



CANADIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION: Project Arachnid

A groundbreaking tool that detects images of child sexual abuse on the Internet and helps survivors put an end to the cycle of abuse

WHAT IS PROJECT ARACHNID?

Project Arachnid is a platform that involves crawling links on sites previously reported to Cybertip.ca that contained child sexual abuse material and detects where these images/videos are publicly available on the Internet. If illegal content is detected, a notice is sent to the provider hosting the content to request its removal.

WHY DID WE CREATE PROJECT ARACHNID?

Project Arachnid is a victim-centric model for reducing the availability of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on the public Internet — for both identified and unidentified victims. We know from (now adult) survivors who, as children, had their sexual abuse recorded, that coming to terms with the ongoing sharing of their abuse images and its public accessibility can be one of the most difficult aspects of the abuse to overcome.

WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE WITH PROJECT ARACHNID?

We believe the most important outcome of Project Arachnid will be the psychological relief offered to survivors that have had no control over the distribution and ongoing sharing of their recorded sexual abuse. For the first time, we are offering survivors some comfort in knowing there is a system solely designed to find and trigger the removal of this illegal content.

Day in and day out these survivors must manage the residual impact of this crime knowing their abuse has been recorded and shared online. By curbing the public availability of this content, it helps to address the very real fear that someone they know may come across an image of their abuse on the Internet.

For those unidentified children whose abuse continues or those children whose abuse has been newly identified, using Project Arachnid to detect and send notices for removal can help prevent their sexual abuse recordings from becoming popularly traded on the Internet. If content is removed quickly, it ultimately makes it more difficult to find.

HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

We have known for some time that the problem is significant and it is growing. This is based on the increase in reports handled by Cybertip.ca each year, the fact that the number of individuals charged with child pornography offences increases in Canada every year, and the collections seized have grown exponentially. Now, for the first time we are able to paint an accurate picture of the public availability of child sexual abuse material online. As far as we are aware, Project Arachnid is the only tool of its kind in the world that can accurately highlight the prevalence of child sexual abuse material on the Internet. This information will reinforce why more than ever Canada and countries around the world needs to do everything possible to address this heinous crime.

Project Arachnid is currently discovering approximately 80,000 unique images per month that require analyst assessment and this number is steadily rising each month. Analyst assessment is triggered when Project Arachnid comes across a webpage with images that are suspect in nature.

