

Web crawler takes virtual bite out of cybercrime

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Simon Fraser University researcher Richard Frank is helping to take a virtual bite out of cybercrime. His web crawler, designed to track websites that exploit children, will be among the School of Criminology's demonstrations at the SFU Surrey campus Global Community Open House on March 6.

Frank developed the web crawler as a PhD student to enable researchers to collect and analyze massive web page samples—more than 200,000 at a time— while remaining "safe" from the content they are tracking.

"We've been working on a longitudinal project looking at the life-cycle of these child exploitation websites," says Frank, an assistant professor and researcher in SFU's International Centre for Cybercrime Research. "Our goal is to understand more about the sites that host this type of content, when they are created, how content shifts and how these sites evolve."

Frank's team is also using the [web crawler](#) to retrieve extremist websites. The researchers want to learn more about their recruitment process. "We're slowly moving into analyzing their forums to find interesting discussions, and explore their social networks," he says.

Visitors to the March. 6 open house will also hear from Rick Parent, an assistant professor in the school who teaches in SFU's popular Police Studies program.

The program covers everything from crime prevention and restorative justice to crime analysis and forensic studies. Courses are taught at the Surrey campus, which is also home to a new forensic criminal intelligence analysis lab. There, students are honing high-level crime investigation skills through a unique arrangement with the Vancouver Police Department. Special Constable Ryan Prox teaches the course, which has generated a long waiting list, and plans are to develop further collaborations with Surrey RCMP.

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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