

Google launches online constitution archive

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A computer screen with the Italian website Google on November 28, 2012 in Rome.

Internet giant Google launched an archive of the world's constitutions Monday in a new online initiative designed to help countries emerging from conflicts or political crises.

Launching the new site — www.constituteproject.org — in New York, Google officials said the aim was to help people drafting constitutions to see what other countries have done in the past.

"We wanted to take the physical constitutions and we wanted to have them organised online, make them universally available online and make them useful for all the different governments going through a constitutional process," Google Ideas director Jared Cohen said.

"These constitutions and [government documents](#) represent an important opportunity for these countries," he added.

The site was drawn up with the assistance of [academics](#) associated with the Comparative Constitutions Project(CCP).

They formulated the idea for the site in 2008 after observing constitutional reform in Iraq and Afghanistan and realizing that there was no central resource detailing basic constitutional provisions.

"A common result ... is a haphazard and accidental cobbling together of constitutional elements from other countries," the CCP said.

Cohen said between five and seven constitutions were drafted each year in different parts of the world.

Tunisia's President Moncef Marzouki, who was present at the launch, said the new site would be vital for countries such as his own which is struggling to agree on a constitution and electoral law following a 2011 revolution.

"I'm very fascinated by this project and I think it will be extremely useful," he said.

The site allows users to search for different constitutions by country or by year, and is subdivided into themes such as citizenship, [foreign policy](#) or judicial [autonomy](#) and power.

"Our aim is to arm drafters with a better tool for constitution design and writing," Google Ideas project manager Sara Sinclair Brody said in a blog post.

"We also hope citizens will use Constitute to learn more about their own constitutions, and those of countries around the world."

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