

Video 6: Government Content

Okay. Well I want to welcome everyone to tonight's webinar. This is your host Tony Laidig. And tonight on Public Domain Blueprint Television (Laughs), we're going to be talking about government content. And we're in for a little treat because I've talked of course previously on government content, quite in depth actually with Info Gold Extreme. But I've recently uncovered some great new websites that has some wonderful content available for us; thanks to the Federal Government; and I'm going to be sharing those tonight. Also, one of the things that I wanted to mention here as we get started ... Hmmm, excuse me. I think I ate my dinner too fast. One of the things I wanted to share here at the beginning is that the federal government has been in the process of updating and changing a lot of their websites. They've been very, very busy, not only from a restructuring perspective but from an adding content perspective as well, which of course is good for us.

Some of the news that they're making don't quite make sense to me and we'll explain and talk about some of those as we get into the webinar tonight. But for the most part, they're doing some really cool things. One of the things that I've really appreciated a lot, we were talking about in the images webinar is how they're restructuring a lot of the websites like the Library of Congress which makes searching for images and things like that a lot easier. I've also found that the National Archives has been doing the same thing. They've completely restructured the entire website. And we're going to look at that in a little bit.

Now, one thing that I will point out and we're going to discover here soon enough is what the National Archive restructuring, it's still on beta phase and it is slow. It is very, very slow. But whatever you consider it's sorting through millions and millions and millions of records, I guess it, you know, it has the right to be at least a little bit slow.

So anyway, let's jump in to what we're going to be talking about tonight. So in this webinar, we're going to be uncovering the content goad you already paid for. We're going to discuss why government content is your new best friend besides me. We're also going to look at some research strategies that reveal free content that everyone else has to pay for. Now I've had the saying, and you've probably heard me say it over and over and over again, that you can't find what you don't ever look for. And that is definitely the case when it comes to government content because a lot of people just take it at face value. Oh, well the government is printing off and is selling this book or it's available in Amazon and they cost money, therefore I must just have to buy it; when in many cases that's simply not the case. And if you know where to look, you can find it for free. And we're going to get into that a little bit tonight.

I'm also going to be sharing some of the top non-government sites for locating government content. And this plays a real key role in finding some of this content that we may need for our information products. The government has done a great job at providing some search engines. And as a matter of fact, they've been updating some of their search engines to function in a much higher level which I think is really awesome. But, there are different colleges and places

like that that pulled together and organized a lot of the government content in some unique ways that makes it easier for you and I to not only find and identify what we're looking for but to get through on them a lot more quickly. And of course money loves speed as they say. And of course, we're also going to be talking about that proverbial and never quite catching up to much, much more.

Alright so, let's keep moving because I want to get through this in a timely manner that I... And I know I say that every week. I never get it for two hours but I really want to do it this time. Alright, so, why government content ...? Well, I'm glad you asked and there's a really, really good reason for it. The biggest one is the fact that you paid for it. Now you probably heard me say this before and if you didn't then what I'm about to tell you is going to be a huge wake up call. And that is that you know normally whenever we think about paying our taxes, you know, April 15th isn't that far away. And I've learned those I'm not happy about you know tax day. But whenever we pay our taxes, we think about that money as being gone. You know if we have a day job, it's automatically taken out of our pay checks and maybe we get a little bit of that back. Maybe we don't. If we're entrepreneurs you know we're paying quarterly taxes or we're paying a year-end tax goal or however you choose to do it. And that money is gone. It's spent. We never see it again. And that's just kind of the way we've been programmed. Then of course for that tax money that we put out there, the government uses it in a lot of ways, some more unscrupulous than others.

But for those ways that we're actually aware of, they use it for programs and for developing information of all types to help the American public, or at least that's what they say. And some of the information that they provide for us actually is helpful. You know they develop programs. They develop helpful information because their job as the federal government is to do kind of the same thing that we do as marketers. We identify people's problems and then we provide them solutions. The government uses our tax dollars to provide those solutions. So if the American public is struggling with credit card fraud, or energy-efficient cars, or how to buy a home for the first time, or whatever the case maybe, or starting a small business, they use our tax dollars to develop and create information that helps us accomplish the very things that we want to do, like starting a new business. And so in a sense, they're doing a lot of the same types of things that we are. They're providing solutions to problems and they provide those solutions using our tax dollars.

