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ADVISOR REVIEWS—COMPARATIVE REVIEW

Opposing Viewpoints in Context (Gale) and Points of View Reference Center (EBSCO)

doi:10.5260/chara.17.1.5

Opposing Viewpoints in Context Composite Score: ★★★ 3/4
Points of View Reference Center Composite Score: ★★★ 1/8

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Abstract
This article provides a comparative review of Points of View Reference Center (POV) and Opposing Viewpoints in Context (OVIC). Both databases are designed to introduce users to current events, social issues, and controversial topics and provide further sources for essential research. POV and OVIC are ideal for high school and undergraduate students with developing research skills.

Pricing Options
Gale’s Opposing Viewpoints in Context bases the price on the type of institution and size of the population served; pricing for OPIC starts at $1,736 for a one-year subscription. Consortia discounts are available (Massari, 2015).

EBSCO’s Points of View Reference Center offers tiered pricing beginning at $3,000 for academic libraries, and $1,350 for high schools annually. Consortia discounts are available (Heindl, 2015).

Product Description
Points of View Reference Center and Opposing Viewpoints in Context both offer resources on current events, controversial topics, and popular social issues. The databases both provide cross-curricular topics and information to identify the curriculum standards covered. POV and OVIC are designed for high school or undergraduate student use. The content is ideal for controversial topic papers, pro/con papers, and offers value as an initial database to explore when selecting a topic for research. With both databases users are able to learn about multiple sides of a topic, and identify additional literature for further research. Both databases offer standard tools for printing, e-mailing, and creating citations. There are no special requirements for the user other than perhaps a password if a proxy server protects the database.

POV and OVIC offer a title list for subscribers detailing multiple publishers. POV includes publishers such as Great Neck Publishers, CQ Roll Call, NPR, government documents, and leading political magazines, newspapers from Tribune Content Agency, primary source documents, etc. In total, POV covers 370 topics with 1,600 main topical essays, and over 1,000 primary documents (<https://www.ebscohost.com/titleLists/pwh-coverage.pdf>).

OVIC offers publications primarily from Gale and Greenhaven Press plus newspapers and periodicals such as National Review, New York Times, Washington Post, Commentary, and CNN Wire. OVIC offers 19,600 pro/con viewpoints, 13,000 topic overviews, 12,500 charts/graphs/statistics, and over 300 profiles of federal agencies and special interest groups (see <http://solutions.cengage.com/InContext/Opposing-Viewpoints/>).

Critical Evaluation
EBSCO’s Points of View Reference Center interface offers a simple display with featured topics prominently displayed at the top and below an alphabetical list of topics to browse. The main interface is un-

“At a Glance” Comparative Review Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposing Viewpoints in Context</th>
<th>Points of View Reference Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composite: ★★★ 3/4</td>
<td>★★★ 1/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content: ★★★★</td>
<td>★★★ 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Interface/Searchability: ★★★ 1/2</td>
<td>★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing: ★★★ 1/2</td>
<td>★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Options: ★★★</td>
<td>★★★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cluttered and simplified, almost stark in appearance due to excessive white space (Figure 1). POV is easy to navigate. Users can browse the provided list of topics, or select a Show All link to view a complete listing of topics available.

The opening page offers a feature titled In the Spotlight highlighting a specific topic or current event; on May 5, 2015 this topic was “Paying College Athletes.” Users are able to read more about the highlighted feature by selecting the hyperlink below the introductory paragraph. It would be helpful for student researchers to have access to more than one In the Spotlight topic, as an avenue for generating topic or research ideas. In addition, the opening page displays images about information titled In the News. These images, which change frequently, provide a link below directing the user to a topic page. On May 5, 2015 the In the News images were as follows: concussions in pro sports, body image & the media, gun control, bottled water, global warming, funding for the arts, media bias, homeland security & civil liberties, HPV vaccine, and intelligent design. The In the News section appears to be geared toward popular topics for undergraduate students rather than current event information.

While POV is easy to navigate from the main page, users are required to click on multiple links to locate all information on a topic. Once a user locates a topic page of interest, they are provided with one Point and one Counterpoint essay. Additional links are provided in the margin for related information on further viewpoints, and more sources such as newspapers, magazines, journals, books, primary documents, etc. Unfortunately, the design is clumsy and may result in users not exploring the full range of information available.

Supplementary features are Research Guides offering help with writing position papers, developing arguments, and debating topics. The guides are well written and provide valuable information for student assignments. Articles also offer an audio player allowing the user the option to have the item read to them. POV offers a mobile user interface that does not automatically scale to the device so users must adjust their screen in order to view POV based on the screen size of their tablet or phone.

