

US Election 2008 Web Monitor: Analyzing Trends in the Political Coverage of Online Media

(Vienna, 13 Dec 2007). Eleven months prior to the US Presidential Election 2008 and in time for the upcoming primaries, a team of European researchers has released a new Web analysis system to track the candidates' performance on the campaign trail. Weekly snapshots of Web coverage reveal regional differences and contrast the perceptions of news media, companies, bloggers and environmental organizations. Besides tracking recent developments, users can also cast their votes for their preferred candidates.

www.ecoresearch.net/election2008

Project spokesperson, Prof Arno Scharl of MODUL University Vienna, outlined how the interactive Web site gives a unique view of the diverging perceptions of different interest groups. "There have been many attempts at monitoring the campaign performance of presidential candidates, but most of them focus on public opinion rather than on online media coverage," he said. "Our Web site provides this information at the touch of a button." Launching the Web site, Prof Scharl described the underlying method and presented interactive visualizations that allow a closer examination of the gathered data. Information landscapes, geographic maps, ontology graphs and tag clouds help understand complex semantic relationships.

The project analyses the Web sites of the Fortune 1000 (the largest US corporations ranked by revenue), 50 environmental organizations, 1000 popular blogs on political issues, and international media from the US, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Processing these sites yields more than 800,000 documents each week. An automated process identifies attention by counting references to a candidate. It measures sentiment towards the candidate by looking for positive and negative expressions that co-occur with these references. Keyword lists reflect the most important topics associated with the candidate.

The US Election 2008 Web Monitor is part of IDIOM (Information Diffusion across Interactive Online Media; www.idiom.at), a two-year research project funded by the FIT-IT Semantic Systems program (www.fit-it.at) of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology in cooperation with the Austrian Research Promotion Agency. The project is jointly pursued by MODUL University Vienna, Vienna University of Economics & Business Administration, Graz University of Technology and three industry partners (Gentics, Austria.info and Prisma Solutions).

Web Site: www.ecoresearch.net/election2008
Press Material: www.ecoresearch.net/election2008/download

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