint-verified criminal arrests and dispositions are the gold standard for criminal history information, but in states like New Mexico, many arrest and court records are created without associated biometric identifiers. For the most part, these non-biometric records, which include critical arrests and court dispositions, never make it to key justice decision makers and therefore might as well not exist.

For many years defendant arrest and charging events have been accompanied by defendant booking events that included inked/rolled or digitally "live-scanned" fingerprints. In a perfect world, all criminal arrests and non-arrest case filings would be

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ARJIS Real-Time Information Sharing

ARJIS provides access to real-time criminal and justice information for agencies throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties in California. The system helps protect lives and keep citizens safer. Initiatives include: wireless access to photos, warrants and other critical data in the field; crime and sex-offender mapping; crime-analysis tools evaluation; and an enterprise system of applications that helps agencies solve crimes and identify offenders.

Today, 81 justice agencies at the local, state and federal levels depend on ARJIS. Some 40,000 transactions take place on ARJIS each day. Its governance structure promotes data sharing and cooperation at all levels for member agencies, from chiefs to officers to technical staff.

Through ARJIS, authorized personnel can pull together information on criminal cases, citations, gangs, arrests, traffic accidents, fraudulent documents and stolen property. Using the capabilities provided by webMethods, that information is updated and exchanged in real-time, seamlessly, between systems and agencies.

Real time, real effective

Software AG has helped transform ARJIS from a more costly, hard-coded mainframe-based system into a cost-efficient, process-centric Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA). Every piece of data flows through webMethods Integration Server, which is configured to connect multiple law enforcement applications. The Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) can integrate any system across ARJIS. Any type of information—from fingerprints to videos—can be shared easily. The ESB can scale to handle any volume of data. Redundant data entry points are eliminated, which improves data quality and integrity.

webMethods Integration Server provides tools that can build services and processes without coding or custom development.

"We are also looking forward to all the benefits of having an ESB-based system," said ARJIS Executive Director Pam Scanlon. "We'll be able to build new functionality easily to meet new requirements. The system is now vastly more usable, and we have greater visibility into information flow."

More than middleware

Because the ESB is part of a complete web-Methods suite, more capabilities can be added as needed. For example, using web-Methods BPMS, time-consuming manual processes can be automated. webMethods BPMS and Complex Event Processing (CEP) will enable ARJIS to quickly analyze and correlate different types of data. SOA governance via CentraSite will give ARJIS a single repository for processes and services to further accelerate new development.

Software AG did more than just provide software. As part of the project, consultants from Software AG helped design the new architecture. They installed and configured the software, conducted testing and assisted with the implementation. The consultants also trained the ARJIS staff on using and maintaining the webMethods products.

Benefits

Implementation of the latest version of ARJIS has resulted in significant benefits:

• Maximum data accessibility for law enforcement agencies

• Improved operational efficiency and public safety

• Redundant data points eliminated, increasing data quality and integrity

• Faster systems integration, thanks to standards-based, re-usable components

• Simplified information access via modern user interfaces

• Consistent views of incidents and evidence across different data sources

• Increased responsiveness due to alerts and notifications based upon predefined events

• Hundreds of thousands of dollars saved monthly in mainframe maintenance

• Reduced costs through consolidation and standardization

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President's Message

parts in between. You will learn "how to effectively raise the level of Public Safety" when you get back home and on the job.

If you *have* attended the NAJIS Conference, I believe you will find this one to be the best ever. If you *have not,* I strongly recommend that you consider it. If you want to hear from your peers about our conference and what they learned, we'll put you in touch with them.

If you want to know more please call any of our board members. The board list and the conference information are provided here and on our website at www.najis.org. I would enjoy visiting with you! My cell number is 785-633-7700.

See you in San Diego on September 10-13, 2013!

Gordon Lansford
President

What Is NAJIS?

The National Association for Justice Information Systems (NAJIS) is an organization of individuals responsible for the acquisition, operation and management of local, state, tribal and federal criminal justice information systems.

All practitioners in prosecutor's offices, the courts, law enforcement, probation, corrections and allied agencies who design, improve, implement or supervise automated information systems can benefit from participating in NAJIS. Individuals who are investigating, evaluating and purchasing automated systems—both hardware and software—for criminal justice purposes are encouraged to join and participate in NAJIS activities.

NAJIS began in 1981 as the PROMIS (Prosecutors Management Information System) User Group and has grown to encompass the interests of all criminal justice agencies. The promotion of integrated criminal justice and new technologies is the focus of NAJIS.

NAJIS conducts an annual educational conference, publishes a newsletter and website with the goal of improving the criminal justice system through the practical application of technology.

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accompanied by defendant fingerprints, and these biometrically-identified defendant records would flow seamlessly to state and federal criminal history repositories.

Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world, and while a number of states and jurisdictions have achieved high rates of fingerprint-based arrest and disposition matching, many states have not. These less-than-perfect states are typically under-funded and poorly resourced. The end result is that many criminal arrests and associated criminal dispositions never make it to federal or state criminal history repositories, and are thus unavailable at key decision points in the justice process.

New Mexico is one of the less-than-perfect states. Over the past two years, the Administrative Office of the Courts has sent three sets of test disposition data to the agency responsible for maintaining the New Mexico criminal history repository and very few arrest/tracking numbers could be matched to criminal court final dispositions. Even with repeated attempts, and after adjusting for varying local practices, less than one percent of court dispositions could be matched to underlying arrests. The end result is that most court dispositions in New Mexico cannot be posted to the state criminal history repository using fingerprint-based identifiers. This means that most New Mexico criminal case dispositions never make it to state or federal criminal history repositories.

The chain of events required to accurately transfer defendant arrest/booking records from law enforcement through to courts is obviously flawed in New Mexico, and many other states suffer from similar matching problems even if it's to a lesser degree. The solution to this problem is complex and would likely involve overcoming resistance, inertia and antiquated procedures at several different levels of the justice enterprise.

Many, if not most, critical decisions related to defendant bonding and sentencing are made by judges in criminal courts. Unfortu-

nately, for state courts in New Mexico – from small, rural magistrate courts to large urban courts – the availability of criminal background information is highly variable. This forces New Mexico justice agencies to rely upon criminal records that are associated only with non-biometric identifiers such as name, social security number and date of birth to piece together the defendant's criminal past.

The most-used criminal history tool for the courts is the New Mexico Consolidated Offender Query (COQ), which is a browser-based application – securely available over the Internet – that combines New Mexico court dispositions, parole information, probation information and confinement information and makes it available to justice agency decision makers such as judges and prosecutors. The COQ provides access to criminal history information by linking personal identifiers other than fingerprint based identifiers such as name, social security number, gender, race/ethnicity, and date of birth. The COQ also provides physical descriptors and photos, when available, to allow decision makers to verify identity. Of course, the lack of biometric identifiers is the big weakness of the system, but in spite of this glaring flaw, the system has proved very useful at all levels of the New Mexico justice enterprise.

To overcome the limitations of COQ, New Mexico's largest courts also query the Judiciary's "Case Lookup" application, which is also available to the public in an abbreviated form that doesn't include defendant dates of birth and social security numbers. The larger courts also query NCIC and the Interstate Identification Index (III or Triple I) to get out-of-state arrests, warrants and protective orders.

Name-based checks are problematic on several levels, but there are two primary deficiencies: 1) An experienced criminal can game the system by presenting him or herself as a different person to avoid being tied to past criminal convictions and warrants, and 2) Name-based checks increase the risk that court and law enforcement

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personnel will mistakenly link criminal history information to the wrong person, and in states with common Hispanic surnames like New Mexico, this risk is amplified.

On the other hand, national systems such as the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) work quite well without relying exclusively on records linked to fingerprint-indexed identifiers. NICS has efficient methods for allowing subjects to quickly appeal misidentification and that keeps the process fair. Also, some court case management systems have weighted party matching criteria for matching returning offenders with near 100 percent accuracy. Without these types of matching functions, every time a defendant reenters the system, they would be treated as a brand new defendant by the application and would never be linked to active or disposed cases. Of course, private sector customer relationship management systems accurately match return customers to existing customer records with a very high degree of accuracy, and these systems are continually improving.

A quick way to improve criminal history availability in states with low disposition reporting rates is to supplement criminal history systems with name checks to allow justice decision makers access records that cannot be posted using fingerprint-based identifiers, which in New Mexico includes most criminal records. This would create a two-tier system, where the first tier would contain records matched using fingerprints, and the second tier would include records that lack biometric identifiers. Of course, justice decision makers should be thoroughly trained to regard non-biometric records as less dependable than records that have been linked to fingerprints.

Many judges in New Mexico have become comfortable with non-fingerprint identifier matching, and courts traditionally provide opportunities during hearings for defendants to deny reputed criminal convictions that may not apply to them. In fact, open court is the perfect opportunity for defendants and attorneys to challenge record errors of all types, even on fingerprint-based criminal histories.

This is not to say that we shouldn't continue to push hard to link criminal records using biometric identifiers, but use of arrest and conviction data that has not been linked to fingerprints can significantly improve the availability of criminal history information to judges and other criminal justice practitioners in many states, and this will improve the overall quality of critical justice decision making. It may even lower the pervasive level of cynicism among judges for the entire criminal history process in states like New Mexico.

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