Melissa Stroebel is the Senior Program Manager at Thorn where she coordinates Thorn’s programs and research. Thorn is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing technology to defend children from sexual exploitation.

At Thorn, a large part of our work comes from informed research collected in the field, which helps our team, along with our many partners, remain on the cutting edge of technology. Recent initiatives have included: “Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in DMST”; “Sextortion: Findings from a Survey of 1,631 Victims”; and “Production & Active Trading Of Child Sexual Exploitation Images Depicting Identified Victims”.

Melissa has spent more than a decade combating the online sexual exploitation of children. Prior to joining the Thorn team, Melissa worked with the NCMEC’s Exploited Children Division conducting research, supporting technology development, and performing victim identification analyses. Melissa graduated from the University of Michigan with a bachelor’s degree in history and George Washington University with a master’s degree in forensic science.

**Keynote Presentation: Kids + Tech: Sexual Exploration or Exploitation?**

We recently completed a first-of-its-kind research study of how kids are using the internet to flirt and learn about sex, and how they view the digital threats they encounter through these experiences. More than 1400 kids and caregivers shared their thoughts and the results were enlightening. One in five girls and one in ten boys over the age of 12 have shared a naked selfie with someone, and one in three caregivers believe their child has shared a naked photo. But even with the increasing number of kids and caregivers who consider this a “normal” part of relationships, our research shows we consistently blame the victim if images are shared out without their consent.

In this session we’ll dive more deeply into what we’re hearing from kids and caregivers on this issue and share how we plan to safeguard sexual exploration in a digital age.