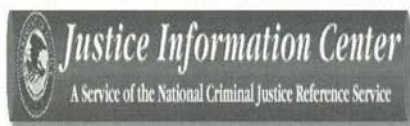


Justice Information Center. Access: <http://www.ncjrs.org/>

While complaints about junk on the Internet grow daily, one Web publisher consistently provides worthwhile content: the U.S. Federal Government. The Justice Information Center (JIC) is a fine example of how federal agencies can collaborate to provide quality information in an easy-to-use format. Maintained by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), JIC is a collection of clearinghouses from the major federal government agencies dealing with criminal justice information, such as the National Insti-



tute of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office for Victims of Crime, and Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The JIC features a number of options for those in search of criminal justice information. "New this Week" and "Current Highlights" sections draw attention to newly released reports, news releases, and grant opportunities. These sections are good starting points for tracking down reports recently discussed in the popular press. Another search option is to browse for information based on the following topics: corrections, courts, crime prevention, criminal justice statistics, drugs and crime, international, juvenile justice, law enforcement, research and evaluation, and victims.

Some topics are further subdivided. Each topic or subtopic is generally broken into three categories: full-text documents, Web sites, and listservs. Within each category, an extensive alphabetical list of links is provided. Though the full text document lists seem to be primarily government-produced reports, the Web site lists include public interest and professional organizations. Unfortunately, aside from titles, there is little other descriptive information about each link, and in some cases, in-

decipherable acronyms are used. Also, there is no information provided about the update cycle, although most lists do appear to have current information.

JIC also offers two search engines. The first, available under the "Keyword Search" button, uses Excite software to search the 1,200 full text documents available on the NCJRS server. Of note is the help screen, which not only provides instruction in constructing searches, but also explicitly states what is being searched so the user knows that PDF files are not included. The site also provides access to the NCJRS Abstracts Database, a collection of summaries of more than 140,000 publications on criminal justice, including government reports, books, research reports, journal articles, and unpublished research back to the mid 1970s. Search options include author, subject, document number, and a global search—which searches the abstract text. Results include bibliographic information and abstract, but no links to the online versions of the publications are described. Users are instructed to order documents from NCJRS, or are referred to the main JIC Web site for documents published by sponsoring agencies after 1995. A suggested improvement would be to provide links to documents directly from the database, or to at least provide more detailed instructions on locating specific documents on the JIC Web site. Despite some minor criticisms, the JIC is clearly an essential tool for locating criminal justice information on the Web and beyond. —Arlene Weible, *Willamette University*; aweible@willamette.edu

Center for Responsive Politics. Access: <http://www.crp.org/>

A hot topic in politics these days is the amount and source of funds in elections and political actions. The Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), which describes itself as a "non-partisan, non-profit research group," provides a wealth of information on campaign

Sara Amato is automated systems librarian at Central Washington University; samato@tahoma.cwu.edu



finance and related topics on their Web site. Funding for the center comes from a variety of foundations and trusts, including the

Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

This site will be beneficial to upper-level undergraduate and graduate students and instructors in a variety of disciplines, such as political science, government, journalism, and law. CRP's mission is to get citizens more involved in government and to encourage Congress to be more responsive. Topics introduced on the homepage include politicians, political action committees (PACs), individual donors, political parties, and the law and its regulations. While the focus of the site is on politics at the federal level, there is a state directory with links to each state's agencies related to campaign finance issues.

All of the databases on the CRP site are well-organized and easy to use. Users will find that the pages for each database provide many search options. For example, the Congressional Travel Database allows for searching by lawmaker, by sponsor, or by destination.

A particularly noteworthy section of the site is the "Registered Federal Lobbyist Database." Based on information from the House and Senate, this site provides searching by company name, client name or lobbyist name within data filed by those who lobby at the federal level. Other databases of interest include the 1998 Congressional Candidate Profiles database, the PAC Database, Incumbent Campaign Finance Profiles, and the 1996 White House Coffee and Sleepover Database.

To keep up with the latest campaign-finance issues, users can sign up to receive Monday Morning Alerts, which cover special-interest legislation in Washington. These alerts are e-mailed weekly at no charge.

With a lot of data to maintain, the CRP staff does an impressive job of providing reports of interest to the general public. This site would benefit anyone wanting to know who provides and receives the financing for

participating in U.S. politics.—*Doralyn H. Edwards, Rice University; doralyn@rice.edu*

AGRICOLA. Access: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ag98/ag98.html>

The National Agriculture Library (NAL) has provided a significant public resource for agricultural information by developing public access AGRICOLA, a Web-accessible version of the NAL database describing books, journal articles, and materials in a range of other formats. Web-accessible AGRICOLA is broken into two segments. The Online Public Access Catalog covers books, audiovisual materials, and serial holdings from the library's very comprehensive agriculture collections. The Journal Article Citation Index is not a citation index in the usual sense but rather a database of citations to journal articles, books chapters, and similar materials. Each segment can be searched by browsing a list of terms, by keyword or field-limited searching, or by using a quasi, command-based advanced

AGRICOLA

mode. The interface has a stripped down to basics look and the help offered is succinct, although somewhat superficial. The advanced mode in particular could use further explanation. Also, the basic keyword search (which is really a fielded search) only supports the combination of two search terms. The advanced search supports a maximum of six terms. Despite these limitations, the rather basic functionality is effective and many users may find it more than adequate for their needs.

AGRICOLA is a significant compilation of the agricultural literature, particularly that of North America. As such it is of interest to a wide range of potential users from farmers to policymakers. NAL's Web-based version makes this tool available to a much wider range of citizens than have had access in the past. While commercial systems may offer more effective or more efficient retrieval, the Web-based NAL form of AGRICOLA is fairly easy to use and is an effective way for casual users or serious researchers to identify published sources of agricultural information.—*Karla L. Habn, University of Maryland Libraries; kb86@umail.umd.edu.* ■