

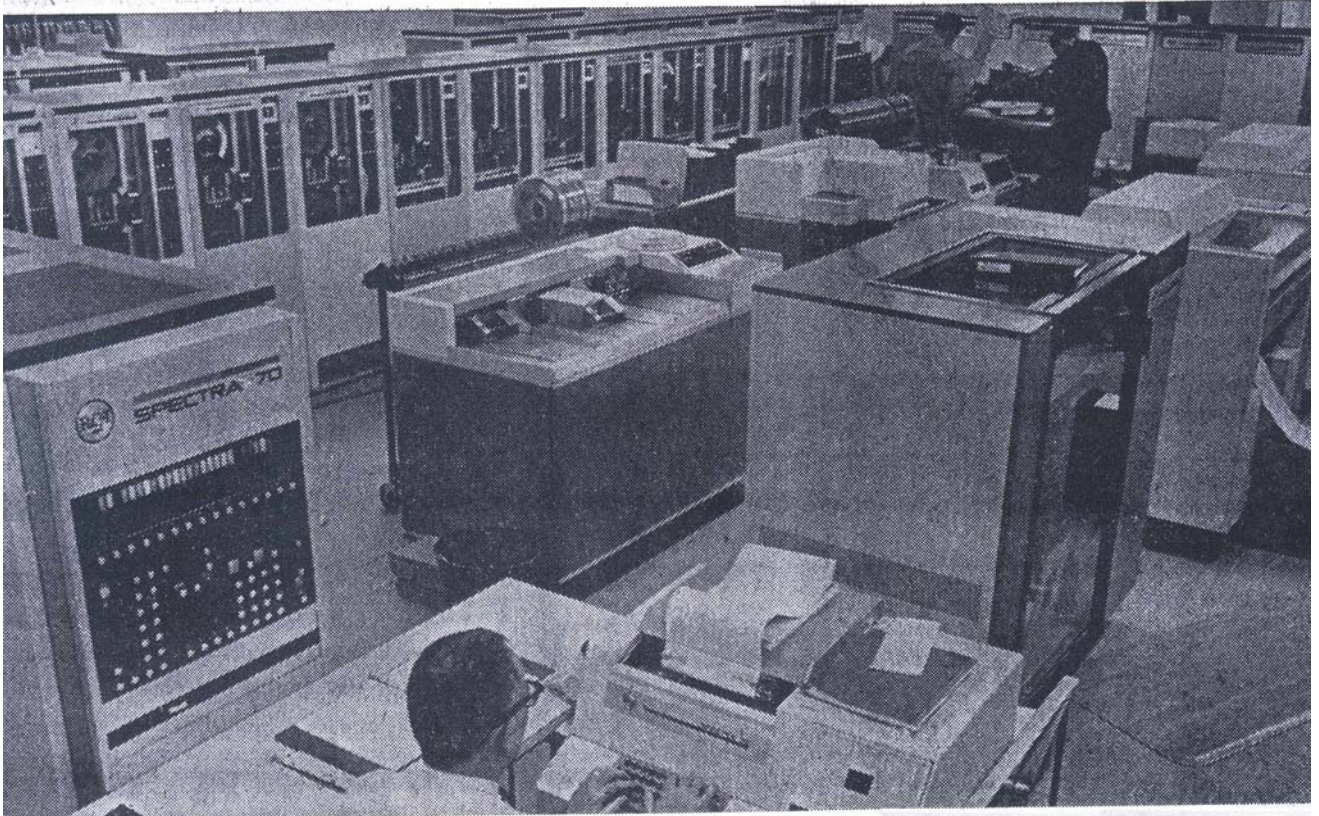
# The Sunday Olympian

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Ten Cent



**SOMEWHERE WITHIN THESE MILES OF WIRES AND MAGNETIC TAPE YOUR NAME LIES (IF YOU DRIVE A CAR)**  
Now Coming On Strong — The 1968 Registration Forms At 1,100 Lines A Minute

(Sunday Olympian Photo)

## Around The State On A Computer Tape

Law clerks of the world, arise! The computer is trying to put you out of business.

Well, maybe not all the way out, but it's going to take over some of the drudgery of leafing through state laws—Revised Code of Washington (RCWs) familiar to so many state workers.

Walter Howe, director of the Central Budget Agency, hopes to have the RCWs on computer tape by the time the next regular session of the Legislature rolls around.

Main beneficiaries of this taping will be the bill drafters in Code Reviser Richard White's office, where bills are manufactured out of legislative ideas.

Once the RCWs are indexed on tape, finding all the information about any one law, or similar laws, will be mere computer play. In seconds the machine will track down all references to any field of state affairs.

If the system works, legislators in session may put it to use, too.

"We hope we can have a daily

report on the status of bills," says Senator Harry Lewis, Olympia.

Any attempt to explain just how the computer is going to hunt up everything about every law and put it on half-inch tape would likely make a data processor tear his hair—or write a letter to the editor.

Suffice it to say that the computer system involved is third generation equipment, and everyone knows how smart the younger generation is.

