

# The Web Page

by Angie Stump Denton, director of Web marketing



## Track your success

After you've developed your online presence, you'll want to track the success of your Web site. You can learn a lot of valuable information about your visitors if you know how. There are several options available.

Web site statistics can be obtained from a log analyzer or a third-party statistics service. It's important to understand how these tools work and what the statistics mean. Otherwise, you might be missing a marketing opportunity.

The data can be vital in helping you improve your site and market your products and services. You can measure the activity on your site, including who is visiting, which pages are the most popular, whether your Internet advertising is paying dividends, and what time of day you should perform site maintenance.

### Counters

Counters are normally run with proprietary third-party software on a remote server. You will have to include a short hypertext markup language (HTML) or JavaScript code on your page that gives you a small image from the remote server. With the help of that server, statistics about your visitors will be collected. Due to the use of JavaScript, counters normally log more statistics than are possible with a log analyzer. Counter services sometimes are available free of charge.

### Log analyzers

When someone connects to — or hits — your site, the Web server records it in a log file. Log files record the user, the protocol used to access the page [such as file transfer protocol (FTP) or hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP)], what they did, the platform (such as Macintosh, Windows or Unix), the search engine (such as Yahoo or Lycos), keywords, date and time, and much

more. Analysis programs use the data in the log file to give you information about your site.

Web servers can be configured to output specific information about each visitor to your site. Log analyzers normally run on your server, and with large sites, your server load will go up when you parse, or run, the log file or even when it is written, depending upon what information you want to capture.

Fig. 1 is an example of a general statistics table generated by Web Trends, a software program that analyzes Web-site usage trends. It includes statistics on the total activity for the sample Web site during the designated time frame. The table gives an overview of the site's performance, helping you quickly assess its growth and its needs.

### What's the cost?

Some Internet service providers (ISPs) or Web hosting companies offer these services as part of their hosting charges. It's a good idea to ask companies what traffic-analysis options they provide when searching for a hosting service. For example, the Web Marketing Department at Angus Productions Inc. (API) uses Web Trends to analyze the sites it hosts.

A free counter can be your best option if you don't have the budget for a log analyzer. However, if you buy a log analyzer or subscribe to a counter service, you will have more options.

The counter services have invested a lot of time and energy in giving their members valuable statistics to help optimize their businesses. If you use a free service, you normally will have to put a button linked to that service on your Web site. Many services provide a choice of buttons, which means you can put one on your site that will blend with your design.

### Features

Knowing that yesterday produced a lot more hits than today will not tell you why. Before choosing a service, request a sample report. There are many statistics available, such as the daily average number of hits, visitor information, referrers and country statistics. A sample report can give you an idea of what's provided by that service.

Referrers — the Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), or Internet addresses — from where visitors come are important. These URLs will let you see which links from many places on the Web work best for your site. You might even get statistics about your placement and your keywords in search engines.

Screen resolution and color-depth statistics should be checked with counters, as they require JavaScript. This data can help you if you're planning to redesign your Web site. Your designers may be viewing your site on 21-inch monitors at 1,600-by-1,280 resolution and 32-bit color depth, which will make any Web page look wonderful. But most people will see your site at 8 bits and 800-by-600 resolution. This could make a design with a lot of bells and whistles look plain ugly.

Browser and operating system (OS) statistics can be interesting, too, if you want to see what types of systems access your Web site.

These statistics will become increasingly important as more people start surfing the Web with set-top boxes and WebPads that operate at 800-by-600 resolution.

There are lots of factors that can affect your Web site's performance, and they might go unnoticed without statistics. So take the time to contact your ISP or hosting company to see what options you have to track your site's success.

e-mail: [astump@angusjournal.com](mailto:astump@angusjournal.com)

**“Keeping track of  
Web-traffic information  
helps optimize your  
site, which in turn can  
improve sales.”**

## Web-site terminology

**Hit:** An entry in the log file of a Web server. A hit is generated by every request for information made. It has no predictable relation to users, visitors or pages.

**Impressions:** The number of times a user views an image (most commonly used for tracking advertising banners).

**Log file:** A file created by a Web server that contains all of the access information regarding the activity on a Web site.

**Referrer:** The referring Uniform Resource Locator (URL), or the site that directed the user to your site.

**Server:** A computer that hosts information available to anyone accessing the Internet.

**Unique users:** The number of unique individuals who visit a site within a specific period of time. Log analyzers and counters define a unique visitor in different ways. Counters normally use cookies, which define a unique visitor over a 24-hour period. Log analyzers log a user's Internet protocol (IP) address, using that data to identify the user for six hours.

**Visit:** A sequence of hits made by one user at one site. If a user makes no requests from that site during a predetermined period of time, their next hit would constitute the beginning of a new visit. Thirty minutes is the average time-out interval.

### Web Trends general statistics

Fig. 1 shows the date and time the report was generated, as well as the time frame for the report. All dates and times are referenced to the location of the system running the analysis.

**Time frame**—Beginning date and time of your log.

**Number of page hits**—A count of actual successful hits for the document, not including any graphics on the page. Pages can be files with extensions like *.htm*, *.html*, *.asp* or a few others.

**Impressions**—A count of the number of pages viewed, not including the supporting graphic files.

**Total number of hits**—A count of all the successful hits including hypertext markup language (HTML) pages, pictures,

forms, scripts and files downloaded.

**Number of hits for home page**—Number of times the home page was visited. This statistic is derived from the home page setting in the profile.

**Number of successful hits for entire site**—Hits with a successful status code.

**Number of page views (impressions)**—The count of hits to documents and forms.

**Document views**—The count of hits to documents.

**Number of visitor sessions**—Hits to your site by a single visitor within the time frame.

**Domestic, international and unknown**—Summaries of the origin of visitors in percentages of hits.

**Average number of hits per day**—Number of successful hits divided by the total number of days in the log.

**Average number of page views per day**—Number of page views (impressions) divided by the total number of days in the log.

**Average number of visitor sessions per day**—Number of visitor sessions divided by the total number of days in the log.

**Average visitor-session length**—Average length of all visitor sessions in the log.

**Unique visitors**—A count of unique Internet protocols (IPs) for the period of the report, whether or not they were authenticated using domain names or cookies.

**Number of unique visitors**—A count using visitor IP, domain name or cookie. Cookies are the most accurate.

**Number of visitors who visited once**—Visitor sessions that occurred once throughout the log.

**Number of visitors who visited more than once**—The count of visitor sessions that occurred with more than the default 30 minutes between any activity.

Fig. 1: Sample general statistics table generated by Web Trends

Statistics		Report Range: 12/31/2000 18:00:48 - 01/29/2001 09:20:33 ?
<b>Hits</b>	Entire Site (Successful)	418,341
	Average Per Day	14,425
	Home Page	8,957
<b>Page Views</b>	Page Views (Impressions)	90,506
	Average Per Day	3,121
	Document Views	81,351
<b>Visitor Sessions</b>	Visitor Sessions	19,604
	Average Per Day	676
	Average Visitor Session Length	00:11:06
	International Visitor Sessions	2.44%
	Visitor Sessions of Unknown Origin	16.49%
	Visitor Sessions from United States	81.05%
<b>Visitors</b>	Unique Visitors	7,000
	Visitors Who Visited Once	5,299
	Visitors Who Visited More Than Once	1,700