

Northwestern University Archives
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**A Guide to Holdings in the Northwestern University Archives
Relating to Northwestern University's
SCIENTIFIC CRIME DETECTION LABORATORY**

Founded in 1929 after the notorious St. Valentine's Day Massacre, Northwestern University's Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory (SCDL) was a pioneering institution in its field. It sponsored fieldwork and research in its attempt to apply scientific methods to crime detection; through curricular programs and publications it disseminated the results of its efforts. Financial pressures forced Northwestern University to sell the SCDL in 1938 to the Chicago Police Department.

The most varied information concerning Northwestern's Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory will be found in a few of the University Archives' **general reference files** arranged under Record Group 17 (School of Law). These files include several administrative documents such as financial reports and minutes from meetings of the special committee to review the work of the SCDL. A number of clippings from local and regional publications describe the laboratory, its mission, and some of the individuals associated with the SCDL. There are as well several University publications detailing the history, physical plant and equipment, and activities of the SCDL. Some of the more useful publications are bulletins issued by the University's School of Law and reprints taken from *The American Journal of Police Science* and the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*. Of interest as well are some scattered course materials related to the laboratory's specialized curricular offerings; of particular importance due to its scope is the *Outline of Scientific Criminal Investigation* published by the SCDL (1936). Also found in the general files are clippings and pamphlets concerning police science, reports of Chicago crime, and items concerning the Chicago Police Department Crime Laboratory, the successor institution to the SCDL. Illuminating the history of the SCDL and placing it in a larger cultural context is Keith A. Barbara's master of arts thesis, "'Scientific to the Last Degree': Northwestern's Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory and the Progressive Battle against Crime" (Johns Hopkins University, 1997).

Other collections held by the Northwestern University Archives also contain material relating to the SCDL. These include:

- Volumes 1 through 3 of [*The American Journal of Police Science*](#) published by the Northwestern University Press for the SCDL. This journal addressed topics in criminology and crime detection and highlighted the work of the SCDL and its affiliates, often publishing articles by SCDL staff.
- A copy of Eloise Keeler's [*The Lie Detector Man*](#) (Telshare Publishing, 1984), a biography of the influential polygraphist Leonarde Keeler.
- General **biographical files** including clippings and related items concerning some individuals associated with the SCDL including: Calvin Goddard and Leonard Keeler.

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- The papers of [Walter Dill Scott](#). Scott served as president of Northwestern University during the period when the SCDL operated under the university's aegis. His papers include correspondence and related materials broadly concerned with SCDL administration and its relationship with Northwestern and the School of Law.
- The papers of [John Henry Wigmore](#), dean of the Northwestern University School of Law. Wigmore was an important figure in the developing field of American criminology. His papers include a few folders of pertinent correspondence including materials documenting the SCDL's establishment, its financial backing, and physical location. Also included are administrative records concerning the work of the SCDL and its involvement in selected cases. Wigmore maintained as well separate correspondence files with some members of the SCDL staff including Calvin Goddard, Fred Inbau, and Leonarde Keeler.
- The administrative records of [Leon Green](#), successor to Wigmore as dean of the School of Law. These include a few folders of correspondence and other materials including a paper on the origin and development of the SCDL and a blueprint of its proposed layout; SCDL staff member Katherine Keeler's letter of resignation; documents concerning curricular matters; and items relating to the transfer of laboratory ownership to the Chicago Police Department.
- The papers of [Fred Inbau](#), a longtime member of the School of Law faculty and an affiliate of the SCDL. Six folders of material relate to the SCDL. Included are: a transcript of Inbau's 1976 interview with Elaine Carter which touches on his relationship with Leonarde Keeler as well as his work on behalf of the SCDL and the Chicago Police Department; Inbau's second edition of the *Outline of Scientific Criminal Investigation*; a proposal to the Chicago City Council regarding the sale of the SCDL to the Chicago Police Department; an overview of the SCDL and its history and work; miscellaneous bulletins; an article on Herbert O. Yardley, an advisor on codes and ciphers; a brief biography of Luke May, consulted on the establishment of the SCDL; a letter to Leon Green concerning the removal and loss of SCDL records; and pertinent clippings.
- A videocassette recording of the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" episode of the History Channel's *Tech Effect* program (original air date: September 21, 2004). [See NU Archives Videocassette #1002 (Accession #04-157)].