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American Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier was born in Haverhill, Mass.

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# Web child porn fuels crackdown

## Some contend action is overkill

By Jerry Markon  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Lewd photographs of children were disappearing from adult bookstores. Child-porn magazines in plain brown envelopes were no longer reaching customers through the mail. It was the early 1990s, and experts believed that federal law-enforcement efforts were ending child pornography.

"We thought this was one of those rare forms of social deviance, of criminal behavior, that had been eradicated," said Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. "Except for a fixated group of hardcore pedophiles, we thought it was gone."

But an increase of Internet-fueled child pornography has triggered a new federal crackdown. Cybercrime, the majority of which involves child pornography, is now the FBI's third-highest priority, behind counterterrorism and counterintelligence.

In the past 11 months, federal prosecutors in Virginia and Maryland have helped convict or send to prison on child-pornography charges the former head of the Virginia American Civil Liberties Union, an Ivy League professor, a sheriff's deputy, a Transportation Security Administration employee, an Army sergeant, a former Navy cryptologist, a contractor working at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, a National Institutes of Health researcher and a U.S. Capitol Police officer.

"The problem is as bad as it appears," said Arnold Bell, unit chief of the FBI's Innocent Images National Initiative.

Some defense lawyers and treatment professionals say that the focus on pornography has become excessive. Many caught in the dragnet, they say, viewed images for their private gratification but never intended to hurt a child.

"Sending people to prison for five or 10 or 15 years for looking at pictures is killing an ant with a sledgehammer," said Peter Greenspun, who defended Charles Rust-Tierney, the former ACLU head sentenced to seven years in prison for downloading hundreds of images.

But law-enforcement officials

say Internet child pornography is increasingly sadistic and depicts young children whose victimization fuels a growing market.

Many defendants obsessively collect huge numbers of images — the FBI recently seized a computer with 1.5 million images of suspected child pornography — and many have molested children, officials say.

"You can't wrap your brain around what we're talking about here," said Bonnie Greenberg, a prosecutor in the U.S. attorney's office in Maryland. "We're not talking about a 16-year-old who looks like she could be 19. We're seeing prepubescent children who are being raped; babies, toddlers being tied up."

Researchers are trying to understand the perpetrators. Do people who view the images harbor a latent sexual interest in children that the Internet brings out, or does the Internet prompt the urges? And will they molest children?

Michael Seto, a Canadian researcher, said he thinks that an "invisible population of pedophiles" has lived in society all along but remained mostly hidden until the Internet offered relative anonymity and a community of like-minded

people.

An increase in federal cases — a 28 percent jump in fiscal 2007 from with the year before — could partly be due to a rise in the number of agents attacking the problem. "Are there more offenses, or are we doing a better job? I think it's safe to say it's both," said Drew Oosterbaan, chief of the Justice Department's child-exploitation and obscenity section.

The frequency at which people who view child pornography also molest children is highly controversial.

The only federal agency that tries to track the correlation, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, says that about one-third of the 2,713 people it has arrested since 1997 on child-exploitation charges, primarily for trafficking in child pornography, also committed "contact offenses" against children.

But some say the risk is often minimal.

"They had absolutely no idea how severe the consequences would be and had no interest in doing anything other than viewing images," said Fred Berlin, a psychiatrist who runs the National Institute for the Study, Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Trauma.