

Visualizing User Behavior on the Places and Spaces Website

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ABSTRACT

The *Places and Spaces: Mapping Science* exhibit introduces science mapping techniques to the general public and to experts across disciplines for educational, scientific, and practical purposes. The exhibit website www.scimaps.org provides information about people behind the exhibit; showcases maps and macroscopes; lists past, present and planned exhibit venues and dates. The website underwent a redesign in 2015 to update the organization and user interface of the website and this study aims to analyze and visualize the changes in behaviour of users of the website due to the redesign.

KEYWORDS

Tableau, Visualization, Geospatial, URL, Hits, Pageviews, Parsing, Web Analytics, Line Graph, Tree Map, Dynamic Visualization

1 INTRODUCTION

The *Places and Spaces: Mapping Science* exhibit works towards the goal of bringing maps of science and macroscopes to the general public. The website which acts as a source of information about the exhibit has a visitor base across the globe and hosts a lot of informational content; videos, games and many science maps. After scraping raw data off of monthly website usage reports in HTML format and cleaning and transforming it into usable format, Tableau was used to create an interactive dashboard that would allow a user to gather insights from a number of visualizations. The dashboard allows a user to analyze the data from a high level as well as to drill down into details if required. Several interesting insights that were uncovered using the dashboard are presented.

2 CLIENT REQUIREMENTS AND VISUALIZATION GOALS

The intent of the client was to understand how the website is used in order to understand the audience and also to quantify the impact of the website. The requirements from the client helped us direct our analysis and visualizations towards answering below key questions:

- What is the geographic origin of the users?
- Are the majority of the users humans or crawlers and search engines?
- Is there a correlation between events and web-site traffic?
- Are users downloading content, if so, what are they downloading?
- What are users searching for?

Each of the visualizations we created provides insights that enable a user to answer a specific question. We attempted to make each

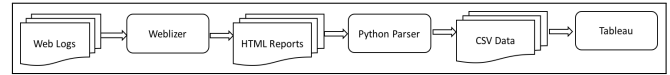


Figure 1: Data Pipeline.

visualization as interactive as possible and visually pleasing while conveying information in the best way possible.

3 TECHNICAL SOLUTION

The data pipeline for creating the visualizations has below important steps as explained in 1.

- Acquire the website usage data: The scimaps.org uses the Webalizer tool [WebalizerWebalizer2017]. Webalizer analyzes the web server logs to create HTML report which provide various statistics of web site usage. While the actual web logs are available for only 2016 the Webalizer HTML reports are available for last 10 years(March 2017 to February 2017). We used these Webalizer HTML reports as source, which is explained in section 3.1.
- Combine the data in single data store which can be queried: Since the Webalizer HTML reports does not allow us to query the data, we required to convert them into a structured format. We decided to convert the HTML reports into comma-separated format (CSV). The section 3.2 explains the implementation of the parser program which converts data into CSV format. While designing the CSV format, we added metadata fields like year and month so that we can filter the data for a specific duration.
- Upload the data in visualization tool: We used Tableau [TABLEAUTABLEAU] as our visualization tool for the visualizations.
- Create individual visualizations: We created multiple reports in Tableau to satisfy various project requirements. Each Tableau report tries to answer a group of requirements for the project. Section 4 explains each visualization in detail.
- Create a single storyboard by combining all visualizations: While it is useful to analyze each dataset separately, it also helps to get a combined view of the overall website usage. We created storyboard from all the visualizations which helps in analyzing all the website usage data in one go. The storyboard provides interactive filters using which user can slice and dice data and analyze the usage pattern effectively.

