

## IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT...

### The impact of two small changes to the AuthorAID website on visitor numbers and page views

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*Accessibility is absolutely essential for a website, particularly one working on a global scale. A website needs to look good, be easy to navigate, load quickly in both high and low bandwidth environments and meet the needs of a diverse and varied audience. This case study shows two small changes that almost tripled the AuthorAID website's page views.*

AuthorAID is an international project which supports researchers in getting published and encourages mentoring relationships among researchers around the globe. As such, the AuthorAID website plays a key role in bringing people together, creating a community and providing discussion groups and resources. The site needs to be accessible and easy to use, catering to a wide range of individuals.

When investigating methods to improve accessibility and loading speed, a few small additions were found to have a big impact – namely the 'add this' button and the AuthorAID favicon.

The 'Add this' button is a bookmarking and sharing application that allows users to link places of interest through various social media outlets. While it appears very small, we found this was adding an additional 78 KB (132 KB uncompressed) to the size of the AuthorAID home page. This alone was over 1/3 of the total page and could make a significant difference to download speeds.

The second item was the AuthorAID favicon. A favicon is the small customised symbol or logo which appears at the beginning of a web address. This small and seemingly insignificant image was also adding larger than expected download requirements. Favicons appear differently depending on the browser and settings, so they are provided in more than one size. Making changes to the icon, including a reduction in available sizes (removing 32x32 and 48x48) would cause a reduction from 11.2Kb down to 1.4Kb. We therefore decided to go ahead and remove the 'Add this' button and change the size of the favicon. These changes were made on the 15th and 17th of June respectively.

It was hoped that this would give the AuthorAID website a little edge in accessibility and be in keeping with INASP's drive for low bandwidth websites and resources. Following the changes, however, the website saw a significant increase

in activity. Using data from Google Analytics, we compared page views and visitors from three two-week periods: 14th to 28th May (before the changes to the home page), 14th to 28th June (one day before the changes and also a period after the changes were made) and finally 14th -28th July which is generally a quieter period due to students and university staff being on holiday. The results are shown in the table below (see Fig. 1).

Visits to the site increased by almost 80% in the first month and page views jumped by 9653.

This table shows an overall average increase of 67% in visits to the website for the period and a 126% increase in the number of page views. Interestingly, more of these visits were from developing countries, suggesting that the page size may have been a barrier to some. The bounce rate also improved, showing that more people were staying on the site once they opened the home page.

These results show that by taking some very simple measures we were able to significantly increase the number of people visiting the AuthorAID website and more than double the number of pages visited. Most publisher pages have favicons and a growing number include the 'add this' button. Adjusting the size of the favicon and removing the 'Add this' button could make a huge difference to website users accessing these pages from a low-bandwidth setting.

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For more information on AuthorAID, visit the website: <http://www.authoraid.info>

Time Period	Visits	Page views	Developing countries in the top ten countries visiting the site	Bounce rate (%)
14th – 28th May	2377	6757	6	63.01
14th – 28th June	4231	16 392	8	51.10
14th – 28th July	3788	14 282	8	56.88

Fig. 1 Statistics outlining an increase in visits to the AuthorAID website.