How to Integrate Dashboard Visualizations with Reports in IBM Cognos Analytics 11.1.4

One of the biggest complaints we have with the IBM Cognos Analytics platform is the current gap in the user experience across core capabilities Dashboarding and Reporting. We have written in the past about the different use cases each of these capabilities are best at addressing, and it is important to understand WHY robust business intelligence (BI) platforms offer distinct end-user experiences in the first place.
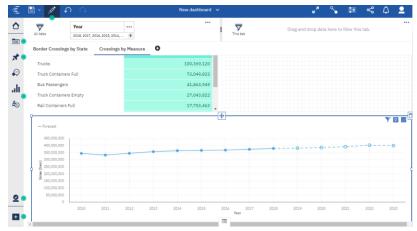
When evaluating enterprise-class BI offerings, it is sometimes helpful to think of the most ubiquitous software suite in the world – Microsoft Office. Just as Office delivers a desktop productivity solution that addresses specific needs such as word processing via the Word application (which I happen to be using here), as well as number-crunching through Excel, and presentation delivery with PowerPoint – BI platforms are designed to address the many needs of a diverse user community. A true platform will deliver a robust experience for passive information consumers in addition to data explorers via easy-to-use visualization tools (Dashboarding and Exploration). Ultimately the real power of IBM Cognos is delivered to professional report developers via its full-featured Reporting capability.

And just like Office, there is no single tool that best addresses each of those distinct audiences' needs. Is it possible to use Word to design a presentation, or to deliver a table of data? Sure, but it is the *right* tool for that job? Can I conduct data discovery while building a report? Yes, and in fact this use case has become more feasible with recent improvements in Reporting.   But there are significant benefits to conducting this type of activity with Dashboarding, just like creating a table of numbers and calculating across those numbers *can* be done in Word, I'd much rather do that in Excel.
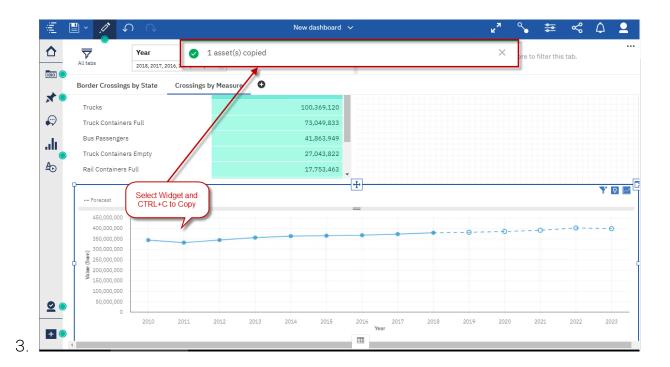
Now, to the punch line: What can I do once I complete my data discovery in a Dashboard and I need to expand upon my discovery by placing that resulting visualization into a report? Well, just like I would take a data table and copy from Excel and paste into a Word document or a PowerPoint presentation, I recommend doing the exact same thing to take your IBM Cognos Dashboard widget to bring it into a report. Below are some screen shots of this technique in action. Enjoy.

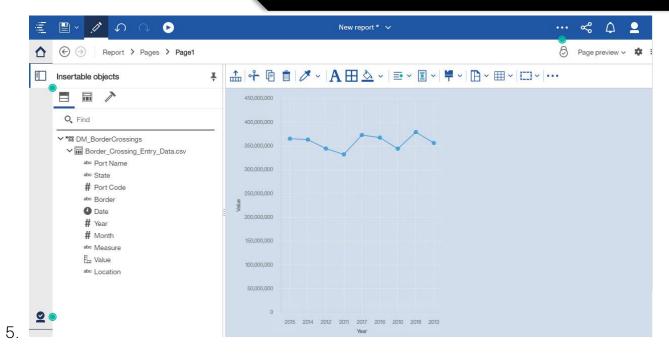1. Build the visualization in Dashboarding

2. Use keyboard shortcut to copy (CTRL+C on Windows, Command+C on Mac)

3.

4. In the target report, select the area on which you want to paste the visualization, and use keyboard shortcut to copy (CTRL+V on Windows, Command+V on Mac). Your visualization widget will be pasted into your report, and the associated data source will come along with it.

5.

Keep in mind that this operation does NOT create any links between the objects. Also, as of right now, this operation is not bi-directional, meaning that you can NOT copy/paste from a report to a dashboard. Finally, this has been tested in version 11.1.4, and works in most browsers, but keep in mind that not all browsers will support this clipboard operation.