Top 100 of 30517 Total URLs					
#	Hits	KBytes		URL	
1	10401	2.46%	170838	0.34%	/
2	3686	0.87%	364	0.00%	/robots.txt
3	3481	0.82%	100542	0.20%	/styles/css/PS_Global.css
4	1938	0.46%	359408	0.71%	/exhibit/docs/05-boyack.pdf
5	1787	0.42%	3078	0.01%	/home/panel
6	1536	0.36%	139776	0.28%	/Scripts/query-1.11.1.min.js
7	1504	0.36%	73984	0.15%	/Scripts/query.cycle.all.js
8	1489	0.35%	2776	0.01%	/Scripts/SlideshowBanner.js
9	1338	0.32%	51183	0.10%	/scimaps/atlas_of_science.html
10	1183	0.28%	15151	0.03%	/contact/
11	1070	0.25%	32604	0.06%	/iteration
12	871	0.21%	19405	0.04%	/advisory_board.html
13	854	0.20%	13356	0.03%	/what_is_a_science_map.html
14	814	0.19%	1154722	2.29%	/docs/EXHIBIT_MASTER_BOOKLET.pdf
15	651	0.15%	160	0.00%	/css/zoommap.css
16	624	0.15%	10025	0.02%	/home.html
17	536	0.13%	16570	0.03%	/browse_maps.html
18	526	0.12%	249328	0.49%	/exhibit/docs/Garfield1964use.pdf
19	512	0.12%	68722	0.14%	/exhibitions.html
20	453	0.11%	7606	0.02%	/team.html
21	428	0.10%	14888	0.03%	/mapstore
22	422	0.10%	6729	0.01%	/iteration/10
23	421	0.10%	15002	0.03%	/ambassadors.html
24	411	0.10%	1427781	2.83%	/docs/Kids_map_key.pdf
25	411	0.10%	632946	1.25%	/docs/PS_AnnualReport_2013_web.pdf

Figure 2: Sample Webanalyzer Report.

3.1 Source Data

As explained in section 3, the Webanalyzer reports in HTML format are used as source data. These reports are available for last 10 years on monthly basis. Each report has following sub-sections: Monthly statistics, Daily statistics, Hourly statistics, Top 100 URLs, Top 10 entry pages, Top 10 exit pages, Top 30 referring Sites, Top 20 search strings, Top 15 user agents, Top 10 countries

Each section in webanalyzer report has HTML table. Figure 2 explains sample table from webanalyzer HTML report.

3.2 Data Parser

As explained in section 3, each Webanalyzer HTML reports is converted into CSV format. We implemented Data Parser Python script which scrapes the Webanalyzer HTML report and converts it into CSV structure. The data parser uses Python module called BeautifulSoup to parse the HTML. It then iterates over all 'A' tags to find the section header within HTML report. Finally it iterates over the HTML table elements consisting TR and TD tags to extract the data and writes it in CSV file. The data parser code is available at [AgastiAgasti2017] repository. The figure 3 shows sample records from the DAYSTATS.csv which is one of the output CSV created by the data parser.

4 VISUALIZATIONS

In this section, we explain various visualizations we created to satisfy the project requirements. We created a storyboard which provides one page interactive view of overall statistics. The individual visualizations support detailed analysis of individual statistics.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Year	Month	Day	HitsTotal	HitsPct	FilesTotal	FilesPct	PagesTotal	PagesPct	VisitsTotal	VisitsPct	SitesTotal	SitesPct	KbytesTotal	KbytesPct
2	2007	3	1	6287	2.29%	5026	2.30%	5545	2.30%	855	2.84%	237	4.48%	227572	3.09%
3	2007	3	2	3094	1.31%	2889	1.33%	3075	1.31%	351	2.38%	225	4.09%	203449	2.75%
4	2007	3	3	3314	1.21%	2836	1.30%	2902	1.23%	326	2.42%	223	4.06%	193021	2.62%
5	2007	3	4	3619	1.32%	3139	1.44%	3114	1.37%	283	1.80%	184	3.35%	148816	1.99%
6	2007	3	5	4406	1.61%	3742	1.72%	3748	1.59%	203	1.51%	183	3.33%	261931	3.55%
7	2007	3	6	6680	2.44%	5803	2.66%	5769	2.45%	498	3.70%	415	7.55%	196060	2.68%
8	2007	3	7	8443	3.08%	6551	3.01%	7597	3.14%	422	3.13%	335	6.10%	169407	2.30%
9	2007	3	8	6910	2.52%	5835	2.68%	6159	2.62%	439	3.26%	373	6.79%	182092	2.47%
10	2007	3	9	6894	2.51%	4786	2.20%	5939	2.52%	382	2.84%	303	5.51%	204942	2.78%

Figure 3: Daily Statistics Sample Records.

