

Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG). *Access:* <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/>.

"SOSIG does for the Internet what a first class social science librarian might do for you at the reference desk: it selects the best resources available in particular subject areas,



describes them to you and delivers them to your desktop at the click of a mouse."

This is an official "publicizing" phrase from the SOSIG Web site. Curious about the site? Read on.

SOSIG is an Internet gateway providing access to high-quality Web resources in the areas of social sciences, business, and law. It is freely available and is part of the UK Resource Discovery Network. SOSIG reaches out to students, academics, researchers, and practitioners via its "Internet Catalogue," "Social Science Search Engine," "Social Science Grapevine," and a "My Account" customizing facility. In addition, it also provides training materials and support for users of these products.

SOSIG's main page shows the "Internet Catalogue," which provides a search and browse facility for social sciences resources that have been selected by subject experts. This catalog looks very much like a Yahoo! Subject categories listing. The subject areas available for browsing are business, economics, education, environmental sciences and issues, ethnology, ethnography and anthropology, European studies, geography, government and public administration, law, philosophy, politics, psychology, social science general, social welfare, sociology, statistics, and women's studies. Each of these provides access to thousands of resources on the Internet.

An advanced search option searches the SOSIG Catalogue and offers controlled vocabulary searching through the thesauri. The advanced mode for searching allows options for limiting the search in a particular subject area or specific field (such as title, author, keyword, URL). The user can also limit by different types

of resources (such as reports, articles, journals, newsgroups, datasets, books, government documents, etc.). Further, truncation of search terms is available, and search results are ranked in ascending order according to documents that have the most number of occurrences of the search term.

SOSIG offers three different thesauri to aid in searching. The "General Social Science Thesaurus" is developed from the Humanities and Social Sciences Electronic Thesaurus of the data archive at University of Essex; the "Government, Politics and Anthropology Thesaurus" is built from the list of subject descriptors developed by the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences; and the "Social Work and Welfare Thesaurus" is derived from Caredata from the National Institute for Social Work. These thesauri help users to execute more accurate searches.

SOSIG's "Social Science Search Engine" indexes more than 50,000 Web pages collected by Web-crawler software. Researchers will locate more resources through the "Social Science Search Engine," but the quality of the resources is less reliable and SOSIG does not provide written descriptions for the listed sites. The simple search option offers keyword searching, which also can be limited to the title or description fields or both.

"Social Science Grapevine" is the "people oriented" segment of SOSIG. Users can browse and search listings of university social science departments, résumés, curricula vitae, profiles of scholars and professors and they can check information about conferences, courses, and more. "Grapevine" is a tool for networking with fellow social science researchers.

The "My Account" feature lets you personalize SOSIG resources. It helps with current awareness, career development, and publicity of conferences and events. For example, users

Joni R. Roberts is associate university librarian for public services and collection development at Willamette University, e-mail: jroberts@willamette.edu, and Carol A. Drost is associate university librarian for technical services at Willamette University, e-mail: cdrost@willamette.edu

can post announcements and new conferences, workshops, or seminars that are of mutual interest to social science colleagues.

SOSIG is an extraordinary Web site that has successfully brought together vast resources available on the Internet in a very creative, coherent and efficient way, allowing students and scholars access to a cornucopia of social science information.—*Triveni Kuchi, Rutgers University, Libraries, kuchi@rci.rutgers.edu*

Africa Action. Access: <http://www.africaaction.org/>.

Africa Action is an organization based in Washington, D.C., that “works for political, economic and social justice in Africa. Through the provision of accessible information and analysis combined with the mobilization of public pressure [Africa Action] work[s] to change the policies and policy-making processes of U.S. and multinational institutions toward Africa.” Africa Action, established in 2001, is the latest manifestation of organizations seeking to influence U.S. policy toward Africa, incorporating three former organizations: American Committee on Africa, Africa Policy Information Center, and the Africa Fund.

When considering Web sites presenting a variety of information concerning Africa, Africa Action is a strong resource. While much of its content may appeal predominantly to activists, policymakers, and scholars of African politics, material and links to general information about Africa are included, as well. This information is also interdisciplinary, covering culture, economics, history, media, politics, public health, and religion, among other topics. Librarians, whether working in general reference or in African Studies libraries, will view Africa Action useful and worth suggesting to their patrons.

The Africa Action homepage has links to main content in eight boxes, vertically positioned with four per side. The middle of the homepage has links to recent articles and information. Near the bottom are two boxes with Africa Action’s contact information and an-

other listing the five most recent documents posted by Africa Action.

The strengths of the Africa Action site are its content, information architecture, archives, and search functions. The homepage has both a search box and two links to the site map. Perhaps the most important function of Africa Action is that they repost governmental and NGO (nongovernmental organization) policy documents emanating from or about Africa. Documents are dated and archived by country and subject.

Africa Action is currently mobilized around two related campaigns: Africa’s Right to Health Campaign (dealing predominantly with the HIV/AIDS pandemic) and debt cancellation for all African countries. Each of these issues has its own page that includes original campaign resources, reposted government and NGO documents, as well as links to related Web sites. Organizations that support these and other campaigns are listed on the “Advocacy Network” page. This includes contact action alerts, updates, event notices, and contact information of over 200 organizations participating in the Advocacy Network for Africa.

Africa Action also includes other useful sections such as “Africa Policy E-Journal” and “Africa on the Internet.” “Africa Policy E-Journal” lists government and NGO policy documents by date and topics with archival coverage to 1995. The “Africa on the Internet” page includes wonderful country-specific resources with links to documents, data, news, and other information. Country links are listed in alphabetical order and also are accessible by clicking on a map of Africa, which is broken into regions near the bottom of the page.

The only negative aspect about the site is that it is not particularly aesthetically pleasing, especially the yellowish-orange background color seen on most pages. Some pages also use a periwinkle blue for the background, making it somewhat difficult to read the black text and blue links. Africa Action uses graphics sparingly so that individuals accessing the site from locations in Africa (where Internet access is costly) will have faster loading times.

Clearly, the strength of this Web site is that it presents a large quantity of information concerning Africa in a clear, orderly, efficient, and timely manner.—*Jason M. Schultz, Northwestern University, j-schultz2@northwestern.edu* ■