

VICTIM DIRECT ONLINE REPORTING

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the responses of Calgary Police Service members, sworn and civilian, regarding whether to allow victims to report crime electronically. Each participant currently deals directly with crime reports. Members in the Communications Section and Records Processing Unit create police reports for minor crimes where no officer attends the scene. Sworn members dispatched to scenes of serious offences also participated in the study. A list of 37 offences in 9 categories ranging from minor to serious offences was included in the questionnaire.

There were 105 respondents from the 275 surveys sent to the different work areas. Results indicate support for victims reporting minor offences online. Generation Xers were more willing to support an electronic reporting system than Baby Boomers. However, there were an overwhelming number of participants who did not support the reporting of serious offences online. Approximately half the respondents had less than five years of police experience.

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CHAPTER ONE – STUDY BACKGROUND

Problem/Opportunity

In the last few years many people in Canada have become computer literate and now feel comfortable working and playing on the Internet. In 2002, 68.2% of the people in Calgary had “Internet access from home, work, school, a public library or some other location” (Statistics Canada, 2004b, ¶ 1) and most businesses utilize the Internet: approximately 68% of small businesses and over 90% of medium and large businesses. Armed with this knowledge, and a desire to reduce Calgary Police Service (CPS) employees’ workload, thus freeing time to tackle other police duties, I am proposing the CPS adopt an alternative method for victims to report a crime—electronically.

For minor offences, victims could utilize the Internet to file a report electronically with the CPS. The CPS utilizes its Web site to educate people about the Service and an icon on the home page would allow citizens to click to an online report form. A victim would then complete all the compulsory boxes in the report and send it over the Internet to the Record Processing Unit (RPU), where it would be scrutinized for accuracy and thoroughness. If information were missing, an RPU member would return an e-mail to the victim outlining the required steps to fully complete the report. Once all the necessary information had been received, a case number (file number) would then be sent to the originator.

Currently, a victim of any crime phones the CPS to report the incident. Victims can also file a report by attending any of the eight District Offices, or five Community Operated Police Stations (COPS). Police officers and/or volunteers staff these offices for select hours each day. Located inside malls, the hours of operation of COPS are dictated by the hours the

mall is accessible to the public. These stations were opened for the convenience of the public. A victim could attend any office and file a report while out shopping in the same mall.

For serious crimes, a car crew is dispatched to the scene where officers talk to the victim and witnesses to receive information before filing a report. However, if the crime is minor in nature and the victim has no suspects in mind, the caller's name and phone number are recorded and that information is sent to the Victim Direct Voice Entry (VDVE) Unit. A civilian member of the Service contacts the victim sometime in the next 72 hours to record the crime scene information over the phone, without ever dispatching a car crew. This two-tiered reporting system, called *differential response*, was spurred in the early 1990s to combat the high call-load of incidents to which officers were dispatched, and to reduce the lengthy wait that some victims were experiencing due to officers attending higher priority calls first.

The purpose of my research is to determine if online reporting of crime could be implemented as an alternative to the current practice. A list of calls for service will be compiled and my research will determine which could be re-routed to an electronic reporting system. CPS officers currently working the street attending complaints, members of the CPS Communications Section who answer the telephones, and members of the VDVE Unit who contact victims by phone and record the crime information electronically will be surveyed to determine which crime reports they believe could be completed online. The results will be compared to crime reports that other police agencies around the world accept electronically.

This electronic process, called the Victim Direct Online Reporting (VDOR) project, could have numerous benefits for both the CPS and crime victims. It would allow citizens to report a crime at their convenience from the comfort of their home or office, and CPS

employees' workloads could be reduced by not having to file initial complaints. It would also reduce the number of calls for service to the CPS Communications Section, as victims would report crimes online and bypass the Communication Centre. In these days of doing more with less, and with the growing number of Calgarians becoming computer literate, the CPS could benefit by adopting an online method of receiving crime information.

Victims would be given the choice to decide which method they felt most comfortable using to report an incident. It is not intended that the VDOR system replace the current method of reporting crime, but rather act as an *alternative* method to collect crime information. For example, a victim could complete every type of report currently taken by the VDVE unit electronically. However, there will be calls for service where an officer must attend a scene, and victims would not be allowed to report these crimes electronically. If this proposal were to be implemented, those serious complaints would not be affected.

Objectives and Research Questions

I have three primary objectives in undertaking this research:

1. To compile a list of all types of calls for service the CPS receives.
2. To determine from CPS officers working the street attending calls for service, as well as from Communications Section officers and members of the RPU, the advantages and disadvantages of an online reporting system.
3. To determine from five other police agencies which type of calls for service they allow victims to report online.

There are two main research questions:

1. What type of criminal reports could the Calgary Police Service accept online?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of allowing victims to report a crime online?

The VDOR project is an opportunity for the CPS to implement an alternative method for citizens to report a crime at their convenience, while saving time and valuable resources for Communications Section staff, RPU members, and officers attending calls for service on the street.

The Organization

The CPS, which was formed in 1885, is sponsoring the Victim Direct Online Reporting research project. In 2003, the Service employed 1,442 sworn and 593 civilian staff, totaling 2,035 members. The CPS also “relies heavily on the contributions of volunteers who work in programs supported entirely within the Service, as well as thousands of associate volunteers who work in programs supported by external organizations such as Block Watch and Crime Stoppers” (Calgary Police Service [CPS], 2004b, p. 20).

Chief Constable Jack Beaton commands the CPS. His executive committee is comprised of four Deputy Chiefs. Along with 26 Inspectors, 44 Staff Sergeants, 139 Sergeants, 147 Detectives, and 1,077 Constables, the Service’s mission statement is “to optimize public safety in the city of Calgary” (CPS, 2004c, p. 1). The primary objective is “on crime prevention, crime detection and apprehension and traffic safety, and our most effective tools are positive community relations, education, problem-solving and use of current technology to analyse conditions, project trends and deploy resources” (CPS, 2004c, p. 1).

The Calgary Police Commission oversees the CPS through Chief Constable Jack Beaton. The nine volunteer members of the Commission are appointed by City Council and

are responsible for appointing the Chief of Police, establishing policing priorities, allocating funds, and monitoring the public complaint process. The Police Commission acts as a “link between the community and the police. The Commission’s mandate is to balance the requirements of public accountability and those of police independence and provide an interface between the CPS and elected officials” (City of Calgary, 2004, Role of the Calgary Police Commission section, ¶ 2).

The CPS mission statement also includes seven guiding principles, three of which pertain directly to the VDOR system. First, the Service wants to “maximize individual and collective skills within the Calgary Police Service in terms of crime prevention, crime detection and traffic safety” (CPS, 2004c, p. 1). VDOR will be able to fulfill this mandate by collecting information on minor crimes that citizens may not be reporting currently. The CPS knows how many crime reports it receives in a given time frame, but does not know how many minor crimes never come to its attention.

The second guiding principle refers to “promot[ing] a professional police image by demonstrating impartial service to the law, and by offering service and friendship to all members of the public” (CPS, 2004c, p. 1). The CPS offers numerous services through various programs, all of which have benefited both the citizens of Calgary and the CPS. The VDOR system would allow victims a new service by permitting them to report a crime online at their convenience.

The last guiding principle that pertains directly to VDOR is concerned with achieving the other principles “within an acceptable cost framework” (CPS, 2004c, p. 1). The annual budget of the CPS is approximately \$160 million. The Chief works to “maintain current levels of service to citizens and accommodate the demands of continuing rapid growth in

Calgary....The Service continually works to improve existing systems and facilities, [and] develop new systems and facilities” (CPS, 2004c, p. 13). New systems take time to create and cost money to utilize. The VDOR system will initially take time to reach its full potential. A marketing plan will help educate victims about the new VDOR system as an alternative method of reporting a crime. Financially, minor hard costs of purchasing computers, office space, maintenance costs, and officer or civilian staff wages and benefits, will become part of the budget.

“The Communications Section answered a total of 775,999 calls in 2003, and officers were dispatched to 240,484 calls, 21.6 per cent more than in 2000” (CPS, 2004c, p. 13). Calls for service are divided into one of four categories. High priority calls are dispatched within 20 seconds and require officers to attend the scene with lights and sirens activated. Priority two calls are less serious and are dispatched within 10 minutes, with officers to be on scene within 30 minutes. Priority three calls are dispatched within 2 hours and an officer is expected to attend the complaint within 5 hours. The fourth level of service involves the VDVE Unit. When a victim contacts the Communications Section with a minor crime, their name and phone number are recorded and sent to the VDVE Unit. No car crew is dispatched to the scene.

The VDVE Unit’s mandate is to contact victims and record crime information where the value of the property or damage value does not exceed \$1,500 and there are no suspects. Examples of crimes taken over the telephone include unforced break and enter to detached garages and sheds, attempted stolen autos, stolen/recovered autos, mischief to property (i.e., graffiti, vehicles, egging of houses, pellet gunshots), theft under \$5,000, lost property, and

crime information. If any of the above offences occurs outside Calgary city limits, the victim is referred to the nearest RCMP detachment where the incident occurred.

VDVE personnel attempt to contact victims only twice within a two hour window. Should there be no answer the call is “dumped,” and the victim has to call back to start the process over again. The problem is that the victim may not know that the CPS has dumped their call. Usually they phone again in four to five days. The current waiting time also depends on the day of the week (Mondays are busiest, followed by days after statutory holidays), with turnaround times of between one to two days. Table 1 shows a list of the number of telephone calls where VDVE members were unable to contact complainants from March 2 until April 5, 2003.

Table 1. List of Unable to Contact Complainants

Date	No. of Unable to Contact Complainants
March 2-8, 2003	45
March 9-15, 2003	54
March 16-22, 2003	71
March 23-29, 2003	84
March 30-April 5, 2003	55
Total	309

There were a total of 309 victims who never filed a report in this five-week period, an average of over 60 per week. If the VDOR system were an alternative method of reporting

crimes, these victims could be accommodated, and the CPS would receive this information in a timely fashion.

Conclusion

The Calgary Police Service is a progressive organization that began incorporating technology years ago, starting with a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system in all marked vehicles. Today, computers are used on almost every desk in the Service. Members of the CPS can determine the benefits of the VDOR system to both the Service and victims. Time and money are two major issues with most businesses, and the VDOR system will enhance the operation of the CPS. This system will add another method of receiving crime information while offering a secure and convenient way for victims to inform the CPS of an offence.

CHAPTER TWO – INFORMATION REVIEW

Review of Organizational Documents

The CPS has numerous documents relating directly to the VDOR proposal. I reviewed and analyzed annual reports, community surveys, mission statements and guiding principles, business plans, statistical reports, and socio-economic outlook reports to indicate the relationship between the Service and the community, and to outline the advantages and benefits of implementing a VDOR system.

The *2003 Annual Report* (CPS, 2004c) reveals a comparison of the number of reports submitted to the CPS both in 2002 and 2003. Criminal reports in 2003 totaled 189,152, up from 181,651 the year before. Dispatched calls for service also increased to 240,484, up from 227,102 in 2002. The total number of calls to the Communications Section was down in 2003 to 775,999, but the number of abandoned calls (unanswered) increased by almost 13,000.

According to the *Annual Statistical Report: Person & Property Crimes 1998-2002* (Wiltse & Adhopia, 2003) there were 26,503 reported thefts (theft over \$5,000, theft under \$5,000, possession of stolen property, shoplifting under and over \$5,000, and theft from vehicles under and over \$5,000) in Calgary in 2002, and almost 8,000 break and enters (residential, commercial, other break and enters, and unlawfully in residence). These statistics will be used to compare officers' workload before and after a VDOR system is implemented.

“In the 4th quarter [of 2002], the Communications Section was not able to meet all of the business plan targets” (Calgary Police Service, 2003, p. 2). In the category of accommodating the demands of growth, the targeted plan is to “maintain a timely response to telephone calls from the public [by] achieving a target of answering 95% of 911 calls within

12 seconds,...answering 95% of non-emergency calls within 30 seconds,...and reducing the abandoned call rate to 5%” (Calgary Police Service, 2003, pp. 16-18). These target goals could be easier to achieve with a VDOR system in place by alleviating a portion of the calls coming into the Communications Section.

The CPS *Community Surveys* of 1997 (Hohn-Martens, 1997), 2000 (Poetschke, 2000), and 2003 (Arrizza, 2004) contain information regarding the reporting behaviour of victims and the type of contact with members of the CPS. These include dialing the CPS emergency and regular phone lines, contact with officers dispatched to the complaint, victims who attended a police facility, traffic violations, and those who spoke with an officer on the street or at designated community meetings. I reviewed these documents to determine if a VDOR system would enhance the relationship between victims and the CPS.

The 1997 survey showed that “of the 568 respondents for which reporting information was available, 65% or 370 reported the incident to the police” (Hohn-Martens, 1997, p. 39). In the 2000 survey, respondents were asked for their rationale if they answered other than “very satisfied.” “Of those people who mentioned service issues, 59% felt that the CPS had slow service/response” (Poetschke, 2000, p. 5). Not all contact with the police service is done over the phone: Almost 10% of the respondents attended a police facility and were “mostly likely to say that the person with whom they had contact was ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ concerned with their problem” (Arrizza, 2004, p. 13). These surveys indicate that a VDOR system could absorb a percentage of the calls for service that the CPS is not currently receiving and may have a positive impact on citizen attitudes towards the CPS.

In 2002, the CPS filed 228,600 reports, of which the VDVE Unit completed 14,700. “Employees of the Victim Direct Voice Entry area of the [Records Processing Unit] handle

one-third of the phone calls officers used to make in following up complaints....During any given week, members of the unit type up and organize as many as 5,000 reports” (Calgary Police Service, 2004b, ¶ 2-3). Victims using an online reporting system could have completed these reports without contacting the Communications Section or the VDVE unit.

