

# Reading Your Web Stats – GA and more

Regina Vilensky, SAGE Publications

# Why have a Web Analytics tool? Can we do without?

- In the world of online publishing not having an analytics tool is like driving without controls on your dashboard. The car can keep moving but you have no idea how fast you are going or how much fuel you have left.
- In publishing we can use analytics qualitatively (e.g. not simply count the number of new subscribers but gauge what kind of experience people are having on your site).
- Critical in any economic environment

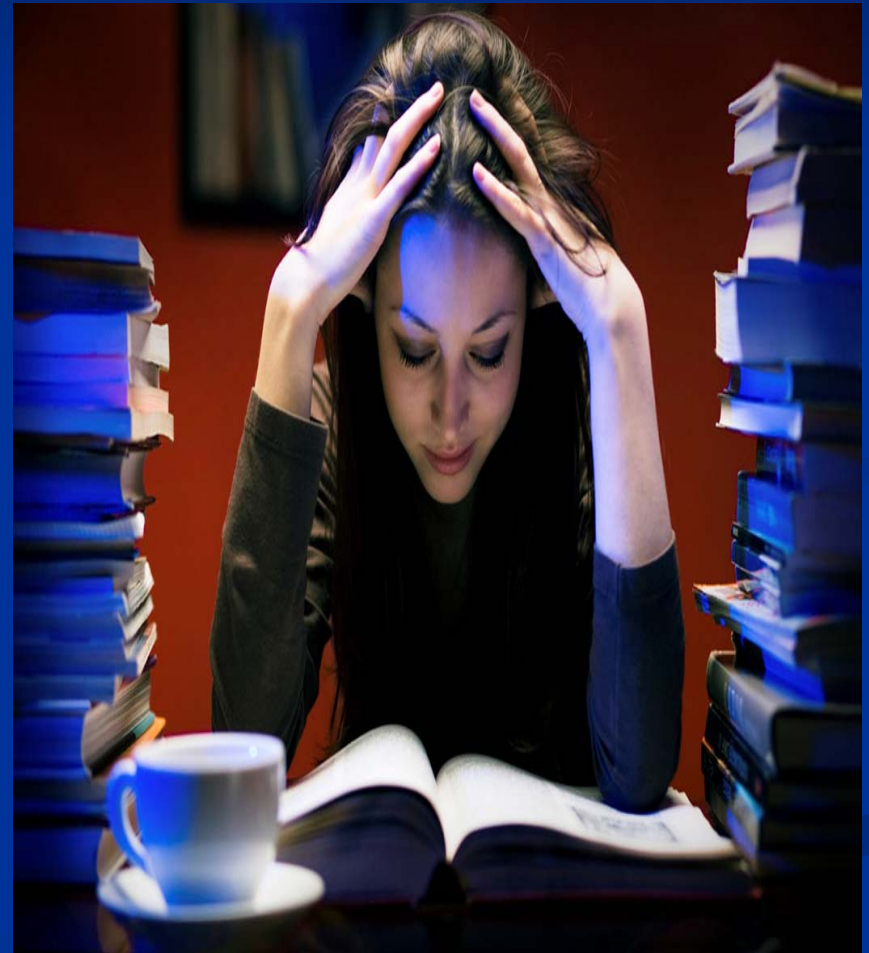


# What to do before you start?

- Ask the right questions
- Define success
- Connect with your data users to find out what is important to them (e.g. improve revenue, cut costs, specific improvements in customer experience, etc.). The last thing you want is to invest into reports that no one will care about.
- Focus on analysis, not on reporting. “If at the end of  $x$  hours of work your table, graph, or report is not screaming out the action that your business leaders need to take, you are doing reporting and not analysis.” – Avinash Kaushik
- Encourage data-driven decision-making

# What are we reading?

- Understand what your reports are about and consider the context
- Examples:
  - Low number of visits to your help page – your users are having a great smooth experience OR they simply cannot find the help page
  - High Bounce Rate – do the users find the page irrelevant OR did they get everything they wanted and left
  - A spike in number of visitors – you just had a successful marketing campaign OR the majority of the new visitors came from Timbuktu, i.e. usage is most likely not legitimate or only accessing free content. Check other reports
- Develop a process



# How much does “free” really cost?

- While GA is technically free, realize that you will need a technical resource for tagging, testing, researching, and fixing issues. Make sure you have that or consider other tools.
- Simply having the reports available is a waste of effort. You will need an analyst resource to figure out and set up relevant reports, provide analysis, and suggest actionable insights



# Is a good analytics tool all you need?

- No!!!! You still need a human
- Higher usage may or may not be a good thing
- You will still need surveys and other research methods. But a good tool can definitely guide you there
- Analytics cannot be left alone. Should be monitored to be useful.

# My content is tagged. Great!! Now what?

- Figure out which reports will best answer the questions you posed
- Set up a regular monitoring process
- Take action upon what you discover
- Ask more questions
- Set up test scenarios
- Be prepared to be surprised...and enjoy!