JEWISH POLITICAL STUDIES ON THE INTERNET

Heidi Lerner

This column reviews the most useful and reliable Internet-based resources available to scholars and researchers of Jewish political studies to supplement their teaching and assist them in their research. These include political science and Judaic information portals and subject directories, discussions lists, the Web sites for a variety of research centers and other organizational bodies, online indexes and catalogs, full-text books and journals, audiovisual materials and statistical data.

Gateways

Subject directories (also known variously as gateways or portals) organize Internet sites into subject categories, provide links to the sites and sometimes offer reviews. The quality and currency of these directories are only as good as their creators. The subject directory "Politics: General Israel/Jewish Politics, Israel/Arab Relations" (pages.videotron.com/jackross/jt-politics.htm) offers a comprehensive list of Web resources relevant to Jewish Political Studies. It provides links to Web sites on general Israeli and Jewish politics, Israeli elections, and Israel-Arab relations. The Israel Government Gateway (www.gov.il/firstgov/english) provides easy-to-use and quick access to most government agencies and to an array of public affairs documents. (This and all subsequent Web sites were accessed August 1, 2006, unless otherwise noted.)

Listservs and Discussion Lists

Many scholarly and disciplinary communities sponsor online discussions groups called listservs. These are e-mail-based groups that academics use to discuss topics, look for help and exchange information, announce conferences, fellowships, and job opportunities, and review books and scholarly literature. The H-NET (Humanities and Social Sciences Online, h-net.org) discussion network sponsors two groups that scholars of Jewish political studies should be aware of: H-Judaic (h-net.org/~judaic) which is the most active scholarly electronic discussion for Jewish studies and Judaica, and PSRT-L (Political Science Research and Teaching List, h-net.org/~psrt).

Think Tanks and Research Organizations

Jewish political studies scholars depend on university research centers and governmental and nongovernmental public policy institutes as resources for their research and teaching. These organizations and bodies study current policy issues and distribute their findings via working papers, reports, current and archived media summaries, conference proceedings, monographic series, journals, and print and nonprint ephemera. Digital versions of many of these are posted at Web sites hosted by a particular center or organization. Scholars and researchers need to be very careful with this information, since unreliable, inaccurate, biased, and sometimes totally incorrect information is often posted on seemingly authoritative Web sites. Think tanks that appear to function as centers for research and analysis may be little more than public relation fronts for special-interest groups that are funded by private businesses and foundations.

Some of Israel's major universities host research centers that conduct policy-relevant research as it relates to Israel's national security and foreign policy. These include the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University (BESA, www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa); the Harry S. Truman Center for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University in Jerusalem (truman.huji.ac.il); the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University (www.tau.ac.il/jcss); the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (atar.mscc.huji.ac.il/~davis); the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University (www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter); and the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University (TSC, www.tau.ac.il/peace).

Several research institutes in Israel and the United States link the political and academic spheres. The Israel Democracy Institute (idi.org.il), the Jerusalem Center for

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Public Affairs (jcpa.org), the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (vanleer.org.il), the Israel Policy Forum (israelpolicyforum.org), the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI, ipcri.org), and the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies (taubcenter.org.il) are independent and nonpartisan.

Scholars can go directly to the Web sites of the various institutes for the available content. But they benefit when access to these materials is improved. Web-based open access archives are not simply collections built for browsing but also serve as open data sources for powerful, automated independent services such as search, aggregation, and impact measurement. Political Research Online (PROL, allacademic.com/one/prol/prol01) is a repository for political science research. It includes conference papers, and emerging scholarship. It is also a "one-stop shopping place" for papers available through research and policy centers. Search options include subject, abstract, author, title, and full-text.

In addition to the usual array of materials, many of these institutes have unique collections. The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs has an extensive online library of the written works of Founder and President of the Center Daniel J. Elazar (1934–1999, jcpa.org/djeindex.htm). The Harry S Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace issues the results of a number of Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Polls at its Web site (truman.huji.ac.il/projects.asp).

Multimedia (Sound and Visuals)
Many research centers sponsor forums, lectures, discussions, and conferences. The traditional method for accessing presentations has been conference proceedings and audiotapes. However, these may have copyright and distribution issues. Many organizations, institutions, and government bodies

Screenshot of the Daniel Elazar On-Line Library, www.jcpa.org/djeindex.htm. Courtesy of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

now use webcasts to distribute lectures and conference proceedings via Web servers. These "cyberlectures" enable distant viewers to "attend" a conference or forum. The Israel Democracy Institute often broadcasts its events live. The Web site offers a list of webcasts of forums, conferences, and lectures in Hebrew and in English. The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute has an online collection of unedited video recordings of conferences going back to 1993. The United Nations maintains a Web site of webcasts of UN events that relate to the Israeli-Palestine conflict (www.un.org/webcast/ sc.html). "Live from the Knesset" (knesset.gov.il/broadcast/eng/scree n_eng.asp) broadcasts when the Knesset is in session.