The *CPS Communications Section Customer Satisfaction Survey 2000* (Muir & Poetschke, 2000) is an in-depth compilation of statistics used to evaluate the service provided by CPS Communications staff members. This report also deals with customer satisfaction; details the reasons for calling CPS, days and times of calls, and opinions regarding telephone service alternatives (VDVE Unit); and documents the reasons for respondents’ dissatisfaction with the CPS. “Respondents who called to report an attack against property were the most likely to be dissatisfied at not being able to submit a report over the phone” (Muir & Poetschke, 2000, p. 23). Property-related crimes are deemed lesser crimes, and are offences to which officers are not dispatched. Reports for these crimes are currently completed by members of the VDVE unit and could instead be done electronically by the victim. Eligible reports the VDVE Unit takes over the phone

include those where the incident occurred earlier (i.e., not in progress), where no evidence is available for investigation, where there is no suspect, where the victim is not a senior, and where the victim is willing to report the offense in this way. (Muir & Poetschke, 2000, p. 24)

Police reports are also taken at COPS, district offices, storefront police offices, and satellite offices.

The rate at which the public has utilized these front counters has varied over the last five years, but it is an alternative way for citizens to access police services that may

be more convenient and places fewer demands on front-line officers. (CPS Research & Development Section, 2001, p. 152)

Finally, the *Differential Response and Three Level Priority System Evaluation* (Bloom, 1993) outlines the types of complaints to which officers are not dispatched. The following is a list of offenses that fall into this category: theft, carprowing, found property, property damage, stolen auto, indecent calls, and non-injury motor vehicle accidents. “The objective of differential response was to relieve the street officer’s workload by having citizens report selected incidents and offenses over the phone or at local Police facilities” (Bloom, 1993, p. 5). A survey was completed to determine citizen’s levels of satisfaction of service with differential response. “The Calgary Police Service should be quite pleased that 86% of the people who received differential response were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service” (Bloom, 1993, p. 7). This indicates that when the CPS made a dramatic change to responding to calls for service, citizens accepted and adopted this new method of reporting a crime. There should be no difference if the CPS implements the VDOR system to augment the reporting system to another level.

The CPS mission statement and guiding principles describe its goals and its relationship with the public. As discussed in chapter 1, the VDOR project fits well with the CPS mission statement as part of a community-based policing philosophy by offering a new service to the citizens of Calgary.

Each of these organizational documents supports the need to implement an online reporting system. History has proven that an addition to the report system will reduce the workload for members of the CPS. The VDOR project should further decrease the number of calls for service, thus allocating more time for members to fulfill other police duties.

Review of the Literature

Online Reporting

The use of computer technology is ingrained in our society. The time has arrived for the CPS to maximize its potential by tapping into this technology to ensure a more effective and efficient way of conducting business. The VDOR project is one approach that will reduce Communications members' and street officers' workload while offering a different method for citizens to report a crime.

Status quo crime reporting methods, which rely almost exclusively on direct contacts with police via telephone, carry with them certain costs that are unique to the voice dependent reporting mode. There is the monetary cost of time lost from work or regular routines by getting involved. (Lasley & Palombo, 1995, p. 521)

Using the Internet, victims can report their crime to the police at their convenience from the comfort of their home or office. There are other benefits to citizens reporting crime online. This new system might encourage more victims to report. Statistics from various surveys indicate that "many crimes go unreported to the police, meaning that not only is an accurate description of crime difficult to obtain, but the overall picture of crime that we do obtain may be biased" (Taylor, 2002, p. 1). A 2000 British crime survey (Sims & Myhill, 2001) states that "only 39% of incidents...were reported to, or came to the attention of, the police" (p. 4), while a Home Office Research and Statistics Department survey (Buck, Chatterton, & Pease, 1995) indicates that the "police were rarely informed about malicious calls....Only 5% [were] reported to the police" (p. 1).

Young people were just as reluctant to report crimes: "About 40% of incidents were mentioned by young people to their parents and around a third...were reported to teachers.

The police knew about 12% of incidents in total” (Maung, 1995, p. 1). Minority groups did not fare well either: “Only 15% of Pakistani victims reported serious threats to the police” (FitzGerald & Hale, 1996, p. 3). Online reporting would offer each of these groups a different way to alert the police about “non-emergency complaints at their convenience, and to explain situations in better detail without feeling rushed” (Alvaro, 2000, p. 44). Taylor (2002) adds that “time and effort have...been found to affect the willingness of individuals to report crime” (p. 4). In today’s fast-paced society, allowing people to report a crime when it is convenient for them would likely encourage more of them to file a report.

Even after reporting crime “the old fashioned way” over the telephone, there has been a reduction in the number of dispatched calls to the scene in recent years. “In 64% of reported incidents, victims had face-to-face contact with the police, compared with 71% in 1998” (Sims & Myhill, 2001, p. 4). Mirrlees-Black and Budd’s (1997) survey indicates that the “majority of people who report a crime have face-to-face contact with a police officer, although the proportion has fallen from 79% in 1994 to 74% in 1996” (p. 3). This reduction is attributed to police agencies taking certain reports over the phone, saving street officers’ time writing reports and rerouting their efforts toward investigations. Clearly one quarter of all reported crimes are never dispatched, and it is some of these reports that the VDOR project could absorb.

The Police Information Technology Organisation realizes the need for “citizens to report non-emergency minor crimes by internet, [thus] easing the burden on police call handling resources” (Ellis, 2003, ¶ 1). Their report includes the benefits of “minor crime reports diverted from 999 [9-1-1] and other busy telephone lines; [and the] potential for [Communications Section] staff to be more cost effectively employed on other police

business” (Ellis, 2003, Results section, ¶ 1). Now is the time to utilize technology to its fullest advantage.

Trusting the Internet With Personal Information

The purpose of this section is to determine if citizens would utilize an online reporting system to file a crime report with the CPS. This review will investigate other business and governmental organizations’ use of the Internet and the advantages and disadvantages this presents to their customers.

The major question affecting this new VDOR system is whether Calgarians and other victims visiting the Stampede City would feel comfortable filing a report online. There are a number of indicators that show citizens are already using the Internet for a variety of purposes, including conducting inquiries, online banking and investing, online shopping, and completing government forms. In some locations, they are also filing police reports.

If citizens are currently divulging personal information over the Internet in order to complete a transaction, would they be willing to complete a police report online? The information they send online would be similar in both cases. As well, the information a victim would send online in a police report would be identical to the information given to a police officer attending the scene or to a VDVE member over the phone. The difference in online reporting would be the victim’s level of trust in sending his or her personal information electronically over the Internet. There is a high level of trust when a victim gives information directly to an officer, knowing that it will not be passed on to a third party. People conducting transactions over the Internet never really know what will happen with their information.

Statistics Canada (2004b) reported that in 2002, 68.2% of Canadians had Internet access; an increase of 15.4% since 1998. In the category of home use only (Statistics Canada, 2004a), people reported using the Internet for variety of reasons, such as gathering information about the government (56.7%), employment (35.0%), medical or health information (63.9%), and news (52.9%). As well, the Internet was used to complete electronic banking (51.0%) and for purchasing goods and services (30.5%). The latter two require a person to disclose personal information such as their name, address, and phone number, as well as credit card numbers and financial data over the Internet for each transaction. These Internet users have confidence and trust in the system with one of their most valuable commodities, their finances. As such, they may be willing to file a crime report online. The VDOR system would never ask for personal financial information, but would require a victim of a lost or stolen credit card to give that information.

There are federal, provincial, and municipal government agencies who are currently using online forms to receive data. In an article for *The Financial Post*, Vardy (1999) wrote that the federal government has purchased software that “lets government departments across Canada create electronic forms for use by the public,...allow[ing] Canadians to obtain, sign, and file official forms through the Internet” (¶ 2). The government of Alberta announced in a news release in 2004 that motorists could pay their fines online. “The Alberta government, in cooperation with the Alberta Motor Association and Alberta Registry Agents Association, launched a new Internet fine payment system that allows individuals charged with traffic or parking offences to pay their tickets online” (Shields, 2004, ¶ 2). The online system uses 128-bit encryption to safeguard the credit card information sent by people wishing to pay their fines over the Internet.

Municipally, the City of Calgary has gone online to help citizens obtain everything from dog licenses and filming permits to online building permit applications for contractors in the electrical, gas-fitting, and plumbing fields. Everyone making an online application has to provide their name, address, contact numbers, and credit card information. Each form contains wording indicating that the information written on the application will only “be shared with the City of Calgary Cashier and the Business Unit to which the application is made. The information will not be publicly available and is protected under the FOIP [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy] Act” (City of Calgary, n.d., p. 1). This declaration provides the applicant with a level of comfort that his or her information will not be disclosed to outsiders.

All three levels of government realize the importance of utilizing the Internet for certain transactions involving members of the public, and feel that the public will have the confidence to use the online methods as a way of conducting business and financial transactions with the government. It is believed that using these methods saves time and money, and can be done at the users’ convenience. Online applications can be completed anytime, not just during business hours, and the applicant can avoid spending time attending the government office and waiting in line.

Consumers have been shopping online for years, giving their personal information to online businesses in exchange for goods and services. In the United States, “revenues from consumer online shopping estimated at \$5.775 billion for 1998, are meager, despite optimistic industry forecasts that such revenues are to grow dramatically to \$37.5 billion over the next 5 years” (Hoffman, Novak, & Peralta, 1997, p. 129). There were millions of people

who utilized the Internet to conduct transactions, each of which required the purchaser to trust the online business with personal information.

Mullaney and Sager (2004) state in their *Business Week* article, “Business on the Web is Warming Up,” that “59%, or 238 public Web companies made money in the fourth quarter of 2003. That’s up from 41% a year ago” (p. 16). An Ipsos-Reid study (Ipsos Group, 2002) on the impact of the Internet on Canadian lifestyles indicated that “if stuck on a deserted island for a month, [51%] would prefer to have a computer with Internet access rather than a television...[and] 59% of adults with a home Internet connection have purchased an item directly online” (¶ 6-7). “The online portion of the ShopNBC home shopping network had a problem most competitors would love to have: a growth rate of 67 percent over the last three years” (Musich, 2003, p. 28). Evidence from trend watcher Forrester Research (as cited by Andrews, 2003) suggests “that online purchasing will jump 42 percent over 2002 to \$12.2 billion” (p. 42). These statistics clearly indicate that people are willing to purchase goods and services online, and to do this, they need to pass their personal information over the Internet to retail businesses.

There are Web sites to educate consumers on what they should know before giving any information online. “For many Internet vendors, your personal information is as important as the money you pay for a product or service” (Industry Canada, n.d., ¶ 13). These sites discuss everything from recognizing secure sites and warning signs about disreputable vendors scams, to tips for teens shopping online. “Children and teens are easily fooled by items that turn out to be not as big or as much fun as they looked online, or of acceptable quality....They may also give out personal information without realizing the consequences” (Industry Canada, n.d., ¶ 14).

The *Canadian Code of Practice for Consumer Protection in Electronic Commerce* (Government of Canada, 2003) was approved in principle in 2003. It is “intended to establish benchmarks for good business practices for merchants conducting commercial activities with consumers online” (Government of Canada, 2003, ¶ 1). This work in progress is intended to protect the purchaser in electronic commerce and is another document that citizens can scrutinize to learn more about giving their personal information online.

The Industry Canada Web site (Industry Canada, 2003) outlines the importance of cryptography to people sending personal information over the Internet. Cryptography “allows the users to authenticate and safeguard sensitive data stored in computers and transmitted over public networks such as the Internet” (Industry Canada, 2003, ¶ 1). Some of these privacy issues are addressed in Bill C-6, the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (Department of Justice, 2000). Industry Canada also describes cryptography techniques as “a foundation for establishing the necessary trust in electronic commerce because they *safeguard* information, *protect* communications and *authenticate* parties to transactions” (Industry Canada, 2000, p. 2). Furthermore, “cryptography is important to building trust and confidence in electronic markets as it functions to allow parties who do not know each other to exchange and authenticate information and conduct business in a secure manner in an on-line environment” (Industry Canada, 2000, p. 1). These Web sites, including an online version of the *Canadian Consumer Handbook* (Government of Canada, 2004), are sites that victims could peruse if they have doubts or are hesitant about filing a crime report online.

Before transmitting personal data over the Internet to the VDOR system, a victim would have to feel confident and trust that the CPS Web site is secure. “We cognitively

choose whom we will trust in which respects and under which circumstances, and we base the choice on what we take to be ‘good reasons,’ constituting evidence of trustworthiness” (Lewis & Weigert, as cited by Strader & Ramaswami, 2002, p. 46). One of the important issues with VDOR is that victims, and not the police service, will determine whether they will file a report online. If they do not feel they can trust the system, they can file a report any of the other ways currently available. In his article, “Trust Online, Trust Offline,” Uslaner (2004) states, “The Internet really depends upon trust rather than creates trust. People who trust each other are more likely to be comfortable with new technology, even if they don’t trust particular Web sites” (p. 28). Trust by victims and the CPS will play a major role in the success of the VDOR system. Parasuraman and Miller (2004) address the topic of trust in their article, “Trust and Etiquette in High-Criticality Automated Systems”: “Trust is important because operators may not use a well-designed, reliable system if they believe it untrustworthy” (p. 52).

