u3a Guide

How to guide:

Measuring the effectiveness of your digital media

Introduction

This guide outlines a variety of **easy** ways that you can measure the effectiveness of your website, your social media and other digital activity – all <u>free of charge</u>. One of the benefits of being online is that you can easily and quickly find metrics that show you what works and what doesn't, so that you can improve what you do. You need not pay to get useful metrics, and you don't need a computer expert to gather or interpret them.

Bear in mind that the best measurements are qualitative (people's opinions) as well as quantitative (data-based). What people <u>think</u> is just as important as data. If they <u>believe</u> that you don't update your website regularly, then they may not visit it to find out. The issue may not be the frequency of updates but how you get people to know about and value those updates. Keep all measurements simple, and make sure they give you the information that you need to take action.

Typically, groups aim to use measurements to check that -

- our website is being visited often
- our website is providing a good experience e.g. people find what they're seeking
- at least 30% of members who are online are members of our Facebook site
- our Facebook site has a large (?) and growing (?) number of visitors
- our Facebook site is updated at least weekly

Your experiences of using this guide are of vital importance. **Please send your suggestions for improvement to feedback@u3a.org.uk**

Qualitative measurements

These are important and don't have to be opinion surveys.

It's good practice to offer people the opportunity to give their opinions all the time, about everything and anything: those who have strong opinions will make them known.

Opinions may "skew" towards the negative, as people are much more likely to complain than compliment, but the benefit of complaints is that they are usually more specific and <u>useful</u> than simple compliments. You can take action as result of them. If you reply to them, always thank the complainer.

The easiest, fastest way to gain specific feedback is to run a "Talkback" session on social media. Advertise a date and time and say you'll host a (time-limited, say 45 minute - never an hour, it sounds too long) Facebook session where people are invited to comment on and give their ideas about improving your website.

This can be run in various ways. You could just run a Zoom event. Or you could post on

Facebook and wait for responses. Or you could run a "**Facebook Live**" interactive real-time video session, or broadcast a **Zoom** session via Facebook, so involving more people than just the ones who have the Zoom link.

Whatever method you use, have a clear named "Host", some questions that you need answers to, and make sure you have some Friends planted, ready to kick off the conversation. Getting started is the most difficult thing.

That's a bit like an online **Focus Group**. A Focus Group focuses on an issue, opinions about it and ideas for solving it, and to be a true FG should be run in a formal manner. If you want to run one, you gather a representative sample of about 8-10 people in a room (actual or virtual), set clear boundaries for the discussion of a topic, time-limit it, and have both a Chair/Moderator who runs the group and 2 observers who record what happens. The session is recorded (video ideally) and afterwards the moderator and observers review it along with the recorded replies to the questions and the ideas suggested.

It can be more difficult to run a "proper" Focus Group than most people think, but an informal one can still give useful information. People usually like giving their opinions. Perhaps a u3a committee could set a question from time to time, committee members could approach groups of people after a monthly meeting and ask their opinions about it. Then the committee could share the answers.

A benefit of linking your social media to your website, and vice versa, is that it makes it easy for people to give their opinions and comments.

Your website: Google Analytics

Google Analytics is the best-known way of evaluating your website's performance. We'll need to check whether the required code (which you copy from the analytics website and simply add to your site) can be added to a u3a Sitebuilder or Beacon site.

To activate GA, go to the Google Analytics website. You don't need to invest in paid-for analytics – you can do a lot with the basic package. The site lets you automatically generate and then embed some code into your website to gather statistics. You'll get an email from GA reminding you to **activate** the code.

What might you want to know?

There are many things that you could measure. You could begin by looking at:

1. **Number of times a page has been visited** – indicates its level of popularity

2. **Length of stay on page** – longer may indicate either interest or confusion: they may stay longer if they can't find what they're looking for.

3. **Length of stay on site – and "bounce rate":** if you have a high "bounce rate" – i.e. people land on the page then leave immediately, it suggests that there's something wrong with that page, people aren't seeing what they expect to see there. Is it labelled correctly?

Time of visit can be an interesting statistic to look at, as it tells you the time of day (or night) that people visit your site. You might decide to run events at that time to capture the attention of people who you know are online at that time.

It's well-documented[1] that Facebook posts published on Thursday and Friday receive the highest engagement, and the highest traffic occurs mid-week between 1 to 3 pm. And a publication at 7pm will result in more clicks on average than posting at 8pm. Instagram users are most active on Mondays.

There are many more measurements but you just need to use what you actually need in order to take action.

Bear in mind that Analytics need interpretation: e.g. you can't assume a page is unpopular because no-one visits it. It might be too well hidden, not easily searchable, but actually have great content. All metrics are indicators, not clear signposts, which is why you need a range of them, and need qualitative opinion, not just data.

Measurements for social media

Social media sites tend to have built-in statistics, a lot of them free. Social media covers many platforms. The "top 3" for the u3a demographic are Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Some u3as use Twitter. Pinterest is increasingly popular.

If you use a lot of types of social media, or want to review a number of different accounts, then you can consolidate and automate reporting from many sites via an online platform like **Hootsuite,** which, like most online tools, has a free version. Hootsuite is the market leader. Most u3a groups won't need or want to manage that level of complexity.

What should you track? – generally, for all platforms:

1. **Track your number of followers,** assess how much that figure is growing (or not).

2. Assess how **engaged** your followers and/or friends are with your posts: 1% is good, 5% is excellent; video and pictures gain the most attention.

