Where has all the data gone?
Using citizen created tools in reference, research and instruction

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Shutdown near? Have no fear – Citizen tools are near

- Agenda:
  - Explaining the data flood
  - Examples of citizen created tools
  - Learning more and keeping up
  - Participants’ contributions
Why data?

• The 2009 Obama Transparency Memorandum[^1] resulted in the creation deposit of government created data into a single access point on the data.gov portal.

• Behind this initiative is the hope that data will make government more transparent, less corrupt and create a revolution in how we govern[^2]

• In reality we have more data than we know what to do with[^3] still, our use of these sources in growing[^4]

[^1]: see reference for more details
[^2]: see reference for more details
[^3]: see reference for more details
[^4]: see reference for more details
Example I: Aggregated projects

- Influence Explorer  
  http://influenceexplorer.com/

- Congressional Data  
  http://congresionaldata.org/
Example II: LegEx.org

- Legislative Explorer [http://LegEx.org](http://LegEx.org) is an “interactive visualization that allows anyone to explore actual patterns of lawmaking in Congress.” Follow bill progress from the beginning to the end of a two year Congress.
- Filter by topic, type of legislation, chamber, party, member, back to 1973.
- Search for a specific bill or representative.
  - Creators: [John Wilkerson](http://john.wilkerson.org), Nick Stramp, Christian Marc Schmidt, and Sergei Larionov (University of Washington).
Legislator Explorer: Data Driven Discovery

A one of a kind interactive visualization that allows anyone to explore actual patterns of lawmaking in Congress.

Get the ‘big picture’
Compare the bills and resolutions introduced by Senators and Representatives and follow their progress from the beginning to the end of a two year Congress.

Dive deeper
Filter by topic, type of legislation, chamber, party, member, or even search for a specific bill.

Want to learn more about the legislative process?
The Legislative Process from the Library of Congress
Who’s your Representative or Senator?
LegSim — a student run simulation for government courses

Launch

Legislative Explorer Data Driven Discovery

113th Congress (2013-2014) Senators Representatives

Jan 02 2013

Jan 02 2013 Jan 03 2014 Jan 01 2015

Became Law

Total Bills: 0 Senate Bills: 0 House Bills: 0
Example III: Tracking the government

• **GovTrack.US**: The site helps ordinary citizens find and track bills in the U.S. Congress and understand their representatives’ legislative record.

• **Open check book**: Which government agencies spend the most money? Who is receiving that money and what are they spending it on?
Example IV: Open City

• A suite of tools for resident of Chicago: “We are a group that create apps with open data to improve transparency and understanding of our government.”
• http://opencityapps.org/

Example V: Stats America

• Your one-stop destination for economic development data sites and tools.
• Created by Indiana University's Kelley School of Business “the goal of StatsAmerica is to provide actionable data for economic developers to use in site requests, developing metrics, grant writing and strategic planning.”
Digital dust

- Be aware that many of these projects have a short shelf life for various reasons. Always check to see if the site/tool are continuously maintained and updated.
- The Sunlight Foundation regularly updates their list as project retire (ex: Docket Wrench).
- Recent causalities:
  - This We Know (http://www.thisweknow.org/): allowed users to explore government data about their community
  - Data Masher (http://www.datamasher.org/): let users mashup two different data sources and share/comment on others https://twitter.com/datamasher

GovPulse turns to dust

- GovPulse (http://govpulse.us/), a lovely, enhanced interface to the Federal Register, went dormant in Jan 2013 (still looks deceptively alive at first glance)
- Three developers Andrew, Dave and Bob won 2nd place in a Sunlight Foundation competition. Because of GovPulse, they were recruited to help design FederalRegister.gov.
Keeping up, keeping current: Updates from the federal government

• Digitalgov.gov - A service from the GSA with the mission of “scouring the innerwebs for digital info so you don’t have to. Expect posts on what government is doing in digital, general digital news, trends and issues on implementing digital for the public.

Keeping up, keeping current: Projects from an advocacy group

• The Sunlight Foundation, a non-for-profit organization “that uses the tools of civic tech, open data, policy analysis and journalism to make our government and politics more accountable and transparent to all.”
Keeping up, keeping current:

**GovLab Digest**  
(NYU & MacArthur Foundation)

- The weekly digest is an easy way to get summary information on different projects, research and other initiatives relating to transparency in governance.
- The Oct. 1 issue included items about the International Open Data Charter, Open Science revolution and more
- [Link](http://thegovlab.org/) (to digest)

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Keeping up, keeping current:

**Be Spacific**

- From the owner of LLRX, this blog provides “accurate, focused research, highlighting primary government documents from around the world” and includes reviews and many citizen created data tools
References


