Investigating child exploitation and pornography : the Internet, the law and forensic science

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Abstrak

Crime scenes associated with child sexual exploitation and trafficking in child pornography were once limited to physical locations such as school playgrounds, church vestibules, trusted neighbors' homes, camping trips and seedy darkly lit back rooms of adult bookstores. The explosion of Internet use has created a virtual hunting ground for sexual predators and has fueled a brisk, multi-billion dollar trade in the associated illicit material. Approximately half of the caseload in computer crimes units involves the computer assisted sexual exploitation of children. Despite the scale of this problem, or perhaps because of it, there are no published resources that bring together the complex mingling of disciplines and expertise required to put together a computer assisted child exploitation case. This work fills this void, providing police, prosecutors and forensic examiners with the historical, legal, technical, and social background for the laws prohibiting child exploitation, in particular, child pornography. The book will become an indispensable resource for those involved in the investigation, prosecution and study of computer-assisted child sexual exploitation. The book provides a history of child exploitation cases and studies, outlining the roles of technology in this type of crime and the evidence they can contain, and documenting new research performed by the authors. It details how successful undercover Internet operations are conducted, how the associated evidence is collected, and how to use the evidence to locate and apprehend the offender. The heart of this work is a legal section, detailing all of the legal issues that arise in Internet child exploitation cases. A forensic examination section presents evidentiary issues from a technical perspective and describes how to conduct a forensic examination of digital evidence gathered in the investigative and probative stages of a child exploitation case. Citations to related documents are provided for readers who want to learn more about certain issues. Actual case examples from computer assisted child exploitation cases are explored, at all times protecting the privacy of the victims while providing enough detail to educate the reader. In addition to providing guidance on the technical and legal aspects of child exploitation investigations, this work identifies and analyzes trends in this type of crime and helps readers understand the similarities and differences between child predators who take to the Internet and predators who do not. Data from the thirty Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces are compiled and reported to provide a deeper understanding of the types of cases, types of offenders and the level of danger they pose to themselves, their victims, and investigating officers. Also, sex offender data from the Offices of Attorneys General in the United States and similar offices in foreign countries are gathered to increase the study sample size, establish controls, and expand the scope of the research to outside of the United States.