

# How to Read Web Site Statistics

Taking a glance at your web site's statistics is a great way to see how your web site is performing.

Most every web site has some sort of statistics available to it. If you do not know how to view your web site statistics simply contact your web hosting provider for information on that.

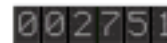
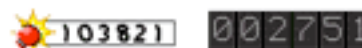
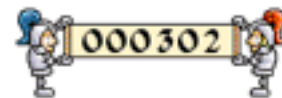
Generally you find web site statistics in your web hosting control panel. I know this is a geeky area for most web owners but, you should become familiar with all that your web host as to offer. You might even be pleasantly surprised as to what you have available to you.

Web hosting servers create what is called a server log. This is where requests being made of the server are recorded.

The server log information in its raw state is pretty difficult to view and so there are many statistical programs available that graph out the information in way that is easier to understand.

## Some Web Statistics Programs

- WebTrends
- AwStats
- Urchin (5)
- D4W Stats
- Power Stats
- Bravenet HitCounter
- Hit Wise



## Types of Statistics

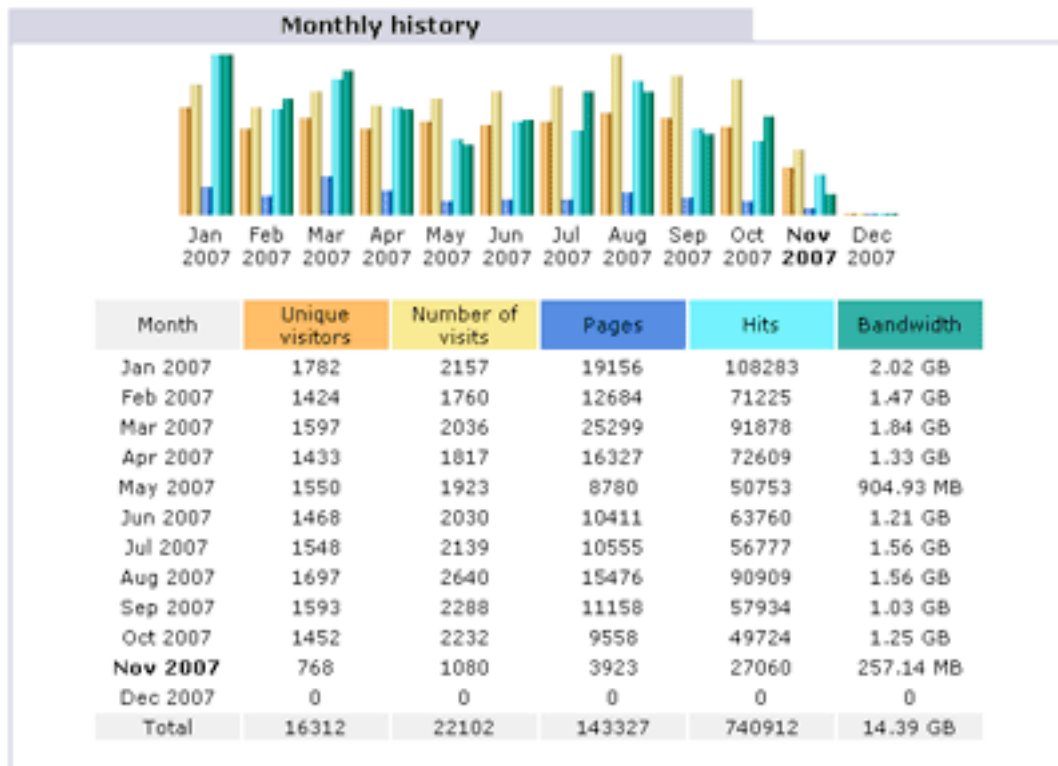
The marketing on the web makes learning about statistics software a bit confusing.

On the low end there are many web sites that offer free or fee based counters. Some simply count hits and some will count the hits but offer graphical reports that delineate between **hits**, **visitors** and **unique visitors**.

[Bravenet](#) offers a counter/stats widget that can be installed on any web site if in case you don't have access to your web hosting control panel. This counter is free but can be upgraded to the pro version for \$6.95 per month.

There are a handful of popular stats software that you will find in your control panel for your web host. These include AwStats, Urchin and WebTrends. These stats analyze your server logs and break the information down in many ways.

- Hits
- Visitors
- Unique Visitors
- Referring URLs
- Referring Domains
- Entry Pages
- Exit Pages
- Bandwidth
- Keywords
- Types of Browsers
- Types of Operating Systems
- Countries
- Regions



Lastly there are some 3rd party statistics software vendors that also analyze your advertising performance. [WebTrends](#) is probably the oldest statistics software and over the years has grown into more of a marketing analytics product. For those spending a lot of money on advertising it would be wise to track that investment.

## Statistics for the Rest of Us

As noted above, there are many ways the server log information is broken down. I generally look at three things, unique visitors, referring domains and keywords.

