UCD researchers develop low-cost crime scene evidence gatherer

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Lero researchers at University College Dublin have developed a low cost device that can help police forces in developing countries or with limited budgets to capture digital and computer data at crime scenes.

The new device called FIREBrick costs US$199 compared with commercial rivals that could cost ten times as much. Features include autonomous disk imaging at speeds of up to 5GB per minute with storage mirroring and encryption and free open source firmware.

FIREBrick is an easy to use modular platform that allows law enforcement departments to implement an evidence pre-processing solution.

The research team, led by Dr Pavel Gladyshev at the Digital Forensics Investigation Research Laboratory (DigitalFIRE) based at the UCD School of Computer Science and Informatics, is part of Lero, the Irish Software Engineering Research Centre.

"Digital data at actual or suspected crime scenes has an increasingly important role to play in building evidence against criminals or terrorists," said Dr Gladyshev.

"Our device helps law enforcement agencies access and copy data on hard discs at a fraction of the cost of commercial systems."

"At one time, fighting cybercrime was the sole preserve of specialist police squads but it has now become routine for regional and district police squads to become involved in the detection and analysis of this type of crime. But funding has not kept up with this development," said Lee Tobin a Lero researcher at University College Dublin.

"Our new device FIREBrick, which is an open source alternative to commercial hardware write blockers and disk imagers, can be assembled from off the shelf mass produced components with just a screwdriver for a total cost of around US$199 whereas a commercial system could cost up to ten times this amount," added Gladyshev, who serves on the INTERPOL steering committee on IT Crime.

Provided by University College Dublin

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