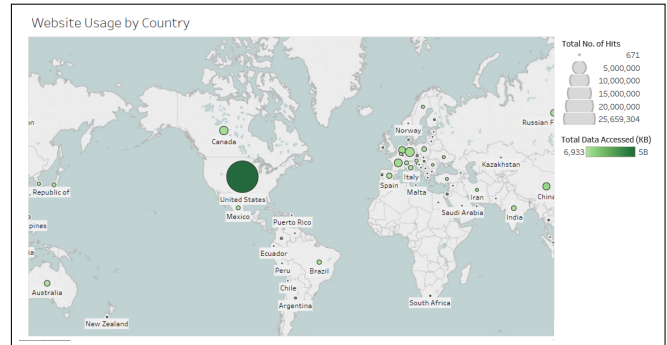


Figure 4: Geospatial Analysis of Web Traffic

4.1 Top Countries and Trends

Using Tableau, we were able to geocode country names into latitude and longitude values. We then visualized the same using one of the in-built maps in Tableau. We chose to use the proportional symbol map for this purpose. The size of the symbol would indicate the number of total hits over a period of time. Using color we were able to show levels of total data consumed by each of the countries. Users are predominantly from United States but one key insight that was uncovered is that after 2015, proportion of users from countries(e.g. Germany and France) apart from the US has increased.

4.2 Top Agents and Trends

Website traffic is mainly attributed to the various requests that are made to the server hosting the content. Let us review the requests made for scimaps.org. We have data of top 15 user agents from March-2007 to Jan-2017. Judging by the yearly pattern of the number of hits, we can mark 2011 as the pinnacle, after successive unremarkable hit fluctuations from 2007-10. There was a record 115% increase in the hits as compared to 2010. And the year 2012 was even better with a 21% increase over 2011. But since then the website has observed a downfall. The year 2013-14-15 have all marked the negative trend in the number of visitors/requests made for the site. Justifying a need for a website overhaul in 2015. We observe an increase of 10% in the request in the subsequent year. And the positive trend seems to be continuing as January records an increase of 26% over Dec-2016. Let us dive deeper and inspect the terminals that are making these requests. We have observed 6 types of terminals that attribute to the traffic on scimaps.org, they are: Windows PC, Macintosh, Linux Terminals, iPhone, iPad and Bots. We see that the majority of traffic seems to be coming from Windows PC during the majority of 2007 - 2015. But, the hits/requests made by other terminals/bots seems to be catching up

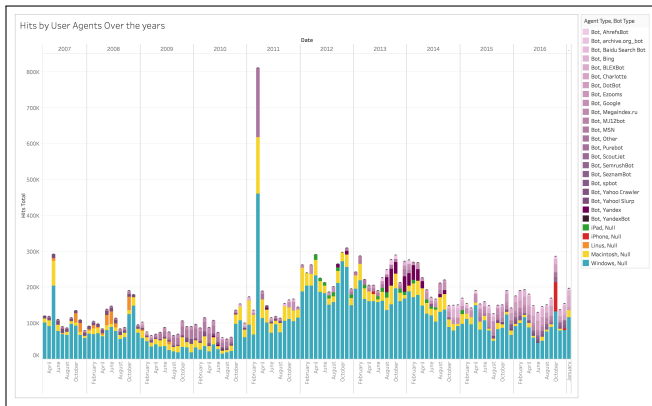


Figure 5: Accessing scimaps.org Traffic (2007 - 2017)

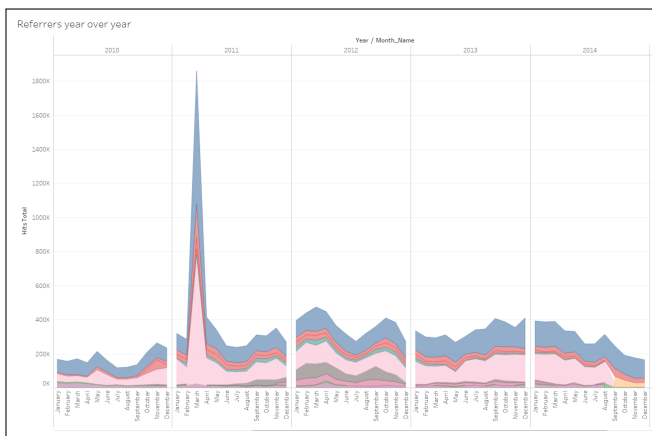


Figure 6: Top referrer.

