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Unplugged from the Reference Desk

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Unplugged from the Reference Desk



Sue Cardinal

Kenn Harper

Carlson Science & Engineering Library

NYS Science Librarians Fall 2011

Carlson Library



Normal Summer Reference Desk Schedule



Monday – Friday 10 AM – 5 PM (35 hours)

Motivating Factors



- ⌘ Not fully staffed
- ⌘ Expecting vacations and professional travel
- ⌘ Low usage of service during summer
- ⌘ Trend toward merging circulation and reference
- ⌘ Summer good time for pilot

Could we using our time better?

Trying Something New

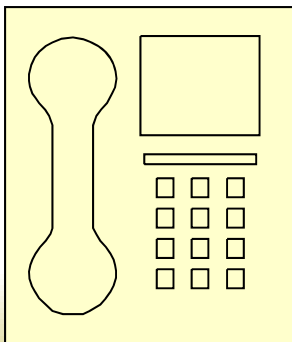


- ❧ Provided Reference Service away from the desk
 - ❧ From 10 am – 2 pm,
 - ❧ we are available by phone and physically at other locations.
- ❧ Added Science Chat service 10 am – 5 pm
- ❧ Continued desk service from 2 – 5

Phone Forwarding



- ☞ Added forward off campus forwarding function (to forward calls to cell phones)
- ☞ Wrote up procedure and posted near the desk phone
- ☞ Bought mobile NEC Wireless (WiFi) Phone (arrived July 2011)
- ☞ Success



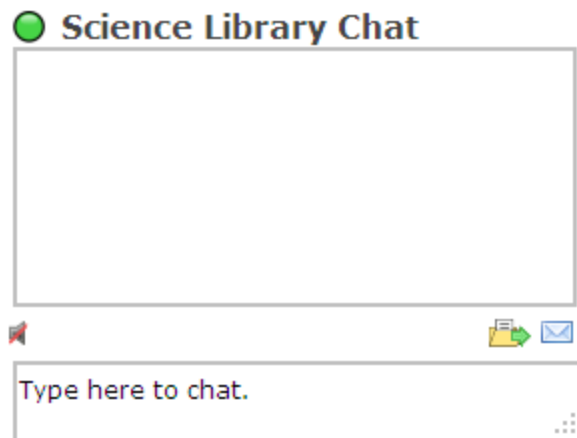
Locations we tried



campus
Offices
desk **Across**
stacks
department
Circulation

within a 5 minute travel time from the desk

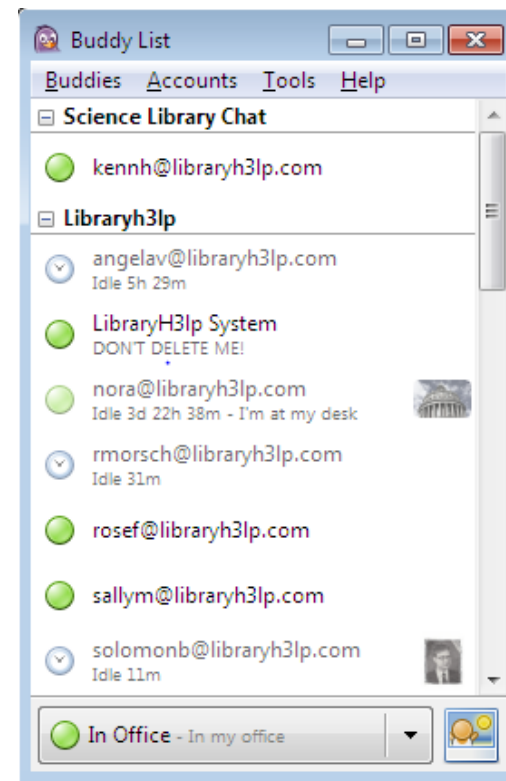
New Science Chat Service (started May 31, 2011)



Carlson Library: (585) 275-4488
Circulation: (585) 275-4488
Reference: (585) 275-4465

[Physics-Optics-Astronomy \(POA\)](#)
[Laboratory for Laser Energetics \(LLE\)](#)
[Edward G. Miner \(Medical Center\)](#)

Patron Interface –
Chat box on Department Page

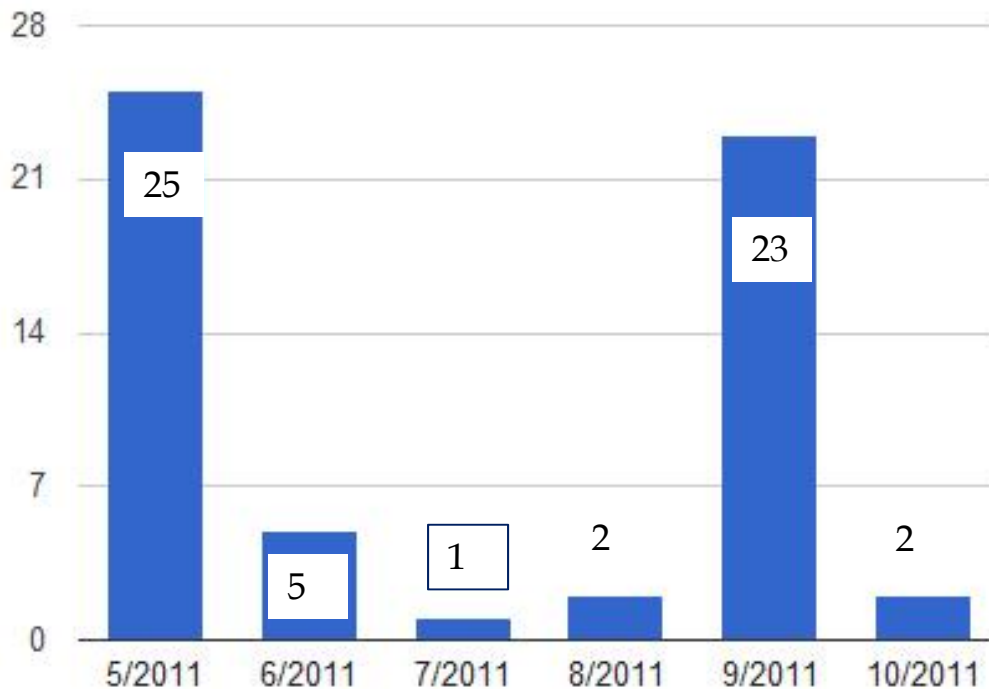


Staff Interface –
Libraryh3lp or Pidgin

Chat Service Stats



Chats/Month



- 13 are real chats from transcripts.
- Most chats are staff practice.
- Didn't count unanswered chats or system messages.

Evaluation



What didn't work



- ❧ Cell phone reception was bad in journal stacks
- ❧ Stacks don't have quick access to a computer
- ❧ Patrons didn't call or go to circulation desk
- ❧ There were 4 complaints about not having a person present.

What worked



- ❧ Freedom
- ❧ Forwarding calls
- ❧ IP phone
- ❧ Reference in departments (especially when food was present)
- ❧ Reference at desk (scheduled & unscheduled)
- ❧ Reference in office
- ❧ Face to face reference in stacks

Next Steps



- ❧ Hiring and training students to work at the desk.
- ❧ Keeping IP phone for jaunts into the stacks or staff meetings
- ❧ Changing Reference Desk name to Information Desk.
- ❧ Adding staff to Science Chat service to cover anticipated growth.