


Effective "Virtual Visits" Statistics for the Annual Public Library Survey

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An  Webinar

Agenda

- What are they asking for?
- Catalog stats options
- Website stats options
- Web analytic software choices
- Best practices
- Resources for more information

Web Stats for the Survey

A new item has been added to the annual Public Library Survey for 2007-2008, a national survey from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Survey is attempting to capture "virtual visits to the library."

Survey Definition of Category

Virtual visits to the library (website or catalog):

Virtual visits include a user's request of the library website or catalog from outside the library building regardless of the number of pages or elements viewed. This statistic is the equivalent of a session for a library's website. Exclude virtual visits from within the library, from robot or spider crawls, and from page reloads.

Let's Break That Down

- Visits to the library website or catalog
- One Visit = One Trip
- Exclude visits from inside library buildings
- Exclude robot and spider crawls
- Exclude page reloads

Library Website or Catalog

- Website
 - website domain name(s) visits
- Catalog
 - catalog domain name(s) visits
- Other parts of the library's web presence
 - Facebook, Flickr, MySpace, Blogger, PBwiki, del.icio.us

To do item:

create list of domain names you need to count

Some Words from the State Library

- This is a test question
- The purpose this year is to determine if the data being requested can be gathered in a reasonable manner
- It is important to get as many libraries participating as possible this year

What Begins a Visit

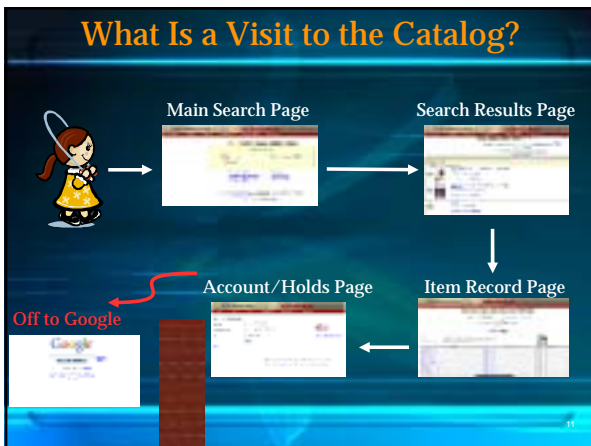
- Entry into the library's web presence from *any* page within the website, catalog, or any other library presence on the web
- *Not* just the website's home page
- *Not* just the catalog's main search page

What Ends a Visit

- Closing the browser window
- Departure to an open web site
- Departure to a subscription resource
- Departure to any other externally hosted service (like AskNow, Live Homework Help)

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Catalog + Website + Other Sites

Let's be honest:

It is impossible to track a user from catalog, to website, to other elements of the library's web presence and count it as one visit.

Different Servers = Different Stats

Excluding Visits from the Library

- Library buildings' IP ranges
- Ensure wireless is being included

*To do item:
compile a list of internal IP addresses*

Exclude Robot & Spider Crawls

- Don't want to count visitors like Google, or Yahoo!, or other indexing tools
- Don't want to count spam robots and other ad-related crawls

*To do item: check to see
whether your stats software allows this*

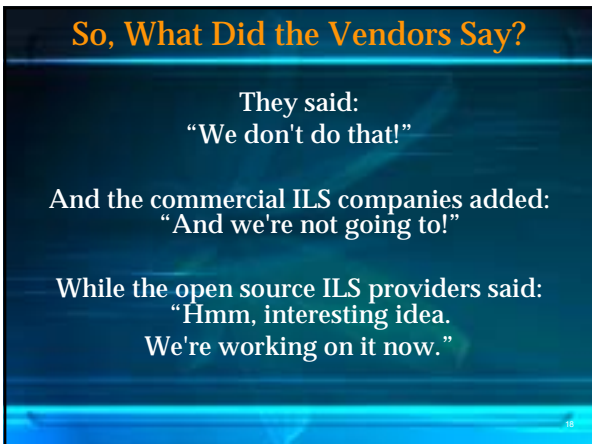
Exclude Page Reloads

- Don't want to re-count a user who is already inside the site and reloads the page

You can only accomplish this if you are using page tagging to get your stats, as it will track visitors across browser sessions.







