

Nov 04, 2016 by [Alvin Snyder](#)

Part Two: Clocking Government Internet Traffic: Let the Races Begin ^[1]

The Voice of America has one of the most popular Internet news websites in the world, and in the United States as well, based on website page turns and user reach. According to Alexa.com, which ranks websites according to their daily traffic volume, the VOA is ranked as the 53rd most popular website in the "news category" of almost 9,000 news websites on the day we looked, February 17, 2009. Of the top 100 news websites, the VOA is ranked ahead of the *Guardian*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Sky News*, *US News and World Report*, *Al Jazeera English*, the *Associated Press*, and the *Toronto Star* among many others.

Some insightful comments were offered following my recent blog on the subject of Alexa.com. Brian Carlson wrote, "A fair comparison would be to look at the relative ranking of America.gov (the U.S. State Department site) and other government-sponsored websites like <http://www.britishcouncil.org/>. Thus, Voice of America.com might be compared to bbc.co.uk... and Alhurra, a government-owned news site, would be compared to VOA or RFE/RL's language sites." John Matel felt likewise. "As a general proposition," he said, "we too often fall into the PD trap of allowing people to frame us w/o a real world reference point. We need to deal with reality ... and comparisons."

We looked up America.gov, which is ranked at number 21,406 in popularity, while Britishcouncil.org, which builds cultural relations with other countries, is ranked higher at 5,439th place.

Comparing other global rankings:

www.bbc.co.uk - #46

www.voa.com - #1,639

www.alhurra.com - #139,587

www.rferl.org - #62,968

European media consultant Morand Fachot notes "the very poor ranking (100,460th) of Voice of Russia, in spite of the number of languages (33), and also to be noted that some 75% of its traffic is from outside Russia itself. Now if you compare that with even a small Western broadcaster such as Radio Netherlands - nine languages (ranked 107,566th and 90% of traffic from foreign-based users) you see that Russian broadcasters have a serious credibility problem."

Coming back to the VOA, it must be noted that although its news website is one of the most popular in the U.S., it was not intended to be heard in the U.S., as the Congress's Smith-Mundt Act banned domestic dissemination of such information intended for audiences abroad

in 1948. Today, almost 40% of VOA's Internet users come from the United States, according to Alexa.com, although the VOA claims that Alexa "fails to capture a large percentage of our international traffic."

But the point may become moot. "I think it might be time to kiss the Smith-Mundt Act goodbye," says Morand Fachot.
