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# Collecting to the Core--Cross-disciplinary Criminal Justice Resources

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# Collecting to the Core — Cross-disciplinary Criminal Justice Resources

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**Column Editor's Note:** The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

Many two-year and four-year colleges offer associate or bachelor's degrees in criminal justice and criminology. It is also common for sociology and other social science programs at colleges and universities that do not offer dedicated criminal justice degree programs to include criminal justice courses and course concentrations within the curriculum. However, even when colleges lack dedicated criminal justice degree programs or academic courses, students often require criminal justice and criminology resources. Whenever students are given license to select topics for research projects, invariably some will choose a theme that intersects with criminal justice. Whether it is the sociology student examining issues related to undocumented immigrants and border control, the education student who wonders whether prisoners with access to G.E.D. classes are less likely to be re-incarcerated, the computer science student writing a software encryption protocol to deter hackers, or the social work student studying the

relationship between intimate partner violence and substance abuse, all will require some level of criminal justice research relevant to their topic.

If a college library has a limited budget for purchasing criminal justice resources because it is not a major curricular focus of the institution, careful selection is critical to ensure that titles will be useful for applied and interdisciplinary criminal justice research. This essay recommends several titles drawn from the "Criminal Justice and Law" section of *Resources for College Libraries: Career Resources* that should be considered core for supporting criminal justice-related study and research, even at institutions without criminal justice programs or course concentrations. This list is not all-inclusive but offers one or two representative titles for each type of reference resource.

## Encyclopedias

With a potentially vast and diverse number of student research interests, ideal collection candidates are those which provide breadth of coverage on a variety of criminal justice and criminology topics, balanced with sufficient depth of content to provide students with useful background information and suggested readings for further research. Two comprehensive encyclopedia sets that fit these criteria were published in 2014, with nearly identical titles: *The Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* published by **Wiley-Black-**

**well** and *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* published by **Springer**.<sup>1-2</sup> If

limited resources require a choice between these two large, expensive sets, this author recommends the **Wiley-Blackwell** encyclopedia, edited by **Jay S. Albanese**. This five-volume work contains approximately 500 entries and is available in print and electronically. It has received several accolades, including selection as a 2014 *Choice* "Outstanding Academic

Title," and recommendation by the **Reference and User Services Association** in the "2015 Outstanding Reference Sources List."<sup>3-4</sup> Although the **Springer** encyclopedia provides more breadth and depth, since it is comprised of 10 volumes and approximately 600 entries, the **Wiley-Blackwell** version offers accessibility for introductory-level students and those with limited prior background and knowledge of criminal justice. The online and print versions of the **Wiley-Blackwell** encyclopedia facilitate browsing by topical category in addition to the traditional A-Z alphabetical list and search functions, a feature which is lacking from **Springer's** encyclopedia. In addition, some of the **Wiley-Blackwell** entry headings are more intuitive and contain less jargon, and the content of entries is generally written to provide a general overview as opposed to the more in-depth analysis of subtopics found in some of the **Springer** entries. For example, the **Wiley-Blackwell** encyclopedia has one entry

*continued on page 30*

## Op Ed from page 28

been field-modified to behave exactly like the twenty year old dinosaurs it replaces.

Honestly — if your business process relies on getting a small white ball into a hole, would you use golf clubs to get it there? If some end-state relies on that ball being in the hole, your end-users won't even know about the ball anyway — they'll just know about the end result. They don't care about the ball; let alone how you get it into the hole. There are no style points being issued.

So we've been well positioned over these past couple of decades to observe the evolution of libraries', and publishers', and book sellers' responses to the evolving environment. We've

seen a world organized around the production, sale, distribution, and management of paper-based artifacts evolve into a world in which some of the most valuable assets take on the appearance to the uninitiated of being intangible.

We've learned that it's not enough merely to translate the processes that were relevant to the physical business model into a digital format — but rather that a more thorough transformation of the underlying processes themselves must occur — one that's based upon analysis that starts with the desired end state and works backward, rather than one that starts where we are and works forward. In other words, an analysis that doesn't begin with, "We've got this excellent set of golf clubs, beautifully designed, evolved, and handed down to us," but rather begins with the question, "We've

got a process stage that used to be triggered by a ball dropping into a hole. How can we best trigger it now?"