Strader and Ranaswami (2002) discuss the importance of the seller’s reputation in online consumer buying: “Reputation speaks for the seller’s record of honesty and concern for meeting needs of buyers” (p. 47). This easily translates into the CPS’s (seller’s) reputation for honesty and meeting the needs of the victim (buyer). Reputation and customer satisfaction are closely linked in any business. “According to the latest American Customer Satisfaction Index update,...satisfaction with Web retailers rose six percentage points during 2002, to 83 on a scale of 100. That compares with a flat rating of 75 for store-based retailers” (Tsao, 2003, ¶ 5). The VDOR system has the same potential to satisfy victims’ ability to file a report at their convenience versus attending a district office or making a report over the phone.

People are more concerned about credit card frauds than online fraudulent use of the same items. “While 76% of respondents said credit card fraud is either a moderate or major concern, only 69% of respondents felt the same way about online credit card fraud” (Ipsos Group, 2004b, ¶ 2). It appears that consumers are more comfortable with using their credit cards on the Internet than in person at a retail outlet. One explanation for this “perception that online is safer may be derived from the fact that, up to this point, less people have been the victim of online fraud” (Ipsos Group, 2004b, ¶ 6).

Other concerns about using the Internet relate to security and privacy. In a report entitled “British Columbians on Crime: While Residents Think Crime Is Becoming a More Serious Problem, They’re Not More Personally Worried About Being a Victim,” Mossop (as cited by Ipsos Group, 2003) concludes that “only 42% of Canadian online adults have ever made a purchase online, and of those who haven’t, security (49%) and privacy concerns (34%) are the top barriers mentioned on an open-ended basis” (¶ 3). These concerns are legitimate and will have to be overcome for the VDOR system to become an alternate method for victims reporting a crime.

Another report, released in April 2004, entitled “Communication and Entertainment Proliferate Over the Internet,” (Ipsos Group, 2004a) refutes Mossop’s (as cited by Ipsos Group, 2003) findings. “Despite recent concerns around identity theft and fraud, online banking saw the largest activity growth, with year-over-year increases of 26%, suggesting that many users are not compromising their use of the Internet for conducting financial transactions over security concerns” (Ipsos Group, 2004a, ¶ 8). This 26% growth represents about 30 million new online banking users. An Atlanta bank, NetBank Inc. (NetBank Inc., 2004), only does business online. Their entire banking operation is done over the Internet.

Each of their customers must have a high level of trust using the Internet or they would not bank there.

More and more people trust the Internet to complete online financial transactions. Customers using “Internet bank sites in eight large European markets jumped 15% between October 2001 and May 2002, to nearly 22.5 million” (Grose, 2002, ¶ 2). Even as early as 1996, “more than half of households with personal computers say they use their PCs to help manage their personal finances” (Wilcox, 1997, ¶ 3), a claim recorded in Wilcox’s article, “Online Banking’s Time Has (Finally) Come.”

A person’s financial information is important, and with millions of people around the world engaging in online banking, they all must trust the Internet and the banks to protect their personal data. It is this trust that the VDOR system will rely on to convince victims to report a crime online. “MasterCard promotes system security, self-regulation, and consumer education as the best ways to diffuse privacy concerns” (Foley & Thyfault, 1996, ¶ 7). VDOR will have to adopt a similar concept to promote trust online.

Calgary Police Service and Community Relations

The purpose of this section is to establish how the CPS and the community interact. The relationship the CPS enjoys with the citizens of Calgary is based on two-way communication, a desire to keep citizens informed about the Service, and the Service’s ability to address community concerns. This police–community union will be a major factor in determining if the VDOR project comes to fruition.

The CPS keeps the citizens of Calgary informed of what the police are doing, what the crime trends are, and how to prevent crime or prevent becoming a victim. The CPS Web site (CPS, 2004a) is constantly updated with crime statistics and tips on crime prevention.

The local newspaper prints a weekly two-page spread on crime in the city, including a wanted person in each district, and Community Liaison Officers release crime statistics monthly for inclusion in community newsletters. To further enhance its relationship with the community, the CPS has developed a variety of programs to apprise the public of pressing issues and address their concerns. Some of the programs are listed below:

1. The Citizen Police Academy is a 12-week, one night per week program where Calgarians learn about different aspects of police work, including what the police do at a homicide scene, the role of police officers in the Cultural Resources Unit, what type of crime Vice Unit detectives investigate, and all the training a new recruit receives. This program also includes a ride-along in a police vehicle where participants accompany officers to complaints.
2. Police and Community Telephone (PACT) is a computerized telephone system which phones people in a given area to inform them of everything from criminal activity in their area, names of dangerous convicted individuals released into their neighbourhood, upcoming police events, or the description of a suspect.
3. The CPS Web site (CPS, 2004a) allows citizens to learn about the CPS online. It is used to inform people of our recruiting process, statistics about the CPS, crime trends, crime-free multi-housing, date rape drugs, and crime prevention tips, to name a few. “Some possible uses of a Web site include sharing department information, crime statistics, and safety tips; providing opportunities for citizen feedback...and using e-mail as a vehicle for communication with the public” (Fazzini, 2003, p. 7). The Web site is constantly updated with information on all the programs the police service offers.

4. Business Watch Unit was developed to educate business owners and managers on ways to help prevent becoming a victim of a break and enter or thefts from their premise (including employees and people who walk in off the street intent on stealing laptops, cash, purses, etc.), and to advise on what to do during a robbery. Unit staff are civilian volunteers who have been trained to attend businesses and discuss prevention tips.
5. Crimestoppers is a program that was developed to allow community members to anonymously pass on information about a crime to the police. This successful program has allowed officers to gather evidence on crimes that might otherwise have gone unsolved. The type of crimes that the CPS receives information on include grow operations (drugs), wanted suspects' hideouts, white-collar criminals, and information on homicides and sexual assaults.
6. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a course to help prevent crime from occurring by addressing the physical layout of a building or complex. Allowing people to see onto the property by cutting the hedges down, removing fences, installing better night lighting, and removing natural barricades where people can hide are some of the recommendations this program offers. The program was designed to open the viewing area of the property, in the belief that criminal activity will be reduced if criminals think someone can witness the crime and identify them as culprits.

The CPS has also responded to the needs of citizens by starting new units within the Service. The Domestic Conflict Unit was created as a result of the growing number of assaults between couples involved in a relationship. Officers working in this unit investigate

the case, lay appropriate charges, ensure the prosecutor is fully aware of the circumstances, and follow each case through court. The Cultural Resources Unit was formed in 1996 to create inroads with community leaders from various ethnic backgrounds (Asian, African, Caribbean, Aboriginal, etc.), and deal with issues such as hate/bias, or issues affecting subgroups such as gays and lesbians or people with disabilities. These partnerships have been invaluable to these groups and the Service as it breaks down barriers. Many immigrants come from societies that do not trust the police, or that view the police as corrupt. These constables lecture to members of these groups on “You and the Law,” where one member of the audience comes onstage and dresses in a police uniform as part of learning about the CPS. Laughter is a good indication that the barriers are coming down.

The Domestic Conflict Unit and the Cultural Resources Unit indicate that the CPS is always looking for new ways to reach out and meet the needs of the citizens it serves. The VDOR system could be another way to reach out, allowing victims to report crimes to the police. “An online service allowing citizens to report certain crimes online has proved highly successful in Finland, with some 23,000 reports filed in its first 12 months of operation....The service was meant ‘purely to improve our customer service’” (European Communities, 2003, ¶ 3). Interaction with the police in an online capacity has its benefits for some citizens. There are people who are reluctant to visit a police station for a variety of reasons, including being too embarrassed after being duped, and the difficulty for some citizens to attend a police station (seniors and people with disabilities). Offering this service would enhance the working relationship between the CPS and Calgarians.

“Most corporations take into account the needs and interests of a great many stakeholders, most obviously their customers and their own employees, but also the

surrounding community and the larger society” (Solomon & Flores, 2001, p. 74). The CPS is no exception, as the Service places great importance on the relationship with the citizens it serves. In 1973, the Service changed its name from the Calgary Police Force to better describe the relationship between the people it serves and the organization itself. A few years later, community-based policing was created in an effort to work more closely with and involve Calgarians in the fight against crime. Chief Jack Beaton states in the *2003 Annual Report*, “Community-based policing means centralizing officers in the communities they serve and establishing meaningful communication with citizens so we understand their policing needs” (as cited by the CPS, 2004c, p. 2).

Others concur with Chief Beaton’s definition. Garcia, Gu, Pattavina, and Pierce (2002) write in their article, “Determinants of Citizen and Police Involvement in Community Policing,” that “one element common to all definitions of *community policing* is the idea that the police and community residents must work in concert both to define and develop solutions to problems affecting the community” (p. 2). The CPS firmly believes that citizens play an important role in the fight against crime. There are over 800 volunteers working in various capacities including (but not limited to) COPS, the Victim Assistance Support Team Unit, and the Business Liaison Unit. These units only exist because of the efforts and dedication of volunteers who contribute a few hours each week to the concept of community policing.

Fazzini (2003) shares a similar opinion to Chief Beaton’s definition of community-based policing. In his article, “Focus on Police–Community Relations,” he states, “Departments must understand the makeup of their communities, as well as the needs and expectations that citizens have of their police services” (Fazzini, 2003, p. 6). Fazzini also

focuses on the larger picture encompassing police work, rather than the obvious tasks of making arrests and writing tickets. “While preventing and solving crimes is the mainstay of every police agency, knowing what community members expect beyond crime solving, and then providing those services, can prove just as important for positive community relations with police” (Fazzini, 2003, p. 8).

An important goal of community-based policing is the reduction of crime. One of the guiding principles of the CPS’s mission statement is “to promote an understanding that the true measure of police effectiveness is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them” (CPS, 2003, p. 1). The Service relies heavily on the relationship it has built with the citizens to fulfill this mandate. Garcia et al. (2002) further add,

The community policing emphasis on strengthening relationships between local neighborhood groups and municipal institutions, and channeling external crime control resources into the local community is generally considered the most significant aspect of the strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder. (p. 1)

The CPS has developed and implemented a number of programs that emphasize the importance of a joint venture between the police and the community. “Collective involvement in community policing would seem more likely if there were agreement in the identification of community crime problems and solutions” (Garcia et al., 2002, p. 5).

The CPS initiated Community Response Teams in each district where members of supporting agencies, citizen groups, and the police working in the same geographical area of the city meet to identify local crime problems and to create solutions in an effort to address crime issues. Crime affects many different agencies, businesses, and other groups, and the

CRT is a method of identifying and solving criminal behaviour without reinventing the wheel. Friedman (as cited by Garcia et al., 2002) accurately sums up this idea when he says, “The whole criminal justice system and all the criminal justice scholars cannot, without an organized, informed community, make significant progress toward safer, friendlier neighborhoods” (p. 1).

The CPS relies on its customers to form a partnership in the fight against crime. As Senge (1994) states, “We’ll establish a reputation for reliability with our customers that will win us more customers than we’ll lose” (p. 276). In policing terms, customers are our clients, the citizens we serve and protect. Having these stakeholders working with the police is invaluable and affects the reputation of the Service.

The Service’s reputation plays a vital role in a citizen’s perception of the police, and thus, is important to the relationship between the two. Surveys have been conducted to determine police reputation. The CPS hires an outside agency every two years to conduct a survey, and in the *2003 Citizen Survey* (Arrizza, 2004), “the vast majority of citizens in Calgary (91%) indicated that they were either very satisfied (49%) or somewhat satisfied (42%) overall with the service provided by the Calgary Police Service” (p. i). The survey also indicates that community members form an opinion of the CPS, whether or not they have had contact with them: “People who had used a police service within the previous 12 months rated the police slightly lower than those who had not” (Arrizza, 2004, p. 4). Indications are that officers are held in high esteem in the public’s eye and only in a few instances does the level of satisfaction decrease slightly. Reasons given by the citizens who responded with other than “very satisfied” include attitude of personnel, service issues (officers not dispatched, issue not solved), and public profile (lack of visibility, not dealing

with public concerns). The survey also indicated that 93% of respondents state that Calgary officers are approachable. All of these statistics focus on the relationship the CPS has with community members and helps determine the level of community support the CPS receives.

This thought is expanded in an article, “Factors That Influence Public Opinion of the Police,” written for the US Department of Justice in 2003 (Maxson, Hennigan, & Sloane, 2003): “As might be expected, residents expressed less approval of officers and the way they do their job when residents perceived problems with disorder or violent crime in their neighborhood or reported being fearful” (pp. 2-3). Public perception alters the opinions and attitudes of community members, and if their own safety is potentially jeopardized, their opinion of police service suffers. One way to reduce their fear is to inform them of crime trends in their neighbourhood and then work with them to develop solutions. Both sides can work together to address crime issues and make the community a safer place.

The type of contact citizens have with the police also affects their opinion of them. People with

only informal contacts hold the highest opinions of police performance and officer demeanor. Those with only formal contacts hold the least positive attitudes toward local police....Individuals with no contacts with police have high opinions of job performance and officer demeanor. (Maxson et al., 2003, p. 5)

Informal contact includes conversations with officers on patrol or interactions with officers at community meetings and activities. Formal contact includes phoning the police requesting service and officer/citizen contact while conducting an investigation. One major difference between formal and informal contact is that community members are interacting with officers in a proactive setting (informal) versus a reactive role (formal).

Even with all the programs the CPS has implemented in the community, survey results from the *2003 Citizen Survey* (Arrizza, 2004) indicate that only 78% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agree “that the CPS consults with Calgarians about policing” (p. 8). One quarter of the citizens polled believe that the CPS could do a better job consulting them about policing in Calgary. The relationship between the police and community members centres on the notion that both groups consult each other. Maxson et al. (2003) state that the public’s opinion of police performance is important for several reasons: “public confidence in police can lead to cooperation that is needed for effective policing...[and] exchange of information fosters police–community partnerships that can be tailored to specific community needs” (p. 10). Both reasons are vital to the success of a police–community relationship.

