



Website Traffic Report No. 04

ILAC Website Traffic Report Period January to December 2009

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The ILAC initiative fosters learning from experience and use of the lessons learned to improve the design and implementation of agricultural research and development programs. The mission of the ILAC Initiative is to develop, field test and introduce methods and tools that promote organizational learning and institutional change in CGIAR centres and their partners, so as to enhance the contributions that agricultural research makes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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Introduction

The ILAC webpage has been a source of information to a wide range of professionals on topics related to partnership, impact, evaluation and organizational learning. The website contains not just outputs or activities from ILAC and its partners, but also relevant information produced by other organizations which are compiled and made available free of charge.

The website is constantly being updated based on new information, technology requirements and user needs. The ILAC Team counts on a full-time professional who, along with undertaking other responsibilities, manages the website content by compiling, publishing and disseminating relevant information, as well as reviewing demands and selecting appropriate technologies to fulfill them.

Use of the ILAC website has, as a result, greatly increased from its creation in 2005 to the present. This report analysis the traffic statistics from 2009 generated by the website server and Google Analytics. The figures in the report relate to number and location of visitors, documents downloaded and website sections visited. In addition, it makes a comparison with previous years and provides an explanation for the changes. The final section of the report discusses future developments.

Background

The ILAC website was initially developed in 2005 to serve two principal purposes: (1) to disseminate the activities of the ILAC group and the results of these activities, and (2) to serve as a rich and useful repository concerned with institutional learning and change.

In September 2006 the ILAC website was upgraded by adding new information, reorganizing its content and promoting its weblink among professionals in the research, development and evaluation fields. The results of these efforts are illustrated in Figure 1, which shows that the number of visitors increased significantly.

An assessment of the website functionalities showed that these were no longer compatible with the new information management approaches and growing user demands. A more dynamic technology was needed which would allow for uploading and managing image and video, blogs, wiki, calendar, automatic subscription to newsletter, reserved areas, intranet, and other tools.

After 6 months of research, Drupal 5.0 was finally chosen and a private company was contracted to develop the new website.

From August to October 2008, the website was redesigned and the new features added. These included an events calendar, closed sections, wiki, blogs, automatic newsletter subscription, user registration, image and video galleries.

To ensure currency with the developments in the area of knowledge management and knowledge sharing, the ILAC website was upgraded to Drupal 6.0 in November 2009. Once again new features were added including anti-spam mechanisms, multiple searches by tags, capacity for hosting other websites (e.g. meetings and workshops), sub-libraries.

Web visitors

During 2009, the ILAC website received 24,932 visits (an average of 68 visits per day). The number of absolute unique visitors was 20,275. Visitors were looking at an average of 2.5 pages from the website.

Early in 2009, a promotional email was sent to a list of about 300 people, mainly professionals of M&E and agricultural researchers informing them about the updated website. It was also sent to virtual networks concerned with M&E. The number of visitors and files downloaded had increased significantly as compared with previous years. During the four-year period from 2005 to 2008 the total number of visitors was about 36,000, a modest figure compared with the period of 2009. In that year alone the ILAC website had over 24,000 visitors. Figure 1 tracks the volume of monthly visitors from July 2005 when the site was launched to December 2009.

