

Google Changes Search Keyword Reporting

Webmaster News

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Back in October, [Google announced](#) they had changed how they report information to various analytics programs. In short, searches performed on Google by visitors signed into any Google service (Google+, YouTube, iGoogle, GMail are just some) will not report any keywords to analytics programs, not even to Google Analytics. **How this affects you** Maybe it doesn't - if you aren't looking at the keywords that bring people to your website, then this doesn't change anything for you. If you are looking at your keywords and their performance (and you should be), then this will. If you use any of Google's services, it will affect behavior when you search, follow a link and then try to get back to the search results.

How Google does it When people visit a web page and then go to another, their browsers pass along information about the previous page. In the case of performing a search, the search terms (keywords) get passed along. Your analytics program can interpret all the information from the previously visited page and provide you with a list of keywords and build statistics on how often those keywords sent visitors your way. To see what is happening now, sign in to your Google account and perform a search. Then, click on one of the results. After the new page loads, try to go back to the list of search results by clicking on the back button in your browser. You'll find you don't go back to the search results - those are now 2 pages back. By inserting an intermediate page, Google can strip out the keywords and then redirect you to your desired page. **What you can do about it** We may just have to deal with it. Google leads us to believe this will impact roughly 10% of all searches, or less than 1% of all traffic to our sites. My reports from Google Analytics shows differently, though - up to 6.4% on this site (www.ChristianWebResources.net) is from organic searches that did not report any keywords. 15% of the searches had their keywords stripped. The majority of these visits are from new visitors (81%). In the list of keywords, **(not provided)** was the #1 result. I don't particularly like the new results. What I have said before, still applies - [write for your readers, not for the robots](#). This change by Google isn't really about the keywords you add to your site, but about information you can get from the queries done by visitors that bring them to your site. This information helps you determine if you're hitting your target.

** If I were to only pick one measurement for my web sites, I would pick this one - but I need to know both the external and internal search terms (having the phrases is also a bonus). There is more action associated with these than any other metric (item being measured) and it is completely under your control, believe, or not. I am most interested in learning what brought a new visitor to my site, not for marketing purposes, but in order to validate what content is striking a chord. Keyword performance is the most direct way of doing this, but there are other reports I'll spend more time with to help fill in the gaps Start with the Keywords report - not everything is being filtered, yet, so there are still many relevant pieces of information here. Applying the Advanced Segment filter for 'New Visitors' will help refine your feedback View Top Content and applying the 'New Visitors' advanced segment filter. With this report, I can drill into the most visited pages and see what keywords are showing for those pages. Measuring results - are you hitting your target? - [Statistics, Trends and Analyzing Your Web Site](#)*