

REFCHATTER

Online reference via integrated IM/Webchat/Texting



RefChatter™ is Web-based software for chatting with patrons who use common Instant Messaging options or a widget to contact your library. RefChatter also offers an optional SMS Module™ so patrons can send text messages that appear on the same staff interface!

Using this single tool, one or more staff members can monitor multiple queues and can maintain multiple, concurrent online reference sessions.

And as a part of the Altarama Integrated Reference Services (AIRS™) family of products, RefChatter gives libraries great statistics, access to transcripts, and the option to integrate with other powerful reference management tools.

And now available with integrated text messaging!



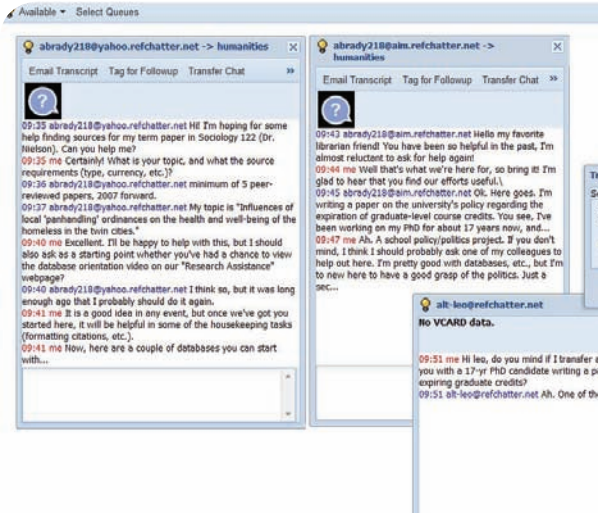
Reference services available to patrons via IM, widgets and text messaging are more popular than ever. The challenge for libraries is finding ways to deliver these services in an efficient and affordable way. Staffing realities, the need for statistics, and even IT policies that frown on IM have been barriers to success in these efforts.

RefChatter is an integrated, hosted, Web-based solution that allows a library to support all of these methods of patron interaction. From a single browser interface, a reference librarian can chat interactively with multiple patrons who can use any common IM client, any of the library's conveniently-placed webpage widgets, and now even if the patron wants to use texting.

And when the volume of chat sessions requires, multiple staff members can share the load, transferring chat sessions back and forth and having back-channel, staff-to-staff chat conversations.

RefChatter represents the breakthrough that many libraries have been waiting for! Created, delivered, and supported specifically for libraries by librarians and library automation experts, *RefChatter* is an affordable Web-based solution for reaching a critical part of your user community in range of modes familiar to them.

Patrons can communicate with library staff from the IM platform of their choice, and library staff can monitor these various chat sessions using a standard set of tools on a single screen.



subject: chat transcript

14:44 +18013192934@android-sms.libraryh3lp.com: Can you recommend a database for research on the politics of farm subsidies? I'm in PoliSci311, and I need some pretty detailed history as background.

14:45 abradyl218@libraryh3lp.com/webchat: Give me a few minutes to check some things out. And let me know what you've already found out.

14:56 +18013192934@android-sms.libraryh3lp.com: Haven't started yet. Dr Jones suggested I get some guidance from the start. Hope that's okay.

