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**From the Selected Works of Brian Coutts**

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## Best Free Reference 2011

Brian E. Coutts, *Western Kentucky University*  
Cynthia Etkin



Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/brian-coutts/28/>

# Best Free Reference 2011: A Dozen Resources Spanning Arab Spring to World Public Opinion

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 [reviews.libraryjournal.com/2012/02/reference/best-reference-free/](http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/2012/02/reference/best-reference-free/)

LJ Reviews

**See also:**

## [Best Reference 2011: Eclectic Works To Match a Tumultuous Year](#)

*By Cynthia Etkin and Brian Coutts*

We are living in a time when the growth rate of information and the ease with which technological tools allow us to share it are unparalleled. Some describe this as the Golden Age of Amateur Experts. In debating the merits of this Golden Age, reliability of information is invariably questioned. The skills needed to think critically about search results and to determine the most relevant sources are of the utmost importance. Create mashups of your finding guides and lists like the one below to link your users to the best resources and answers.

Arab Spring: An Interactive Timeline of Middle East Protests

[guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline](http://guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline)

The prodemocracy rebellions in the Middle East that began in December 2010 can be easily followed using this interactive time line. Icons on the site link to corresponding news articles and allow quick identification of protests and crackdowns, political moves, regime changes, and international responses. Swim lanes represent countries, from Algeria to Egypt and from Libya to Tunisia, where it all began. Great for those quick answers needed at the reference desk or for chat-help services.

Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL)

[biodiversitylibrary.org](http://biodiversitylibrary.org)

BHL is a collaborative effort of natural history and botanical garden libraries to digitize their collections and make them available as a global biodiversity commons. In 2009, the effort began to expand globally, and now BHL includes more than 53,000 titles and 102,000 volumes that can be browsed or searched, together covering more than 1,060,000 species. APIs and developer tools are available to assist in re using content. Data files can also be exported to help libraries identify content. BHL includes such collections as the Smithsonian Contributions and Studies Series; Darwin Digital Library of Evolution, from the American Museum of Natural History in New York; Harvard University Botany Libraries' Orchidaceae Type Specimen Project, Extinct Species; and books from the Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Great for rare scientific texts.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)

[cbpp.org](http://cbpp.org)

Need to know the impact of the recession on states? The lessons learned from deficit reductions? Since 1981 the Center has conducted research and provided analysis for state and federal fiscal policy and public programs. The reports, which are online beginning with 1996 publications, cover public policy regarding fiscal issues, poverty, health, housing, social security, taxation, and welfare reform. MyCenter allows tracking of specific issues over time.

GetHuman

[gethuman.com](http://gethuman.com)

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to reach a human when you're having a problem with a product or service and getting caught in an endless phone loop. Building on that frustration, in 2005 this company began what is now the web's largest database of customer-service information with a catalog of direct phone numbers for large companies in 50 countries. For each company it lists the best phone number to connect with a live person, or a place to leave a message, and even indicates what recent wait times have been.

## Moves and movements

Migration in America, Forbes

[forbes.com/sites/jonbruner/2011/11/16/migration-in-america](http://forbes.com/sites/jonbruner/2011/11/16/migration-in-america)

Forbes staff writer Jon Bruner writes that Americans are enormously mobile, noting that 37.5 million of us moved from one house to another last year and that 4.3 million people moved among states. His interactive visualization based on IRS data illustrates these patterns by tracing inward and outward moves for every U.S. county.

North Korean Economy Watch

[nkeconwatch.com](http://nkeconwatch.com)

For more than five years, Curtis Melvin has followed the news and analyzed the economy of North Korea and shared it with readers of his website, well before the death of Kim Jong-Il in December 2011 turned the eyes of the world toward that country. The site provides a mix of Melvin's writings and other resources and includes a link to his Google Earth North Korea project, which is the most extensive map of North Korea's economic, cultural, political, and military infrastructures. As speculation on the future direction of North Korea abounds, turn to this site for the latest news.

Occupy Wall Street

[occupywallst.org](http://occupywallst.org)

This is the unofficial site of the movement that began in September 2011 on New York City's Wall Street and has spread to more than 1500 cities worldwide. Here users can learn what the movement stands for, keep current with Occupy events, watch streaming video from around the world, use the interactive map to see messages left by protestors, follow discussions, and access how-to documents on civil disobedience and grassroots practices.

Parks Canada/Parks Canada

[pc.gc.ca/eng/index.aspx](http://pc.gc.ca/eng/index.aspx)

May 19, 2011 marked the 100th birthday of Parks Canada, the world's first national park service. This bilingual French and English website describes the country's 42 locations set aside as national parks protected for public understanding and enjoyment,



including 11 UNESCO World Heritage Centers; and the 167 historic sites administered by the service.

## Philosophy Bites

[philosophybites.com](http://philosophybites.com)

Made in association with the Institute of Philosophy at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, this growing collection of 168 podcasts on all aspects of philosophy features hour-long interviews in which hosts David Edwards and Nigel Warburton engage some of the world's leading philosophers on some of their favorite topics. From Alain de Boton's recent *Atheism 2.0* to Quentin Skinner's discussion of Machiavelli's *The Prince* to retired Cambridge professor Edward Craig on *What is philosophy?* it's all here.

## Science Daily

[sciencedaily.com](http://sciencedaily.com)

Since its inception in 1995, this award-winning site has provided breaking news about scientific discoveries. Now offering more than 65,000 research articles, 15,000 images, 2500 encyclopedia entries, 1500 book reviews, and hundreds of educational videos, the site generates 15 million page views per month and has a global audience. Users can check out the latest headlines, such as, *How Viruses Evolve and Become Deadly* or review the *Top News* in medicine, technology, and the environment.

## Survey of California and Other Indian Languages

[linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey](http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey)

The Research Center in the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley supports the documentation of the indigenous languages of California and the Americas. Users who click on the center's map of California can locate, for example, Salinan, which is spoken in the Salinas River Valley, where some 2500, 3000 speakers were alive in 1925 and where today there are sadly no first-language speakers remaining. Also available are archival materials, secondary sources, and sound recordings and a rich collection of dissertations and fieldwork tools.

## World Public Opinion (WPO)

[worldpublicopinion.org](http://worldpublicopinion.org)

A consortium of public opinion research centers in 25 countries that represent the majority of the world's population [gives] voice to public opinion around the world on international issues through this website. Discover public opinion by global region or explore topics such as the environment, globalization/trade, security, and human rights.

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*Cynthia Etkin is a librarian in Washington, D.C., and Brian E. Coutts is Professor and Head, Department of Library Public Services, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.*

