

Brennan Center for Justice. Access: <http://www.brennancenter.org/>.

Inspired by the work of Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law is a nonpartisan institute focusing on issues related to democracy and justice. Founded in 1995 by family and former clerks of Brennan, the center is part think tank, part public interest law, and part advocacy group.

The goal of the Brennan Center is to “win meaningful, measurable change in the public sector,” focusing on the current programs of democracy, justice, liberty and national security, voting rights, campaign finance, fair courts, and criminal and racial justice. As the content of the Web site illustrates, the center works through the courts, legislation, and the media. Each of these areas has a section dedicated to the work the center has achieved thus far. The use of jargon is limited, making it more approachable for nonexperts.

The center provides a wide variety of materials generated by the Brennan Center staff. The blog entries written by staff, going back to 2006, vary in topic as program focus has changed over the years. The legislation section is a clearinghouse of Brennan Center legislation, while the court cases section includes case summaries and supplementary documentation such as *amicus* briefs.

The “Publications” are longer pieces available as PDFs although few have dates, making it difficult to determine the age of some of the data. “Features” has the only papers written by journalists and law professors from outside the center. The

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journal article section is the weakest having only nine articles with the most recent from 2008.

The Web site is easy to navigate because the main menu is constant, while the menu on the right changes by section. A simple search is available for the entire site, while the resources section offers browsing by topic or by release month. The look is uncluttered with a neat color scheme.

The resources found on this site would be of interest to political science students, as well as those interested in voting rights, campaign finance reform, or racial justice. The scholarship and resources from the center are well-written and researched, but students should remember the center’s commitment to advocacy.—*Kimberly Bartosz, Illinois General Assembly Legislative Research Unit, kimberlyb@ilga.gov*

Influence Explorer. Access: <http://influenceexplorer.com>.

Influence Explorer, a product of Sunlight Labs, “provides an overview of campaign finance, lobbying, earmark, contractor misconduct and federal spending data.” From its clean and uncluttered homepage, users can browse by “People” (individual donors), “Organizations,” “Politicians,” or “Industries.”

These sublevel pages contain simple lists of names, organizations, or industries, arranged highest to lowest based on dollar amount contributed or, in the case of politicians, received. These are not comprehensive lists; only the top 50 under each category are displayed, but the search box in the top right can be used to find others. Clicking on a specific name, organization, etc. leads to more detailed data for each. Data from the most recent election cycle is the default, but this can be changed to go back several years, or even decades in when available.

In the “Data” section, users can mine several categories using filters to limit results more narrowly. For example, in the “Campaign Finance” category, available filters include: “Amount,” “Cycle,” “Contributor,” “Date,” “Recipient,” “Transaction Type,” and more. The other filterable data categories are: “Earmarks,” “Lobbying,” “Grants,” “Contracts,” “Contractor Misconduct,” “EPA” (Environmental Protection Agency), “FACA” (Federal Advisory Committee Act), and “Bundled Contributions.” Upon receiving results, the option is given to either preview the data directly on the page or download as an Excel file.

Perhaps the coolest feature of the site is the “Poligrift” tool, which is hosted on a separate Sunlight Foundation Web site, poligrift.com. Poligrift allows users to paste a URL or specific chunk of text into a search box and generate a report of Influence Explorer data pertaining to any person, company, organization, or industry mentioned.

The content searched is imported to the Poligrift site, where all terms matched with data are highlighted in yellow. “The Report” on the right side of the screen displays simple pie charts with links to the full data for each.

So, where does Influence Explorer get its data? The “About” page tells that it is provided by several other prominent organizations, including Center for Responsible Politics, the National Institute for Money in State Politics, Taxpayers for Common Sense, Project On Government Oversight, as well as government Web sites, USAspending.gov, and Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO).

Influence Explorer is extremely user-friendly; its content is well-marked and clearly visible, making it simple to navigate and understand. Students of American politics and related social science fields would find it a rich lode of easily accessible money-politics data.—*Todd J. Wiebe, Hope College Libraries, wiebe@hope.edu*

Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text & Image. Access: <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/>.

The Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text & Image (SCETI) has brought together a remarkable array of images from various collections of manuscripts, rare books, and photographs made available by the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

Each collection has its own distinct Web site with SCETI as the portal to each one of them. The site provides access to more than 12,000 images, which include papyri and sheet music collections. Some of the collections include “The English Renaissance in Context,” “Horace Howard Furness Shakespeare Collection,” “Crisis of the Union: the Civil War,” and “Marian Anderson Photographs.”

The design of the SCETI site is neat in appearance and simple to use. All the information needed to find primary source material is presented clearly. The homepage includes a link to each SCETI collection, two drop down menus, and a link to the site’s search page. The homepage also has links to the News and Technical Information sections. The Technical Information section is useful for anyone interested in digitizing primary source material at his or her own institution.

For each digitized collection on the SCETI site you are given a description and a link to its individual Web site. For example, “The Lawrence J. Schoenberg” page provides links to other related online sources such as the “Medieval and Early Modern Works” and the “Schoenberg Manuscripts in Penn in Hand” collections. Each of these collections provides additional links to bibliographic information and scanned images.

The SCETI Web site is a wonderful portal for researchers seeking primary source material. This site would be particularly useful for students in the social sciences and humanities.—*Tom Sommer, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, thomas.sommer@unlv.edu* 