Now, the beautiful thing about it is that because our tax dollars are paying for that content creation or those programs to be created or whatever the case maybe, according to law that information is in the public domain because it was paid for by our tax dollars. And we're going to get into the corporate law here in just a little bit. But just, it goes pretty much without saying that in the end, all of this information that our government is developing for us, we have a free and legal, excuse me, legal right to use it to create our own information, products or hyper products and all of these types of things that we've been talking about over the last several weeks because in effect, you and I paid for the development of that content. And that's an awesome thing.

The other thing that I love about government content is that you get the best of both worlds, meaning that not only do you gain access to a lot of historical content. Because you figure you know the United States has been in existence for what, 230 years, several years. You know we've been around a little while. That's super long compared to some countries. But so we have access to that historical content and there's a lot of it. But also, we gain access to current content. And depending on the types of products that you want to develop in the niche that you're working in, you may need current content. And by current I mean like relevant topics that people are looking for solutions for today.

And so when it comes to product development, product creation, of course we've really covered the gamut over the last several weeks, where we focused on products and content types that will allow us to create all sorts of things, from t-shirts and posters to clothes and Kimberly books and all that kind of stuff. And of course, depending on the types of information and products that the public is looking for, that can in some cases draw on historical content but also current content as well.

Thomas asked a really good question. I'm going to answer right now. And I've planned on mostly answering questions at the end. But if I see one come across that's relevant at the moment, I'll address it right then. He asks, "When you say government, do you mean the US government only or all governments around the world?" And that's an awesome question. What I'm primarily going to be talking about is US government, the US federal government, okay? The laws are different in every country concerning government content. So what I'm going to be sharing with regard to the US federal government, that may not be true for, well it isn't true, or may not about it. It's not going to be true for the Canadian government or for the government set up in the United Kingdom or in other countries.

Now, if you live in another country apart from the United States, what I'm teaching is still going to be relevant to you just like all the other public domain content that we've talked about because you can develop products using US government content and just keep those products technically here in the United States. And the way you do that is like I've shared before where you use US based hosting companies, US based payment processors. So technically, the content never leaves the United States, unless somebody from overseas buys it. But you know, so it's kind of a, an end around a very legal ... We're not talking gray out of black out here. This is all above the board and legal. But the government content that we're primarily focusing on is US federal government under US copyright laws. And I've said this before and now I'll just say it again just for the sake of, for the sake of completeness. And especially since we're talking about federal government content is that I am not a copyright attorney nor do I play one on Facebook or television. I do have a copyright attorney on a retainer that I work with. And every once in a while I'll send him some questions and he so kindly answers them. But what I'm sharing is the knowledge that I've obtained over working with public domain content for the last 5 or 6 years. And actually I worked with it much longer but online, I've been on line the last five or six years with it. And so as a result, I've picked up a thing or two. And I spent a lot of time learning and understanding the law. And so what I'm sharing is based on that wisdom and experience, okay? So I'll just share that. In other words, this is for entertainment purposes only. Please secure a legal counsel if you need to do that. (Laughs)

Okay. Alright, let's continue. Another thing that's great about government content is that it's available in all forms of media. And what I mean by that is that you may find web base content or you might find the content in books. You'll find images. You'll find audio, video. Every type of media that you could imagine, the US government has content available in those mediums which is great. Because depending on the types of products that you're developing, you may need different types of content. You may need video content or text-based content. And it's most likely that a lot of us are primarily going to use text-based content and that's fine. They have tens of millions of pages of it, you know. So, we definitely have a lot of opportunity there.

Also, this content then is being created, that we're using and accessing, has been created by top specialists, professionals, you know, the brightest minds that might come by, so to speak because ... I'm going to say this as a rhetorical statement. The government doesn't hire dummies. (Laughs) That may or may not be true. But whenever they're developing programs and information for the American public, they're looking to the best and the brightest minds and the most relevant current information available. So, for the most part, we are gaining access to information that is proven. (Laughs) Bob says now they (Inaudible – 15:05) for them. Yeah, that's ... Yeah. I'm not going to turn this into a political debate although it's tempting. But anyway, let's just say (Laughs) that for the most part, the content that we paid for has been written by some pretty smart people who for the most part know what they're talking about. And that's good for us because we want good quality content that's going to provide value for the end user, okay?

