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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

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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

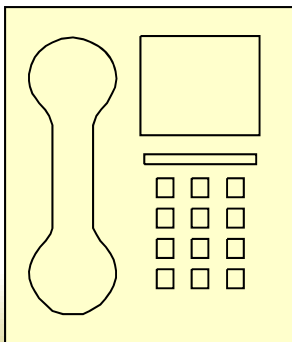


- ❧ Provided Reference Service away from the desk
  - ❧ From 10 am – 2 pm,
  - ❧ we are available by phone and physically at other locations.
- ❧ Added Science Chat service 10 am – 5 pm
- ❧ Continued desk service from 2 – 5

# 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

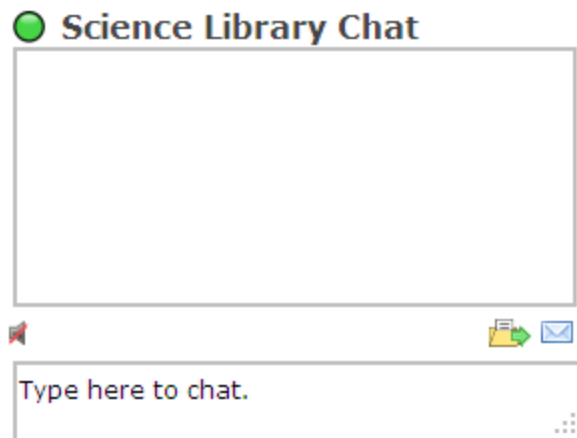


**campus** **stacks**  
**Offices**  
**desk** **Across**  
**department**  
**Circulation**

within a 5 minute travel time from the desk



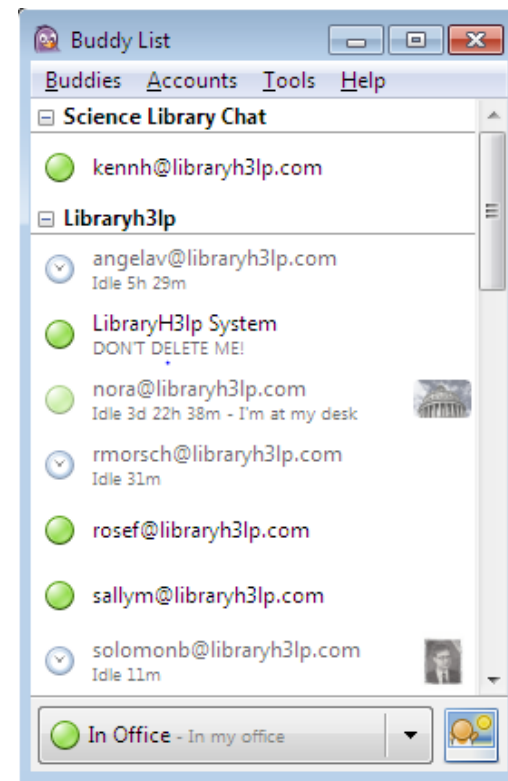
# New Science Chat Service (started May 31, 2011)



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

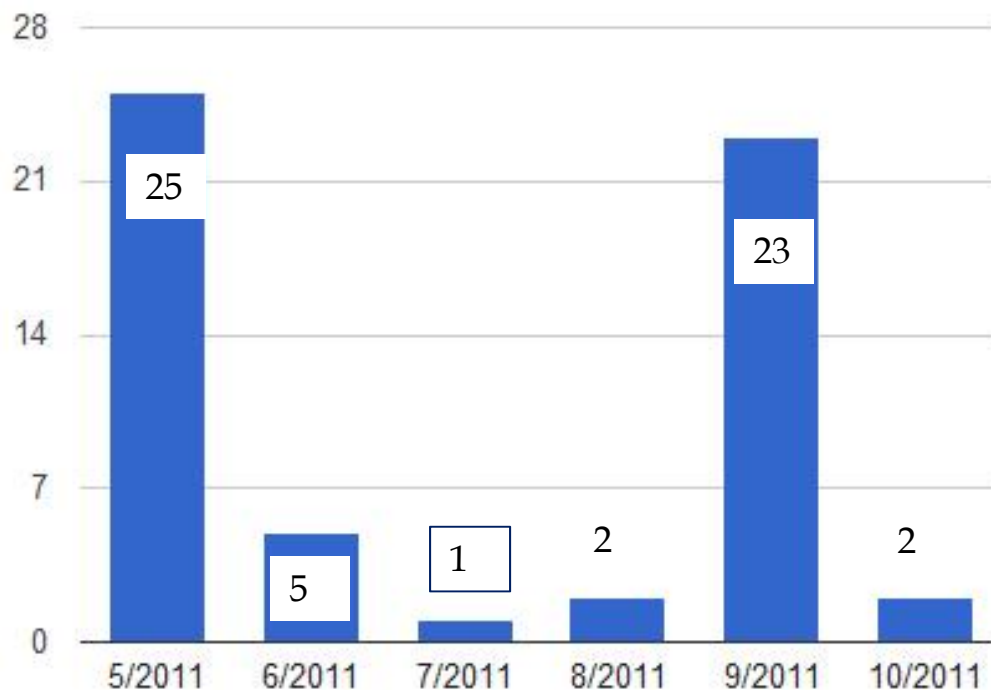


Staff Interface –  
Libraryh3lp or Pidgin

# 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.