There are many benefits to the CPS and to the citizens it serves in developing a great working relationship. Members of society play an integral role in the joint effort to fight crime, and only through the inclusion of these citizens can the CPS make Calgary a safer place. The relationship between the police and the community is an on-going, evolving venture that has many rewards.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss the research methods utilized in this study, as well as the data gathering tools. The final section will talk about how the survey was conducted and the options that were considered prior to selecting the methods employed in this study.

Research Methods

Research was conducted to determine the viability of the VDOR proposal. Two research questions were devised surrounding the VDOR project:

1. What type of criminal reports could the Calgary Police Service accept online?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of allowing victims to report a crime online?

Prior to determining the best research method to gather the necessary information, the following objectives were created:

1. To compile a list of all types of calls for service the CPS receives.
2. To determine, from CPS sworn members, the types of calls for service that could be handled via an online reporting system versus sending a car crew to the scene. Their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of such a system would also be sought.
3. To determine from members of the CPS Communications Section the types of calls for service that could be handled via an online reporting system. They would also be asked to record their thoughts on the pros and cons of such a system.
4. To determine from members of the RPU the types of calls for service that could be handled via an online reporting system, and what the advantages versus the disadvantages would be.

“Methodology is the gathering of data and the making sense of it in an orderly way, as well as the study of methods” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 63). Stringer (1999) describes research as a “systematic and rigorous inquiry or investigation that enables people to understand the nature of problematic events or phenomena” (p. 5). Kirby and McKenna add that “the selection of the method is a critical aspect of researching and is usually based on what kind of information is sought, from whom and under what circumstances” (1989, p. 63). The information sought for the VDOR project was objective versus subjective, and the participants were members of the CPS who would be affected by VDOR. They are best suited, based on their daily workload, to determine the answers to the questions posed for this research.

What kind of research methodology is best suited to obtain the answers for this project? After careful consideration of qualitative and quantitative research methods, I decided to utilize the latter. A quantitative approach is defined as “research methods that emphasize numerical precision; a detached, aloof stance on the researcher’s part (i.e., the avoidance of overidentification)” (Palys, 1997, p. 423). The “ideal of detachment is also consistent with the quantitative preference for aggregated data, which compile responses from many persons so that general trends or patterns across people are made visual” (Palys, 1997, p. 15). With this in mind, a statistical response was deemed best to gather the necessary data for the research project, and thus the decision to use a quantitative approach.

Data Gathering Tools

A short questionnaire (see Appendix A) was constructed to gather the necessary information from members of the CPS. Participants were asked to check one of three boxes (yes, no, or not sure) to the question, “Which of the following calls for service could be

completed using the Victim Direct Online Reporting System?” Thirty-seven criminal code offences were selected in nine different categories. Each was chosen to make participants think about the type of information and evidence they gather at a complaint and whether that same information could be obtained online from a victim. Then, the participant was to check off the appropriate box. Two other questions were asked of each participant:

1. What do you believe are the advantages of an online reporting system?
2. What do you believe are the disadvantages of an online reporting system?

These were asked so the participants could offer their opinion of the pros and cons of allowing a victim to report online. A demographics section was placed on the last page to analyze trends in gender, age, and years of service. Finally, a section for comments was placed in the survey for participants to clarify their responses.

The participants were selected from three diverse groups of CPS members: the Communications Section, the VDVE Unit, and sworn members. All three groups have direct knowledge of, and are affected by, the current reporting systems within the CPS.

Communications Section personnel handle the first line of response for calls of service.

These civilian members establish the necessary criteria to classify the complaint and whether a car crew should be dispatched to the scene or a member of the VDVE unit should take a report over the phone. Communications Section personnel were chosen to participate due to their specialized training and years of experience in classifying complaints.

Communications Section personnel do not dispatch a car crew to the scene if the complaint is minor in nature. Instead they send the victim's name and telephone number to the VDVE unit. These civilian members were asked to participate in the survey because, after phoning the victim to record the complaint directly onto the computer, they classify each one

into various types of offences. Occasionally, during the conversation with a victim, new information comes to light that changes the nature of the complaint. For example, a member of the VDVE unit can take a report of a theft from a detached garage, but if it is determined by the VDVE member that the garage is attached to the house, the complaint becomes a house break and enter. These complaints are then rerouted back to Communications to have an officer dispatched to the victim's home to file the report.

Finally, sworn members working the street who are dispatched to various types of complaints were asked to partake in the survey. Sergeants and constables are directly involved in responding to complaints, some of which could possibly be taken online. Their knowledge and experience of attending countless scenes made them obvious candidates to participate in the survey. Members from districts encompassing all four quadrants of the city of Calgary were selected to reply to the questionnaire.

Members from all five areas of the Service who were asked to participate in the survey responded. The Communications Section personnel returned 36 of the 100 surveys (36%), the VDVE Unit members completed 7 of 15 (46.6%), District 2 filled out 15 of 50 (30%), District 4 sent back 14 of 50 (28%), while District 7 filled out 33 of 60 (55%).

Data correlated from the 102 returned surveys were analyzed using the chi-square method to determine the validity of the variances of responses. Chi-square is defined as "a statistical test often used for analyzing categorical data" (Howell, 1995, p. 358). This method was chosen to determine if there were significantly more, or fewer, responses in favour of allowing a citizen to report each crime online, or "if the frequencies just represented a chance deviation from the 50:50 split" (Howell, 1995, p. 357). In a yes or no response survey there is

a 50:50 chance of either answer being selected. The chi-square test analyzes the data to determine which results lie outside the odds of chance. The formula used in chi-square is

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

where O = observed frequency in each category and E = expected frequency in each category.

The responses to the two questions (“What do you believe are the advantages of an online reporting system?” and “What do you believe are the disadvantages of an online reporting system?”) were correlated and analyzed for common themes among groups.

Study Conduct

The steps involved in administering the survey were routine. To ensure the accuracy and content of the survey, two officers were asked to complete it and critique it for grammar, substance, and to determine the length of time required to read and complete both the consent form and the questionnaire. They returned the completed paperwork in less than 10 minutes with minor grammatical changes.

Each group’s involvement was secured in a different manner. For the Communications Section, I discussed the survey in a supervisors’ meeting, where the consent form (see Appendix B) and the questionnaire were reviewed in detail. Specific instructions were issued that each participant’s involvement was strictly voluntary and a consent form had to be signed before completing the survey. Further directions were given that the consent form and questionnaire were not to be attached to each other to prevent correlation of the two documents. Two boxes were placed on the receptionist’s desk to collect completed forms. These were then gathered and placed in a locked filing cabinet in my office.

The supervisor of the VDVE unit was informed of the same issues as the Communications Section staff. She gathered the completed forms in two separate envelopes and then sent them through the internal mail system. These were then placed in a locked filing cabinet in my office.

Staff Sergeants in Districts 2, 4, and 7 were briefed on the questionnaires in the same manner as the supervisors in the first two groups. These officers were chosen over team sergeants because the latter have direct supervision over the constables who were asked to complete the survey. Staff Sergeants are once removed from the constables in the para-military organization of the CPS, and thus are viewed as having less direct influence on their day-to-day work environment. I also asked the Staff Sergeants to be cognizant of the rank structure as they are asking sergeants and constables (those inferior in rank) to complete the survey. They were also advised that participation in this survey was strictly voluntary.

The results of each survey were tallied by work area and then compared to determine similarities and differences among the three groups who have hands-on experience with the current report writing process. (Please see Appendix C for survey results.)

Options Considered

Various options were considered in order to select the best method of receiving completed surveys. My knowledge of participants' attitudes towards surveys and the amount of other paperwork members have to deal with at the commencement of their shift were taken into consideration. Alternative methods of receiving surveys and reasons why they were not utilized are discussed below.

1. Internal mail. The CPS has an internal mail system that has a turnaround time of one day. Although timely, the printing of 2000 consent forms and 2000 (three-page)

- questionnaires, placement into 2000 envelopes, and attachment of 2000 self-addressed, return envelopes was deemed too time consuming and costly. Another significant reason why this method was not used was the impersonal approach to asking members to complete the survey.
2. E-mailing the survey internally within the CPS. This method would be more cost efficient and timelier than the internal mail system, but only computer literate members would actually receive the questionnaire. Those officers who do not know how to use e-mail or who do but do not check their e-mail messages regularly would not respond to the questionnaire. It could be argued that the results from completed surveys would be skewed in favour of computer literate members.
 3. Attending parades. I gave consideration to attending parades—the start of shifts where the sergeant updates his or her team with information regarding crime trends, wanted criminals, etc.—to explain the VDOR project, consent form, and questionnaire. However, there are eight districts with eight teams per district, with four to six different shift start times per day (from 6:00 in the morning to 9:00 in the evening), seven days a week. That equates to 64 parades and 64 explanations of VDOR and extensive travel time between districts. This was not a practical solution.
 4. District Commander's Meetings. The advantage to attending a District Commander's Meeting was that I would only need to explain the project once. The disadvantage was that each commander would have to inform his or her Staff Sergeants, who would assign the questionnaire to their respected sergeants, who would then ask the constables working for them to complete the consent form and questionnaire. There were too many middlemen in this equation and more chances of misunderstandings

about the project.

I also considered other data gathering tools and whether to expand the scope of the project. My thoughts and reasons for not proceeding with other methods are summarized below.

2. Focus groups. Focus groups with members of the community (seniors groups, teen groups, business groups, people with disabilities) would have helped to determine if they would utilize an online reporting system if the CPS were to offer VDOR as an alternative method of reporting a crime. Time was a factor in this study, however, and this limitation will be discussed further in chapter 5.
3. VDOR affecting members' employment. Thought was given to the possibility that some participants in both the Communications Section and RPU may view an online reporting system as detrimental to their employment and thus may be biased in their responses. This was discussed with the RPU supervisor. She perceives her unit as being the receiver of all online reports, perusing them for accuracy and thoroughness, and contacting victims with case numbers. This would enlist the current human resources strength of the unit. VDVE workers were not consulted with this possibility.
4. Other police agencies. I considered sending my survey to other police agencies in Western Canada. That option will be discussed further in chapter 5, Future Research section.

As a result of analyzing these options, I decided to discuss the project, including the consent form and questionnaire, with the direct supervisors in each of the areas that are affected by the current method of receiving information for crime reports. I felt that they

would pass on the most accurate information about the project, and therefore, that more officers would be interested in completing the survey.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

Study Findings From Survey Information

The analysis of the survey results will be presented in three segments: statistical data from answers to whether a victim should be allowed to report each offence electronically (Part One – Offence Results); the retort to two questions regarding participants’ opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of an online reporting system (Part Two – Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Reporting); and finally, the responses recorded in the comments portion of the survey (Part Three – Comments). Chi-square formulae were used to determine whether the results were greater than random chance results.

Part One – Offence Responses

Five work areas were surveyed. Table 2 reveals the number of surveys sent to each work area, the number of completed surveys from each area, and the percentage of members who responded.

Table 2. Percentage of Responses by Work Location

Location	No. of Surveys Sent	No. of Surveys Returned	% of Surveys Returned
Communications	100	36	36.0%
RPU	15	7	46.6%
District 2	50	15	30.0%
District 4	50	14	28.0%
District 7	60	33	55.0%
Totals	275	105	38.2%

The number of questionnaires sent to each work location was based on how many the supervisors thought their people would return completed. There are approximately 130 people in Communications, only 15 members in RPU, and 80-90 in each of the three districts. Of the 275 surveys sent to the different work areas, 105 were completed and returned, a 38.2% return rate. Of particular note is the 55.0% return rate for District 7, but only a 28.0-30.0% return rate for each of the other two districts. The Staff Sergeants in District 7 attended the parades at the start of every shift, explained the project to the participants, and fielded questions before the surveys were completed. In Districts 2 and 4, the Staff Sergeant discussed the project with the team sergeants, who later spoke with participants. Thus, the respondents were receiving third-hand information. This discrepancy did not come to light until all questionnaires were returned, and may be a reason for the lower return rate.

Demographic Results

There were three demographic portions of the VDOR survey: age, gender, and years of service. The completed surveys were gathered and recorded in five different work areas, although the data are presented comparing just civilian and sworn members. This adds a fourth demographic group.

Age: Findings.

The age category was divided into three blocks of years to coincide with the definitions of three generational groupings: war babies (those born prior to or during the Second World War), Baby Boomers (1945-1965), and Generation Xers (1966-1985). Due to the low number of war baby participants (2), which equaled 1.9% of the participants, their

responses will not be compared to the other two groups. Baby Boomers comprised 43.7% (n = 45) of the respondents, while Generation Xers totaled 54.4% (n = 56).

Both age groups' responses were very similar for a majority of offences. If one group was adamantly against allowing a certain crime to be reported online, so was the other group. There were exceptions to this rule: When the two generations differed in opinions, Xers were always more willing than Baby Boomers in agreeing to allow victims to report online. Table 3 shows the percentage differences between the two age categories for several offences.

Table 3. Percentage of Yes Votes by Age Category

Offence	Baby Boomers	Generation Xers
Bigamy	22.2%	57.1%
Obtain Credit by False Pretenses	26.6%	51.8%
Forgery	20.0%	44.6%
Obtain Food/Lodging by Fraud	38.6%	64.3%
Defraud Person – Under \$5,000	36.4%	55.4%
Utter, Convey Threat to Proper or Animal	29.5%	53.6%

In each of the above six offence categories, approximately half of the Generation Xers agreed to allow online reporting. For that group, the offence of Obtaining Food/Lodging by Fraud was the highest, at 64.3%, while Forgery was lowest, at 44.6%. The percentages of Baby Boomer “yes” responses were about half that of the Xer’s group, with the largest difference in the bigamy offence.