and the share evens out after the website's overhaul. Till 2015 we observe that majority of traffic is from windows users, the traffic made by bots appears to have risen during this time. After the overhaul, Windows and bots share an approximate equal share of the website traffic, with mac traffic share increasing to 10.32% in 2017 over 2016. Of all the bots, major traffic should be attributed to Google, Yahoo Slurp and MSN bots from 2007 - 2010. And, in recent past DotBot and Bing seems to be the prime bots making 11.59% and 11% of traffic in 2016 respectively.

4.3 Top Referrers

Top Referrals data set shows the referring site to scimaps. To visualize top referrals, we used bar chart and restricted our data to top 10 due to sheer number of referral. Using bar chart to visualize the data, allows the users to quickly identify the trend of referrals and helps to know where to invest based on traffic.

4.4 Top Searches and Trends

We used tree map visualization to plot the top search strings for every individual years. The tree maps for individual years, specifically 2 years before the website was reorganized and 2 year after

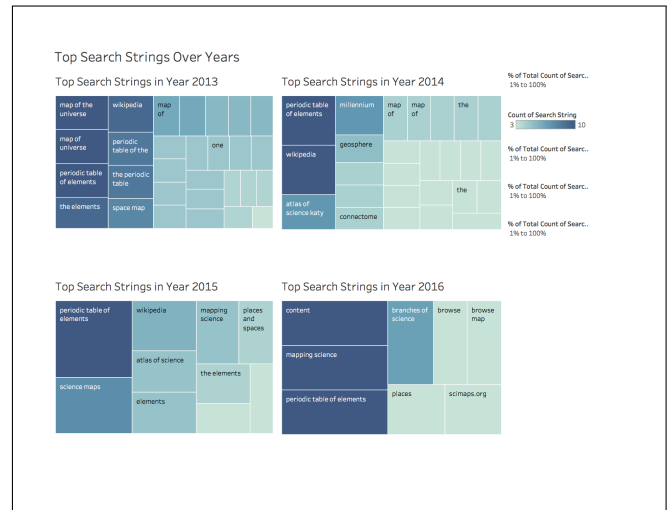


Figure 7: Top Search Strings in year 2013 to year 2016.

the website was reorganized are placed side by side. This helps in understanding the trend of the search strings. Figure 7 provides the screenshot of the visualization. Please refer to the Tableau live implementation to see the interactive version of this visualization which showcases many details on the mouse-over.

The analysis of this visualization clearly identifies the trend. Before 2016, the maximum search strings were related to 'periodic table of elements' while in 2016 the focus is shifted towards 'mapping science'. However, these two topics are consistently amongst the top 10 searches throughout the analysis period.

4.5 Most Popular Pages

In this section we intend to discover the kind of content that is being consumed by the users on the scimaps.org website. The website observed a great boost in content consumed during 2008, 2011 and 2013 there was over 40%, 60% and 45% more content consumed as compared to the respective earlier year. After the website revamp in 2015, we observe a rise in content consumption but the increase is not significant as the one observed during the above mentioned years. To attain an intuitive understanding of this we have broadly classified the website content into 6 categories: Data, Document/Text, Images, Video, Web and Other. Following are some take aways from our analysis of the user behavior on scimaps.org:

- Over the years there has always been a decrease in the amount of data consumed/downloaded.
- There has been a steady rise in the amount of documents browsed & downloaded over the years. The monotonic relationship does not seem to have any effect of the website redesign as we observe a minor rise.
- The images/visualizations showcased in the year 2010 marked the peak. There was over 3200% increase in the images viewed and 670,000% increase in the image data downloaded. This feat has not been repeated since then but we can see that the users are generally enticed by the

