Digital Communications Report

A review of analytics for bates.edu, email, and social media

July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015
Produced by the Bates Communications Office
Contents

4 THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE
5 BATES.EDU
5 Our Users
9 Our Content
11 2014 Remodel
12 EMAIL
13 SOCIAL MEDIA
15 CONCLUSIONS AND GOALS
Overview

This report reviews key analytics data for our digital communications channels over the 2014–15 fiscal year. The data was collected using Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics, MailChimp Reports, Measured Voice, and Supermetrics. The data was compiled and analyzed by the Bates Communications Office (BCO).

The Digital Communications Report is intended to serve as a roadmap in our ongoing quest to understand the needs and goals of our audiences, so that we can best tailor our digital communications to meet them where they are. It features key metrics about how we distribute content across digital platforms, the users who consumed that content, and how they received it.

This marks our third year creating this report. This year, we have expanded the report’s scope, looking beyond web analytics to also include email and social media. While the website is still our largest publication in terms of content and consumption, the role of email and social media in effective communication is increasing and we want to reflect it here in order to paint the fullest picture possible. Our social media and email analytics are for BCO-created content, and do not include all emails and posts pushed out by the college.

We hope you find this year’s report as illuminating to read as it was for us to compile and write.

Highlights

› Mobile traffic continues to grow rapidly as a share of our site traffic – from 10% three years ago, to 19% two years ago, to 25% this past year. For our public visitors (who constitute the vast majority of our audience), that number over the same span has leapt from 16% to 26% to 34%.

› Texas jumped into the Top Ten states for visitors to bates.edu, and traffic increased from both California and Illinois relative to their northeast peers.

› Instagram has emerged as our most-engaged-with social media platform, with an average of 153 likes or comments per post.

› Following the last fall’s bates.edu remodel, user interaction with our global navigation more than doubled, and our homepage load time dropped to under 1 second on average – the fastest in the NESCAC.
The college communicates with key audiences via bates.edu, as well as by email and through social media. For those channels managed by BCO, here’s a high-level summary of user engagement over the past year:

### BATES.EDU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique pageviews of new BCO content</td>
<td>439,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total news posts</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most viewed post: “Slideshow: 26 Bates photographs of 2014 that we like the most”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total athletic releases</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most viewed release: “Info on Friday’s NCAA Sweet Sixteen game at Babson”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SOCIAL MEDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Likes, Comments &amp; Shares</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>26,603</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>35,142</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>1,794</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EMAIL

96 sent  1,823,106 total delivered  513,000 opened  118,900 clicked
28% of deliveries  23% of opens

SUBJECT LINE OF OUR MOST-OPENED EMAIL:
“BatesNews: Convocation livestream, Campus Construction Update, the monthly slideshow…and welcome back!”

bates.edu

OUR USERS

Analytics data can provide a sense of scale of our audience — how they found us, what technology they used to visit us, and how they behaved while they were here.

How many people visited the website in FY 2014-15?

4,107,849 total sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL PAGEVIEWS</th>
<th>10,909,487</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNIQUE PAGEVIEWS</td>
<td>8,258,859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How engaged were they?
A typical user visited 2.7 pages on each visit and stayed on the site for 2:30 minutes
  › A typical public user visited 3 pages on each visit
  › A typical Bates user visited 2.1 pages on each visit
63% of all visits consisted of only 1 pageview
65% of all visits lasted for 10 seconds or less

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGEVIEWS PER SESSION</th>
<th>AVERAGE SESSION DURATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1:39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where did they come from?
The vast majority of our users are in the United States. While many are in New England, quite a few hail from farther afield. This word cloud shows the top 10 states from which visits to our site originated, with the state name sized according to the number of visits:

The top countries of origin included India (1.40%), UK (1.00%), Canada (0.91%), Philippines (0.52%), Australia (0.37%), Pakistan (0.35%), Germany (0.27%), France (0.24%) and China (0.24%).
How did they find us?

Our largest source of web traffic is search engines, at 51%. This percentage is even higher for our off-campus users. Our second largest source of web traffic is direct traffic — links shared in emails, bookmarks, or URLs typed by hand.
How did they visit us?

