Using Google Analytics at Boston University

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Using Google Analytics at BU

The Google Analytics platform allows you to get detailed insights into how visitors are using your website and improve user experience.

Analytics allows for everything from a quick overview to an in-depth analysis of your site's visitor data. Google Analytics is a free application and is automatically included on most public-facing sites managed by IS&T.

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How can Google Analytics help you?

- Data from Google Analytics is often used in making critical business decisions and improving visitor experience. In Analytics, this data is extracted through "reports." A number of standard reports come included with every BU Google Analytics account.

  - **Basic reports**
 - **Advanced ("Custom") reports**
  - **Dashboards**

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Boston University Google Analytics Account vs. Separate Free Google Analytics Account

Boston University Google Analytics Account

- Most public-facing sites managed by IS&T, the tracking code for **Boston University Google Analytics** account is already included. This account is set up with with our **Properties and Apps** (i.e. http://www.bu.edu, http://sites.bu.edu, BU Mobile, etc.) and **Views** (i.e. Views of www.bu.edu include major sites such as Admissions, TechWeb, Dining, etc.)

- To view BU's data in Google Analytics, you'll need to be granted access to the account. Once access is granted, your view will include data from all of BU's Web Properties and Apps. This can be an overwhelming set of data. **Custom Segments** create a subset of your Analytics data to filter out page views that aren't from your site.

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Separate Free Google Analytics Account for Sites with Advanced Tracking Needs

- For sites with advanced tracking needs, a separate (free) Analytics account is worth consideration. In WordPress on www.bu.edu, additional Analytics accounts are very quick update for Site Admins.

  - First, you'll need to create a (free) Google Analytics account for the site. Once the account has been set up, grab the "**Tracking ID**" and head to WordPress.

    - In your WordPress Admin panel, go to **Settings** > **Google Analytics**.

    - Click "**Add new account…**" and enter the Tracking ID from Google Analytics. Click 'OK'. All set!

    - Verify that data is being received in Analytics by checking **Real-Time reports**. If these reports have data, then your tracking code is working.

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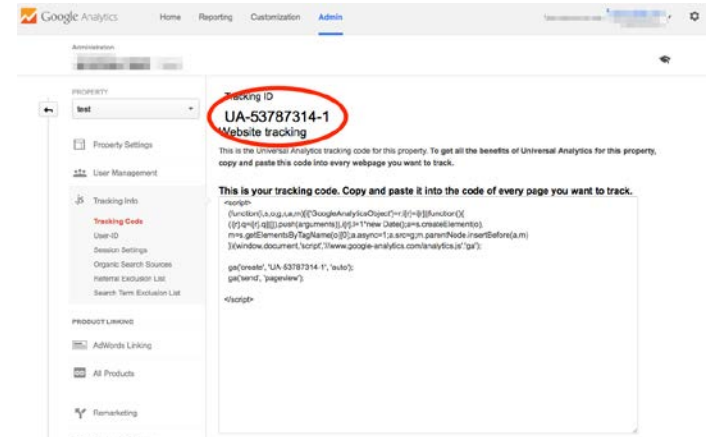
Dashboards

A quick way to check your most business-critical metrics. You can create custom dashboards in your Google Analytics account and a summary view of Analytics data is available right in the WordPress dashboard. This gives you a quick look at the number of users and pageviews your site has seen over the past 30 days and top 10 pages ordered by view count, etc.
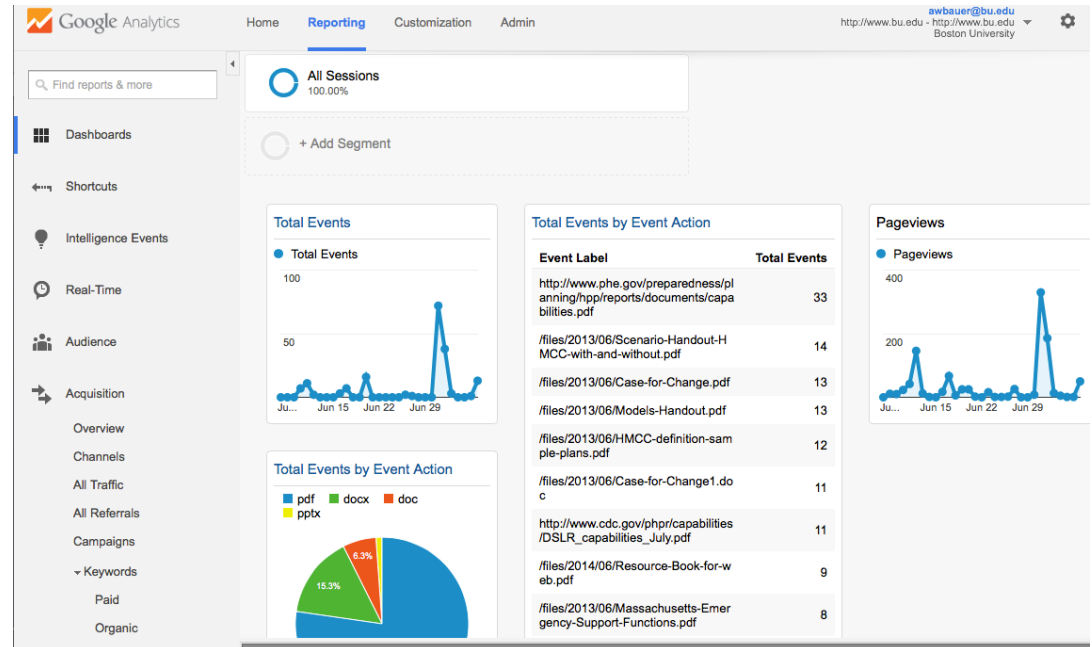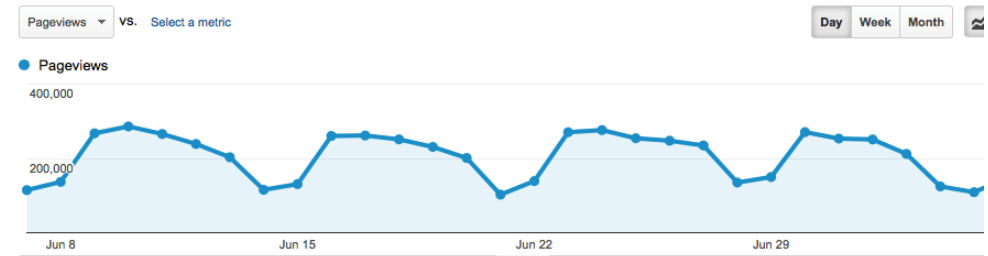
Basic reports

