Crime Mapping and Public Safety? NIJ's *Call for Papers*

Over the last decade the criminal justice community has begun to reap the valuable analytic benefits of geographic information systems (GIS) technology. This technology enhances the ability of researchers and practitioners to analyze spatial patterns of crime and criminal behavior, to share disparate data sets across jurisdictional boundaries, and to identify hot spots of criminal activity.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and is solely dedicated to researching crime control and justice issues. In 1997, the NIJ established the Mapping and Analysis for Public Safety (MAPS) program to promote research, evaluation, development, and dissemination of GIS technology for criminal justice research and practice. In support of these efforts, NIJ's MAPS program is pleased to announce its annual *Call for Papers*. This year's theme is "*Crime Mapping and Public Safety: Identify the Direction, Explore the Connection, Engage the Future.*"

MAPS solicits papers from the justice community for presentation at its annual conference, the MAPS' Seventh Annual International Crime Mapping Research Conference, to be held March 31 to April 3, 2004, in Boston, Massachusetts. Paper submissions will be considered for all of the following conference events: presentations, professional development workshops, and showcase sessions.

Since crimes are human phenomena, their distribution across the landscape is not geographically random. The lure of potential targets combined with simple geographic convenience influences where people choose to break the law. Therefore, an understanding of where and why crimes occur can improve attempts to fight crime. The MAPS conference is an example of the National Institute of Justice's efforts to further the innovative use of GIS in crime mapping and public safety. Presentations will address topics such as data sharing and policies; GIS privacy, legal, and ethical issues; GIS tools for law enforcement and public safety; GIS in Indian country and rural areas; sentencing/corrections/courts/reentry; tactical crime analysis; and international crime mapping.

Some of the current uses of GIS technology in solving crimes include calculations of crime density values (i.e., the number of crimes per square mile), the correlation of vacant home percentages with the occurrence of illegal activity, the distance between registered child sex offender homes and school locations, and the analysis of serial offender residences to the areas where they conduct their routine activities. Conference professional development workshops will emphasize such "how to" demonstrations, discussing the technical matters relating to the practical uses of GIS in criminal investigations.

GIS maps offer crime analysts graphic representations of crime-related issues. Simple maps that display the locations of where crimes or concentrations of crimes have occurred can be used to help direct police patrols to places they are most needed. Policy makers can use more complex maps to observe trends in criminal activity, while detectives use them to better understand the hunting patterns of serial criminals and hypothesize where these offenders might live. In an effort to encourage and broaden the innovative use of GIS maps, the conference will feature the Fifth Annual Crime Map Competition. Contestants will be judged in four categories: best analytic map display, best cartographic design, most innovative use of mapping, and best overall map.

One segment of the conference will include presentations from winners of the Fourth Annual Student Paper Competition, established to recognize important work in the field of spatial analysis of crime, criminal behavior, and public safety by enrolled college students pursuing a degree. The papers directly address the use of spatial analysis in the study of crime activity or phenomenon.

Showcase sessions will provide an opportunity for attendees to interact with each other around a specific technical topic such as demonstrating software an agency has developed or presenting a case study or research project.

The *Call for Papers* deadline for presentations and workshops is September 30, 2003. The final decisions for presentations and workshops will be made by Friday, October 31, 2003. NIJ will reimburse travel expenses and conference registration fees for competition winners, presentation speakers, and up to two speakers per workshop. The deadline for the student paper competition is January 2, 2004, and the deadline for the crime map competition is March 31, 2004.   Detailed information on the conference and the *Call for Papers* is available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/maps/Confrences/04conf/CallforPapers.html or via e-mail at maps@ojp.usdoj.gov.