Alright, now, let's take a look a little bit at the types of government content. And this is more like from a copyright perspective, okay? I just want to throw this in here so that we have an equal footing on what we're talking about. So first of all, content that's produced by federal employees in the course of their regular duties is considered in the public domain. And the reason why it is is because their paychecks are paid by our tax dollars, okay? And so since we paid for them to do their thing, the content that they produced doing it is in the public domain, alright? And also, any content that's paid for by taxpayer dollars is in the public domain. Like, I'll give you for instance, the photos taken by the Hubble. Okay, so that's not necessarily some dudes snapping their camera. Well I guess there is but a lot of it is handled by computers. But because the Hubble was built using taxpayer dollars, and all of the different technicians and everyone are being paid for by tax payer dollars, the content that's created by the Hubble is in the public domain. And NASA is very clear in stating that on their websites, okay? So those photos that you know, the real gorgeous, deep space photos that it of all the different places out and about the universe, those photographs are in the public domain. And that's just one small example, okay, out of tens of thousands of different options and opportunities that are available to us.

And now what I will say just because it was brought up earlier is that in each country these laws are going to be different. And so we're focusing on US, US laws. So this is it in a nutshell.

Now, there are a couple of things that I want to point out here. One of the things that the US government is very good at is identifying what content is and is not in the public domain. In other words, not every federal government website that you go to is going to have exclusive

content that's in the public domain and nothing else. There are websites out there that actually have content that is not in the public domain. And usually where that comes from is that in some cases our government does just like we do. They form joint venture projects where they partner with a private company or university or some places like that, and the information is generated from that joint venture, is protected by copyright in many cases because it involves private individuals. And so a lot of that research wasn't necessarily paid for by our tax dollars. And so as such, some of that content is not available to us. But the US government is very good at identifying those pieces. Excuse me. And so in some cases you may go to a government website and you'll see where perhaps some of the content is indeed of a public domain like for instance, the copy on the website. But you'll notice next to a photograph that's illustrating what the copy is talking about, there might be a little disclaimer, you know, copyright Getty Images or something like that. Because in some cases the federal employees will pull stock photography down from the stock sites just like we do, and those images are not in the public domain. They're protected by copyright. But the government will state if something is protected by copyright. They will let you know.

Now one thing that I found is that whenever they reveal what the policy is on that particular website for you know whether something is in the public domain or not... I'll show you an example too here in a little bit. You have to dig for it sometimes. Sometimes they'll have it in the proxy policy or the usage policy or copyright page. Usually what I'll do if a government site has a search engine, I'll type in "public domain". And it'll search that specific site and it'll bring up the page or talks about the content. And I'll show you. I'll show you how I do that here in a little bit.

Okay, let's talk a little bit about where to find this government content. And I'm going to get down to a list of sites and then we're going to jump over to the net and look at some of this. I want you to have the list because there are some new ones on here that I've not talked about before. But once we get to the list, we're actually going to go and look at some of these sites. And I'm going to show you why they actually made it on my list.

Now, there are literally tens of thousands of websites that the government has. And so I'm obviously not going to list all of those. I'm just going to point out some of the best government sites and non-government sites that will work together to help us find the content that we want, okay? And one of the thoughts that just popped into our mind, and I showed the site earlier. And it just did occur to me, is that we're talking about federal government content here, okay, not state government. Some state government content is in the public domain; a lot of it is not. And again, their websites will tell you if it is or it isn't. Okay.

So the first site that I want to talk about, and I'm just going to talk about it briefly because I've spent a lot of time in the past sharing on this site, is USA.gov. And this is a central hub site for the federal government. And actually you know I'm just going to bounce back and forth between some of these sites as we're talking. Let's see... Actually I don't think I have USA up. If we go to USA.gov, this is kind of like the central hub of information. And one of the things that I like about what they've done with this site now because they've heavily updated it within the last 6 months or so is that they've made it even easier to find information than what they have

in the past. Of course you know you have the search engine. We'll talk about that a little bit. And you can see here where there is actually ... The search that they're doing now is more on trends than literal keywords. I mean you still type in your keywords but the topics and results that they're showing you are based more on trends, the most popular trends, which is kind of cool. They also have some very targeted, focused information based on who you are you know. So here you see information on militaries, or for military veterans, for businesses and nonprofits, so on and so forth. We can explore topics. They have this nice little drop down. So like if you're in the health and nutrition market or the money and taxes market, we can just scroll right down here and hit "money and taxes" and then it breaks it down even further. So let's say we want information on, oh I don't know... consumer protection. So you click on that and it breaks it down even further. And so it gives you online tools. It gives you information like the Consumer Action Handbook or how to be a smart consumer. So we can click on that and then it just keeps drilling it down further and further. So it allows you to do exploratory discovery if you will, in finding content that way. And that's one of the things that USA.gov was good for. They also have this search engine of course and so we could type in our keyword that way. And I could type in "consumer". We're going to look at that here just a little bit.

