

# Adding Organization, Customization and Insight to One of America's Largest Public Policy Research Repositories



As a leading private organization for analyzing U.S. and global public policy, the Brookings Institution relies on its website to present current, relevant research to millions of visitors each year. With a growing database containing tens of thousands of diverse content items, Brookings required a new insight solution that would improve navigability on its Sitecore-based website and make content more accessible to a worldwide audience. With the help of Coveo and Velir, Brookings was able to organize its Sitecore web content, improve user experience and reach new milestones for site content and traffic.

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*Fred Dews, Website Managing Editor  
Brookings Institution*

## The Challenge

The Brookings Institution is one of the leading providers of social sciences research and education in the United States. Founded in 1916, Brookings is one of the oldest organizations of

**BROOKINGS**

### Industry:

Nonprofit – Public Policy

### Business Goals:

- ▶ Streamline and organize research presented on website
- ▶ Improve the site's overall user experience
- ▶ Increase site visit duration and page views per visit

### Coveo Solution:

Coveo for Advanced Website Search

### Results at a Glance:

- ▶ Significant improvements in site performance and user engagement
- ▶ Greater percentage of users are downloading PDF files and accessing media content
- ▶ Improved access to its broad range of research and other content, helping to further policy debate in the U.S. and around the globe

its kind and produces independent research, analysis and recommendations covering all aspects of foreign and domestic policy. With a constantly growing online repository containing tens of thousands of documents, it became increasingly important that information become more organized, navigable and customized to meet the site's increasingly global audience.

The Brookings Institution's incumbent search solution lacked the capabilities and control necessary to present its content in a highly relevant manner. Users were often unable to access research with the level of granularity they required – such as by author or geography. Instead, the results were presented as a fixed list of dates and titles, with no refinement possible. "The previous search engine was a black box," said Fred Dews, Managing Editor of the Brookings Institution's website. "We didn't know what the algorithms were, so we were not able to customize the tool to fit our specifications."

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Director of Business Development, Velir***

The previous search solution also faced indexing issues with popular document types, including the 20,000 PDFs that comprise the majority of full research documents contained on the site. This content was not able to integrate with similar documents from other sources, presenting an incomplete knowledge base around important policy issues. "If I'm looking for all available information on tax policy, I don't want a webpage and a PDF separately," said Dews. "We needed all relevant assets to be displayed in the search results."

## Implementation

Velir (www.velir.com), a veteran Sitecore Solutions Partner and full-service web agency, worked with Brookings on a major redesign of their website and recommended Coveo for search integration. A primary factor in this decision was Coveo's Sitecore connector that allows immediate indexing of content as soon as it is published to the site. This provides users the ability to crawl not just pages, but also specific Sitecore fields and other content items. Site visitors have a full view of all online content with one query – including multimedia, HTML, PDFs, etc. Results are highly relevant, even with additional content sources. "We're actually seeing users click on the 'Download PDF' page directly from the search results, which is a very excellent result," said Dews.

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***Fred Dews, Website Managing Editor  
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Another key upgrade was the ability to refine the results in an organized manner – a major differentiator for Velir. "The key thing that drove us to Coveo is the ability to filter by any item in the Brookings taxonomy - such as content type, category, or author" said Mike Dolan, Director of Business Development at Velir. "That really spoke to the Brookings Institution's audience."

Currently, the Brookings website categorizes and organizes site content into more than 6,000 lists, using such attributes as content type, date, experts, topics, geography, attachments and research activities. These additional choices and categories allow for more refined results. "From our users' perspective, Coveo is a really powerful way to show our wealth of web content," said Dews. "Now I can click on one scholar's name, and find the number of pieces where he's the author, for example." The advanced search interface also enables users to include or exclude certain keywords in their

search as well as create custom queries using search Booleans (and, or, not, etc.) or system fields.

As search results are returned, a document count appears by each facet on the page to help guide the user as they continue to refine their search. Once a user has selected one facet, they can further narrow their search by continuing to include and exclude additional facets as well as sort results by relevancy, date and view count. Additionally, Coveo indexes content in every language that is supported by the Brookings Institution website, including those not based on a Latin alphabet such as Chinese and Arabic. "Big portions of the site beyond the traditional 'site search' features are being driven by content from the Coveo index," said Dolan. "We were able to leverage Coveo throughout the site to dynamically generate content based on user preferences. That was a really powerful concept for this project." Another key advantage was Brookings ability to customize and weight results with a feature called Query Ranking Expression, or QRE. With QRE, Brookings is able to give more weight to certain types of search results. For example, in The Brookings Institution's research-driven business, recent content should be weighted higher – as new policy recommendations on existing topics are published daily, this feature is critical. "Our site houses all Brookings research since the site was launched in 1995," said Dews. "People have been writing about tax policy for a lot longer than that. We want the most recent material to surface higher, so we apply a higher weight to documents written in the past three months, versus the past year, two years, five years, etc."

As Coveo indexes items in Sitecore, it preserves information on relationships between different pieces of content. The ability to access this robust taxonomy data enabled Velir to customize the search function to serve related items alongside each search result. For example, a search for "China" that is filtered to display events allows users to easily see which of the returned results have transcripts or audio and

video files associated. These search results can be filtered to only display items associated with certain types of media content and related files can be downloaded directly from the results listings.

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## Results

Since the launch of their new website in May of 2012, Brookings has observed significant improvements in site performance and user engagement driven largely by the deep search integration, and a much greater percentage of users are downloading PDF files and accessing media content. Coveo's robust search capabilities along with other website improvements have helped Brookings improve access to its broad range of research and other content, helping to further policy debate in the U.S. and around the globe. "The Coveo project has worked out well for us," said Dews. "It has been a great tool."

## GET STARTED WITH COVEO

For more information visit Coveo's website at [www.coveo.com](http://www.coveo.com), or call Coveo at **1-800-635-5476**.