Age: Conclusions.

For a majority of offences, both the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers were in agreement as to whether a crime was reportable electronically. Although both groups gave similar responses as to which types of crime victims could report electronically, Xers were twice as willing than Baby Boomers to say yes to online reporting of certain crimes.

Gender: Findings.

There were 41.7% female participants (n= 43) and 58.3% (n= 60) males. Table 4 shows the breakdown of civilian versus sworn members in both genders. All respondents in the Communications Section and RPU are civilian staff, and all the participants in the districts are sworn members.

Table 4. Gender in Work Area

Work Area	No. of Respondents	Female	Male	Did Not Answer
Communications	36	26	8	2
RPU	7	7	0	0
District 2	15	2	13	0
District 4	14	0	14	0
District 7	33	8	25	0
Totals	105	43	60	2

Of the 43 civilian members who responded, 8 were male. Conversely, of the 62 sworn participants, only 10 were female. Table 5 shows a breakdown of the yes responses according to gender.

Table 5. Percentage of Yes Votes by Gender

Offence	% Yes – Female	% Yes – Male
Criminal Harassment/Stalking	6.9%	23.3%
Bigamy	20.9%	56.6%
Break & Enter – Shop With Intent	4.6%	26.7%
Possession of Stolen Property Under	11.6%	53.3%
False Pretenses Under \$5,000	24.2%	55.0%
Obtain Credit by False Pretenses	16.2%	56.7%
Forgery	20.9%	41.7%
Defraud Person – Under \$5,000	30.9%	56.7%
Mischief to Property Under \$5,000	30.9%	50.0%
Indecent Telephone Calls	52.4%	80.0%
Utter, Convey Threat to Person	16.7%	40.0%
Utter, Convey Threat to Property/Animal	26.2%	53.3%

Gender: Conclusions.

1. A majority of female respondents either work in Communications or RPU, while more males work in the districts.
2. Both genders were in agreement that some offences are not to be submitted electronically.
3. Males answered “yes” in greater numbers in every offence category.
4. For those who answered “no,” there is no gender difference, but those who said “yes” are more likely to be male. An example is the offence of bigamy. Using chi-square

(χ^2) statistical formula, the result is ($\chi^2(2) = 13.15, p = 0.001$). While 30 of the 43 females and 23 of the 60 male participants said “no,” there were 9 females and 34 males who said “yes.”

Because of the correlation of gender with location of work, the higher rate of yes responses among men may be associated as much with location of work as with gender.

Years of service: Findings.

Members were asked how long they have been a CPS member, sworn or civilian.

Table 6 indicates the collective responses.

Table 6. Years of Service

Years of Service	Percentage of Respondents
Less than 5	44.7%
6 - 10	15.5%
11 - 15	11.7%
16 - 20	15.5%
More than 20	12.6%

The number of participants with less than 5 years service (44.7%) was almost half of the total respondents. Each of the other groupings was between 11.7% and 15.5%. There were 60.2% of the participants with 10 years of service or less and 39.8% with more than 10 years. This more closely ties in with the two age categories, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. Baby Boomers are between 38 and 58 years of age and most have more than 10 years of service, while Xers are between 18 and 37 years of age and most have less than 10 years

of experience. Table 7 indicates the number of “yes” responses according to number of years of service.

Table 7. Number of “Yes” Responses According to Years of Service

Offence	Less Than 10 Years Service (n=)	More Than 10 Years Service (n=)
Abduction Without Custody Order	11	1
Harassment/Stalking	15	2
Arson – By Negligence	13	4
Bigamy	37	8
Break & Enter Commit– House	7	2
False Pretenses Under \$5,000	26	15
False Pretenses Over \$5,000	14	5
Obtain Credit by False Pretenses	30	11
Forgery	26	7
Obtain Food/Lodging by Fraud/Meal Fraud	37	16
Defraud Person Over \$5,000	18	6
Defraud Person Under \$5,000	32	15
Render Property Dangerous, Useless, Inoperative or Ineffective	28	15

Years of service: Conclusions.

1. With slightly more than half (55.3%) the participants possessing more than five years on the job, their level of expertise and experience would have some bearing on their

- answers. More years of service equates to handling more calls for service, thus gaining more experience and expertise.
2. In 35 of the 37 offences, members with less than 10 years service were more likely to say “yes” than members with more than 10 years service. Both groups had the same number of “yes” responses to the Mischief to Act, Omits to Act, or Causing Danger to Life offences.
 3. The only offence where the more senior members favoured online reporting was in the Mischief Causing Danger to Life category. Two sworn members, both with more than 20 years of service and working in the same district, were the only ones to say “yes.” All other respondents, sworn and civilian, said “no.” This interesting yet puzzling response may be attributed to their years of experience attending complaints of this kind. Offences of Mischief Causing Danger to Life are extremely rare; thus, many officers have never investigated this type of complaint. The words “danger to life” have serious connotations and may explain why other respondents said no to an online report. The two senior veterans who have been around the block may have realized these offences often turn out to be minor in nature.
 4. In a majority of offences, there were more “yes” votes in the less than five years service category than all the “yes” votes in the more than five years of service categories added together. Younger officers often have less police experience, yet are more conversant with computer technology than senior members. As a whole, Xers’ comfort levels using computers is greater than members of the Baby Boomer generation, and this may explain why the less experienced officers are more willing to allow victims to report a crime electronically.

Civilian versus sworn members: Findings.

There were 43 civilian and 62 sworn member respondents. Table 8 outlines the work area for each participant.

Table 8. Work Locations and Number of Civilian and Sworn Members

Work Location	Type of Member	Number	Total Per Member Type
Communications Section	Civilian	36	
Records Processing Unit	Civilian	7	43
District 2	Sworn	15	
District 4	Sworn	14	
District 7	Sworn	33	62

All 105 respondents work in areas of the CPS that deal directly with the current method of receiving and recording crime reports. All civilian staff members work in either the Communications Section or RPU and talk to victims on the telephone to receive their information. Some staff in Communications and all staff in RPU complete crime reports.

All sworn members work in either District 2, 4, or 7. These officers attend scenes, talk to victims and witnesses, conduct neighbourhood inquiries, and then phone in their report. Their knowledge base includes awareness of the importance of a scene examination to determine if there is potential evidence to support the victim's allegations. This knowledge and experience might affect their responses to a VDOR system, as they should have a better understanding of the crime scenes at which they gather evidence as opposed to the ones they don't. Civilian staff members were more likely not to support online reporting than sworn

members. In 9 of the offence categories, not one of the 43 civilian respondents elected to agree to online reporting of the crime. There were five other offences with only one participant in favour. Sworn members had varying degrees of support in each offence.

These statistics clearly indicate an overwhelming negative response by civilian staff members towards online reporting of certain crimes. These responses reconfirm the gender findings that males are more willing to allow electronic reporting. In addition, the more significant finding is the willingness of sworn members to support online reporting. Table 9 shows the offences to which civilian participants gave zero or one “yes” response, and compares them with responses from sworn members.

Civilian versus sworn members: Conclusions.

1. Civilian staff members made approximately 4 out every 10 responses.
2. From a work location perspective, sworn members are more likely to support an online reporting system than civilian staff.

Table 9. Zero or One “Yes” Response by Civilian Participants Compared to Sworn Members

Offence	Civilian “Yes” Response (n=)	Sworn Member “Yes” Response (n=)
Arson – Set Fire Willfully	0	5
Arson – Set Fire to Personal Property	0	5
Arson – To Own Property	0	5
Arson – For Fraudulent Purposes	0	6
Arson – By Negligence	0	17
Break & Enter – Dwelling House	0	9
Break & Enter With Intent – Commercial	0	18
Mischief Causing Danger to Life	0	2
Mischief To Act, Omits to Act or Causing Danger to Life	0	4
Abduction Contravening Custody Order	1	11
Abduction Without Custody Order	1	11
Break & Enter With Intent – Dwelling	1	13
Break & Enter – Commit – Commercial	1	11
Break Out – Commit – Commercial	1	14

Responses to Certain Offences

“Yes” responses: Findings and conclusions.

There was not an overwhelming response of “yes” to any offence; however, there were a number of offences where the “yes” vote was significantly higher than the “no” vote.

Table 10 shows the top five offences for which respondents were decidedly in favour of allowing that crime to be reported online.

Table 10. Top Five Online Reportable Offences

Offence	Percentage of "Yes" Responses
Mischief to property Under \$5,000	77.9%
Theft Under \$5,000	76.0%
Theft From Mail	69.2%
Harassing Telephone Calls	68.3%
Indecent Telephone Calls	67.3%

The percentage of the "yes" votes in each of these categories clearly indicates that more than two-thirds of respondents believe these crimes could be reported electronically. In conclusion, there is stronger support allowing electronic reporting of minor crimes.

"No" responses: Findings and conclusions.

There were a number of offences that respondents clearly stated should not be reporting online. Table 11 indicates offences with a strong "no" vote.

Table 11. Top Non-Reportable Online Offences

Offence	Percentage of “No” Responses
Abduction Contravening Custody Order	85.7%
Abduction Without Custody Order	86.7%
Criminal Harassment/Stalking	81.9%
Arson – Set Fire Wilfully	93.3%
Arson – Set Fire to Personal Property	93.3%
Arson – To Own Property	93.3%
Arson – For Fraudulent Purposes	92.4%
Arson – By Negligence	81.0%
Break & Enter Commit – Dwelling House	91.4%
Break & Enter Intent – Dwelling House	85.7%
Break & Enter Commit – Shop or Commercial	87.6%
Break Out Commit – Shop or Commercial	84.8%
Possession of Stolen Property	83.8%
Mischief Causing Danger to Life	98.1%
Mischief to Act, Omits to Act, or Causing Danger to Life	93.3%

At least four of every five respondents state that these offences are not reportable electronically. The common thread throughout these offences is the serious nature of the crime and potential effects on victims. All abduction offences, arson crimes, and break and enter offences (except the category of Break and Enter on Other Premises) were included by the no voters. The highest categories include sections where life could be endangered

(Mischief Causing Danger to Life and Mischief to Act, Omits to Act, or Causing Danger to Life) followed closely by some arson categories. Surprisingly, responses to the Break and Enter and Commit to a Dwelling House category placed lower in percentage. The Criminal Code of Canada states “everyone who breaks and enters a place...in relation to a dwelling-house [is guilty] of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for life” (as cited by Greenspan, 2003, p. 628).

Life imprisonment is also the harshest penalty For Mischief Causing Danger to Life, but the maximum punishment for Mischief to Act, Omits to Act, or Causing Danger to Life is five years. Arson offences are punishable by 14 years in prison and abduction offences are 10. Offences of Criminal Harassment/Stalking are punishable by a maximum of five years. The harsher sentences reflect the serious nature of the crime and potential effects on victims, and are associated with higher rates of “no” answers.

In conclusion,

1. The more serious crimes of Abduction, Arson, and Break and Enter of a Dwelling House or Commercial Premise are not offences that should be reported online.
2. Any mischief section involving endangerment of life is also not recommended for reporting electronically.
3. The severity of the punishment by the Criminal Code of Canada for the above listed offences appears to correlate directly with respondents’ reluctance to consent to the reporting of the offence online.

Inconclusive results: Findings and conclusions.

While there were certain offences that members believe are reportable online and other types of offences that definitely should not be allowed, there were many crimes where

the yes and no responses were evenly matched. Bigamy, most of the fraud section, a mischief section, and threats to property or animals are offences that some participant groups are mixed as to whether the offences could be electronically reported. Table 12 highlights the inconclusive results.

Table 12. Table of Inconclusive Results

Offence	% of “Yes” Responses	% of “No” Responses
Bigamy	41.0%	52.4%
Obtain Food or Lodging by Fraud/Meal Fraud	51.9%	44.2%
Defraud Person Under \$5,000	45.2%	51.9%
Render Property Dangerous, Useless, Inoperative or Ineffective	41.3%	49.0%
Utter, Convey, Cause Threat to Property or Animal	42.3%	53.8%

The difference in the percentages of yes and no answers in these five categories is less than $\pm 6\%$. The percentage for each offence does not add up to 100% due to the number of participants who were undecided. None of the above listed offences would be classified as a major offence.

Two main conclusions can be reached based on the inconclusive results:

1. Besides the above listed offences, there are a number of offences that garnered more than one-third of the “yes” replies: Possession of Stolen Property Under \$5,000

- (35.2%), False Pretenses Under \$5,000 (39.0%), and Obtain Credit by False Pretense or False Statement (39.0%). Further study and consultation is required to determine if these offences should be included in a VDOR system.
2. None of offences listed as inconclusive involve the possibility of immediate harm to anyone and are therefore classified as minor offences.

Offences under and over \$5,000: Findings and conclusions.

Ten offences in the questionnaire have either an over or under \$5,000 value attached. The dollar values are dictated by the lawmakers and are listed in the Criminal Code of Canada. Table 13 indicates the various under and over \$5,000 offences and the percentage of “yes” responses.