Hits are simply server requests (for anything). So if someone navigates to your web site, the home page load counts as one hit plus any supporting graphics will be counted as additional hits.

1 Page with 5 graphics = 6 hits

So you can see why raw hit data is deceiving. They are not just about clicks, they include all requests.

**Page Request** = Just the page loads individually.

**Visitors** = The same visitor can be counted more than once.

**Unique Visitors** = Visitors counted once that day regardless of how many times they came by.

If you want to know exactly how many people are coming to your site you need to look at just Unique Visitors.

The term “**Hits**” is used loosely when describing the value of web advertising space. Hit numbers are always the highest but they do not equal the number of eyeballs.

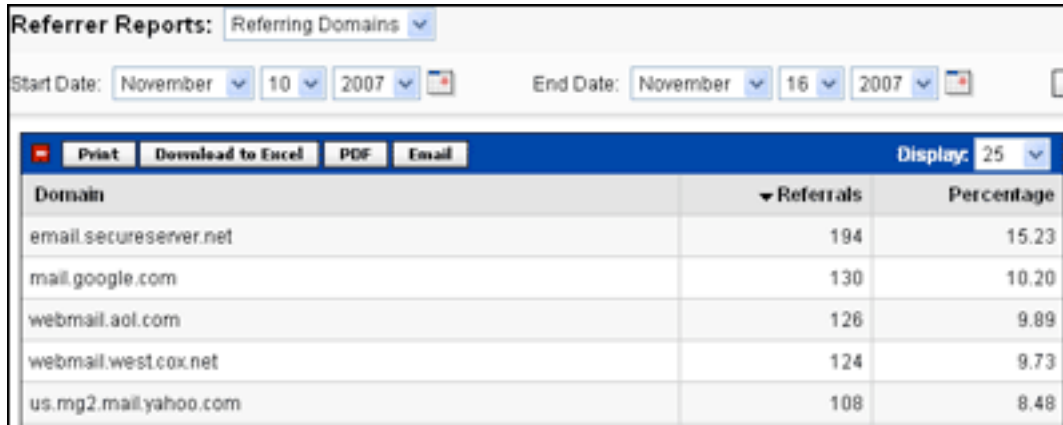
If someone says they get a 1000 hits a day that could, in reality, translate to 100 or less visitors.

## Referring Domains or Referring URLs

This stat is important to me because I want to see from where hits are coming from. If you are participating in link exchanges with other web sites, you should be seeing their domains listed in the Referring Domains stat.

You will probably be surprised to see many other referring domains. These are probably linked so go ahead and click on them to see if you can find the link that is going to your site.

When you can not find your link, you will probably be wondering why the server recorded that referring domain. This is mostly the case with referring URLs because many URLs are dynamic. This means that they are served up from a database and the URL with its query string got recorded but was only in existence for a moment.



The screenshot shows a web analytics interface titled "Referrer Reports: Referring Domains". It includes date selection fields for "Start Date" (November 10, 2007) and "End Date" (November 16, 2007). Below the date fields are buttons for "Print", "Download to Excel", "PDF", and "Email", along with a "Display: 25" dropdown menu. The main data is presented in a table with three columns: "Domain", "Referrals", and "Percentage".

Domain	Referrals	Percentage
email.secureserver.net	194	15.23
mail.google.com	130	10.20
webmail.aol.com	126	9.89
webmail.west.cox.net	124	9.73
us.mg2.mail.yahoo.com	108	8.48

Things that contribute to phantom links are web email programs from AOL, Yahoo, MSN and Google. Also, banner rotators, community sites or forums. These links were in existence for just a moment while someone was referencing your site.

Many of your hits will be from web spiders or robots. These are programs that traverse the internet to gather data. If you are linked well from other sites you can expect spider activity almost immediately. This is a good thing because you want to get indexed as soon as possible like by Google.

**Note:** You may be wondering why you get hits from remote countries all over the world. These probably are not people but other search engine spiders launched from servers from these countries. For example Norway = 1 hit.

If you get a lot of hits from Norway then you are very popular there.

## Keywords

The keywords and phrases stat is also important because it shows how people find you in terms of search words. This stat is very revealing because not only do we see the expected keywords being used but sometimes new ones because of the uniqueness of a string of text that is located on your home page.

As an example, I have a site that has a few testimonials listed on the home page. These did not have any of the keywords listed in the meta tag yet a company or name of a colleague ends up being recorded as a potential keyword stat.

What to do with this knowledge? Well it depends. If the keywords haven't been used in your natural search campaign or your advertising maybe it should be considered if there are enough hits to warrant the energy.

## **Conclusion**

Be in tune with your web site's performance by getting access to your web site's statistics. This will help guide some of your marketing decisions.

## **Webcentrica Customers**

Contact [Site Mechanix](#) to find out more about [Traffic Facts](#). Easy to read charts and graphs and reports can be emailed to you at any frequency and customized to report only the things you want to know.

Posted on November 17th, 2007 by Karl Knelson