Harnessing Wikipedia as a Tool: An Analysis of Traffic Sources

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Introduction

Today, users of all backgrounds obtain a huge amount of information from Wikipedia. Attempting to increase the visibility of the Wayne State University Digital Collections, I introduced links to our Collections on relevant Wikipedia articles. Following an analysis of data obtained through Google Analytics, I discovered that traffic to our Digital Collections from Wikipedia had increased significantly.

Objectives

• To present real data as evidence that Wikipedia can be a viable tool for librarians to make their collections more widely accessible.
• To encourage librarians to use Wikipedia as a tool to support their mission of free and equal access to information.

Definitions

• Direct: Direct traffic includes people who typed the website’s URL into the browser and sessions where Google Analytics is unable to detect the source.
• New User: People that visit your website for the first time in the selected date range (technically, a user without a previous cookie.)
• Pageview: A pageview is reported when a page has been viewed by a user on your website
• Referral: A referral is reported when a user clicks through to your website from another third-party website.
• User: An individual person browsing your website (technically, a unique browser cookie.)

Methods

First, I searched Wikipedia for articles that were related to collections found in Wayne State University’s digital collections. In the external links section in the bottom of the article, I added a link to the relevant collection by editing the page through my username. I originally added links to eight Wikipedia articles, but only included an analysis of two collections in this poster.

External Links (with):
• [First U.S. Human Heart Transplant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_U.S._human_heart_transplant)
• [Wayne State University Library](https://lib.wisc.edu/)

The digital collections are tracked using Google Analytics, which is a customizable web analytics service. Powered by the Google Analytics Tracking Code, which is a JavaScript code that users add to their websites that wish to be tracked, Google Analytics collects visitor data and sends it to the Analytics server. Using Google Analytics, I was able to determine whether adding links to Wikipedia articles increased traffic to our digital collections or not.

The time frames are:
• Before the links: January 17, 2017 – November 19, 2017 (305 days)
• After the links: November 20, 2017 – September 20, 2018 (305 days)

Results

First U.S. Human Heart Transplant

WPA Music Manuscripts

Contributing to Wikipedia

1. Familiarize yourself with Wikipedia’s Purpose and Core Content Policies:
   i. Neutral Point of View
   ii. Verifiability
   iii. No Original Research
2. Set up an account

References