



# The Buzz on the OpenLab

## Analyzing Engagement with The Buzz: A Research Project by the OpenLab’s Team of Student Bloggers

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City Tech’s OpenLab is a living lab that encourages the growth of diverse communities. The Buzz is the OpenLab’s blog where eight student bloggers write about a variety of topics. With these topics we aim to create micro discourse communities to engage students. Given the lack of physical space for students to meet and engage on a commuter college, the formation of online communities is a growing alternative for campus engagement at City Tech and colleges like it.

In conducting this research we sought to find out how students use The Buzz. We wanted to know what subjects garnered the most views and what time of day was most popular to be online. With this information we wanted to collaborate to discover innovative ways to increase student engagement with The Buzz. To do so, we gathered and analyzed data that we discovered through the OpenLab Jetpack plug-in, which gathers statistics on the overall page views and comments and formulates this data by weekly and monthly totals.

For the purposes of this experiment we focused on data from November 1, 2015 through April 21st, 2016. Here is what we found when we looked at the data:

Months and Years												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2015											554	1,413
2016	802	2,075	1,817	1,276								5,970

Figure 1: The Buzz: Total views by month

To date, February 2016 has been the most highly trafficked month on The Buzz (Jetpack Data). We believe this spike is the result of the Spring semester beginning and students logging on for the first time after the break to check their messages, getting acclimated with new courses, and seeing what new information has gone up since the fall semester’s end. In early February The Buzz was also featured as a highlighted site in the OpenLab Community Engagement Team’s weekly “In the Spotlight” post. This recognition on the OpenLab project site The Open Road, as well on the OpenLab homepage, likely drove traffic to The Buzz. Interestingly, however, the day that garnished the highest views was in March -- the 16th to be exact -- and the time of day that people tended to be online was mid- to late-afternoon, 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm (JetPack Data). We checked the stats early in the day, mid-day, and then finally at end of day.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total	Average	Change
Mar 21	Mar 22	Mar 23	Mar 24	Mar 25	Mar 26	Mar 27			
79	72	56	78	19	23	23	350	50	
Mar 28	Mar 29	Mar 30	Mar 31	Apr 1	Apr 2	Apr 3			
59	58	86	50	48	39	20	360	51	+2.86%
Apr 4	Apr 5	Apr 6	Apr 7	Apr 8	Apr 9	Apr 10			
79	54	69	72	30	29	35	368	53	+2.22%
Apr 11	Apr 12	Apr 13	Apr 14	Apr 15	Apr 16	Apr 17			
89	65	101	67	33	23	31	409	58	+11.14%
Apr 18	Apr 19	Apr 20	Apr 21	Apr 22	Apr 23	Apr 24			
56	51	66	37	41	24	25	300	43	-26.65%
Apr 25	Apr 26	Apr 27	Apr 28						
28	37	24	3				92	30	-30.78%

Figure 2: The Buzz: Total views by day

On Wednesdays, Samantha’s motherhood blog and Jessica’s foodie blog are posted to the site. Statistically, Wednesdays have the highest amount of views followed by Mondays, Thursdays and then Tuesdays (Jetpack Data). In turn we were able to conclude that genres that focus more specifically on personal experience, maturity in emotional and psychological growth, or points of view like Samantha’s and Mandy’s blog, which uses personal quotes from City Tech students to tell their story, got the highest click traffic, followed closely by food blogs like those of Brianna and Jessica. We rationalized that people flock to opinion-based blogs about topics such as where to eat, what to do, or what someone thinks of something because more and more millennials are flocking to blogs for ideas and advice. Next, photography blogs like Konyca’s and Jean-Luc’s are eye-catching and garner a lot of admiration for showcasing their artistic talent by way of stills that captivate or represent a higher meaning. Finally, self-help or career-based advice blogs like Pamela’s and Amoni’s are sought by specific individuals whose majors pertain to that week’s post.