Basic reports have standard metrics including pageviews, referring search terms, and visitors by location, among others, for a given time period.

Examples:

- *"Which are our top-performing pages this month?"*

- *"What top cities of our visitors?"*

Google Analytics Glossary is a helpful resource while learning reports:

- ▪ Dimensions and metrics for understanding the building blocks of your reports
  - ▪ **Dimensions** are attributes of your data – rows in reports. For example, the dimension *City* indicates the city, for example, "Paris" or "New York", from which a session originates. The dimension *Page* indicates the URL of a page that is viewed. Browser, Landing Page and Campaign are all examples of default dimensions in Analytics.

  - ▪ **Metrics** are quantitative measurements – columns in reports. The metric *Sessions* is the total number of sessions. The metric *Pages/Session* is the average number of pages viewed per session. A descriptive attribute or characteristic of data. *Screenviews*, *Pages per Session*, and *Average Session Duration* are examples of metrics in Analytics.

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Advanced "Custom" reports

These reports can help answer complex questions, and are intended for datasets that are retrieved on a regular basis.

A Custom Report is a report that you create. You pick the dimensions (*City* and *Browser*, for example) and metrics (*Sessions*, *Pageviews*, and *Bounce Rate*, for example) and decide how they should be displayed. You must specify at least one dimension and one metric.

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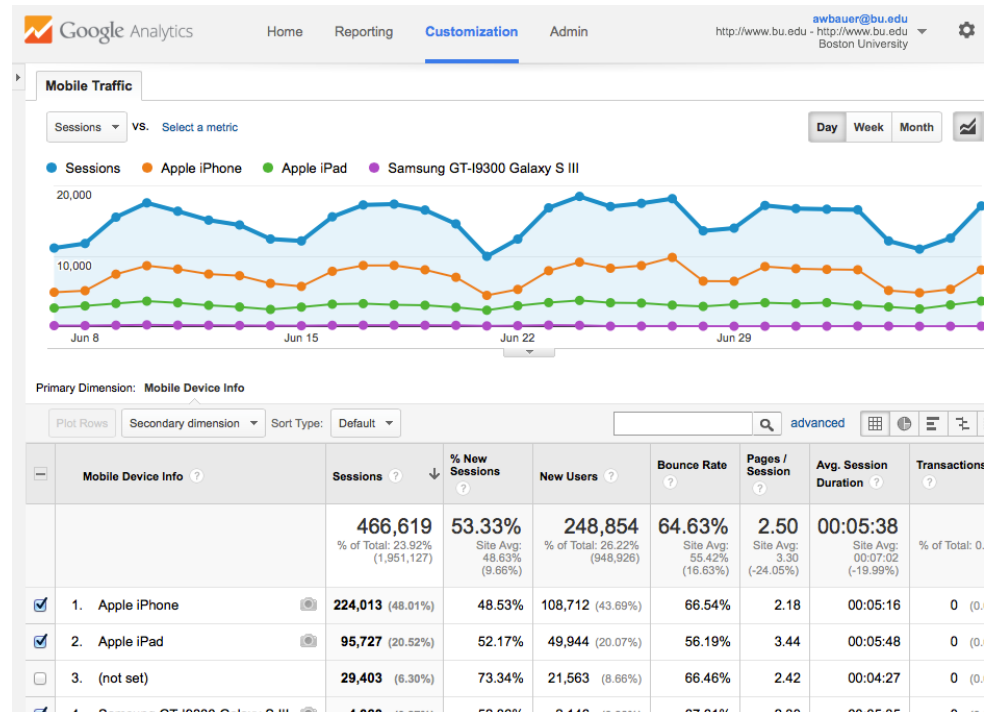
Advanced Features: Enable Tracking for Downloads and External Links

- You site can let Google Analytics know when visitors download a file or follow external links. With these settings enabled, you can use the existing tools in Google Analytics to track this information.

- A user on your site with the **Site Admin role** can enable these from the **WP Dashboard > Settings > Google Analytics**.

- To track external links, simply turn on the checkbox.

- To track file downloads, turn on the checkbox and specify which types of files you need to track. The settings panel has built-in options to select PDFs or MS Office documents. There is also a field to specify additional file types. Follow the on-screen instructions carefully. Only track file types that you need — **every additional file type adds overhead and make may page loads slower.**

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Get More Help For Analytics

- Google's Analytics Help Center gives a good overview of the product and some step-by-step procedures to setup some basic reporting.

- For more in-depth study Google offers Analytics Academy — a lineup of free online courses aimed mainly at teaching how to use the product's reporting features to make decisions about your site.

- Google's support for Google Analytics is excellent and extensive. IS&T supports the BU-specific aspects of Google Analytics (embedding tracking codes, account management, access to stats), but IS&T does not offer general training for using Google Analytics.

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Demo & Questions

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