

Title: Statistics, Trends and Analyzing Your Web Site

Subtitle: Modules and Extensions

Second Subtitle: #0 Are you hitting your target? Things you should know

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Summary: After you have done all your planning and organizing and finally doing what you expected it to? Your web site is quite a bit different than - you don't see the faces that visit your web site or get a chance to shake some tools to help you discover if you are hitting your goals for your web than just a simple counter to properly gather and analyze the statistics a

We've spent time covering the essentials for planning an effective web s how to measure that effectiveness using various statistics and analytics want to know how effective you are in your online ministry, don't measure though, be sure there is an action attached to it, or you will simply be gathering information.

Definitions

We need to have a basis of comparison for our analysis, so we will start various measurements you can take. Every statistics and analytics package features and things they track, but the most important pieces of information - though they may differ in how they measure them. Educating yourself a measurements will better equip you for online success.

Visits The number of times people have been to your site. You will also need your package measures if people visit your site, leave and then come back multiple visits? How long after I leave your site before my next visit is c

Visitors The unique number of viewers of your site. Each analytics package different ways of measuring this - some use cookies, other use session v a combination of IP address and browser information.

Pages The number of URLs (mostly the stuff typed in the address bar or link) requested from your site. Be aware that in XOOPS, like most other appear different each time you visit it. Technically, you need to be able uniquely defines a page. <http://www.christianwebresources.net/> everything after .com/ and before the ? (question mark) is considered a page by most web ? (question mark) is the parameter, or query, string. But, in this example provide us with a unique view in our browser. You will need to examine y learn how each of your potential analyzers handles them.

HitsThe number of items requested from your site. Each item on a page n the server, whether it is an image, a video, a javascript file, or a stylesheet is higher than the number of pages viewed, but is one of those 'techy' statistics that are not always the best decisions for your site.

ReferralsWhen people visit your site, they reach it through a variety of means. If they type the address in their browser and go directly to your site, they click on the link, they follow a link on another web site, or they click on a link after completing a search on Google, Yahoo!, or MSN. The previous site or page before they come to yours is the referrer.

In the case of a bookmark, email, or typing directly in the address bar, the referrer is not available. There are some 'anonymous' browsing options that will not pass the information. If the referrer is available, you can break it down - the tld (top level domain - .com, .org, .gov, .edu), the domain (christianwebresources.net) and the page (christianwebresources.net/modules/article/view.article.php?20).

Search termsKnowing the search terms that brought visitors to your site can be a factor when the referrer is a search engine or if you use internal search on your site (which XOOPS does). Knowing the search terms visitors use can help you tailor your content and the difference between external searches (from Google, Yahoo, and other search engines) and internal searches boils down to 'Why did they come here?' and 'What are they looking for?'

** If I were to only pick one measurement for my web sites, I would pick the search terms. It gives you both the external and internal search terms (having the phrases is also a good indicator of the action associated with these than any other metric (item being measured, time spent on page, etc.) under your control, believe, or not. We've covered content in past articles and more detail in another article.*

LocationUsing information gathered from the user's visits, a fairly accurate picture can be shown showing you where your visitors are located. For a church or ministry seeking to reach a specific community, knowing how effective you are reaching that community online is important. If your web site reaches beyond your community and where you have new opportunities, it can be a rather eye-opening.

** I would place this second on my list, especially for a local congregation.*

Client information Many analytics packages will provide you with information s computers that includes details like which browser they are using and wh operating system the computer is running, and the screen resolution and they are using. This information is only somewhat useful, but mostly only where the available technology isn't as advanced as it is in your area. K your visitors are using older computers and browsers can be used to cus viewing on those systems. Otherwise, target your design for the recent b capabilities.

Combining the raw measurements You can have the raw measurements of visits, v pages, referrers, and locations, you can start putting together some othe Pages per Visit, or Pages per Visitor, or Visits per Location. Like all col spend a lot of time sorting, arranging, comparing and manipulating the s site. Don't get so caught up in analyzing the statistics that you ignore yo statistics in order to determine how you will react to them. Most of them proper context - watch your site for trends more than specific details.

Server Tools

Most web hosting accounts provide you will a statistics tool, like Webalizer are OK (and usually free!), you get what you get and cannot fine-tune yo you want or provide the results in a format you want. Still, these tools c basic information that you can use for developing your site further.

Both Webalizer and AWStats work by analyzing the server logs and extra them. I won't go into much about either of these - you can visit their web them, or you may find them in your web server account manager.