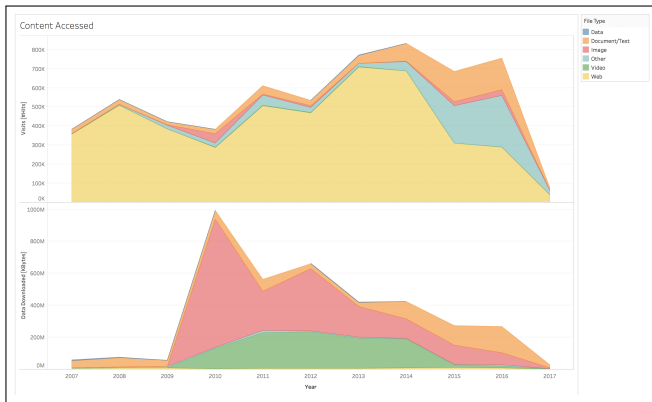


Figure 8: Distribution of Content Accessed (2007 - 2017)

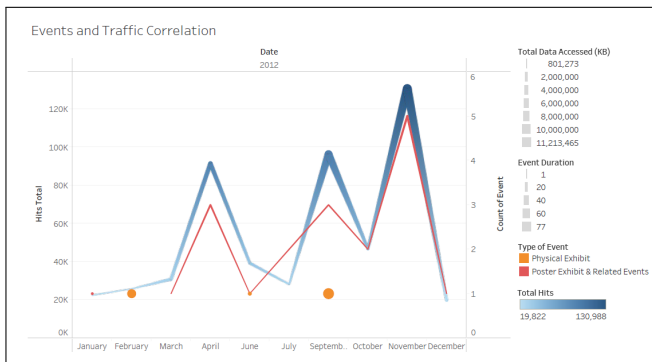


Figure 9: Correlation between Exhibit Events and Web Traffic

image content that is being posted on the website. Since the website revamp in 2015, there has been a great increase user interest for images at scimaps.org.

- Taking a look at the video/media consumed by the users, we see a substantial increase in the videos downloaded and visited during 2010. This was the same case with images. This establishes a fact that the content that the website hosted in 2010 was highly appreciated. Since then we see a negative trend in the video content consumption and the website redesign does not seem to have addressed that issue.
- The website redesign doesn't seem to have positively affected the users web based content consumption.
- Looking at the distribution of user visit and download pattern, we observe a trend. Earlier during 2007 -14 we observe huge web content consumed which drastically changed after 2015. This has been substituted by image, document and miscellaneous content.

4.6 Events and Website Traffic Correlation

In order to answer one of the key questions, we intended to visualize the trends in web traffic when there were exhibit events. We were able to get information about events in past ten years and

classified the events as physical exhibits and poster events. The two datasets used for this visualization were combined using inner join in Tableau. There is clearly a correlation between events and web traffic as well as total data accessed by the users. Physical events tend to affect web traffic by a significant amount and duration of the events plays a role as well.

5 OTHER SIMILAR TECHNOLOGIES

There are various performance parameters and aspects that aren't reviewed in the current paper due to unavailability of data. A good web analysis done by mining the user data would yield insights that could boost website traffic and potential business advancements. Listing some of the tools that could help in web analysis.

- **Google Analytics:** A freeware made by Google to monitor and report website traffic. The tool enables so to procure intricate details and visualize the trend in user behavior pattern across the web-pages. We can leverage the integrated Google intelligence and Google's proprietary machine learning library. Thus, generating actionable insights that could potentially increase in website traffic. The implementation is fairly simple. To link the tool to the website a tracking code is added to the web pages, this essentially integrates Google analytic in your website. This is also bundled along with other Google services which would help monitor the website via mobile devices.
- **Piwik:** An open-source utility tool that can help the owner analyze the website traffic and determine the performance of various content hosted. Over the years users have added myriad plugins to Piwik to perform in detailed analysis and user profiling of the website traffic. This coupled with mobile integration helps the owner monitor the website traffic.

6 CONCLUSION

To better understand and analyze the ROI for an application, web traffic analysis is important. Based on this project we can conclude that the analyzing the web traffic data can provide interesting insights which can help in improving the web site contents and its promotional efforts.

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