Apture Increases Congressional Transparency

August 12th, 2009 — Scott Hartley

This week the burgeoning Silicon Valley start-up Apture announced further media integration possibilities by adding Google Street View to its suite of integrated multimedia options. Apture enables website publishers to add depth to pages and easily surface hand-selected information to elucidate points and add clarity to journalism. These links allow publishers to incorporate multimedia links – Wikipedia, photo, video, audio, or map – that can improve accountability. Though many records are “public,” current access requires a skill and patience many lack. As “Aptures” on the net become more prevalent, their hope is that transparency and access to information will improve.

As used by the New York Times, BBC News, Washington Post, and Reuters, Apture efficiently enables media outlets to surface contextual information, and allows users to better understand issues. For example, Washington Post uses Apture to efficiently reveal Senator voting and disclose financial records. Apture is attempting to facilitate the exposure of public information hidden in hard-to-
access formats. U.S. Congressional votes, financial records, and floor speeches are publicly available, but tedious to access. Using C-SPAN closed captioning data, Apture allows publishers such as the Washington Post to highlight debate, hand-select specific videos of House or Senate floor speeches, and even specify video start-times to pinpoint exact issues. With health-care bills that are 1,000 pages long, such specific references become increasingly relevant and useful for anyone seeking fact over anecdote.

As the Obama Administration and members of Congress attempt to reform the American health-care system, perhaps tools such as Apture can enable prominent media outlets and citizen journalists alike to surface relevant information with fluidity. In fact, last week Tech President aptly utilized Apture embeds to surface a White House memorandum from Peter Orzag at the Office of Management and Budget and John Holdren at the Science and Technology Office calling for greater use of technology to solve tomorrow’s problems.

Update: A reader corrects us; it is actually Washingtonpost.com that collects the data used by Apture in the Congressional voting record example above, which is available here. A great project.

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Posted in Tech Tools. 2 Comments »

2 Responses to “Apture Increases Congressional Transparency”

1. Bob Greiner Says:
   September 4th, 2009 at 9:17 am

   The Congressional votes data is actually provided to Apture by washingtonpost.com. It is compiled by us from original sources, databased and displayed here.

2. idteam Says:
   September 4th, 2009 at 9:34 am

   Noted, thanks for the correction Bob.

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