

Govwiki.US: An Open Directory of US Local Governments

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ABSTRACT

This submission describes a new open source, open data web site we are planning to interface with Wikipedia.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

J.4 [Social and Behavioral Sciences]: Economics

General Terms

Economics.

Keywords

Open government, financial transparency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Govwiki.us is a project designed to increase citizen knowledge of US local governments – especially smaller and more obscure governmental entities, many of which do not yet have Wikipedia pages.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Source code for the project is available at <https://github.com/govwiki/govwiki-dev.us>. The implementation is available on line at <http://govwiki.us>.

By the time of the OpenSym conference in August, we expect to have loaded extended attributes for about 1000 California local governments. The data will include lists of elected officials, revenues, expenditures, employee pay and pension benefits, financial health and government performance indicators. Most of the data will be sourced from resources provided by the state government and audited financial statements prepared by each government.

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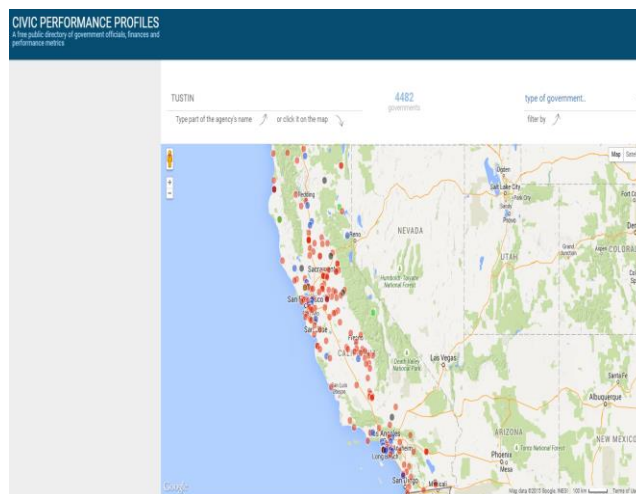
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2789853.2806213>

The site will be able to generate pages that can be automatically submitted to Wikipedia. Also, we will incorporate Wikipedia content about each government on the site. We intend to add a field to the database containing the URL of each government's Wikipedia page and then host that page in a frame (as a possible alternative, we may use an API to periodically extract data from the relevant Wikipedia page and host it on our own site).

We formulated this architecture after witnessing the failure of a previous local government crowdsource information platform, the Sunshine Review. Our belief is that the crowdsourcing of content will be more effective if it is done through Wikipedia. Potential contributors will be interested in adding content to a specialized, low traffic platform.

One alternative would have been to use the Wikidata platform rather than to create our own database. Our initial not-for-profit client requires the flexibility to rapidly change the database schema. Leveraging Wikidata would require obtaining approval to add new fields, which would have unacceptably lengthened our development process.

The first screen capture shows the main page of the system, supporting both map based selection and manual entry of government names.



The second capture – which appears on the following page - shows elected official data for one city government in Southern California. The third capture shows quality of service data such as crime rates, library opening hours and pavement condition index.

CITY OF TUSTIN

- Overview + Elected Officials
- Employee Compensation
- Quality of Services
- Financial Health
- Financial Statements

Overview + Elected Officials

Web Site Address	http://www.tustinca.org
Population	78,360
Median Individual Earnings	49,374
Median Home Price	615,500

Title: Mayor

Name: Charles E. "Chuck" Puckett

Email: cpuckett@tustinca.org

Term Expires: 2016



Title: Mayor Pro Tempore

Name: John Nielsen

Email: jnielsen@tustinca.org

Term Expires: 2016



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Quality of Services

Violent Crimes per 100,000 Population	100.00
Property Crimes per 100,000 Population	1473.00
Pavement Condition Index	86
Sales Tax Rate	8.000%
Library Hours (per week)	48.0

Our hope is that a hybrid approach of working within Wikipedia and outside of it, will maximize the contribution this site makes to citizens' knowledge of the governmental institutions that directly or indirectly touch their lives.