Off-campus users visited bates.edu on a mobile device or tablet 34% of the time. Windows is still the most popular operating system, but its lead is steadily dropping due to growth in Apple and Android use. Chrome is now the most popular browser, overtaking Safari since last year. Firefox’s use has dropped substantially in a year. The most significant shift in our browser profile is the decrease in use of older versions of Internet Explorer. Given our current browser profile, we have better control than ever as to how our website renders on users’ screens.

Sitewide, mobile/tablet is growing steadily and averaged 25% for the year. Many areas of our site are seeing much higher mobile traffic. Among three of the top sites — Admission, Athletics, and News — mobile/tablet traffic averaged 44% for the year. And on our 4th most popular page, the Dining Menu, mobile/tablet traffic is 65%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating System</th>
<th>Sitewide</th>
<th>Only Admission, Athletics &amp; News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macintosh</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andriod</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iOS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrome</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safari</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefox</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Explorer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OUR CONTENT

Looking at user behavior helps us understand the types of content our audiences are seeking out and how they go about navigating through it.

Where did visits begin?
- **39%** on the homepage
- **6%** on Garnet Gateway
- **3%** on Dining Menu
- **2%** on the Athletics homepage
- **1%** on ILS > Changing email password on iPhone
- **1%** on Library
- **1%** on ILS > PowerPoint Presentation Tips
- **1%** on Career > CV vs. Resume
- **1%** on Admission
- **1%** on Directory

Where did users go from the homepage?
While email, social, and organic campaigns are directing more users to internal landing pages, the site’s homepage is still our most popular landing page, with a **39%** share.

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**VISITED FROM HOMEPAGE**
- **11.2%** Featured News Posts
- **8.9%** The Quad
- **8.9%** Athletics
- **8.1%** Academics
- **5.1%** Admission
- **4.6%** A-Z Index
- **4.1%** Email
- **2.9%** Library
- **2.4%** About
- **2.4%** Campus
Top Sites
On bates.edu, “sites” are collections of multiple pages. Looking at the most viewed sites (which aggregate the unique pageviews for all pages within that site) helps us understand more generally the types of content our audiences are consuming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Unique Pageviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homesite</td>
<td>1,677,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>454,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>410,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnet Gateway</td>
<td>333,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>289,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining</td>
<td>203,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS</td>
<td>190,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>170,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>169,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Basketball</td>
<td>163,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Lacrosse</td>
<td>157,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>151,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>142,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Alumni Community</td>
<td>138,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Financial Services</td>
<td>132,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>132,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Catalog</td>
<td>115,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About</td>
<td>109,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quad</td>
<td>108,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Center</td>
<td>104,396</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total unique traffic to bates.edu was up **1.1%**.
Traffic to the homepage was down **8%**, likely due to targeted emails, social media, and SEO efforts increasing traffic to internal pages.
Traffic to the Admission site was up **17%**.
The Quad is represented as number **19**, but is a new site, created late in the fiscal year to improve campus communication. Adjusted for its age, it is a top **5** site.
Athletics has **5** sites in the top **20**.
The top 20 sites represent **65%** of bates.edu’s traffic.
2014 REMODEL

On November 3, 2014, we launched a remodeled version of bates.edu. The primary goal of the remodel was to provide our users with a site that works well on all devices. The secondary goals of the remodel were to improve site speed and to improve the global navigation.

Device Support
From FY13-14 to FY14-15 there was a 32% increase in mobile/tablet traffic. This upward trend has continued throughout the year and our bellwether sites (those targeted for prospective and current students) indicate that the growth will continue into FY15–16.

Now that our site has 6 breakpoints, we’re ready to accommodate all types and sizes of devices. Focusing on developing new templates and design elements that are as geared toward “tap” and “swipe” gestures as they are to mouse-clicks will continue to keep our site easily usable to all visitors.

Speed
Lower page load times are more likely to keep visitors on the site, and to make their experience on the site enjoyable. To keep our page load times down, we focused on optimizing two of the largest controllable contributing factors to speed: http requests (the number of files required to load each page), and page size (the amount of data that has to be transferred for each page to render).

When compared to the average NESCAC homepage, our new homepage has 17% fewer http requests, is 4 times smaller in page size, and loads over 5 times faster. While the average NESCAC homepage takes 4.5 seconds to load, bates.edu loads in less than 1 second.

By focusing on site speed in the development of our remodeled website, we were able to maintain our site’s reputation of hosting large, high-quality photos, while still producing the fastest homepage in the NESCAC.

