



*The 2002 NAJIS conference will be held in Seattle, Washington, September 26 - 28, 2002, and will feature sessions on new technologies, justice integration efforts, recent developments in case management and more.*

We start the year in unsettled times. Many are still reluctant to resume their "pre 9/11" activities. NAJIS was impacted as well by having to cancel our fall conference. However, we are on the road to recovery, and planning for next year's conference is well underway. We won't be duplicating the 2001 conference agenda in its entirety, but it's given us a great headstart in planning for 2002.

Times have changed, and the emerging business paradigm may rely far more on technology than ever. With concerns about travel safety,

reliance on teleconferencing and other virtual technologies is growing. Look for some sessions in this area at the conference.

Seattle is our destination. We haven't been to the Pacific Northwest in a number of years and Seattle is the crown jewel. While we don't expect to corral Bill Gates into being our keynote speaker, Seattle is a hub of high-tech activity. We should be able to take advantage of the technological sophistication of the community.

Mark your calendars for the NAJIS conference! We'll be in Seattle beginning Thursday, September 26 through Saturday, September 28. In an effort to spur registration, we'll be

offering more significant early registration and team discounts. Our success relies on you and your interest in NAJIS. To let me know what's important to you, contact me at [mperbix@yahoo.com](mailto:mperbix@yahoo.com).

**Mark Perbix**

NAJIS President

*The conference will be held September 26, 27 and 28 at the Westin Hotel, Seattle. For hotel reservations call 888-627-8513, or 206-728-1000. Room rates are \$134.00 for a single or double. When making hotel reservations, please mention that you are registering for NAJIS.*

**Reservations must be made by August 28, 2002.** Call Terri Schaub, Conference Coordinator, at 334-749-7148 if you have questions about the conference.

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## What Is NAJIS?

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

All managers in prosecutor's offices, the courts, law enforcement, and allied agencies who design, improve, implement or supervise automated information systems can benefit from NAJIS membership. Individuals who are investigating, evaluating and purchasing automated case tracking and management hardware or software for criminal justice functions particularly are encouraged to join and participate in NAJIS activities.

## NAJIS weathers 9-11

Because of the cancellation of the last year's conference due to the events of September 11, 2001, NAJIS was unable to conduct its annual business meeting for 2001. This created something of a "constitutional crisis" as we were unable to hold elections for board and officer positions, and half our board were serving terms that would have expired at the conference. To address this problem, the board filled these vacancies at its conference planning meeting held January 18-19, 2002, in Seattle.

NAJIS bylaws provided a path to address this problem. Board members are allowed to fill vacancies in the officer positions, and the president is empowered to fill vacancies in board positions. Following a somewhat convoluted process, the three remaining active board members present at the meeting, John Gill, Jerry Hardt and Steve Prisoc, appointed me to continue as president of NAJIS until the next annual meeting. I appointed Dick Whetstone, Mary Young and Clete McAlister to fill the three existing vacancies on the board with terms ending in 2003. With the board vacancies filled, the new board re-elected Tom Simpson as Vice President, John Goergen as Treasurer and Terri Schaub as Secretary – all with terms expiring at the next annual meeting.

We were fortunate that the bylaws provided a vehicle for resolving this situation. Hopefully this will be just a one-time occurrence. NAJIS will continue to aggressively pursue expanding the board and recruiting new board members to broaden the focus and participation in our organization.

*Mark Perbix*

## Technology Combats Recidivism

*by Judge Michael Marcus*

The vast majority of criminal offenders are repeaters. Statistics from our local jail include a typical month in which 22 of 23 persons jailed for Robbery had been in the same jail within the previous year, as had 22 of the 32 jailed for Burglary, 20 of the 26 jailed for Theft in the First Degree, 304 of the 372 jailed on drug charges, and 32 of the 39 jailed for vehicle theft. National statistics show 7 of 10 jail inmates have prior incarcerations, and more than 62% of those released from prison experience a new arrest within three years. However we measure them, our 65-75 percent recidivism rates represent dismal public safety performance and suggest that many victimizations may be preventable.

I think this poor performance is in large part a product of the clerical heritage of the criminal justice morality play (after all, where else in a democracy do people wear robes?), and in part reflects an absence of good information about how to reduce recidivism. Both are changing. A 1996 ballot measure amended our Oregon constitution to add "protection of society" to the listed purposes of criminal sentences (Or Const Art I, sec 15); the 1997 Legislature made preventing recidivism the major test of our performance in corrections; and the Oregon Judicial Department resolved in 1997 that in addressing public safety, sentencing judges "should consider and invite advocates to address the likely impact of the choices available to the judge on future criminal conduct."

Technology has now made it possible for those making sentencing, probation, release, and corrections decisions to access to improved predictive information, which if applied, will enhance public safety.

The Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council has invested in a "DSS-Justice" project ("DSS" refers to "Decision Support System" technology) with the objective of reducing recidivism by using sentencing support tools supplied with this technology.

The Department of State Police and the Information Resource Management Division of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services are building a "Public Safety Data Warehouse" and the Oregon Judicial Department is now committed to distributing sentencing support technology to judges state-wide. These tools will be used to enhance sentencing decisions, plea negotiations, and probation violation dispositions.

Sentencing support technology, as it now exists in Multnomah County, exploits a "data warehouse" – simply a central repository of data gleaned from numerous criminal justice sources. These include arrest and jail data, sheriff and police data, court data, and district attorney data. Department of

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Corrections data is on the way and we ultimately plan to include 911, probation, and alcohol and drug and Department of Motor Vehicles data.