The best way to locate archived webcasts is through the use of directories or searchable Web sites that point to well-indexed archives of available webcasts. The "Jewish Webcasting Guide" (jewishwebcasting.com) lists more than 350 webcasters and provides Web links and detailed descriptions of the content. It also categorizes the webcasters by subject areas, offers a search capability, and includes information about how to use webcasting software.

The Online Speech Bank (americanrhetoric.com) has more than 5000 links to full text material, and audio and video files of speeches, sermons, debates, lectures, forums, and other recorded media events and is growing all the time. This site directs users to the Web site of the Prime Minister of Israel's office.

Other types of sound and visual files are available that supplement textual material. Political science scholars should not ignore Web exhibits. The Jewish Women's Archive recently mounted Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution (jwa.org/feminism). This online exhibit offers well-indexed and valuable primary source image, visual, and audio content to highlight the contributions of American Jewish women to the women's movement.

The Israel Government Press Office (147.237.72.31) has made its national photo collection digitally available. Photos can be downloaded in a low resolution and are available for personal, non-commercial use only. It is possible to order quality high-resolution photographs from the collection for a fee.

The University of Texas Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collections (www.lib.utexas.edu/maps) holds an extensive collection of Middle East maps. Most of these were produced by the Central Intelligence Agency. The majority of the images are JPEG images within the 200K to 300K range, however, some of the images are quite large.

Full-text Databases, Journals, and Books

Commercial and noncommercial suppliers provide subscription-based and open access to full-text journals, books, and working papers that are useful for scholars. Access to current and retrospective offerings is available via a variety of search options. Stanford University has partnered with ebrary™ to offer full-text searching and retrieval on electronic books. ebrary has a number of services that enable users to locate and use books relevant to their research. Search criteria include the Library of Congress (LC) Subject Headings, which is the main list of subject terms used for cataloging books in the United States. Library of Congress subject headings for Jewish political studies include "Judaism and politics" (with various subdivisions); "Jews—[Geographic subdivision option]—Politics and government;" "Political aspects" under individual Jewish sects (i.e. Orthodox Judaism—Political aspects); and "Israel—Politics and government."

Some Jewish political studies-oriented, full-text electronic journals (e-journals) are available freely on the Web or via subscription. The Jewish Center for Public Affairs Web site has placed the entire run of *Jewish Political Studies Review* (free access) on its Web site. The Shalem Center (shalem.org.il), a research institute in Jerusalem plans on making all the issues of *Hebraica Political Studies* available full-text online. Currently, articles from volume 1 can be accessed at the journal's Web site. *Azure*, the quarterly journal of the Shalem Center has created a free electronic archive of all of its current and retrospective issues.

Scholars also need to access broader scoped political science e-journals. The SAGE Full-Text Collection for Political Science (available by subscription, www.csa.com/factsheets/sagepol-set-c.php) includes twenty-four peer-reviewed journals going back almost a quarter of a century. A search using the descriptor "Jews, Jewish people" retrieves seven journal articles.

Expanded Academic ASAP (available by subscription) is a general periodical index offering some full-text content with varying coverage from 1980 through the present. A search string "(Jew* or Judaism) and politic*" and limited to refereed and full-text citations retrieved 663 hits. In Israel, RAMBI (free access, jnul.huji.ac.il/rambi) and Index to Hebrew Periodicals (available by subscription, libnet1.ac.il/~libnet/ihp/ihp-eng.htm) both direct researchers to full-text articles in Jewish Political Studies: a simple keyword search in the Index to Hebrew Periodicals combining the terms "טקסט מלא" and "ופוליטיקה" brought 214 hits; combining the keyword "full text" and subject term "politics" yielded twenty-five results in RAMBI. (Search results above from July 10, 2006.)

Statistical Data

Several social science data and statistical services maintain Web sites that offer online data files and documentation. The Mandell L Berman Institute–North American Jewish Data Bank (NAJDB, jewishdatabank.org) provides social and demographic data on the Jewish community in the United States. The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA, thearda.com) offers datasets for the study of religion. The State of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics Web site (cbs.gov.il) makes available statistical information about the population, economy, and society of Israel.

What's New?

The newest form of Internet-based resources has been the exponential emergence of weblogs (commonly referred as "blogs"). These cannot be ignored. Academics can find the creation of a blog tempting. Blogs offer political scientists an opportunity to put forth one's own perspective on current events. They can be used as teaching tools and reach a far-ranging readership. But the medium is too new to permit one to say whether or not it will emerge as a serious academic tool.

This article describes some of the online resources that are useful for Jewish political studies researchers and teachers. But digital technologies are evolving so quickly that scholars who are busy familiarizing themselves with what is out there now also need to utilize their knowledge and initiative to help plan for what lies ahead.

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