Providers Who Did Not Respond

- SirsiDynix (Horizon)



- TLC's CARL



- NewGenLib (open source solution)



ExLibris's Responses



ILS Products: Aleph and Voyager

- Do not provide visitor statistics currently
- Aleph records numbers of user sessions, but only for sessions including searches; distinguishes in-library and outside access
- Voyager does none of the above

Innovative Interfaces's Responses



ILS Products: Millennium

- Do not provide visitor statistics currently
- Is hoping to provide this functionality in a future release

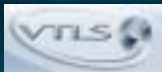
Polaris's Responses



ILS Product: Polaris ILS

- Does not provide visitor statistics currently
- Polaris uses Microsoft IIS as its web server, which provides server logs

VTLS's Responses



ILS Product: Virtua

- Does not provide visitor statistics currently
- No demand from users to do so

LibLime's Responses



Open Source ILS Products:
Koha and Evergreen

- Does provide visitor statistics currently
- Integrates Google Analytics into the OPAC, which will track visits when configured by the library to do so

Casey Bisson's Responses



Open Source ILS Product: Scriblio

- Does not provide visitor statistics currently
- Is working on a customized script to track visits as defined in this survey

What Are Our Catalog Options?

- Rely on the vendor or kludge together a solution using web analytics software
- Page tagging (we'll cover in a moment), which will count hits or visits
- Choose to only count main catalog page hits or count all major pages

Website Stats Options

Website Stats Options

- Web server log file analysis: analyze server logs on a sampling basis
- Page tagging: count individual page hits via an image tracker, a JavaScript snippet, or a page redirect
- Choose to only count homepage hits or count all major pages being hit and used

Web Server Log File Analysis

- Pros
 - extremely accurate to the session
 - requires no changes to the web site/web pages
- Cons
 - time intensive
 - sometimes difficult to parse the data
 - would have to be done on a sampling basis only

Page Tagging

- Pros
 - easier and less time-intensive than server logs
 - accurately tracks user sessions automatically
 - can use even if you don't control your web servers
 - can record events that don't talk to the web server (e.g. Flash interactions)
- Cons
 - requires changes to the web site/web pages
 - requires browsers to work with it (e.g. JavaScript)
 - image may get cached between visits, thereby counting multiple visits only once

Page Tagging Options

- **Image tracker**
 - 1x1 pixel image (invisible) -or- real existing image
 - requires you to touch every page
 - screen readers will pick it up
- **A page redirect**
 - requires you to touch internal links to your services
 - misses all external links to or bookmarked or other direct access to your pages
- **JavaScript snippet**
 - requires you to touch every page
 - not always browser compatible
 - cookies are deleted or not allowed by some users

Overall Web Presence Stats Options

- **Implementing page tagging on each external web presence**
 - MySpace
 - FaceBook
 - externally hosted blogs
 - PBwiki
 - del.icio.us
- **Use site's built-in stats tools**
 - Flickr shows page views, for example
 - blogging and wiki software may count stats

Web Analytic Service Options

Free Services: Web Log File Analyzers

- [AW Stats](#)
- [Alterwind Log Analyzer](#)
- [Analog](#)
- [Webalizer](#)

AW Stats

- Claims to have more features than the others
- Can parse out data



Alterwind Log Analyzer

- Some data parsing requires for-pay "Professional" version (\$125)



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Page Tagging Services with a Price

These are all more or less the same in terms of features and capabilities:

- ClickTracks: \$\$\$
- Mint: \$30
- Omniture SiteCatalyst & Discover: \$\$\$
- SmarterStats: \$\$\$
- Web Trends: \$\$\$

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Best Practices

- Website: page tagging (free or subscription) is easier and more likely to let you meet exclusion requirements
- Catalog: if not using open source, must kludge together something to count individual page hits or visits via page tagging (image tracker or a JavaScript snippet)
- Extended Web Presence: count individual page hits via page tagging or built-in site stats tools

Tips

- Count as many pages, as many paths in and out of your sites, as possible
- Don't forget your externally hosted presences
- Record what is "visits" and what is "hits"
- It's not going to be perfect; let it go; the survey will likely be revised for next year

Resources for More Information

See the handout linked to on the Infopeople web page for this webcast for:

- Books
- Blogs
- Other online resources
- Links to the free and not-free web analytics service providers

Questions?

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