Projects survey: Poligraft & Ushahidi

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Poligraft

• Build as a project by the Sunlight Foundation
• Takes a news article or a blog post and analyzes it to find the connections between the politicians, corporations, organizations, and donors mentioned in the piece
• It is based on their project Influence Explorer – a central source for data about campaign contributions, earmarks, lobbying activity, and government contracts and grants
Poligraft (cont’d)

- Data sources:
  - Federal campaign contribution and lobbying records from OpenSecrets.org
  - State campaign contribution records from FollowTheMoney.org
- Uses Calais for extracting entities (people, companies, etc.)
- Gives an overview of the influence points from the article and links towards Influence Explorer for detailed information
- Example: http://poligraft.com/iIAM
Poligraft (cont’d)

• What I like:
  • Adds context to articles
  • Makes it easy to identify connections that would be missed otherwise

• What I don’t like:
  • Doesn’t have a ranking strategy for the entities in the report

• Useful points:
  • Great example of how different projects can be connected to provide a new and interesting functionality
  • Many (accountability) projects have as a starting point the analysis of the money flow
Ushahidi

- It appeared in the aftermath of Kenya's disputed 2007 presidential election as a website that collected eyewitness reports of violence.

- Uses crowdsourcing for social activism and public accountability resulting in the first case of 'activist mapping'.

- It has been successfully used for causes ranging from violence tracking (Syria, Libya, Gaza Strip) to election monitoring (Mexico, Bulgaria, India, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon, Honk Kong, Sudan, Macedonia, ); from human rights violations (Palestine, Burma, Turkey) to relief in cases of natural disasters (Haiti earthquake, Pakistan floods).
Ushahidi (cont’d)

- It is based on 3 main functions:
  - Easy to use
  - Accessible to anyone
  - Deployable worldwide

- Information can be sent as SMS, MMS, emails, tweets or entered on a website, and in “near-real-time it is posted on an interactive map”

- The platform is easy to set up and customize; has very detailed instructions

- It is open-source and plenty of plug-ins and additions have been developed by users or volunteers

Ushahidi (cont’d)

• What I like:
  • Inexpensive (almost free)
  • Easily adaptable

• What I don’t like:
  • The verification is done manually – has resulted in the complimentary project SwiftRiver
  • Mapping of SMS messages is also done manually

• Useful points:
  • Success in crowdsourcing depends on the ease of use
  • Customizable tool resulted in larger adoption rate
  • Data visualization (mapping)
Ushahidi– Palestine crisis map
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Showing Reports from Sep 05, 2011 through Nov 05, 2011

Filter Reports By
- Category
- Location
- Type
- Media

Verification
- Verified
- Unverified

Reset all filters
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