"It's nothing but a fast, dumb

law clerk," says White. "It's not going to do anyone's thinking for them, but it will assemble information much faster so the decisions can be made."

The present RCWs are in 12 volumes, about as many as a strong man could carry if he could get his arms around them all. They're brought up to date every two years. Biennial supplements now run from 3,500 to 3,600 pages.

Contrast that with the two or three 12-inch reels that will hold (See Page 13, Column 1)

# Computers Start Spinning In A Big Way For State—

(From Page One)

them once they are taped, plus the saving in space and bookshelf fatigue alone.

But revised law books are only a part of the spinning world of state computer reels. Data processing is reaching out into a lot of other state activities in the ever present quest for speedy information. Giving it a nudge is \$2.5 million, earmarked by the last legislature.

One of these is a crime information center, which is expected to be pretty well along during this biennium. Captain DeWitt Whitman of the State Patrol is project leader. He is working with James Cleghorn of Howe's office.

As soon as it's functioning, the initial concern will be focused on disseminating information throughout the state on stolen cars. Under way now is a survey of all law agencies in the state to find out just what files are kept and how available they are.

Once completed, police anywhere in the state will be able to obtain information on any stolen car almost instantaneously. The feasibility of a state-wide file on outstanding bench warrants on wanted persons and identifiable stolen property also is being worked out.

"It will help police find out if a person they pick up is wanted somewhere else," Howe says.

Closely allied with this is the system recently installed in the State Department of Motor Vehicles to make information about licenses—and most prominently, car and driver licenses — available all over the state. One feature will be an up-to-the-minute list of the names, ages, sexes and accident records of the state's drinking drivers.

"The computer will place the information about these drivers at our fingertips and enable us to rehabilitate them or remove them from the road — hopefully before they are involved in a fatal accident," says Doug Toms, Motor Vehicles director.

One third generation storage unit being given a shake-down in the Department of Motor Vehicles provides an illustration.

Magnetic storage cards, rather than tape, is the operating media. The cards, which look something like the computerized bills Christmas shoppers receive from Santa Claus, are a dull black,

with notches along their lower edge.

The computer selects the proper card, on signal, by "feeling" the notches in the card.

The storage unit is hooked to a "video data terminal" which, despite its fancy name, looks like a small teevee set.

Push a button and the machine, kicking cards around a circular drum at a speed of a half a millionth of a second, extracts the information and prints it on the video screen.

The unit, says Will Wolf, Motor Vehicles assistant director for information systems, will store 525 million characters. It can hook up to video screens in any part of the state, and flash information on cars and licenses from one office to another instantaneously. But back to the RCW system. White calls it "a major research tool of the state". In addition to giving his bill drafters the information they need quickly, it will help the courts and the attorney general in looking up past decisions.

"The computer allows a search directly against the text," says White. "It by-passes intermediate thought processes of manual indexers who have to gear their thoughts to the person asking for the search."

"For instance, if you wanted to know every reference to the Tax Commission (now the Rev-

enue Department) the only way to do it would be to have a law clerk go through the books page by page. It's tedious, expensive and inaccurate."

"It will provide an inverse cross reference table. That sounds complicated, but it's simple, really" says White. "Certain statutes rely on other statutes for operation . . . one affects the other."

A keypunch card repeats one portion of the text. A series of the cards covers the whole section needed. Fed into the computer, which writes magnetically on tape, the information is rendered into readable language by machine at a speed of 1,100 lines a minute.

Analyzing and indexing the information involves an "argument" within the computer. Once the whirring tape finds a portion that the key word or phrases can argue with it stops and prints out an answer.

The full section of the law can be produced or a mere reference can direct the law clerk to the right place in the books. The whole file can be searched in 45 minutes, a job that now takes days.

Joseph Noegel, systems coordinator in the Central Budget Agency, sees a "tremendous data base" being built up as the RCWs are put on tape and other information is fed into the system.

"Capturing" the statutes on tape will cost about \$10,000, a low price, officials say, made possible because most of the punch card preparation will be done at state institutions as a part of key punch operator training.

Howe wants to make certain that what is being "captured" on tape now is as complete as possible so it will mesh with other systems as data processing grows.

That seems to answer the question Senator Lewis had for Noegel and Joseph Kirschner, staff analyst, when they appeared before the Interim Legislative Facilities Committee recently to explain the potential for bill status reporting.

"Will the system be flexible, so in the future it can be plugged into others? Can vetoes, amendments and other information about bills be included without overhauling the whole thing?" Lewis asked.

Yes, said Noegel. "The RCWs will be only a part of the whole system."

He told the legislators, including Lewis, Representative Hal Wolf, Yelm and Representative Tom Copeland, Walla Walla, chairman of the committee, that by the 1969 session the Central Budget Agency can tell legislators just how much a bill status system will cost.

If the Legislature decides to adopt the system for its bill reporting, White expects it to speed up the legislative process. "It won't cut down on the paperwork; we'll still need mass printing of bills, for example," he cautions.

It probably won't shorten legislative sessions, either. But by providing lawmakers with all the information they need, and providing it fast, it should help make more meaningful what they eventually produce.