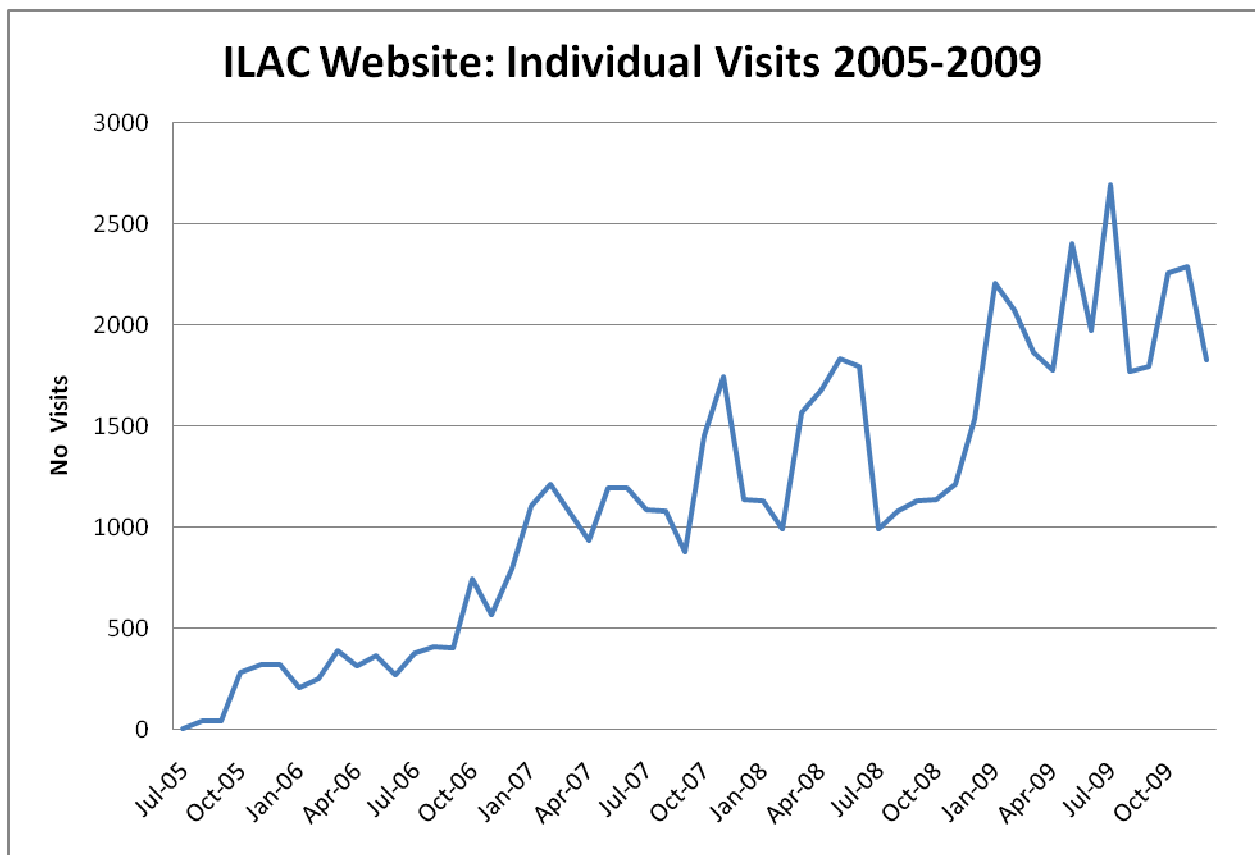


Figure 1: ILAC website visitors from 2005 to 2009

There is a significant increase in the number of visitors from September 2006 when the ILAC Team adopted a marketing strategy and introduced improvements. At this time, the ILAC website link was sent to all CGIAR professional staff (about 8,000 individuals) and to M&E professionals, increasing its visibility. The peaks in the graphic are explained by the periodic dissemination of ILAC publications, such as Briefs and Newsletter, on the site. The period of low activity -- July to November 2008 -- was due to ILAC's migrating from an earlier to a more up to date technology. No promotional emails could be sent during this period of heavy maintenance.