Navigation
Before the remodel, bates.edu’s global site menu contained 135 links. Through testing and analytics, we found that this bloated navigation was overwhelming and deterring users.

With the remodel came a new menu. It contains 30 links. The process for determining what warranted a presence in the global menu was a mix of art and science: it included consideration of user behavior, top tasks, content popularity, and thoughtfulness about the core values and messages of the college which require visibility. With a more focused system of navigation (which can be easily scanned and explored even on a phone), we found that users are more likely to interact with our new global menu – more than twice as likely, in fact.
In FY 2014-15, BCO delivered 96 emails, for a total of 1.8 million individual email deliveries. This included:

- 42 Bates News messages, each to approximately 22,000 recipients
- 40 Sports Update messages, each to approximately 20,000 recipients
- 14 Events at Bates message, each to approximately 1,350 recipients.

The average open rate for these emails was 28%, which is above the industry standard. The average click rate among those who opened an email was 23%.

Unsubscribes

The Events emails had 33 total unsubscribes, or an average of 2 per email.
The BatesNews emails had 497 unsubscribes, or an average of 12 per email.
The Sports Updates emails had 1,357 unsubscribes, or an average of 34 per email.

Subject lines for emails with Top 5 open rates

- 29.9%  BatesNews: Two honors for Bates, blizzard schmizzard, and a possible treatment for PTSD
- 29.4%  BatesNews: 26 photographs of 2014 that we like the most
BatesNews: Announcement of 2015 Commencement speaker and honorands

BatesNews: Convocation livestream, Campus Construction Update, the monthly slideshow…and welcome back!

BatesNews: News media hits (including a Face in the Crowd), latest Bates ‘Beings’ and a Working Weekend

Top 5 Bates News stories receiving most unique views from email

4,005 Slideshow: 26 Bates photographs of 2014 that we like the most

2,846 Slideshow: Bates people plowed ahead during the Jan. 27 blizzard

2,764 Students admitted to the Class of 2019 are the academically strongest, most diverse in Bates history

2,284 Multimedia: Garcelon’s prime-time NCAA debut was a night to remember

2,251 Campus Construction Update: Feb. 6, 2015

Social Media

In addition to video sites like Vimeo and YouTube, BCO maintains an active presence on three primary social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Facebook
Followers: 12,000
Total Posts: 306
Total Impressions: 1,113,020
Total Engagement (Likes, Comments, Shares): 26,603

Top posts

8/31/2014
586 Comments, Likes, Shares
“The Class of 2018 as seen in the Peter J. Gomes Chapel. (Phyllis Graber Jensen/Bates College) #BeingsOfBates"

3/13/2015
627 Comments, Likes, Shares
“A great run. You made a long winter much better.”
Twitter
Followers: 8,333
Total Posts: 338

Total Impressions: 720,611
Total Engagement (Favorites, Replies, Retweets): 1,794

Top Tweets

3/14/2015

Winter was cold, Alumni Gym was always warm, and Bobcat men's hoops took us on a beautiful winter ride. Thank you!

Congratulations to the Bobcat men's basketball team on your great run to the Sweet Sixteen
You gave us so many Great Days to Be a Bobcat!

3/8/2015

Bates (motto: With Ardor and Devotion) rolls, beats Stockton (motto: An Environment for Excellence) in NCAA tourney hoops
#marchmottomadness

Instagram
Followers: 3,100
Total Posts: 229

Total Engagement (Likes, Comments): 35,142

Top Posts

1/28/2015

11/16/2014
Conclusions and Goals

This year’s retrospective report makes a few things clear:

› Our users are engaging with our content on whatever device they have handy — and increasingly, that means devices with small screens.
› Search remains far and away the most important vehicle for bringing new and returning visitors to bates.edu.
› Followership and engagement on social channels is steadily growing, with more interactions with our content happening entirely within social platforms.

These facts help us focus on a few valuable and achievable goals for the coming year:

› Continue to improve the user experience on bates.edu with intentional enhancements to the web design, styles, and layout.
› Make bates.edu even more goal-oriented, with clear pathways for the most critical top tasks such as joining the mailing list, touring, interviewing, applying, giving, and registering for events.
› Grow our public audiences through creative digital marketing, including search and social.
› Sustain our defined “Planet Bates” email audience through refined email campaigns that are in support of the college’s communications strategy.