Webalizer <http://www.mrunix.net/webalizer/>
AWStats <http://awstats.sourceforge.net/>

Modules

XOOPS-stats

This module has probably been around the longest of all the ones listed by XOOPS-stats includes visits, visitors (by IP address), referrers, hits 1 year, days in the month, and hourly hits, browsers and you are provided information about screen width and color depth. You can also configure t referrer domains.

After installing this module, you need to edit one of the core files of XO means any time you upgrade your core, you will need to add the line bac information. But, it will work, no matter which theme you are using.

iStats

Not quite as old as XOOPS-stats, but it has been around since I started

2005. Version 2.1 was the last officially released version of this module, release by another XOOPS member that addressed a few small issues (see German language files). No one is currently maintaining this module. You get statistics and trends for the number of visits (by hour of the day, week, week, month and year), visitors' operating system, browser, screen depth and the domain name of their ISP, top visited pages and top referrers. After installing the module, you will need to modify your theme(s) to include begin gathering statistics (the module uses a javascript to gather information if you upgrade your core, but if you switch themes, you will need to be sure to use a new theme).

iSearch

This module by Instant-Zero focuses on your internal search terms - you get words searched by day and most searched words. You can even export them to a spreadsheet program (like Excel or OpenOffice Calc). Only internal searches by this module - no traffic information, referrers, or information from external sources. After installing this module, no modifications are necessary to any core files. To record the search activity of a group, you must allow them access to the module.

Netquery

There are a lot of tools in this module - most don't have anything to do with gathering statistics. But, it does have some pretty strong logging and identification of words of its *ultimate purpose is to deal with problems caused by automated spiders that read everything on your site, harvest email addresses, and post spam and to advertise their own links through your web pages. It works to prevent spiders from using your site by analyzing their actual HTTP requests and comparing them to known patterns.*

myReferer

A module by WolfPackClan that collects and tracks information about referrers, search engines and crawlers. No real traffic information is provided in this module, but it does provide information about internal searches.

After you install this module, you need to edit a core file, like with XOOPS 2.0.14. You are instructed to edit /footer.php.

Other Tools

Statistics provided by your other modules

Many XOOPS modules provide some information about the content they manage, such as most downloaded, or most visited. Be sure to spend some time looking through the areas of each of your modules to see what they have to offer. These statistics provide information about traffic to your site, but they will assist in identifying what you can fine-tune your content even better to match your goals.

Google Analytics

It's nice not to have to use your server's resources or your database to store data from tracking traffic on your site. There is a trade-off, though. Anytime you request data from that is on another domain, there is the lag-time for the browser to request data from the other site and retrieve it. If that site is down, or having difficulties, you may experience issues on your site.

Aside from all the information you get from the statistics modules available in XOOPS, there is a lot of information available when you use Google Analytics and you have the ability to create custom reports for each site you track (you can track multiple sites with one Analytics account).

All the information about your web traffic is collected by inserting a few

from Google in your theme.

Clicky

Clicky also provides you with some custom javascript to place in your theme image they provide to track your details. The image-based tracking is no javascript version.

The free plan allows you up to 1,000 page views/day and reports on a limited measurements. To get all the features, you need to spend \$10/month. Clicky does show that it has some features that Google Analytics (GA) doesn't, a bit out of date, based on what I've seen at GA.

SlimStat

This is a PHP script you can add to your site and integrate with your XOOPS. XoopsExpert has written an article http://xoops.experts.com/modules.php?op=module&mod_id=1&mod_title=How%20to%20Install%20SlimStat%20on%20XOOPS. With this package, you will need to maintain and update it as changes are made of activity with this program (the last release was in 2006), so the functionality services like Google Analytics and Clicky, the functionality resides on the server. To add functionality, you will have it for your site.

The End Result

It really all boils down to defining your goals for your site, setting some metrics, then measuring them. After you get your measurements, adjust your content. Repeat as needed.

Pick an analytics tool that will help you focus your site and the content you are trying to reach. None of the current selection of XOOPS modules fit perfectly, but they provide you with an good start. You may even want to install 2 of them - one for each - combined will give you traffic and both sources of search results. I started with Clicky to include internal and external search results. Whatever you decide, it's about to collect information and formulating an approach to improve your site based on that information. Make it a regular exercise to look at the information about your web visitors. As you will better define what additional information you might need to be effective, look at the available packages and see which one might provide that information. Collecting feedback and refining your site and you will be better equipped to succeed online.