Readership metrics

Trends and stories from our global traffic data

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A sense of perspective...

Currently, Wikimedia projects are viewed:

- 14-15 billion times per month
- 400-500 million times per day
- 5000-6000 times per second

Pageviews of WMF websites; not included: Bots, spiders, other forms of reading
This talk

- Some basic facts to keep in mind about Wikimedia’s overall web traffic
- Trends: How things have been changing in recent years
- New metrics: Beyond the limitations of pageview numbers

Myself:

- Analyst in the Wikimedia Foundation’s Readers team
- Wikipedia editor since 2003
Sister projects are actually still large websites

- Wikiversity: 4.2 million views/month
- ProPublica.org: 4.3 million/month (US nonprofit new site, several Pulitzers, budget $13m/year)

Caveat: Baseline of undetected bot traffic may be higher on small projects
Pageview definition

2014/15: Major effort by the WMF Analytics team to revamp the pageview definition, in particular to better exclude bots

Retroactively applied back to 2013, so we now have a bit over four years of higher-quality data to look at for trends
Long-term pageview trend 2013-2017

Overall traffic essentially flat (-2% yearly since 2013)

Mobile grew +21% yearly, desktop shrunk -14% yearly
Long-term pageview trend 2013-2017

Some events that noticeably cost us traffic:
- Block of Chinese WP in China (~1%)
- Switch to 100% encrypted traffic (2-3%?)
- Block in Turkey (~1%)
Long-term pageview trend 2013-2017

Desktop

Mobile

Mobile grew +21% yearly, desktop shrunk -14% yearly

Mobile ratio

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<td>May 2013</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>July 2017</td>
<td>53%</td>
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Mobile has surpassed desktop.
Seasonality and year-over-year changes

Wikimedia pageviews year-over-year comparison, May 2013-July 2017

Desktop drop in (Northern) summer and around Christmas
Seasonality and year-over-year changes

“Christmas bump” in mobile views, presumably due to new phones going online
Unique devices

Industry standard web metrics: Pageviews and unique *visitors*

Unique visitor counting requires tracking users across views, which we avoid for privacy reasons (as opposed to almost all major web sites)

Novel privacy-friendly alternative developed by WMF in 2015/16: Unique *devices*

- Based only on the reader’s date of last access
- NB: devices ≠ users
Unique devices

E.g. (July 2017):

English Wikipedia: 732 million/month, 66% mobile

All Wikipedias: >1 billion (preliminary new measurement: 1.36 billion)

Mobile has less pageviews per device
Limitations of the pageview metric

Does not capture offline reading, e.g.:

- Printouts of articles
- Kiwix, ZIM file downloads
- New offline features in the Android and iOS Wikipedia app

400-500k clicks/day on “printable version”

Actual prints from browser =?
Limitations of the pageview metric

Page previews (formerly known as hovercards)

- New feature being activated currently on desktop Wikipedia
- Shows short summary of linked article when hovering over a wikilink
- Might decrease pageviews somewhat (which is kind of the point)
- A new way of reading Wikipedia content
New metrics: retention and engagement

Two new metrics we are building right now (FY 2017/18):

**Retention** - how often do people come back?

- We’re reusing the last-access date cookie (introduced for unique devices metric) for this

**Engagement** - how intensively do people engage with the content?

- We’re measuring the time until browser tab close (for a small sample)
Questions?

Readers meetup: Tomorrow (Saturday) 6:30pm, Drummond Center (Level 3)

- Talk to the WMF team responsible for Wikipedia’s reader-facing software features

Explore public stats:

- [https://stats.wikimedia.org/](https://stats.wikimedia.org/)
- [[mediawiki:Wikimedia_Audiences#Reading_Audience]]

Contact:

- tbayer at wikimedia.org / [[meta:User:Tbayer (WMF)]]