Table 13. Differences of “Yes” Responses in Under and Over \$5,000 Offences

Offence	Under \$5,000 (%)	Over \$5,000 (%)
Possession of Stolen Property	35.2%	15.2%
False Pretenses	39.0%	18.1%
Defraud Person	45.2%	23.1%
Mischief to Property	77.9%	23.1%
Theft	76.0%	23.1%

The statement voiced by the participants in every over/under offence is that the dollar value associated with the crime clearly determines their decision to allow or not allow electronic reporting. For each offence under \$5,000, respondents more than doubled their “yes” responses compared to offences involving a value of over \$5,000. To commit each of

the offences, the criterion is identical for both under and over \$5,000, and the only difference is the value of the item stolen. Theoretically, theft of an item valued at \$4,999 is classified as theft under \$5,000 and the victim could report it online according to the survey results, but if the value of the same stolen item was \$2 more, it would be classified as theft over \$5,000 and would not be reportable online.

A number of offences conclusions can be drawn from this data:

1. The value of the item involved in the fraud or theft is important in determining whether a victim can file a report electronically.
2. The younger sworn members and those with fewer years of service with the CPS were more willing to allow reporting these offences online than the older sworn members and those with more than 10 years of service.

Members from all work locations were consistent in their views that if the offence was classified in the Under \$5,000 category, they would more willing to support reporting it electronically.

Offence Responses: Overall Study Recommendations

1. Most participants clearly support victims of certain minor offences reporting the offence electronically.
2. The more serious offences should not be included in a VDOR system.
3. Responses were inconclusive for a number of offences and focus groups should be formed to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of making them reportable online. These groups should review the reasons why the CPS receives information for crime reports over the phone and why officers are dispatched to scenes. The role and responsibilities of each work area regarding report-taking should be examined to

- make further determinations as to which of the inconclusive responses could be reported.
4. It is recommended that the responses from this survey be compared to offences other police agencies allow online. This may help the decision-making process in #3 above.
 5. Generation Xers are more willing to work with the VDOR system than Baby Boomers. A VDOR system is more likely to be successful now than any time in the past, because there are more Generation Xers in the workplace and the CPS continues to hire younger sworn members and civilian staff, all of whom are from Generation X.
 6. Sworn members are also more willing to adapt to a VDOR system than civilian staff. Members from each work area that participated in the online survey should be included in the planning and implementation stages to ensure a smooth and successful transition. Their knowledge of the current report handling method is beneficial to starting an online reporting system.

Part Two – Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Reporting

Two questions in the questionnaire required written responses: “What do you believe are the advantages of an online reporting system?” and “What do you believe are the disadvantages of an online reporting system?” The answers are clustered into themes that emerged from all work areas.

The advantages include time and convenience for victims, time and human resources savings for the CPS, and other benefits for both groups. Common disadvantages involve fraudulent reporting, empathy or customer service, accurate reporting, computer issues, and other related issues.

*Advantages of Online Reporting: Findings and Conclusions**Advantages for victims: Findings.*

1. Time – The issue of victims’ time was stated as a major benefit for online reporting. A VDOR system would reduce callers’ waiting times on the phone, either with Communications staff or an RPU member. The electronic reporting system would also help hurry the process of reporting many minor crimes that have no suspects and would enable victims to report minor occurrences and obtain case numbers immediately. The victim chooses the time to report the occurrence, either at work or at home, day or night, seven days a week.
2. Convenience – Convenience for victims reporting electronically was given as another benefit for this project. Victims would not have to travel to a district office or COPS station to report a crime. The Internet is open every hour of the day, making it extremely convenient for victims to use whenever they decide to report the crime.
3. Greater Options – VDOR is another method of allowing victims to report crime, in addition to phoning the Communications Section and waiting for a member of RPU to call back within 72 hours, or attending the nearest district office or COPS station if they know where they are located. VDOR offers another option for victims to use.
4. Easier to Report – The last benefit involves the ease of reporting. For computer literate individuals, completing a report online by filling in the blanks and writing a narrative of the event including the particulars of who, what, why, when, and where would be fairly easy. The victim would be the person who decides if he or she would report electronically, so there is no anticipated requirement for a phone-in help line.

Other interesting insights about VDOR by participants include:

- Victims could gain a sense of control over their report, thus empowering them. Victims would be in charge of the content and wording of their reports, as well as the timing of filing the report. Victims could write a draft copy of the narrative portion and rework it before submitting the final copy online. Timing is important to victims, as they could complete the online report in segments before sending to the CPS.
- The Internet runs 24/7. The CPS is also open 24/7, but an officer will not be knocking on a victim's door in the early hours of the morning to talk to a victim of a minor crime.
- People who do not wish to contact police by phone or in person may report online. There are victims who would prefer not to have an officer attend their residence or place of employment to file a complaint. Nosey neighbours and fellow office workers tend to ask questions when the police are seen in the area. An online system would satisfy victims' needs for privacy while the CPS would still receive the complaint.
- Victims might report crimes online that they might not normally otherwise. Some victims believe that the crime is too trivial in nature to bother the police and that the police have better things to do, so they don't file a complaint. VDOR allows for victims to report any crime without "bothering" the police.
- Customer service efficiency would be increased. The CPS prides itself on its customer service, and any program that enhances or builds on the relationship with the citizens of Calgary is always adopted. Participants in the survey stated that electronic filing of reports by victims would increase our customer service.

Advantages for victims: Conclusions.

1. Time and convenience for the victim are major benefits to an online reporting system. They can report an incident when they are ready and have the time to do so, and from the convenience of their home or office.
2. Only victims who are computer literate will use an electronic form of reporting. The knowledge they have of computers, online forms, and e-mail will enable them to work at their own speed and comfort level completing the report.

Advantages for CPS: Findings.

1. Time – Many respondents stated that an online reporting system would save CPS members' time. Besides answering dispatched calls for service, officers are required to complete community projects. There would be more time for them to attend to these other duties. VDOR would also allow district officers to attend higher priority calls in a more timely fashion, as they would not be at the scene of a crime reportable online or spending time phoning in a report.
2. Human Resources – Members in Communications, RPU, and officers working the street would have reduced workloads if a VDOR system were implemented. Communications Section staff would receive fewer calls for service, RPU members would take fewer reports over the phone, and officers working the street would be dispatched to fewer complaints, thus reducing the number of calls for direct police assistance. The victim writes the original report, including listing all the property that was stolen or damaged by the culprit(s). This would free up human resources and give officers more time to investigate cases, deal with more urgent calls, and fulfill other police duties.

3. Efficiency – An electronic reporting system would allow for more efficient use of police resources. With fewer victims phoning Communications Section staff and fewer RPU staff completing reports over the phone, the CPS could utilize these resources on other projects. RPU members could approve and correspond with incoming online reports and issue case numbers to victims who send in properly completed reports.
4. Cost Savings – Many participants stated that an electronic system would save money for the CPS, but not one of them expanded on the concept. Assumptions can be made that if there are fewer CPS employees there would be a financial savings, but a VDOR system should not eliminate employment opportunities for current staff or members. The implementation of an online reporting system and the time required to educate the public that the CPS is offering an alternative method of reporting crime could take months or years. In that time, the calls for service will also increase and staff in all areas will be required to fulfill functions and duties that an online reporting system cannot achieve.
5. Other CPS Benefits – Other ideas and concepts surfaced in the advantages to the CPS portion of the survey, including
 - creating new jobs in the CPS. This is assuming that RPU becomes the conduit for the online reports. If VDOR becomes popular, then more staff will be required to review online reports and send case numbers back to victims; otherwise there will be no need to create new jobs. Current workers' job responsibilities will be altered to include the online reporting system

- enhancing gathering of statistics for CPS. The CPS has no way to determine how many crimes are unreported. More victims might come forward and report using an online system if they could report electronically.
- improving the relationship between police and the public. The CPS enjoys a great working relationship with the citizens of the city and by offering another way to report crime, a few survey participants believe it would enhance that relationship.
- allowing for quicker serial number entry on the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). Most stereo and audio/visual equipment have individual serial numbers that can be matched to a victim. The faster the victim reports the serial numbers of stolen items to the CPS, the sooner they can be placed on the CPIC. If an officer locates the item and runs the number on CPIC, he or she will get a match and determine the rightful owner of the property.
- using victims' reports as witness statements for court purposes. All victims are currently required to complete a written witness statement and most do that while the officer completes the police report. If the prosecutor were in agreement, the victim could use the electronic report as his or her witness statement in court.
- enabling more accurate reporting. Victims could take their time to articulate responses. Most people write draft copies of reports and rework them to make them sound just right. Victims could do this online, taking their time, and include more detail in their reports.
- improving efficiency for CPS receiving reports. Officers phone in reports and are immediately placed on the server, awaiting their supervisor's approval. There are many supervisors, all of whom have varying expectations concerning reports. All

VDOR reports would be approved by a few RPU members, thus increasing the efficiency of receiving and reviewing reports.

- increasing the number of complete reports. The online form would be constructed with mandatory fields that must be completed before the victim could send the report to RPU. Since all questions could be asked online every time, this would eliminate reports that have information missing.

Advantages for CPS: Conclusions.

1. Utilizing an online reporting system will save CPS members' time that could be allotted to other policing duties. District officers would attend fewer calls for service, depending on the type of complaints victims can report online.
2. Human resources should remain the same, but the specific job descriptions of the RPU could be altered to include becoming the conduit for all electronic reports. The number of personnel in the unit should remain the same, as some of the reports that they now receive over the phone would be accepted online.
3. As more victims become familiar with VDOR, there would be fewer phone calls to the Communications Section, thus reducing staff workload.
4. An online reporting system would give a victim the choice of how to report the crime, thus improving the relationship between citizens and the CPS.
5. Reports could be more thorough, with mandatory fields having to be filled out prior to allowing a report to be submitted.

Disadvantages of Online Reporting: Findings

1. The most common theme amongst the list of disadvantages of allowing an electronic reporting system was fraud. Members from all five work areas indicated that the

- online reporting system would be used fraudulently, which could add to the CPS workload. The perception of VDOR is that it is faceless. Participants believed that it would be easier for people to fabricate a fraudulent story over the Internet versus talking face-to-face with a police officer or even while filing a report with an RPU member on the phone.
2. A second disadvantage involves a perceived decreased level of customer service. Some participants believe that victims will see VDOR as a way of CPS members to avoid work. This system could be viewed by the public or victims as another way of showing the police don't care (lack of police response) or that they at least lack interest. No police response was seen by some respondents as impersonal and robotic, and could negatively affect the public's perception of police service.
 3. Empathy was another concern with an online reporting system. Computers can't empathize with victims, nor offer any compassion, and with no direct contact with CPS members while using VDOR, victims cannot ask questions or get advice in completing the forms.
 4. Respondents were concerned with the accuracy of information in online reports. Others believed insufficient data will be collected as victims will not complete the forms properly or include enough detail. To combat this concern, some participants stated officers would need to verify the content and completeness of reports.
 5. Another concern raised by some members dealt with computers and technology. Some victims do not have access to a computer, but with two-thirds of Calgarians having access to the Internet, an online reporting system is an alternative method of filing a police report. Security and confidentiality were issues raised surrounding

- computers, as well as transmitting personal data over the Internet. Hackers are known to break into computer systems and steal information. Some other responses included the victim's level of comfort using computers and hesitation giving personal information over the Internet. Two interesting responses were a) lost reports due to computer problems and b) an online system that would be a target for cyber-terrorism.
6. Investigative issues were listed as possible disadvantages to adopting an electronic reporting system. Certain crimes should be investigated for evidence, fingerprints, and suspects. Some respondents believe an online system could reduce the collection of evidence and thus increase the possibility of an improper or incomplete investigation. Others believe VDOR can't be used for any crime with a suspect. There were a number of "no" responses in the questionnaire that had writing in the margins stating that their answer would be "yes" if there were no suspects. As there was no method for respondents to incorporate different answers to the same question, they wrote comments in the margins.
 7. The benefit of talking to a victim, whether in person or on the phone, is eliminated with a VDOR system. With the current method of reporting, members chat with victims and often glean more information pertaining to the crime. Victims might be more willing to offer suspects' names verbally, versus putting a name in writing using VDOR. And some stated that investigators would be unable to observe victims' actions (body language) if they used an online reporting system.
 8. Frivolous complaints were an issue for a member of one of the districts. This member believes the number of minor complaints would increase.

9. The increase of upfront costs to administer the VDOR project was mentioned. It is uncertain if this member realized that the RPU staff would be responsible for VDOR, or rather if he or she believed there would be a surplus of online reports requiring more staff to manage the increased workload.

Disadvantages of Online Reporting: Conclusions

1. Fraudulent reporting might be an issue with VDOR. Other agencies who have adopted an electronic method of receiving reports should be contacted to determine if this is a concern.
2. Customer service was listed in both advantages and disadvantages responses. A customer satisfaction survey should be conducted after the implementation of the VDOR system.
3. Security and confidentiality using computers and the Internet will have to be addressed at a level to instill confidence in the public. Businesses, banks, and other companies complete financial and personal information transactions using the Internet every day, and the CPS will have to implement this security into VDOR to ensure victims will utilize the system.
4. Some investigations may be hampered if officers do not attend scenes to talk with victims and witnesses. There is evidentiary value in reading body language in victims, witnesses, and suspects that cannot be done online.
5. There could be an increase in the overall number of cases reported, as more victims may come forward and report online. This could increase the workload for RPU members.

Part Three – Comments

The final portion of the questionnaire was a comments section. Participants were encouraged to voice opinions about the VDOR project and some interesting comments were written.

