Editorial

It is a long time since the reader was last provided with an overview of how the journal is faring in terms of readership and flow of manuscripts. These are the topics this editorial proposes to cover – succinctly – for a needed update.

Log analysis tools, or website traffic estimators, are in no short supply on the Web. The least that can be said is that the variance of their estimates is astonishingly great. When asked (on 22 September 2018) to evaluate the number of unique visitors to our site (http://resmilitaris.net), Statshow (www.statshow.com) mentioned "roughly" (sic) 1,650 per month; the same monthly figure as indicated by Worth of Web (www.worthofweb.com) was 960, while Site Worth Traffic (www.siteworthtraffic.com) estimated that the *Res Militaris* website was visited by 101 unique users per day (or some 3,000 per month if our arithmetic is right). This last order of magnitude seemed corroborated by the even higher figure that AWStats supplied for August this year : 3,407. Yet, a much more sobering estimate of the same traffic over the last 8 months was provided by Google Analytics, which placed it at 316 a month on average for the calendar year in progress.

One may be pardoned for being baffled by such wild (over 10:1) differences. What, then, is to be done? When all available thermometers are known to be inaccurate and differ considerably, there's a simple way out of the quandary: stick to one of them, and observe its variations over time as a rough indication, not of temperature at any given time, but of upward or downward trends affecting it. This is the strategy we adopted.

AWStats, the log analyzer offered by our web host, is an open-source web analytics tool operating under a public license and enjoying a good reputation. While it distinguishes between "real human" visitors ("viewed traffic") and robots, worms or replies with special http status codes ("not viewed traffic"), it does so on the basis of a list of known robot or spider IP addresses. Since not all robots or spiders identify themselves as such, the said list is hardly exhaustive. As a result, the "unique visitor" figure indicated by AWStats tends to inflate the number of unique *human* visitors – unfortunately in unknown proportions.

Google Analytics (GA), for its part, resorts to a combination of JavaScript and cookies to let Google know each time a webpage is consulted. It distinguishes between human and non-human visitors more realistically than AWStats because most crawlers and spiders do not run JavaScript code. Its downside is that those visitors who have disabled cookies and/or JavaScript in their Internet browsers are left out of account, and so are those users who have opted out of Google Analytics. Despite the fact that it is widely regarded as one of the best website traffic estimators, it does therefore underestimate the number of unique human visitors – again, in unknown proportions.

Choosing between these two less-than-perfect metrics is not an easy matter, as one (AWStats) supplies figures that are ten times as high as the other (GA). The choice, one must admit, is subjectively tantamount to deciding between a morale-booster and a morale-buster for the editors of *Res Militaris*, who thus found themselves tempted to choose the more favourable measure for the wrong reasons. As it happens, the decision was made

easier than anticipated by a purely contingent consideration : it was not until last February that GA figures were first made available to the journal's leadership, which means that as of 2018 multi-year longitudinal GA data are lacking. AWStats, then, it will be, though we will keep an eye on GA results in future years for comparative purposes.

Readers of the journal can consult its AWStats statistics by following this link : http://stats.resmilitaris.net. By that yardstick, *Res Militaris* is faring pretty well. Whereas the volume of unique visitors to its website amounted to some 21,000 in 2015 and 23,000 in 2016, it suddenly rose to over 43,000 in 2017. Here's the detail :
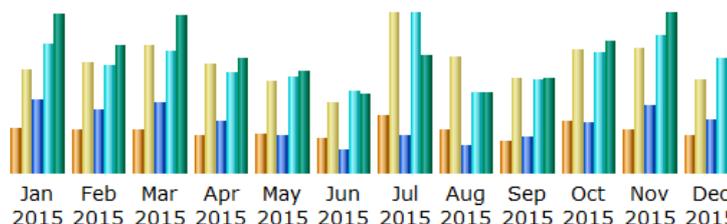