The next item I want to tell you about is the National Archives site and that is found on Archives.gov. And if we go there, this is what you'll find. And what you would primarily want to focus on in finding content here is right here – "Research Our Records". So if we clicked on that, you notice that they give you a couple of options. But one of the things that I want to draw your attention to is this little link right here. This is a brand new thing that they just started developing - Online Public Access, and it taps into all their different records. And there are three or four different types of searches that you could do here and they've centralized everything. You can do an advanced search if you want to, that allows you to get very specific one, what types of records you want to find. But one thing that I found is that, here's ... This tells you the different databases that you're accessing - the archival research catalogue, archival databases, archives.gov, electronic records archive. So these are all rolled into this. They used to all be separate, okay? So like if we wanted to find information on Native Americans like Indians, okay, we could type in "Indians" and hit "search". And what I found is, and you're going to see it here because I'm just going to let it go, is that it takes a while. This is a very slow search engine and in more times than a lot I found that it actually times out but whenever it times out it still gives you access to the records. They got ways to go to develop it. But it's also sourcing tens of millions of records and I think that's one of the reasons why it takes so long. So we should have like background music playing, you know like Jeopardy or something. (Laughs) But anyway, so it will return results to us. So while it's still thinking about it, let's go on to the next one and we'll come back to it.

Okay, the next site that I want to mention, I'm not going to go to them. We've talked about it during the images time. So, I mean that's a Library of Congress site. And on the Library of Congress site of course you find a lot of historical information and pretty much every medium there in demand. They have it all. And they've really done an excellent job at reorganizing a lot of that to make it easier to find.

FedWorld.gov is another great site to look at. Oh it looks like we may have some results here. Okay. So let's close this. And so you can see here that they give us information from three different areas – online holdings, description only and authority records. Okay? Now, most of these, most of our primary information would come from the first one, although I've found that in the other areas, there's a lot of information too. Now, we are dealing with archives which usually mean older materials. And you can see here where we can refine by date and it tells you the different dates and where that information is coming from. So a lot of these are older. We're not showing all of it of course. But you can see here they've also done an excellent job where we can refine. So if we want just videos, we can choose moving images. If we're interested in maps, we could just choose that; sound recordings, text records, so on and so forth. Also file types, if we only want to show PDFs. They provide us a link with that. So you can see what they've done... a really good job. I think they'll eventually get things searching in a much faster level. But what's really cool is that once you get these initial results here, you can click "view online holdings" and it'll bring up all the records. And this one tends to be a little bit faster than the initial search as you can see.

And so we did a search for Indians. You can see where we have a number of PDFs of the Indian School of Journal. So just for (Inaudible – 29:11) let's just pick one. That's where we're going to put the first one. There are 37 hundred results. And so you know very basic information. So we can actually just click on that or download that. And this is the January 1905 edition. Now, it's a pretty big file which means that this is a high resolution PDF which is good news for us if we wanted to use some of these content, say some of the image content out of it or whatever, or if we need to do run OCR on the document like we've talked about in the past. One thing that I have appreciated about the government is that a lot of their scanning efforts, they do an excellent job at doing things very high resolution which is good for us. And actually I'm going to let that load. We'll come back and take a look at it.

Let's take a quick peek, while that's loading at FedWorld, so FedWorld.gov. Now FedWorld works a little bit different than USA.gov in that their information is a little bit more focused in specific types of content. A lot of it is related to the NTIS which is the National Technical Institute. So we're dealing with more... National Technical Information... I'm sorry. Information Service.... So we're dealing more with technical information that's available here. Now one of the things that you'll notice is that I found that a lot of these sites like FedWorld, they're in a transitional stage, okay? So you notice that we can still do a search and the search is primarily of NTIS stock of... But for now that FedWorld is still a central hub.

Let's go back to see if our... Yeah. Here's is our PDF. So here is... It essentially is a little magazine that was turned back in the day for (Inaudible – 31:48) schools like in Carlisle which was about 20 miles from me. The Carlisle would be, in schools is probably the best known or one of the best known. And so these are very high resolution images that of course we can download to PDF if we wanted to. Like if we wanted nice illustrations of some of the native chiefs here, we'd be able to grab them right out of the book. And some of the content, I mean I'm obviously scrolling quickly so I'm not reading it. But if we were working on information or products for this particular market, for the Native American market, this could be a great source of content for us, okay?

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Alright so, let's go back to the beginning here.

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