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## Jail data, answers still can't be found

### Inmate photos erased after Macomb County computer system crash

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**BY NANCY A. YOUSSEF**  
 FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Macomb County lost nearly 60,000 computerized photos of its jail inmates, and nobody can explain why or what will be done to prevent such a mistake in the future. Three weeks ago, an officer went to add another inmate's photo into the system when it crashed. Officials later discovered all the photos stored had been erased.

The sheriff's office, the personnel at the county's office of Management Information Services, the county Board of Commissioners, and Imagetrak, the company based in Anaheim, Calif., which makes the computer system, have not offered explanations for why the computer crashed, why there weren't backup files or why the photos couldn't be recovered.

"I have never been so frustrated in my 21 years in law enforcement," Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said Thursday. "This is extremely absurd."

Meanwhile, the computer mishap has compromised both local and regional law enforcement, police said.

Regionally, the loss has thwarted efforts to create a tricounty database of information and makes catching criminals more difficult, police said.

Members of the sheriff's departments in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties were collecting mug shots to distribute to each department within the next eight months. And Macomb County officials planned to use the computer system to send mug shot photos through a computer in each patrol car.

"It really hinders law enforcement when photos that were supposed to be available are lost," said Sgt. Kim Rossman, who serves as a liaison between the Sheriff's Department and the county information-technology department.

The county's jail processes about 24,000 inmates a year, according to Michelle Sanborn, jail administrator. Since 1999, each inmate's photo has been entered into the Imagetrak database. Investigators have used that database to track offenders and to create photo lineups for witnesses.

The county's computer systems -- and the information they store -- are maintained by the county Management Information Services. When the Sheriff's Department's computer system crashed, officials discovered they did not have a backup.

MIS Director Cyntia Zerkowski has not returned repeated calls for an explanation, Hackel said. Zerkowski also has not returned a reporter's calls seeking comment.

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