

# NEW WAY TO FIGHT CYBERCRIME



**T**he digital age has provided unbridled access to information and exciting new opportunities for communities and businesses alike. Library and information professionals have been at the forefront of this change, with the digitisation of collections, a growing demand for ebooks and in the provision of computer and internet courses. But the rise of digital technologies has also presented a challenge in the form of cybercrime.

Cybercrime includes crimes which are directed at computers such as hacking or denial of service attacks, and crimes where computers are integral to the offence, such as online scams and identity theft. Unfortunately, the soaring use of smartphones and tablets has only increased our vulnerability to cybercrime.

The Australian Government, in consultation with the states and territories, has created the National Plan to Combat Cybercrime, which outlines a number of initiatives to address cybercrime in all its forms. A key component of the National Plan is the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN).

ACORN is a new initiative which makes it easier for people to report cybercrime, and provides a stronger mechanism for police to manage cases and identify trends.

Launched in November 2014, ACORN is a collaboration between the Australian Government and all state and territory police agencies. ACORN reports are already helping to build a much-needed national intelligence database of cybercrime, which will help build our detection and prevention mechanisms making Australia a harder target in the future.

Over 10,000 reports were lodged with the network within the first three months, which hints at the prevalence of cybercrime in Australia. The majority of complaints relate to online scams and fraud, and online trading issues affecting those who buy and sell items over the internet.

Libraries can play an important role in raising awareness of cybercrime and its prevention among the community.

Additionally, the breadth of libraries, from schools to public, and from government to corporate, all provide a means to share information among a broad and diverse section of the community. Young people are prolific users of social networks where cybercriminals can bully or harass; older Australians can often be vulnerable due to a lack of experience online; and those between 25 to 40 years are the most active in the digital economy, making them most likely to be affected by cybercrime. All of these groups turn to their libraries for advice, research and support.

Free wi-fi spots available in cafes and other public places – including libraries – are an attractive target for cybercriminals seeking to steal personal information such as passwords and banking details.

One of the most important weapons we have to combat cybercrime is not only a computer literate public but also a cyber literate public. Therefore, the training courses available at libraries offer a valuable service in educating internet users on how stay safe online, how to engage in the digital economy and how to report an incident when it occurs.

Innovative programs such as eSmart Libraries are already empowering communities with tools and resources to stay safe in the online world. The ACORN initiative complements this and other educational initiatives as a user friendly mechanism to report online crime, and to learn more about the types of activities that constitute cybercrime.

The ACORN website has valuable resources available that can be distribute throughout various channels within libraries, including PowerPoint slides that can be inserted into any computer/internet training course delivered.

With increased community awareness, and stronger reporting and intelligence frameworks such as ACORN, a rise in cybercrime can be prevented.

For more information or to download ACORN resources for your library, visit the website at [www.acorn.gov.au](http://www.acorn.gov.au).