2015

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2015	1,835	4,271	49,308	86,381	5.53 GB
Feb 2015	1,785	4,557	41,767	72,496	4.39 GB
Mar 2015	1,814	5,204	46,678	81,527	5.46 GB
Apr 2015	1,578	4,478	35,375	67,265	3.95 GB
May 2015	1,641	3,750	26,125	64,677	3.55 GB
Jun 2015	1,450	2,920	16,439	55,691	2.76 GB
Jul 2015	2,371	6,579	25,444	107,224	4.11 GB
Aug 2015	1,813	4,792	19,007	54,391	2.81 GB
Sep 2015	1,387	3,880	24,225	62,608	3.32 GB
Oct 2015	2,150	5,077	34,028	80,327	4.62 GB
Nov 2015	1,781	5,146	45,925	92,023	5.55 GB
Dec 2015	1,569	3,847	36,052	77,248	4.39 GB
Total	21,174	54,501	400,373	901,858	50.44 GB
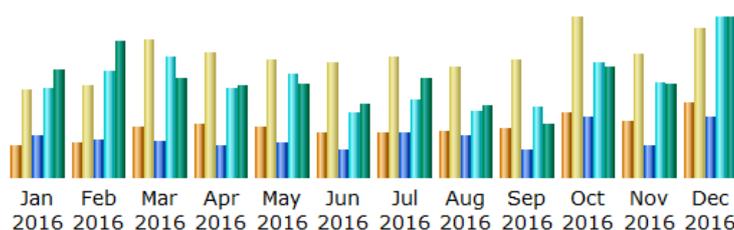
Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2016	1,274	3,349	23,305	50,432	3.99 GB
Feb 2016	1,305	3,500	21,297	59,166	4.98 GB
Mar 2016	1,925	5,278	20,220	67,118	3.62 GB
Apr 2016	2,065	4,768	18,229	49,740	3.34 GB
May 2016	1,902	4,539	19,199	57,597	3.44 GB
Jun 2016	1,705	4,400	15,127	36,620	2.69 GB
Jul 2016	1,750	4,606	25,334	43,509	3.67 GB
Aug 2016	1,828	4,269	23,000	36,739	2.63 GB
Sep 2016	1,878	4,512	15,528	39,177	2.02 GB
Oct 2016	2,503	6,113	34,223	63,542	4.07 GB
Nov 2016	2,120	4,710	18,143	52,872	3.44 GB
Dec 2016	2,874	5,682	33,748	89,234	5.90 GB
Total	23,129	55,726	267,353	645,746	43.77 GB

2016
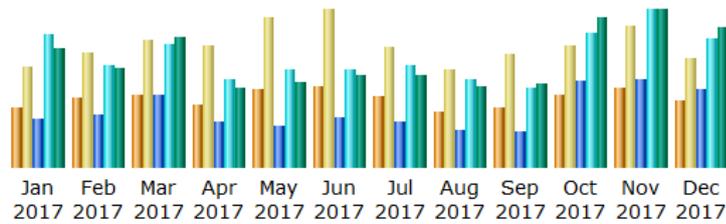
Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2017	3,106	5,294	27,296	75,958	5.14 GB
Feb 2017	3,560	5,999	30,500	58,422	4.31 GB
Mar 2017	3,823	6,649	41,852	70,935	5.66 GB
Apr 2017	3,226	6,324	26,373	50,809	3.48 GB
May 2017	4,055	7,807	23,366	55,545	3.70 GB
Jun 2017	4,264	8,215	28,369	55,344	4.00 GB
Jul 2017	3,718	6,208	26,183	58,928	3.96 GB
Aug 2017	2,832	5,071	21,541	50,347	3.52 GB
Sep 2017	3,121	5,880	21,017	45,114	3.64 GB
Oct 2017	3,749	6,335	49,939	76,679	6.47 GB
Nov 2017	4,158	7,381	50,593	90,088	6.84 GB
Dec 2017	3,540	5,703	44,519	73,303	6.07 GB
Total	43,152	76,866	391,548	761,472	56.79 GB

2017

Last Update:	22 Sep 2018 - 03:04
Reported period:	- Year - ▾ 2017 ▾ OK

Summary					
Reported period	Year 2017				
First visit	31 Dec 2016 - 03:07				
Last visit	31 Dec 2017 - 22:44				
	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Viewed traffic *	<= 43,152 Exact value not available in 'Year' view	76,866 (1.78 visits/visitor)	391,548 (5.09 Pages/Visit)	761,472 (9.9 Hits/Visit)	56.79 GB (774.65 KB/Visit)
Not viewed traffic *			754,460	1,422,226	38.74 GB

* Not viewed traffic includes traffic generated by robots, worms, or replies with special HTTP status codes.

In other words, the yearly sum total of monthly unique visitor figures more than doubled between 2015 and 2017. The data for the first 8 months of 2018 suggest a probable slight overall decrease to just under 40,000 in annual terms – though of course trend is not destiny, and things may well change before the year is out.

The country origins of page requests are imprecise at best since, in order to determine them, AWStats uses domain extensions, a very large proportion of which happen to be either missing entirely or not indicative of any nation (e.g., ".net", ".com", ".org", ".int"). The rest of those geographical indications may not be statistically representative : they are presented below even if of avowedly suggestive value only.

The reader is in for some surprises as, contrary to what one might expect, the country origins of page requests do not always coincide with those of published contributions to the journal : interestingly, readers and writers do not always live in the same countries.

The detail reads as follows :

Geographic Distribution of Page Views, 2015-2017

Year	Page Views	% Unknown Country Origins	Known Country Origins of Page Requests (% of remainder, rounded)
2015	400,373	**73%**	EU + Norway + Switzerland : 57% *(of which Germany : 19.1% ; France : 7.8% ; Poland : 2% ; Switzerland : 1.5% ; Italy, UK : 1% each)* Russia : 26% ; Ukraine : 10% ; North America : 2% ; Latin America : 1.4% ; Asia: 2.2% ; Africa : 0.4% ; Oceania : 0.4% ; others : 0.6%
2016	267,353	**69%**	EU + Norway + Switzerland : 60.2% *(of which Germany : 18.5% ; France : 15.8% ; Poland : 6% ; Belgium : 1.1%; Italy : 1%; Switzerland : 0.8%; Netherlands : 0.6%; Sweden, UK : 0.5% each)* Russia : 28.4% ; Ukraine : 3.6% ; North America : 1.1% ; Latin America : 1.9% ; Asia : 2% ; Africa : 0.6% ; Oceania : 0.5% ; others : 1.2%.
2017	391,548	**76.6%**	EU + Norway + Switzerland : 70.8% *(of which Germany : 28.4% ; France : 18.1% ; Belgium : 1.4% ; Latvia : 1.4% ; Italy, Switzerland : 1.2% each ; Poland : 0.9% ; Greece, Sweden, Netherlands : 0.7% each)* Russia : 16.2% ; Ukraine : 0.7% ; North America : 1.2% ; Latin America : 3% ; Asia : 3.4% ; Africa : 0.5% ; Oceania : 2% : others : 2%.