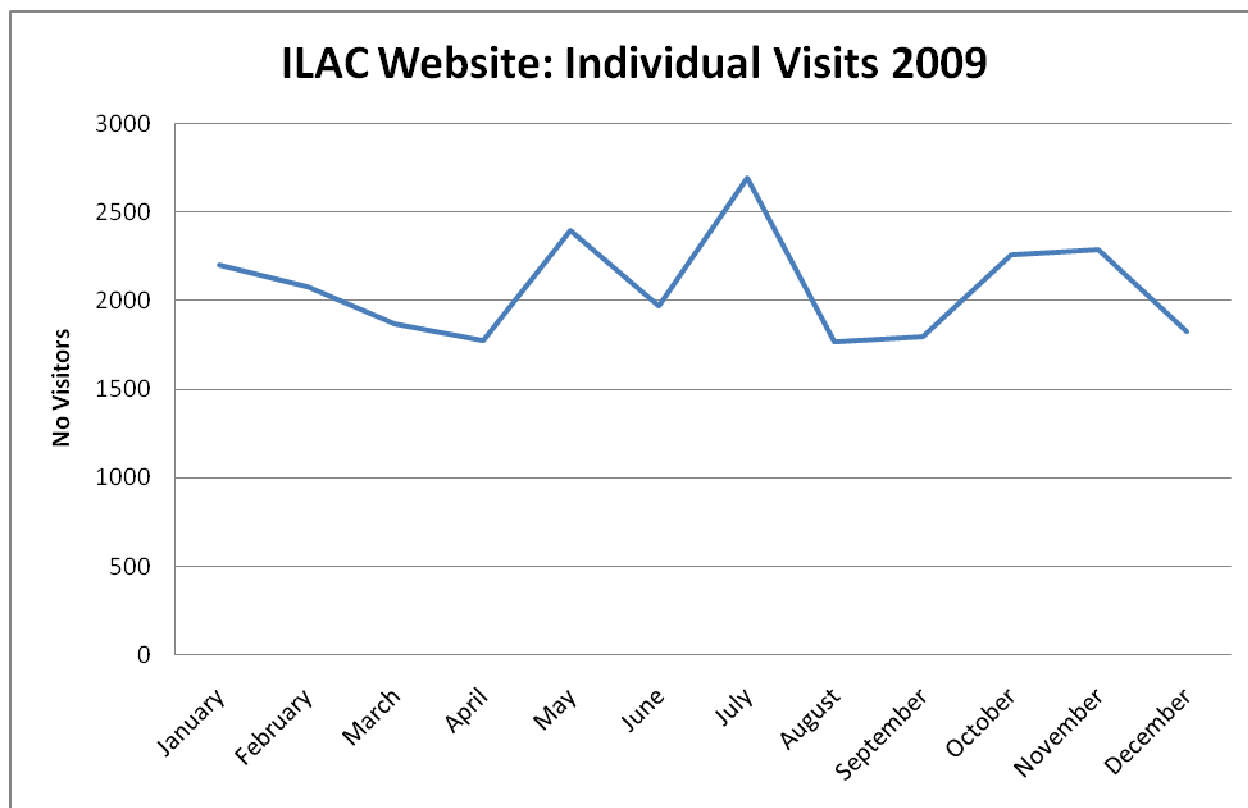


Figure 2: ILAC website visitors in 2009

As part of a marketing strategy, three promotional emails were sent during 2009, informing readers of new publications produced by ILAC. These resulted in regular readers returning to the site and new visitors being attracted. Figure 2 illustrates the number of monthly visits during 2009. Figures range from a low of 1,828 in December to 2,691 in July. The peaks in May, July and November reflect the sending of promotional emails.

A strategic ally in the promotion of the ILAC website is Google’s search engine. User feedback suggests that the ILAC website appears among the first links when readers search for a specific publication using Google. .

Statistics show that most of ILAC’s visitors are located in the Americas (32%), followed by Europe (31%), Asia (21%), Africa (12%) and Oceania (4%). A more detailed breakdown shows that visitors located primarily in Northern America (25%) and Northern Europe (15%). Figure 3 shows the distribution of visitors by sub-region. Compared to previous years, the statistics show that visitors in Eastern Africa and South East Asia are increasing.