Gale’s Opposing Viewpoints in Context offers an attractive, engaging interface that is graphically appealing. While the main page is more complex than EBSCO’s POV, it is nonetheless easy to navigate and well organized. Similar to POV, users can browse the provided list of current topics, or select Browse Issues to view an alphabetical listing of all topics (Figure 2).

OVIC’s opening page provides spotlighted issues, selected topics, featured news, and a featured video, which change regularly. On May 5, 2015, the Featured video is the Boston Marathon bombing trial. Featured news included Commentary magazine’s “Gay marriage: The courts & federalism;” NY Times’ “The quest for transgender equality;” USA Today’s “Devastating injuries tarnish NFL’s glamorous image.” The OVIC opening page also displays rolling images of current topics. On May 5, 2015 the images were the Nepal earthquake, Presidential election candidates, Baltimore rioting, and the Apple watch.
TABLE 1  Comparison of Topic Coverage: Capital Punishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OVIC</th>
<th>POV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic Page</td>
<td>Introduction to topic plus organized categories with additional information</td>
<td>Explanation of topic; requires additional clicks for more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Featured Viewpoints</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoints</td>
<td>296</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Journal Articles</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Documents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>6,105</td>
<td>213,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>241,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/TV transcripts</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>*May be included under other categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Map</td>
<td>1 (with 4 images and downloadable stats)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2  Comparison of Related Topic Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OVIC</th>
<th>POV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

release. OVIC also offers materials on the annual debate topic as determined by the National Speech and Debate Association.

User navigation in OVIC is streamlined. Once a topic is selected, the user is taken to a well-organized topic page that contains an introduction to the topic and information sorted into categories. The categories are: Featured Viewpoints, Viewpoints, Academic Journals, Statistics, Primary Sources, News, Reference, Magazines, Websites, Interactive Maps, Video, and Audio. Not all categories are available with every topic, such as statistics or maps, but most are included. Included on the topic page are links to related issues.

Supplemental features include writing tools and resources for middle and high school students, and free teacher lesson plans. An audio player is available for users to listen to articles. OVIC has a mobile optimized site, launched in February of this year, which automatically scales the page to the user’s device.

For this review, the author compared topic coverage of capital punishment in both POV and OVIC. While POV offers more articles, users will note duplicates and articles that deviate from the topic. OVIC is clearly the winner when compared to POV for researching current events, social issues, and controversial topics. OVIC offers targeted results for each topic and contains the information within categories that are easily identifiable by the user. Table 1 outlines the coverage of both databases on the topic. Table 2 describes the related topic links provided.

Authentication

Both POV and OVIC allow institutions to utilize proxy servers to protect access to the databases.

Author’s References


Massari, Kristina. “Writing a review.” E-mail message to author. April 21, 2015.

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Farmington Hills, MI; 48331
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Fax: (877) 363-4253
URL:  <http://www.cengage.com/us/>
Points of View Reference Center Scores Composite: ★★★★ 1/8

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★ 1/2
The content is varied and extensive; however, there is some duplication of sources. The content is appropriate for the research needs of high school and undergraduate students.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★
The interface is unappealing and sparse. Users are required to click multiple times to locate information on a topic. Advanced search features are available; however, users must apply further skills to limit results to topic areas of interest.

Pricing: ★★★
Pricing is slightly above average for similar databases.

Contract Options: ★★★
POV offers a standard contract to other similar databases. Consortia pricing is available.

Opposing Viewpoints in Context Scores Composite: ★★★★ 3/4

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★★
The content is varied and comprehensive. There does not appear to be duplication of sources within a topic. While OVIC offers fewer articles than POV, the articles are focused, addressing the topics in a concise manner. The content strength is maximized due to the excellent organization of the topic page sources.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★★ 1/2
OVIC is graphically appealing and intuitive for users. The search features are somewhat simplified, making it easy to navigate providing consistent results without delivering an overwhelming number of results.

Pricing: ★★★★ 1/2
Pricing is average and in line with similar databases.

Contract Options: ★★★
OVIC offers a standard contract to other similar databases. The content can be bundled with other In Context products for package pricing. Consortia pricing is available.

About the Author

A graduate of the University of South Carolina, Susan Moore is employed by Limestone College in Gaffney, SC. She wears many hats including Assistant Professor, teaching Academic Research courses, Instruction Librarian overseeing all instruction to traditional day students and extended campus students both online and at off-campus sites. Ms. Moore also serves as the Limestone College Archivist.