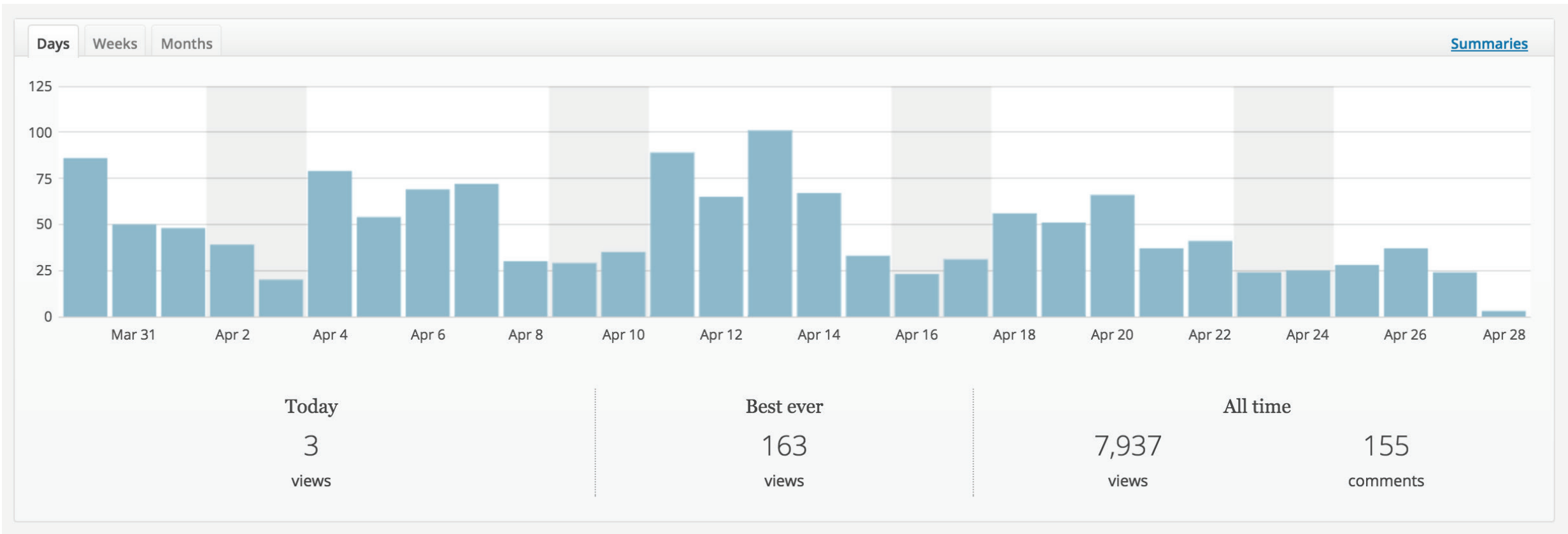


Figure 3: The Buzz: JetPack Summary Data

Overall the amount of views versus comments is skewed in favor of views (Jetpack Data). People do more reading than they do engaging on the blog, but we hypothesize that users may be more susceptible to comment if they share the content on their own respective accounts on social media outlets, as this would allow them to share their findings and continue to share them with others. Based on all of our findings we were able to sum up student engagement on The Buzz into these conclusions:

1. The most popular topics are food and personal experience blogs
2. The most popular month was February
3. The most popular day is Wednesday
4. Users are more active in the late afternoon

In summary, we have clear objectives for the future of The Buzz based on these findings, and we hope to articulate better growth objectives for the site in the Fall 2016 semester. With this information we want to better promote The Buzz and its discourse communities, potentially offer students the option to guest blog on topics of their interest, and attempt to get faculty to utilize the OpenLab and its affordances in their courses more often or as an alternative to Blackboard. Also, from this data we have realized that building discourse communities takes great effort, networking and commitment, however we are all committed and determined to build communities for the students of City Tech to feel the comfort that home brings while being surrounded by your peers.