Findings

1. A participant asked about online reports that require more investigative work. This person was looking beyond receiving the crime information to the possibility that some online reports will contain names of suspects and leads requiring an officer to investigate the complaint, interview the suspect(s), and lay appropriate charges.
2. Participants suggested reports that could be taken online such as property damage, thefts, and lost and found property—all if there are no suspects. Reports of chronic missing persons and stolen autos were also mentioned as reportable online. However, the CPS should respond in person to every attack against person complaint instead of allowing an electronic report.
3. There was also a comment about the unions wanting to have a voice in online reporting. VDOR could affect the employment opportunities of union members.
4. All reports taken by the VDVE Unit, part of RPU, could be absorbed by VDOR. There would also be a reduction in the VDVE callback time due to members of that unit receiving fewer reports over the phone.
5. A public education campaign with emphasis on the victim having the choice of reporting electronically would be required to introduce the VDOR project. An online report form must be detailed and have instructions to help the victim through the

- reporting process and to reduce the number of reports RPU members return for more information.
6. A quick review of each online report for appropriate response or action is necessary to ensure victims receive a case number for insurance purposes in a timely fashion.
 7. Victims may have problems using an online system if they have difficulty reading or writing. This concern is widened with the many diverse groups of individuals living in Calgary. If they have difficulties reporting online, they can always revert to the current method of reporting over the phone to a RPU member.
 8. One comment discussed the availability and access to the Internet versus the access and availability to district offices, meaning it is easier for victims to use the Internet than it is to attend a district office or COPS station to report a crime. This is true for a majority of computer literate victims.
 9. Most calls for service could be done online, as police attendance at most complaints is not warranted. This comment suggests there is sometimes little or no evidentiary value for an officer attending the scene. The crime information gathered by an officer talking to a victim, minus the body language, is the same information a victim could enter onto an online report form.
 10. VDOR is a good idea if the case has no suspects, no safety issues, and no liability issues. Legal issues will have to be addressed by the CPS legal department prior to implementing an online reporting system. A disclaimer window which pops up as soon as anyone opens the VDOR Web site would be mandatory. This disclaimer would have to alert people that if a crime is in progress or someone is in imminent danger or harm, to dial 9-1-1 immediately.

11. One participant believes that no reports should be taken online due to the different circumstances of each situation, while another thought that mentally ill people would make up imaginary stories.

Conclusions

Some valuable and some far-reaching comments were recorded in the comments section of the VDOR questionnaire. Participants were thinking about the implications of implementing an electronic reporting system. Issues regarding timeliness of CPS members proofreading reports, comments about the need for some reports to be followed up by a uniformed officer, and the difficulties of people who are challenged with reading and writing, are examples of comments respondents wrote on the questionnaire. Each of these issues would have to be addressed before implementing a VDOR system.

Overall Study Recommendations

1. The CPS should introduce an online reporting system as an alternative method of allowing victims to report crime. Although they have less police experience than the Baby Boomer generation, survey results clearly indicate that Generation Xers are more willing to allow victims to use an electronic reporting system. Thus, over time, there will be more and more acceptance of the VDOR.
2. Prior to implementing an online system, there are a number of issues that should be addressed:
 - The CPS Information Services Section (ISS) should be responsible for setting up the computer network, complete with security, for incoming reports. The level of security should equal that of banks who allow customers to conduct financial transactions online.

- A CPS legal advisor should review the VDOR process for legal and liability issues, including Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.
 - Communications staff should be trained to advise callers that an online system is available as an alternative method of reporting crime.
 - RPU should be trained on receiving, proofreading, and returning e-mails with case numbers to victims. They would be responsible for the VDOR system once it is operational.
 - Street officers should also be trained to advise complainants that VDOR is an optional way of reporting crime.
 - A mock or dummy run of the entire system should be completed to determine any glitches.
 - A media release to educate the public should be organized.
3. Some respondents discussed fraudulent use of a VDOR system. A warning about falsely filing a report along with the sections of the Criminal Code and the penalties that could be administered by a judge if they are convicted of fraud could pop up on every screen prior to victims entering information on the form. Another alternative is to have the warning pop up as the last window before the report is submitted to the CPS. The warning would also inform people that their e-mail address is captured on every transmission.
 4. Customer service and customer satisfaction were issues raised in the questionnaire. A customer service survey should be completed as part of an ongoing process to determine victims' satisfaction with the new system.

5. A review of how VDOR is affecting the workload of various work units, and monitor crime statistics and investigations, should be ongoing to alert the CPS about concerns or problems at the earliest opportunity. If alterations to the VDOR system are required, they should be implemented immediately.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Organizational Implementation

There are two major findings emerging from the questionnaire. The first is that there are groups who are not favourable towards VDOR. The entire concept of online reporting is new to most participants. An in-depth educational component to describe the new online process and how employees might be affected if the CPS implements the VDOR system is a must. Emphasis on the words “alternative method” are crucial to ease the concern that VDOR will replace the current system of receiving crime reports and thus reduce staffing levels. Two flow charts showing the various stages of reporting (the current method and VDOR) should help describe the differences in reporting systems.

Staff members have to embrace the concept for any major change to occur within an organization. In order to accomplish this change, members from each of the work areas (Communications Section, RPU, and street officers) should be asked to participate in focus groups, research and development teams, and implementation committees. Inclusion motivates individuals who then carry their enthusiasm back into their workplaces.

The second major finding is that it is not clear whether victims should be allowed to report some crimes electronically. There are a number of offences which some respondents felt should be reportable online, while others disagreed. From the responses to the questionnaire, VDOR should only include property-related offences that are minor in nature. But there were a number of offences that garnered both yes and no responses, suggesting that a research team consisting of members from different work areas and a member from the CPS planning unit should be developed to review the inconclusive findings. This committee should also contact other police agencies to determine which crimes they allow victims to

report online. Focus groups comprised of staff members in the categories that stated no to online reporting should be formed to determine the reasons for their decisions. Valuable insights and inclusion in the process should benefit everyone involved.

Implementation Process Recommendations

Implementation of the VDOR project as an alternative method of receiving crime reports directly affects a number of areas within the CPS, as well as various agencies that work closely with it. The following is a list of recommendations for various units that would be affected in implementing a VDOR system. Prior to accepting the first online report, ISS staff would be required to play a major role installing a computer system, separate from the current internal Police Information Management System (PIMS), to receive all online reports. This new system would be required to prevent hackers from gaining access to PIMS. The two systems must be compatible to allow for downloading victims' online reports into PIMS, where all crime information is housed, in order that every officer would have access to every report in a timely fashion.

ISS staff would be responsible for maintaining the computer system. Encrypting information received by the CPS and developing other security features would be critical to safeguarding victims' information. Businesses such as banks, bookstores, and E-bay have used the Internet for years to conduct financial transactions. Security features used by these businesses would be a vital component in convincing victims to utilize the VDOR system.

ISS staff should also develop the online forms. These forms would contain mandatory fields that would require a response from the victim before he or she could submit the report. A committee of CPS employees affected by the reporting system could address the design of the forms with an ISS program developer.

The computer implementation phase would involve routing the incoming electronic reports directly to the RPU prior to downloading to the main server. The RPU could be responsible for receiving and proofreading each online report for accuracy and completeness, and conversing via e-mail with victims whose reports do not contain proper information. They would assign a case number to each successfully completed online report before downloading it onto the main server.

The CPS Public Affairs/Media Relations Unit should organize a media blitz to announce the launch of the online reporting system. Two key aspects will include creating a list of the types of crimes that will be accepted online and emphasizing the CPS Web site address where the forms will be accessible. This media campaign would help overcome any potential concerns that employees and the public have about reduced customer service. The primary message would be to educate citizens and CPS employees about the new method of reporting crime.

The Communications Section staff currently field all victims' calls for service. They will need to be informed of the online reporting system so they can advise victims of their choice of how to report a crime. An internal memo outlining this alternative method and a list of the types of crimes that would be reportable electronically could be used to educate staff members. An "All Personnel Memo" could be drafted to inform all street officers and staff working the front counter at district offices, satellite offices, and COPS of this new method of reporting crime. In a 2000 community survey, 9% of victims stated they attended these offices to file a report (Poetschke, 2000). Officers talk to Calgarians and visitors on a daily basis and could inform them of this alternative method. For example, a tourist who has noticed he has lost his camera or wallet and is about to embark on a flight home could be

advised to report the loss online when he arrives, thus allowing him to make his flight. Officers also lecture to community members on various topics and could mention the new VDOR system to spread the word.

The Victim Assistance Unit (VAU) should be apprised of the online project, as its staff deals with phone calls from victims about crime. Some of the complaints they receive involve the amount of time victims waited for police to arrive at the scene or the time it took for a member of VDVE to phone them back and file a report. VAU staff could enlighten these victims that VDOR could be used for future occurrences to save time.

As with any new policy, the Directive/Policy Manual Unit should write a new directive outlining the VDOR system for inclusion in the CPS Policy Manual. The CPS legal department will also need to review the VDOR project, as it pertains to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation and other legal issues.

Reassigning human resources within each affected work area to utilize the skills of CPS employees to implement the VDOR project could eliminate the cost of hiring an outside agency. The CPS has experts working in ISS who could develop the required forms and safety features. Members of the RPU have already been trained to accept and categorize reports over the phone. Using them to proofread and approve online reports would be a natural progression.

Outside Agencies Affected by VDOR

The CPS is well known for being a leader in the policing world. It received that reputation by initiating a number of new programs and ideas over the years, including the Serious Habitual Offenders Program, the Domestic Conflict Unit, and Community Response Teams. Internally, each of these programs has strengthened the Service's response to

community-based policing efforts. Outside agencies were included in these programs to help combat the growing need for all agencies dealing with similar problems or concerns.

The VDOR system will affect how outside agencies conduct business with the CPS. When an officer attends a crime scene, he or she receives a witness statement from all witnesses, including the victim. These are written on separate forms and are sent to the Crown Prosecutor's Office as part of the crime report. Prosecutors use these statements in court to help witnesses remember details of an offence, or to challenge witnesses if their testimony differs from what they wrote. If the online reporting project is implemented and an officer does not attend the scene, a hand-written witness statement will not be obtained. In these cases, a prosecutor would decide whether the online witness statement will suffice for court purposes. The decision to accept the electronic version of the file would ultimately reside with the judge. Some officers stated that an online system would reduce the collection of evidence, as witness statements are regarded as potential evidence. Their concern would be eliminated if prosecutors and judges were to accept online reports as a victim's witness statement.

The VDOR project would also benefit individuals who reside in small towns surrounding Calgary. If they become victims while in the city but decide to attend their local RCMP detachment to report the crime, they are usually advised to contact the closest CPS office. With VDOR in place, the RCMP officer could advise them to report the crime online instead of travelling back to Calgary.

Individuals are not the only victims of crime; businesses are also targets of break and enter, theft, and fraud artists. All fraud victims are asked to attend district offices to file a report. The RCMP recently introduced an electronic fraud reporting system using a program

called RECOL (Reporting Economic Crime Online). This Web site allows fraud victims the convenience of reporting online from their home or office.

The RECOL site provides an online tool to use to report any kind of fraud, such as identity theft, fraudulent letters or telemarketing scams. Complaints received by the site are directed to appropriate law enforcement agencies and other organizations concerned with white-collar crime, with the user's consent. (Munroe, 2004, ¶ 2)

Calgary Social Services agencies would benefit by a VDOR system, as an employee could report chronic missing youths online. Although this may not save time for the agency, reporting runaways online would allow the CPS to receive that information in a timelier fashion.

People with disabilities and seniors who find it difficult to get around would benefit from the implementation of an electronic reporting system. The convenience of reporting online versus the time it takes to become mobile and attend a district office would be viewed as the CPS fulfilling one of the guiding principles of its mission statement: The fourth principle is "to promote a professional police image...by offering service and friendship to all members of the public" (CPS, 2004c, p. 1). An online service would offer an alternative method for these people to report a crime.

Implications If VDOR Is Not Implemented

As Calgary grows in size and population, so does the amount of crime and the number of victims requiring a police report. Failure to implement the VDOR system would affect the increasing workload of Communications Section officers, RPU members, and officers working the street. It is predictable that each of these work areas will expand their human resources strength to respond to the expected rise in the number of calls for service.

The public is also becoming aware of other police agencies utilizing an electronic medium to receive crime reports, and may demand that the CPS implement a similar system in Calgary. Vancouver Police Service and Surrey RCMP implemented an online reporting system for minor crimes a couple of years ago. In the United States, there are a number of policing agencies using an online reporting system, including the Penn State Police for their Silent Witness program and the Internet Fraud Complaint Center, a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National White Collar Crime Center. The Police Information Technology Organisation in England has a Web site for electronic reports. This service is used “to notify the Police of some types of minor crime committed in the United Kingdom” (Ellis, 2003, ¶ 1).

The CPS would benefit greatly by implementing an online reporting system, enhancing its relationship with the citizens of Calgary and its tourists. Time saved by victims completing the original report electronically will allow officers to fulfill other policing duties.

Future Research

CPS sworn and civilian members involved with generating or filing crime reports completed the survey in this study. Although their responses are important from an internal user perspective on whether an online reporting system would be successful, further research is required from a variety of potential users of the system. These users are identified as members of the public, including business groups, seniors groups, people with disabilities, and younger victims. Prior to implementing the online system, the CPS will require information to determine if these individuals would file a report electronically. Surveys and

focus groups with members of these groups will solidify accurate responses and allow the CPS to formulate a decision to implement a VDOR system.

Further research is also required to determine if other police agencies have a similar process or have decided against using an online reporting system. A number of questions arise if other agencies are allowing victims to file reports electronically. Which types of crimes does each agency allow online? Has there been a customer satisfaction survey done to determine why some victims are using this new approach and others are not? Has there been a noticeable increase in the number of reportable minor offences? Have fraudulent reports been detected, and what were the implications of these findings? The results will have a major impact on the decision by the CPS to implement an online reporting system.