3. You want to **analyse your followers by type or by where they are coming from**; while that can be done automatically (usually paid-for), you can do a lot manually.
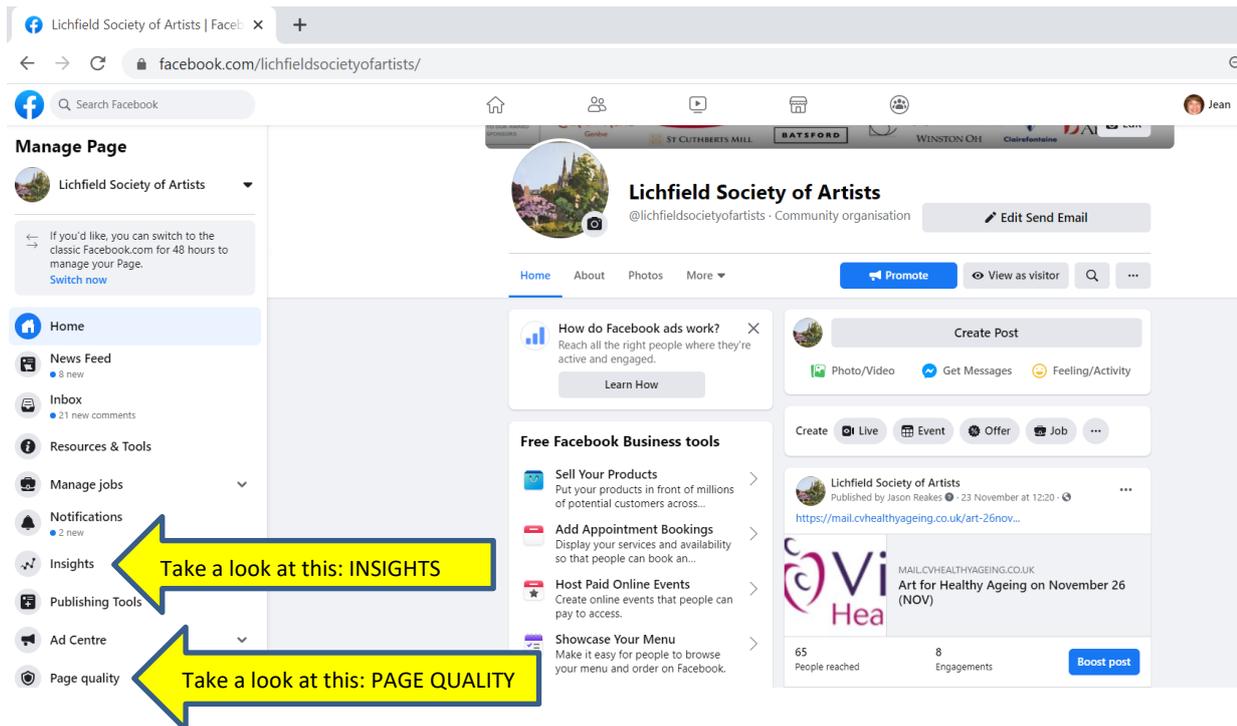
Specifically Facebook

Facebook shows Admins what's going on without them having to do anything: take a close look at what an Admin sees, and follow the links.

On the next page is a screenshot which shows an Admin's view of a Facebook page.

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[1] Best times to publish on Facebook: see Influencer marketing hub.com.

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Author: Jean Jackson

Page or Group Admins are also automatically informed about how many people engaged with the page that week, and whether the trend is up or down. That should be enough for you to know how well your group or page is performing.

Facebook Insights doesn't allow you to compare your site with ones belonging to other groups but of course you can always ask other groups for information, via social media!

I'm told that the app called **Popsters**, enables you to compare your Facebook site with others, so if you feel that is a pressing need you could investigate it.

There is a mass of information about social media and Facebook best practice and analysis: the problem is limiting it!

Keep measurement simple – and make opinion part of it.

Online surveys

The world's most popular service for online surveys is **SurveyMonkey.** It is free: there is no need to set up a paid-for account. There are some limitations on the free account, e.g. you can't include your brand logo.

Its benefit is its versatility. You can use or adapt their pre-written questions, and embed a survey link anywhere – the link is clickable on a PC, mobile phone, iPad - and you can display results in graphs.

The free account doesn't allow you to share graphs automatically, so you need to screen-shot what you need and email it. To do that, press CTRL (bottom L on PC keyboard) and PRT SC (top right), at the same time. Open an application like Word or Powerpoint or Outlook and drop the screenshot in there: press CTRL-V to do that.

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People can get "survey fatigue" and stop answering – but if you ask only what you need to know and give clear options for response, a survey can be very useful.

Try to limit yourself to 5 short, clear questions.

SurveyMonkey gives free advice on good survey practice and even gives example questions for you to use, whose effectiveness has been proven.

In summary:

- Choose the right social sites for your purpose
- Content that works best is highly visual, ideally interactive, and well-publicised
- Measurements show you what works – you need to decide what to **do** as a result
- Measurements divide into routine and ad hoc (for a specific purpose).

ROUTINE: report these monthly

1. **Website and social media**:
   How many visits this month? Is engagement going up or down?

2. **How often is the website or social media updated/contributed to?**
   Is there a correlation?

3. **What do members think about our website or social media?**
   Are there any interesting comments?

AD HOC

If a specific event is taking place, how can we measure engagement with it or what people think/thought about it?

Usually you'd measure how many people turned up (as % of those expected) and then ask them a few questions. A follow-up survey is standard and easy to create, but it may not be as useful (or quick) as simply asking for people's opinions.

Ideally, ask what they liked, and what could have been improved. Don't take it personally: complaints tend to be specific and so are useful, while compliments are often vague ("It was great!") so you can't learn anything from them.

Good luck.

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