

TellFinder Automates Identification of Child Sexual Abuse Material

Toronto, Jun 7, 2020 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - TellFinder Alliance, in response to the increased presence of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) appearing in online commercial sex advertisements, has created new tools for TellFinder users to identify and report these images to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's (NCMEC) CyberTipline in seconds.

The District Attorney of New York co-founded TellFinder Alliance in 2018. Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr. has established the District Attorney's Office as a national leader in criminal justice by expanding its expertise on an array of 21st-century crimes and funding innovative tools and partnerships to address those crimes. TellFinder is a web platform that connects its users to the transitory data of the deep web where human trafficking and other crimes flourish.

TellFinder Alliance identified the potential benefit of TellFinder to locate and recover missing and exploited children and donated access to this tool to NCMEC. Since that time NCMEC analysts have been using the tool to support the recovery of missing children being exploited through sex trafficking.

In 2019, NCMEC approached the TellFinder team to discuss how to rapidly flag and report CSAM on their platform. A new process was urgently needed to achieve two things: utilize CSAM images to find missing and exploited children, but also remove these same images from the internet. For Chris Dickson, Director, Research Engineering at Uncharted Software and lead TellFinder developer, the solution was to design automation tools that would help NCMEC analysts, the TellFinder team, and law enforcement investigators. Dickson and his team enhanced TellFinder to provide automatic reporting of CSAM to NCMEC's [CyberTipline](#).

"Not only do these images document crimes being committed against children, but when they are shared online, child victims continue to be victimized each time the image of their sexual abuse is viewed," said Tiffany Henderson, Supervisor of the Child Sex Trafficking Team at NCMEC. "Adding this automation to the TellFinder tool will help decrease the circulation of these images and protect children from this re-victimization."

U.S. federal law requires that U.S.-based electronic service providers (ESPs) report instances of apparent child sexual abuse material that they become aware of on their systems to NCMEC's CyberTipline. NCMEC staff review content reported to the CyberTipline and then the reports are made available to law enforcement for their independent review. According to Dickson, "It's about ensuring our users and analysts have the tools at their fingertips to report things like this. This is stuff you hope to never come across, but it's there. You want to make the steps required to deal with it as seamless and simple as possible. Filing a report through TellFinder takes seconds and puts that information directly into the hands of professionals that know how best to handle the situation."

The automation tools could not have been developed at a better time. In March and April of 2020, NCMEC reported seeing [an increase of nearly 5 million CyberTipline reports in comparison to the same period in 2019 \(1\)](#). There were several child sexual abuse videos that went "viral" during this time and contributed to the increase, but NCMEC has also observed some increased vulnerability for children as more time is spent online during the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.

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TellFinder Alliance is a network of law enforcement, technology, research, and nonprofit partners who adapt and advance emerging capabilities in AI, data science, visual analytics, and deep web data for counter human trafficking applications. TellFinder Alliance serves over 300 law enforcement agencies around the world. TellFinder Alliance was co-founded by Uncharted Software and the District Attorney of New York.

The Office of the District Attorney of New York (DANY) is responsible for the prosecution of violations of New York state laws. The current district attorney is Cyrus Vance Jr., serving since 2010. Mr. Vance established the District Attorney's Office as a national leader in criminal justice by expanding its expertise on an array of 21st century crimes. DANY's Human Trafficking Response Unit (HTRU) is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of sex and labor trafficking cases in Manhattan. It consists of specially trained ADAs, analysts, investigators, and social workers who focus on developing proactive evidence-based prosecutions, connecting victims to services, and targeting individuals and businesses that permit trafficking to occur. HTRU works closely with other areas of the Office, law enforcement agencies, and non-profit partners to target the business mechanisms of trafficking and disgorge trafficking-related proceeds.

Uncharted Software designs, develops and deploys innovative visual analytics systems that improve analysis and decision-making in complex, fluid information environments. Uncharted solutions range from massive "big data" investigation systems to mobile real-time collaboration. Uncharted brings 25 years of creative, technical and user-centric innovation for law enforcement, intelligence analysis, defense and financial professionals. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's (DARPA) recent 60 Years retrospective identified Uncharted's Memex tools as one of just 120 seminal breakthroughs that changed the landscape of modern technology.

1 *Online Child Abuse Complaints Surpass 4 Million in April. This Is How Cops Are Coping Despite COVID-19*, Forbes, May 9, 2020 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2020/05/09/online-child-abuse-complaints-surpass-4-million-in-april-this-is-how-cops-are-coping-despite-covid-19>

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