Q&A ON DIGITAL COMMONS AND GOOGLE ANALYTICS

For tracking website visitors, bepress offers Google Analytics statistics. To help you get started, the following Q&A will provide a brief introduction to the service and suggestions for further study.

Do you officially support Google Analytics?
No. bepress provides the data, the analytics login, and these notes. *Everything else is up to you.*

How does Google Analytics work?
Each time one of your bepress-hosted web pages is loaded, a small message is sent to the Analytics computers. You can log in and view the collected data, slicing the results in a wide variety of ways. Details and access are found at http://www.google.com/analytics/.

Who reads the repository's material, really?
Google Analytics can provide some visibility into the length and nature of visits to your site. We suggest you view it as an estimate. For most visits you will get a general idea of where the originating computer is located, but this data is subject to complications.

On the Internet it is hard to tell exactly who is loading your pages. Significant traffic to your website comes from automated tools, not humans. The trouble is there is no clear way to distinguish which is which. The large robots, like those of Google and Yahoo search engines, are well understood. But there are many others, such as country specific search engines, research projects, security compromised computers, and just plain broken computers. There are tools that sit somewhere between robot and human, such as download accelerators, that speculatively fetch a large number of pages that are never actually viewed.

Why don't the numbers match up?
The numbers you view on Google Analytics may not match the numbers in bepress download reports for your site. Bepress has made a policy decision to exclude duplicate loads and probable robot traffic from the numbers. While this results in lower numbers, we feel those numbers are more indicative of true interest in the resource. Bepress uses an automated technique to identify "robot like" behavior.[1] Google Analytics also tries to exclude robots but the choices of what to exclude will not be identical.[2] To explore more on this topic, visit the COUNTER initiative at http://www.projectcounter.org/.

How do I increase the number of visits or downloads?
The best way is to post more content. Perhaps your question is, "How can I get more readers for the content I've already posted?" This question comes under a field of expertise called "Search Engine Optimization" or SEO.

For most bepress sites, Google search brings in the largest number of new visitors.[3] Google ranking works by counting the number of websites that link to yours, placing more value on links it deems to be important (somewhat similar to the concept of 'impact factor' in academic publishing). Simply put, getting more links to your sites helps their visibility in search engines.

The technical part of organizing web pages for discovery by search tools falls largely to bepress. We carefully format titles and pages for good indexing, and we work directly with search companies on topics like the presentation of metadata. Outside of this technical arena, *the rest is up to you.*

Who links to your site now?
To learn more about who links to your site you can use the "link:" command in the search box at any of the major search engines. For example, to see who links to the Dublin Institute of Technology's repository, type "link:arrow.dit.ie" in the search box at www.google.com.[4] Try it now, we highly recommend it.

As interesting as it is to see who links to you, it is equally interesting to learn who does not but should. Any link helps, whether from a highly regarded foundation associated with your organization or from the personal home pages of your employees or faculty. Consider asking affiliated organizations to link as a courtesy to you.

What else might I consider?

Wikipedia
You may notice traffic originating from Wikipedia. You, or one of your authors, may even be tempted to intervene and edit Wikipedia pages directly to drive traffic to your site. We recommend against this. In the Wikipedia community the ideal editor is not directly vested in the subject, and maintains a neutral point of view at all times. If you feel the Wikipedia contributors have missed something valuable, it is acceptable to engage editors on the "talk" page of a Wikipedia entry.

Web Directories
Web directories are edited by humans and contain lists of websites sorted by category. While there were once many directories, at this point there is only one *general purpose* directory worth your attention, "dmoz." While you may never have heard of dmoz, search engines consider a listing here as a positive rating factor. Consider submitting a listing for your repository, and if you have journals, submitting one for each journal. Note that it can take a very long time for dmoz to add or update your submissions.

Journal Names and URLs
If you set up new journals, consider the "design" of the journal name in terms of search. What words are so common that searches for them will yield results so broad your journal will be lost in the noise? What words will bring potential readers and your content together? The same advice applies to the assigned web address. Two examples of web addresses with strong key words are "digitalcommons.fiu.edu/hospitalityreview/" and "scholarship.claremont.edu/mimejournal/". Recent surveys confirm that most web visitors examine the web address in search results, prior to deciding to click on a particular link.

The Media
If you are covered in the media, make sure the reporter knows you have a web site to link to. This is the modern equivalent of "just make sure they spell your name right."

Keywords
Creating extensive keyword listings for your articles is generally not worth the effort. And adding speculative keywords can hurt, as the pages become less targeted (less about "one thing") and thus rank lower in a focused search. If, however, there are good synonyms for core concepts, these can help. For example, an article about "gestation" might benefit from the addition of keywords like "pregnancy" and "reproduction."

Link Strength
We recommend that links to content posted in Digital Commons take the following form: "http://repository.cmu.edu/jpc/vol6/iss1/1/" including the trailing "/" and excluding "index.html" or other extra material. There are also benefits to consistently using this format as varying your link styles can dilute search engine rankings by spreading results across all different forms of the link.

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1
Learn more about how bepress counts downloads at: http://bepress.com/download_counts.html.
2
 Each web page has a small bit of JavaScript called "ga.js," which does the counting. If the web browser disables JavaScript, you get no counts. If the web page is loaded by a robot, it may or may not process JavaScript.
3
 Although Google brings in the highest total number of visitors, these are not necessarily the highest quality or most targeted visitors.
4
To exclude the clutter of your own repository, use the form "link:arrow.dit.ie -site:arrow.dit.ie."