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NEWS

COMPUTER CRIME

Recent news stories have featured a student in the United States charged with using an international data communications network to break into some 200 computer accounts at 14 sites around the world; another student who penetrated the central memory of a company computer and erased data from it; a bank employee who opened a fictitious account in a subsidiary abroad and credited it with a small sum of money each week by manipulating a computer programme.

These are examples of what has come to be called computer "crime", though the term is sometimes an exaggeration since the act may be carried out with criminal intent but may equally be a mere show of technological prowess or even be caused by negligence

or operator error. Because intent is so hard to prove and because of the novelty of the "crime", national legal systems are ill equipped to cope with this type of crime which, as computer systems are increasingly interlinked through telecommunications networks, has taken on an international dimension.

The legal issues that arise in this new field and the way in which OECD countries are tackling them are explored in an interesting article "Computer Crime" by Martine Briat, OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry, Division of Information, Computer and Communications Policy, OECD Information Service, Chateau de la Muette, 2 rue Andre-Pascal, F 75775 Paris Cedex 16 France, (*The Oecd Observer*, No. 127, March 1984, p. 16).