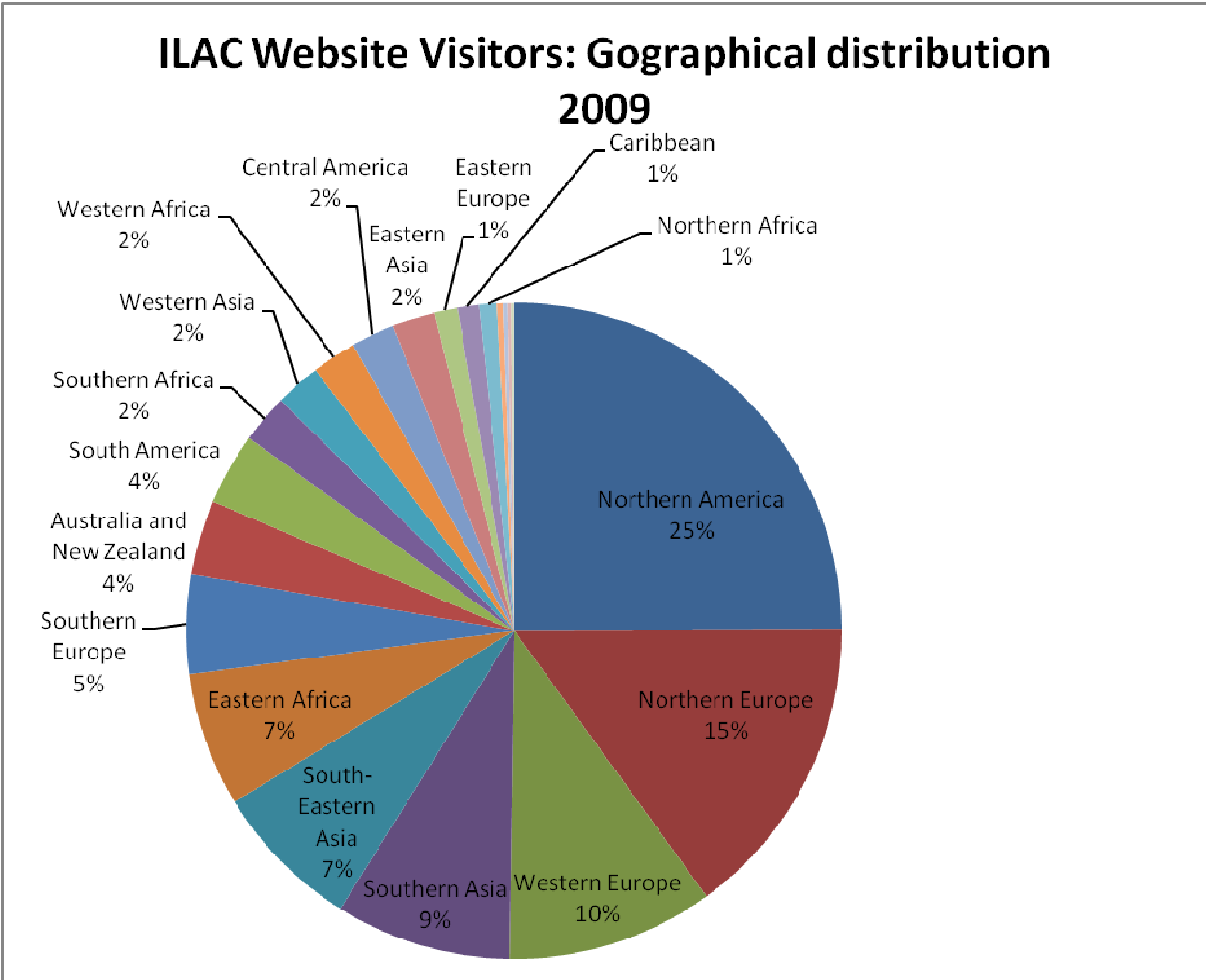


Figure 3: ILAC website visitors by sub-region

Three hundred and forty professionals have subscribed to the ILAC Newsletter. Registration does not oblige users to identify their affiliation but email address analysis suggests that users are affiliated with universities (e.g. University of California, Sokoine University-Tanzania, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences), United Nations organizations (e.g. FAO, UNEP), NGOs (e.g. ILEIA-Netherlands, Helvetas-Sri Lanka, CARE, One World Trust-UK, Child Fund, KIT-Netherlands, AmeriCares-USA), National research institutes (e.g. INERA-Tunisia, ICIPIE-Germany, CATIE-Costa Rica, INIA-Uruguay), Ministries of Agriculture (e.g. South Africa), international banks (e.g. African Development Bank), the CGIAR, and private enterprises such as Syngenta, Four Scenes Managing Consultancy-Australia, and Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company.

Web content

The *Google Analytics*¹ report, for the first 500 pages, shows that the content most downloaded is related to the ILAC section on ‘tools for M&E’, with 39.2% of all downloads. This is followed

¹*Google Analytics* is a Google program that allows analysis of web traffic data to determine volumes and marketing effectiveness; <http://www.google.com/analytics/>

by information about ILAC, the Team, events, registration and learning laboratory activities (30.7%); ILAC virtual library (15.4%); ILAC publications (13%); and information about ILAC's facilitation training workshop (1.7%).

The traffic report is able to track what keyword the visitors used on a search engine (such as Google and Yahoo) to direct them to the ILAC website. The analysis of the first 500 keywords used by 6897 visitors, shows that 'random sampling' was the keyword most used (894 times or 13%), followed by 'ILAC' (585 times or 8.5%), 'contribution analysis' (391 times or 5.7%), and 'rich pictures' (259 times or 3.8%) among many others.

Future developments

The ILAC communication team is seeking ways to increase the visibility of ILAC website, by linking the site with other sources, such as the websites of evaluation societies and other evaluation-oriented networks.

The team also is looking for ways of encouraging first-time visitors to return repeatedly. The team understands the importance of simplifying the functionalities of the site so that visitors can find easily and with the minimum number of steps, the precise information for which they are looking. Equally important is the quality and relevance of the website content. The team is therefore ensuring that the site contains the most up to date publications and resources possible, as well as innovative features such as 'ask the expert chat room', blogs, bookmarks, and Google scholar.