As could be expected, the largest segment of our readership is European, and its majority status has followed a clear rising trend in 2015-2017. What was less expected is the weak interest raised by the journal in English-speaking nations (UK, North America), and the strong showing of German readers (who are more numerous than French readers, even though the journal uses French as one of its two editorial languages and France is the founding editors' native country) in all three years under consideration. But the main surprise comes from the sizable presence of Russia and the Ukraine among page viewers.

Whereas the flow of English-language manuscripts for regular issues has been satisfactory over the 2015-2017 period, the linguistic balance which is central to the journal's editorial policy was made problematic by a relative dearth of French-language submissions in 2016 and 2017. Of the 64 contributions (articles, presentations of "classics", book reviews) published in those three years, 39 were in English and 25 in French. The editors resisted the temptation of reducing quality requirements applied to French-language articles in order to redress this linguistic balance.[*] While the overall selectivity rate (initial submission numbers compared to the actual number of published articles) went down from 2.6:1 to 1.9:1, that decrease reflected a rise in the proportion of quality submissions rather than a general loss of quality – or so the editors believe. (All-English) ERGOMAS and (hitherto all-French) thematic special issues had distinctly higher acceptance rates (5 out of 6) due to prior screening by guest-editors, but they often entailed longer revision lead time.

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[*] It is true, however, that the two all-French special issues respectively published in July 2015 and December 2016 have more than compensated for that linguistic deficit. Yet, there is no reason to expect that future special issues will all use French, so that the need for achieving a better linguistic balance remains.

The country origins of published contributions were as follows :

Regular Issues	
Articles	France : 9 ; Canada : 6 ; Israel : 4 ; Sweden : 4 ; Norway : 2 ; USA : 2 ; Denmark : 1; Gabon : 1; Greece : 1; Italy : 1 ; Morocco : 1 ; Slovenia : 1 ; South Korea : 1 ; United Kingdom : 1.
Presentations of "Classics"	France : 4 ; United Kingdom : 1.
Book Reviews	USA : 11 ; France : 9 ; Israel : 2 ; Denmark : 1 ; Greece : 1.
ERGOMAS Issues	
USA : 10 ; Sweden : 5 ; Israel : 4 ; Canada : 3 ; Germany : 3 ; Argentina : 2 ; Switzerland : 2 ; Belgium : 1 ; Denmark : 1 ; Netherlands : 1 ; Norway : 1 ; Philippines : 1 ; Portugal : 1 ; Spain : 1 ; Taiwan : 1.	
Thematic Special Issues	
France : 28.	
Total	
France : 50 ; USA : 23 ; Israel : 10 ; Canada : 9 ; Sweden : 9 ; Denmark : 3 ; Germany : 3 ; Norway : 3 ; Argentina : 2 ; Greece : 2 ; Switzerland : 2 ; UK : 2 ; Belgium : 1 ; Gabon : 1 ; Italy : 1 ; Morocco : 1 ; Netherlands : 1 ; Philippines : 1 ; Portugal : 1 ; Slovenia : 1 ; South Korea : 1 ; Spain : 1 ; Taiwan : 1.	

2015-2017 Authors/Reviewers' Countries of Origin

A summary comparison of the country origins of "producers" and "consumers" of published contributions suggests that there are far larger proportions of French, US, Canadian and Israeli authors than of readers located in the corresponding countries. Conversely, the share of German authors is much narrower than that of German readers, and there are no Russian or Ukrainian contributors even though Russia and the Ukraine provide very large (though apparently dwindling of late) segments of our readership. While the rest exhibit a welcome degree of geographic diversity, an interesting development is the rise of Scandinavian contributors to the journal.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above is that while *Res Militaris* is far from being in a bad way, it certainly needs to correct a number of (linguistic, geographic) imbalances. Since it has little control over the supply of manuscript submissions, it can only encourage potential authors from French-speaking countries as well as from hitherto underrepresented geographic locations to put pen to paper and not shy away from submitting manuscripts of interest to our readership.

Beyond such short-term concerns, the future of *Res Militaris* hinges on securing enough resources to beef up its editorial team and prepare for a generational transfer of leadership when the time comes. Options have been weighed, some promising, others more realistic, and we may be close to a solution – one that (if it holds up) will be spelled out in coming months in a new editorial. Meanwhile, let us hope for the best !

Bernard Boëne