Here's how the software works: when I enter a case number, the software asks me which case charge I am sentencing on, (with the first charge as the default selection) The software also allows me to choose any state or local charge known to the system. Once I've selected a charge, the software performs several tasks: it selects a category based on the charge (property crimes for a theft case, for example), a category of offenders based upon what we know about the offender (presently criminal history – divided into five levels of six categories of criminal behavior; age, gender, ethnicity), and an outcome measure

based on some flavor of recidivism (for the theft offender’s sentencing, the system would propose a measure of the absence of a new conviction for any property crime within three years of sentencing). Based on these defaults, the software displays a bar chart of all sentencing components (community service, jail, theft talk, etc) commonly used for similar offenders, with the bars sized according to the proportion of each sentencing component that represents “success” by the outcome measure.

Critical to the usefulness of this tool is the capability for users to modify any of the defaults and click a button to recalculate to see what effect the difference—

say, a change in the criminal history of the offender—may have. Users can run different choices through the system while preparing for, or even during , a

sentencing hearing. As an example, I may be sentencing a sex offender on a theft charge and wish to see what effect particular interventions might have predicting future sex crimes on the part of the offender.

Below the bar chart, the software displays all of the data in a table form, so users can readily determine how much data supports each of the “outcomes,” and can also access data on those sanctions less-frequently used for similar offenders when sentenced for similar crimes.

When I announced our first use of this tool against real data to my colleagues, I compared it the Wright Brothers’ flight at Kitty Hawk and predicted that the impact of decision support on criminal justice will be as profound as that first flight was to transportation. Of course, to reach full potential, we still have about as far to go as we did from that first flight to get to a Boeing 737.

Eventually, sentencing support tools should link to useful literature about sentencing, particularly in the

domestic violence and sex offender arenas because there is so much useful literature that goes unnoticed by most of us in the “system.”

Of course, there are many offenders for whom lengthy incarceration is the best public safety device, and many more who will not change no matter what we do. And there are many limitations on sentencing discretion. But there is a significant role for prosecutorial and judicial discretion in most cases, and this tool will enable us to do far better with some offenders than we now do blindfolded.

This technology will eventually reach every Oregon practitioner in

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criminal justice. It will challenge all of us to develop new skills, and it will require us to modify our approaches to sentencing in criminal cases.

If you’re interested in more information, please visit my Web site at [www.smartsentencing.com](http://www.smartsentencing.com). It contains screen shots of the application, and sections on latest developments and frequently asked questions. It also contains related legislative, administrative, and judicial material on sentencing and sentencing support.

It is my hope that decision support technologies, which have been available outside the justice enterprise for some time, will soon begin to impact our ability to impose effective sentences, both in terms of reducing recidivism and in enhancing public safetyk.

*Michael Marcus is a circuit court judge in Multnomah County, Oregon. Judge Marcus can be reached at [micheal.h.marcus@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:micheal.h.marcus@ojd.state.or.us). Judge Marcus will speak at the upcoming NAJIS conference.*

## NAJIS Reorganization

by Mark Perbix

NAJIS has always been a tight-knit organization that relies on the efforts of a few key individuals to manage our group and plan our annual conference. Over the past two years, NAJIS has received a few comments indicating that we might be a bit too close-knit. We’ve been perceived by some as being exclusionary. This perception was reinforced at our 2000 conference in Philadelphia when through lack of volunteers to run for vacant board positions, the three vacancies on the board were filled by incumbent board members and no new members were added to the board.

We wish to change this perception, and the board has decided to address this concern by expanding the size of our board specifically to draw in newer members of NAJIS. The by-laws allow the size of the board of directors to change upon a majority vote of our membership. We’d like to do this at the next conference. We want to be ready to immediately implement this change by having a list of candidates ready to be elected. If you have attended a NAJIS conference in the past two years, you are eligible to run for a seat on the Board of Directors. If you are interested in getting more involved in NAJIS, we’d love to hear from you. Please contact any board member or officer if you would like to be considered. If you know of anyone else who might be qualified, let us know and we’ll do the recruiting.

“Truth in lending” requires that we inform you that NAJIS is a totally voluntary organization, and does not compensate board members for their participation. Board members attend the annual planning meeting and the annual conference at their own expense. We have a limited operating budget and most of our budget is spent hosting our annual conference. That said, we still wish to encourage your participation and consider running for the Board of Directors.

# NAJIS 2002 Meeting Registration: Seattle, September 26-28, 2002

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Dept./Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

○ Registration fee \$295 (post-marked on or before July 31, 2002) or \$395 (postmarked after that date). \$295 for three or more from the same agency who register at the same time. Registration includes NAJIS membership, conference, program, luncheon, and activity. Additional charges for spouses and children to attend luncheons and event will be announced.

*Federal ID # 38-3448014*

Hotel reservations for the conference can be made by calling the 888-627-8513 or 206-728-1000. **Reservations must be made by August 28, 2002.** The official conference coordinator is Terri Schaub, 334.749-7148.

Please make check payable to NAJIS and mail registration to:

2002 NAJIS Conference  
Attn: John Goergen  
Prosecuting Attorney's Council  
116 W. Ottawa, Suite 200  
Lansing, MI 48933

## NAJIS

National Association for Justice Information Systems  
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