



Governance Studies

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Improving Federal Election Commission Website (FEC.Gov)

by Darrell M. West, Brookings Institution

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For 10 years, I have been studying federal government websites, first at Brown University and then at Brookings when I moved here last year

- good news is that tremendous progress has been made over that time period
- governments have added a great number of services, added functionality, and become easier to navigate
- but there still is considerable work to be done

Each year, we rate 61 federal agencies ranging from Cabinet departments to independent agencies

- in our last study, the Federal Election Commission site rated 48th out of the 61 federal sites
- FEC site had a total score of 40 out of 100 points (score is based on number of features and online services)
- had publications, data, audio clips, privacy policy, email, electronic updates, and online services
- lacked features such as video clips, foreign language translation, comments, personalization, PDA accessibility, and being accessible to visually impaired

Eight Specific Recommendations

- 1) improve interactive capacity for public feedback through comments form
- 2) add personalization to tailor site for voters, candidates, journalists, researchers, or students
- 3) webcast Commission hearings
- 4) add public outreach through blogs
- 5) RSS feeds for information customization (updates on particular candidates or political action committees)
- 6) non-English access (Spanish)
- 7) improve access for visually impaired
- 8) mobile access for PDAs and smartphones

Three General Comments

- 1) web architecture (front door/back door access)
 - only four percent of visitors enter government websites through front page
 - most come via search engines
 - virtue of flat architecture
- 2) importance of promoting existence of government websites and online services
 - citizens can't access unless they know sites are available
 - public service announcements and public documents
- 3) website readability
 - half of Americans read at the 8th grade or less