Another phase of this project would be to compare the findings of the questionnaire with other police agencies' online reporting systems to determine which crimes they allow victims to report electronically, and to compare their implementation processes to determine the value, usage, and barriers that they overcame while instigating their online system. In addition, opinions from the Crown Prosecutor's Office and the different levels of the courts should be solicited for a legal decision surrounding VDOR. There is no use reinventing the wheel.

CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

To err is human, as they say.

In hindsight, there are several lessons to be learned from this project. Some of the lessons concentrate on the design of the survey and the information it revealed, while other lessons involve the instructions issued to supervisors who asked participants to complete the questionnaire. Other changes, such as including focus groups and sending the questionnaire to other police agencies, will be discussed.

Changes to the Survey Design

The questionnaire was designed for quick responses. Members of the Service are bombarded with paperwork daily, and with calls for service waiting at the commencement of every shift, time is critical. The members' perception of "yet another questionnaire" and the anticipated length of time to complete it were deemed important in order to receive responses.

Reviewing the results indicated how the survey could have been designed differently to simplify or allow the data to be interpreted more clearly. The nine categories were alphabetically arranged to avoid the perception that I was biased. I included a variety of crimes to make participants think about the need to attend the scene, collect evidence, and talk to victims and witnesses. If they perceived a need to attend, they would not agree with reporting of that offence online, but if they believed there was no reason to attend, they might see VDOR as a viable option to gather crime reports. When attending a scene, officers gather physical evidence, such as break and enter tools left at scene, potential fingerprints left by the suspect, and footprints in flowerbeds outside windows in break and enter cases. They also

talk to neighbours to determine whether they saw the culprit(s) or if they recorded the license plate of a suspect's vehicle.

If there were an opportunity to redesign the questionnaire, I would include all property-related offences, including the ones that the VDVE Unit now takes reports for over the phone. With the move to differential response in the early 1990s, the CPS decided not to dispatch a car crew to these offences. If the VDOR questionnaire had included all of these offences, the analysis of the results would have been simplified, by determining how many CPS employees agreed to allow online reporting for crimes currently reportable over the phone.

The following is a list of crimes that the VDVE Unit receives over the phone:

1. Unforced break and enter to detached garages and sheds;
2. Attempted stolen autos;
3. Stolen/recovered auto (moved only a few feet);
4. Mischief to property (e.g., graffiti, vehicles, houses [egging, pellet gun shots, etc.]);
5. Theft under \$5000 (e.g., carprowlings, wallets or purses taken from offices or lockers, gas driveoffs, bikes, ornaments or lawn furniture taken from residential homes, shopliftings);
6. Lost property; and
7. Crime information.

The CPS generally classifies offences into two categories: attacks against property or attacks against persons. With the VDOR concept in its infancy, the majority of the responses were against allowing reports over the Internet for serious crimes. If the project were implemented with only minor crimes (attacks against property) and proved to be successful

in Calgary, further research regarding more serious crimes involving attacks against persons could be completed and added to the reportable online list.

There were a number of participants who responded “no” to every category, although the Service allows for some of the crimes to be reported over the phone. This indicates that they either are against allowing electronic reporting or they perceive a need or requirement for a victim to talk to an officer, albeit over the phone and not in person. Another question should have been added to the survey: that if all answers were “no,” to list the reason(s) for making that determination. Although it is more difficult to lie face-to-face with an officer, I believe it is almost as easy for a victim to exaggerate the truth over the phone as online, but this opinion might not be shared with employees who completed the survey.

There are a few changes to the questionnaire that would improve the accuracy of the responses. First of all, there were too many years of service categories; there should have been two, not five. The age categories were devised to correspond to different generations of workers—the War Generation, Baby Boomers, and Generation Xers—to compare responses from one generation to the next. But with only two members in the first category, I would eliminate that age group and revert to just two groups: Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. The second demographic change involves the number of years of service. There were five groups in intervals of five years, but in review of the responses, two groups, one with less than 10 years and the other with more than 10 years of service, would have sufficed. These small demographic alterations would have simplified the analysis without compromising the integrity of the results.

More Specific Questionnaire Instructions

Another change to the project would include the instructions issued to the supervisors who asked participants to complete the survey. Every supervisor was informed that this reporting system would act as an alternative means and would not replace the current method of victims reporting crime. More emphasis should have been placed on the word “alternative,” thus eliminating the possibility of anyone believing VDOR will replace the current system. I do not know the interpretation and exact instructions given by each supervisor. Therefore, to ensure more accurate passing of the project overview and the instructions, I suggest that the researcher pen them and the supervisors read them verbatim. A list of possible questions and answers to frequently asked questions might have aided the supervisors in explaining the concept to participants.

Alternatively, I could have attended district supervisor’s meetings and discussed the project and questionnaire directly with them. All of their questions would have been answered and they would have had a better understanding of VDOR. In turn, they might have felt more comfortable verbalizing an overview of the project and answering questions from the participants. Greater consistency in how the project was explained and how instructions were delivered might have produced more diverse responses, as participants would have understood the overall objective better.

Hosting Focus Groups

Although great statistical knowledge is gained through surveys, I would, in hindsight, also host focus groups with members from the same five working groups who completed the questionnaire. There were interesting insights into the answers given to the two questions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of online reporting, as most participants wrote

short, bullet-point answers in response. Deeper discussion and debate about the pros and cons would have proven valuable to this project.

Conclusion

I have learned many lessons during this research project. Changes to the survey, written instructions to the supervisors administering the questionnaire, and hosting focus groups to clarify responses are three suggestions that would have improved this project.

A VDOR system should compliment the CPS's current method of receiving reports of crime by allowing victims to use the Internet to transmit information regarding minor offences. Two-thirds of Calgarians have access to the Internet, and with the younger generation of both sworn and civilian members of the Service agreeing that certain crimes should be reportable electronically, now is the time for the CPS to seriously evaluate the possibility of expanding the way we receive crime reports.

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APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

My expectation is that you will find this questionnaire easy to follow. In most cases, all you will do is place a check mark in all of the boxes that describe your response. It should take you about 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will be anonymous and held in the strictest confidence.

I would appreciate your return of this questionnaire in the pre-stamped envelope provided by **Friday, May 20, 2004**. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [telephone number] or e-mail at [e-mail address].

Thank you,

Blaine Knapik, S/Sgt. Calgary Police Service

Questionnaire for Calgary Police Service Members

1. Which of the following calls for service could be completed using the Victim Direct Online Reporting System? Please place a check mark next to each offence that you feel could be completed using an online reporting system.

Category	Criminal Code Offence	Yes	No	Not Sure
Abduction				
CC 282	Abduction Contravening a Custody Order			
CC 283 1	Abduction Without Custody Order			
CC 264 3	Original Harassment Stalking			
Arson				
CC 434	ARSON – Set Fire to Personal Property			
CC 435 1	ARSON – For Fraudulent Purpose			
CC 436 1	ARSON – By Negligence			

Category	Criminal Code Offence	Yes	No	Not Sure
Bigamy				
CC 291	Commit Bigamy			
Break & Enter				
CC 348 1 B	Break and Enter Commit - Dwelling House			
CC 348 1 A	Break and Enter With Intent – Dwelling House			
CC 348 1 B	Break and Enter Commit - Other Premise			
CC 348 1 A	Break and Enter With Intent – Other Premise			
CC 348 1 B	Break and Enter Commit - Shop or Commercial			
CC 348 1 A	Break and Enter With Intent – Shop or Commercial			
CC 348 1 C	Break and Enter Commit - Shop or Commercial			
Fraud				
CC 355 B	Possession of Stolen Property - Under \$5,000			
CC 355 A	Possession of Stolen Property – Over \$5,000			
CC 362 2 A	False Pretences - Under \$5,000			
CC 362 2 B	False Pretences – Over \$5,000			
CC 367 1	Obtain Credit by False Pretence or false Statement			
CC 367 1	Forgery			
CC 380 1 A	Obtain Good or Pledge by Fraud (Real Fraud)			
CC 380 1 A	Defraud Person Over \$5,000 of Money, Service, Property, Security			
CC 380 1 B	Defraud Person Under \$5,000 of Money, Service, Property, Security			
Mischief				
CC 430 3	Mischief Causing Danger to Life			
CC 430 3 A	Mischief to Property Over \$5,000			
CC 430 5.1	Mischief to Property Under \$5,000			
CC 430 5.1	Mischief to Act, Omits to Act or Causing Danger to Life			
CC 430 1 B	Render Property Dangerous or Useless Inoperable or Ineffective			
Telephone Crimes				
CC 372 2	Indecent Telephonic Calls			
CC 372 3	Harassing Telephone Calls			
Theft				
CC 334 A	Theft Over \$5,000			
CC 334 B	Theft Under \$5,000			
CC 336 1 A	Theft from Mail			

Category	Criminal Code Offence	Yes	No	Not Sure
Threats				
CC 264.1 3	Utter, Convey, Cause Threat to a Person			
CC 264.1 3	Utter, Convey, Cause Threat to Property or Animal			

2. What do you believe are the advantages of an online reporting system? (Please use the back of this page if you require more space.)

3. What do you believe are the disadvantages of an online reporting system? (Please use the back of this page if you require more space.)

Demographic Information

1. How many years have you been a CPS member?

- less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- more than 20 years

APPENDIX B – CONSENT FORM

This research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training through Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia. The student concerned is Blaine Knapik. S/Sgt. Knapik's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning either Dr. Gerry Nixon, Dean of Royal Roads University, at [telephone number] or Ms. Angella Wilson, Coordinator, MALT, at [telephone number].

This document constitutes an agreement to take part in a research program, the objective of which is to develop a strategic plan. The research will consist of a questionnaire and is foreseen to last approximately 20 minutes. The questions will refer to victims reporting minor crime online through the Internet as an alternative method of reporting crime to the Calgary Police Service. Your responses will be recorded and summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless an agreement has been obtained beforehand.

A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible. Prospective research subjects are not compelled to take part in this research project. If an individual does elect to take part, she or he is free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. Similarly, if employees or other individuals elect not to take part in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

By signing this letter, the individual gives free and informed consent to participating in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C – SURVEY RESULTS

Could a victim of the following crimes report it online? (Note: all responses shown as percentages.)

Criminal Code Offence		Yes	No	Not Sure
Abduction				
CC 282	Abduction Contravening a Custody Order	11.4	85.7	2.9
CC 283 1	Abduction Without Custody Order	11.4	86.7	1.9
CC 264 3	Criminal Harassment Stalking	16.2	81.9	1.9
Arson				
CC 434 A	Arson – Set Fire Willfully	6.7	96.3	1.0
CC 434	Arson – Set Fire to Personal Property	3.8	93.3	2.9
CC 434 B	Arson – For Own Property	4.8	93.3	1.9
CC 435 1	Arson – For Fraudulent Purpose	5.7	92.4	1.9
CC 436 1	Arson – By Negligence	16.2	81.0	2.9
Bigamy				
CC 291	Common Bigamy	47.0	52.4	6.7
Break & Enter				
CC 348 B	Break and Enter Common – Dwelling House	8.6	91.4	0.0
CC 348 1 A	Break and Enter with Intent – Dwelling House	13.3	85.7	1.0
CC 348 B	Break and Enter Common – Other Premise	27.6	71.4	1.0
CC 348 1 A	Break and Enter With Intent – Other Premise	28.6	67.6	3.8
CC 348 B	Break and Enter Common – Shop or Commercial	12.4	87.6	0.0
CC 348 1 A	Break and Enter With Intent – Shop or Commercial	17.1	79.0	3.8
CC 348 1 C	Break and Enter With Intent – Shop or Commercial	12.4	84.8	1.9
Fraud				
CC 355 B	Possession of Stolen Property – Under \$5,000	65.2	68.8	1.0
CC 355 A	Possession of Stolen Property – Over \$5,000	15.2	83.8	1.0
CC 362 2 A	False Pretences – Under \$5,000	30.0	55.2	5.7
CC 362 2 B	False Pretences – Over \$5,000	18.1	77.1	4.8
CC 363 3	Obtain Credit by False Pretence or False Statement	30.0	66.2	4.8
CC 367 1	Forgery	32.4	63.8	3.8
CC 364	Obtain Food or Lodging by Fraud, Moral Fraud	61.9	41.2	3.8
CC 380 1 A	Defraud Person Over \$5,000 of Money, Service, Property, Security	23.1	73.1	3.8
CC 380 1 B	Defraud Person Under \$5,000 of Money, Service, Property, Security	45.2	51.9	2.9
Mischief				
CC 430 2	Mischief Causing Danger to Life	1.9	98.1	0.0
CC 430 3 A	Mischief to Property Over \$5,000	23.1	73.1	3.8
CC 430 4	Mischief to Property Under \$5,000	77.9	17.3	4.8
CC 430 5.1	Mischief to Act, Omits to Act or Causing Danger to Life	3.8	93.3	2.9
CC 430 1 B	Rendel Property Dangerous, Insecure, Inoperable or Ineffective	41.8	49.6	9.6

Survey Results (continued)

Criminal Code Offence		Yes	No	Not Sure
Telephone Crimes				
CC 372.2	Indecent Telephone Calls	67.3	26.9	5.8
CC 372.3	Harassing Telephone Calls	68.3	26.0	5.8
Theft				
CC 334 A	Theft Under \$5,000	73.1	25.0	1.9
CC 334 B	Theft Under \$5,000	76.0	21.2	2.9
CC 336 A	Theft from Mail	69.2	26.9	3.8
Threats				
CC 264.1 2	Utter, Convey, Cause Threat to a Person	30.8	65.4	3.8
CC 264.1 3	Utter, Convey, Cause Threat to Property or Animal	42.3	53.8	3.8