My guess would be that the average reader of *Against the Grain* doesn't need to be shown any of this. First of all, let's be honest: there really *are* no average readers of *Against the Grain*! For the most part, those whom I've met or spoken with over the years are canny, storied, long-term observers of all the forces discussed here. Perhaps I can serve merely to affirm the impressions and insights you've gathered, or to say, "Hmmm. Yes, it looks like that from here as well..." Perhaps you can tuck this away for use at an opportune time. Truly — when was the last time you got to quote **Woodrow Wilson** to underscore a point? 🐘

entitled “Police Discretion” on this topic, while the **Springer** encyclopedia has three separate entries: “Police Discretion and Its Control,” “Police Discretion in Law Enforcement,” and “Police Discretion in Providing Services and Assistance.”<sup>7-8</sup> In terms of breadth and depth of coverage on this subject, **Springer** comes out on top, but for students looking for a straightforward, non-specialized definition with a basic history and discussion of the current issues, **Wiley-Blackwell** is more direct. Although both encyclopedias have entries edited by scholars from around the world, the **Springer** version has a more obvious international scope (as evidenced by main entries like “Community Service in Europe”), making **Springer’s** encyclopedia potentially preferable if global criminal justice is a curricular focus.<sup>9</sup>

In summary, both of these encyclopedias provide thorough overviews of criminology and criminal justice terms and concerns, and are complimentary in terms of coverage rather than strictly duplicative. Entries in both works include extensive bibliographies of references and balanced coverage of topical issues. If collections budgets allow, it would be worthwhile to purchase both sets; however, the **Wiley-Blackwell** encyclopedia may be more accessible and helpful to the general researcher without criminal justice specialization.

### Handbooks

An excellent series of handbooks that would be useful to undergraduates and non-specialist researchers who need background information related to criminal justice and law is the **SAGE** Key Issues in Crime and Punishment series published in 2011. There are five stand-alone, thematic volumes in this series, which can be purchased individually or as a set: *Crime and Criminal Behavior*; *Police and Law Enforcement*; *Courts, Law and Justice*; *Corrections*; and *Juvenile Crime and Justice*.<sup>10-14</sup> Each work includes twenty chapters, each based on issues that are either frequently the subject of popular and scholarly debate or are fundamental themes for the volume. Within each chapter, readers will find a fairly thorough history and background, contextual information regarding the recent impact and coverage of the topic in contemporary media and scholarly discourse, and a pro/con section, which gives equal coverage and treatment to different viewpoints on the issue. For example, *Crime and Criminal Behavior* contains the chapters “Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide,” “Prostitution,” “Internet Crime,” and “Terrorism and Extremism.” Topics covered in *Courts, Law and Justice* include “Drug Laws,” “Insanity Defense,” and “Mandatory Sentencing.” In *Corrections*, example chapters of interest include “Mentally Ill and Mentally Challenged Inmates,” “Prison Overcrowding,” and “Healthcare and Medical Assistance for Prisoners.”<sup>15</sup> As these examples illustrate, the subjects covered may appeal to a wide range of students, and would be especially helpful to

those who are interested in choosing a criminal justice topic for an argument paper or debate assignment. Chapters include references for further reading (including citations to relevant court cases when applicable, as well as to scholarly articles, books, and reports), and are appropriate for readers with no prior knowledge of the topic, as well as those with some background who want to further explore the history or opposing positions.

### Statistics Sources

It is common for researchers to seek criminal justice and law-related statistics to include in papers or presentations, and a good one-stop shop for statistics in this area is the **Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics**, published online by the **University at Albany’s Hindelang Criminal Justice Research Center**.<sup>16</sup> Last updated in 2013, this resource draws on data from major government and research organization sources, as well as individual researchers, including the **U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics**, the **U.S. Department of Transportation’s National**

**Highway Traffic Safety Administration**, the **Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics**, the **Pew Research Center**, and the **NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund**, to name a few.<sup>17</sup> It is especially helpful for statistics from 2002 to 2011, but some topics include statistics dating back to the 1970s and ’80s. This free online resource is essential for online research guides and bibliographies related to criminal justice and law, and is particularly helpful for undergraduate and non-specialist students looking for quickly available statistics to incorporate into research assignments.

The encyclopedias, handbook series, and online statistics sourcebook described here are examples of resources that would be most helpful and applicable to a broad range of students and scholars searching for criminal justice information to incorporate into cross-disciplinary research. For libraries at institutions without a strong criminal justice focus or the ability to support exhaustive collections on this subject, these works are important inclusions for a core reference collection. 🍷

### Endnotes

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2. **Bruinsma, Gerben**, and **David Weisburd**, eds. *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*. New York, NY: Springer, 2014.\*
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11. **Chambliss, William J.**, ed. *Police and Law Enforcement*, Key Issues in Crime and Punishment 2. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011. <http://www.credoreference.com/book/sagepolice>.\*
12. **Chambliss, William J.**, ed. *Courts, Law, and Justice*, Key Issues in Crime and Punishment 3. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011. <http://www.credoreference.com/book/sagecourts>.\*
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14. **Chambliss, William J.**, ed. *Juvenile Crime and Justice*, Key Issues in Crime and Punishment 5. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011. <http://www.credoreference.com/book/sagejc>.\*
15. See table of contents in each of the five volumes in the Key Issues in Crime and Punishment series (SAGE) for complete lists of chapter titles.
16. **University at Albany, Hindelang Criminal Justice Research Center**. *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*. <http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/index.html>. Accessed June 14, 2016.\*
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\*Editor’s note: An asterisk (\*) denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.