

Small child walking away

INDUSTRY HASH SHARING PLATFORM

DIGITAL DEFENCE AGAINST EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

By Thorn

Project URL: wearethorn.org/reporting-child-sexual-abuse-content-shared-hash/
Project Twitter: [@thorn](https://twitter.com/thorn)

Organisation URL: wearethorn.org

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An open and free internet is simultaneously a driving force for immense good – and evil. Part of this evil is the ability to store and share images of child sexual exploitation. An organisation called Thorn is committed to leveraging technology to combat predatory behaviour, rescue victims, and protect vulnerable children. Their methods include a Task Force made up of over 20 of the world's leading tech companies and, since 2012, an innovative, shared platform that allows hosting companies to identify exploitative images.

The Industry Hash Sharing Platform uses a technique called hashing, whereby any digital file (of any type) can be boiled down into a digital 'fingerprint' – an alphanumeric series that is completely unique. Eight companies are currently signed onto the Platform, with Thorn actively onboarding more, and it has been adopted for use by the US National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).

Before the Platform, each hosting company used separate policies for identifying and removing images of child sexual abuse. Now, when a Platform participant (including Facebook, Google and more) identifies an offending image, they hash the photo and share the fingerprint with the Platform. This allows every other company to scan their databases of user- or even corporate network-uploaded files and know for certain that the exact same image will be identified. Since no file is touched or otherwise analysed, scanning privacy concerns are mitigated – you cannot work backwards from a hash to create a file.

The collaborative efforts enabled by the Platform have so far resulted in 1.2 million unique interceptions to date, and eight victims rescued. You can donate to Thorn through their website and join the fight to end the sexual exploitation of children. Just click the link above.

Image 'Walking it alone' courtesy of Lance Shields.

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