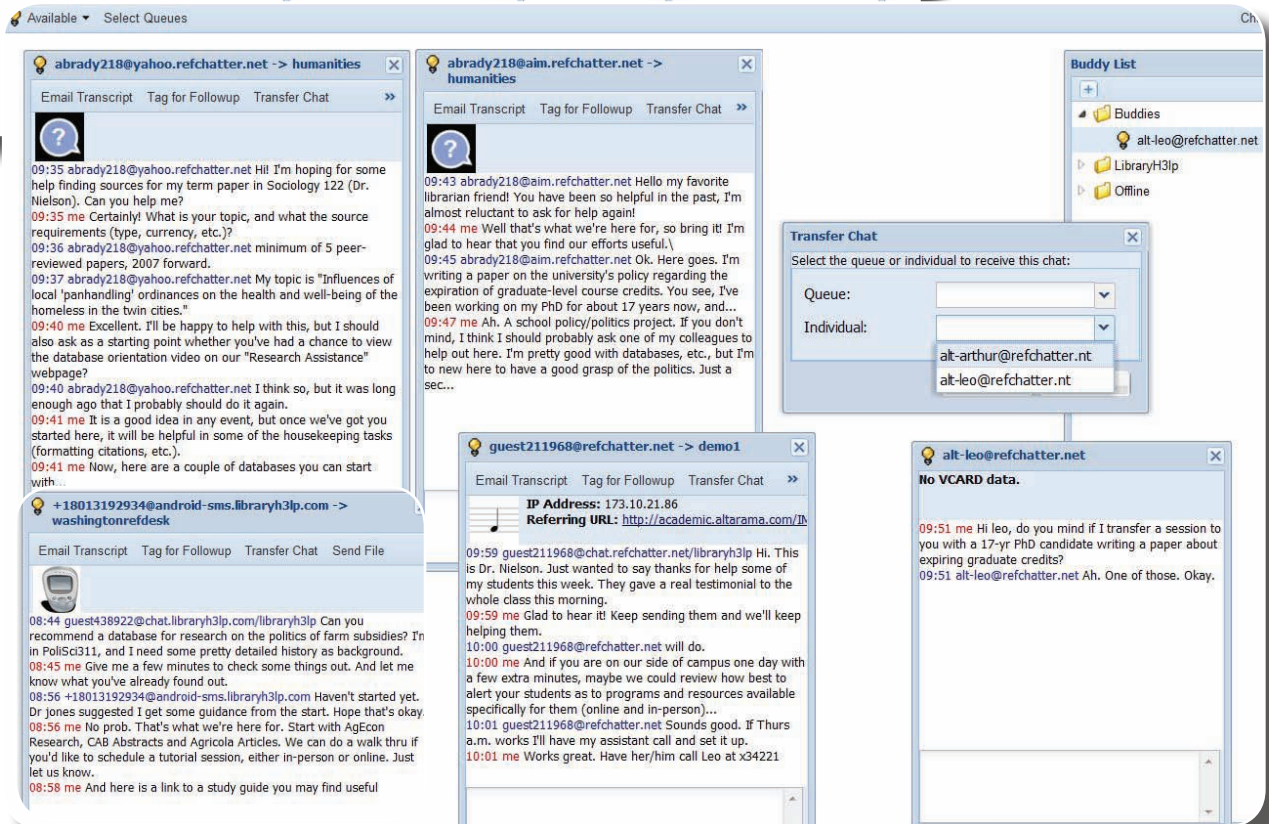
14:56 abradyl218@libraryh3lp.com/webchat: No prob. That's what we're here for. Start with AgEcon Research, CAB Abstracts and Agricola Articles. We can do a walk thru if you'd like to schedule a tutorial session, either in-person or online. Just let us know.

14:58 abradyl218@libraryh3lp.com/webchat: And here is a link to a study guide you may find useful

14:59 abradyl218@libraryh3lp.com: download from <http://libraryh3lp.com/download/AutumnLeaves.jpg>

RefChatter gives library staff the capability to email chat transcripts to the patron for future use.

Chat transcripts can also be saved and stored by the library for records or future use.



RefChatter's backchannel capabilities allow staff to easily communicate with each other. Chat sessions can also be transferred through the backchannel to available staff or subject specialists

Why RefChatter may be the reference tool you've been waiting for:

- Patrons can use the tools and features of the IM tools they are already familiar with, including AIM®, MSN®, YAHOO®, ICQ®, QQ®, and MEEBO-ME®
- Patrons without an IM client have equal access through a customizable IM-like widget you can place anywhere in your library Web pages, even embedded on your Facebook® page
- Access points (IM and widget) can be organized into queues and staff allocated to the queues according to their ability to handle the types of questions arriving in any queue
- Librarians need only a standard Web browsers (FIREFOX®, OPERA®, IE®, and SAFARI® are supported) to monitor multiple intake points and work with multiple patrons simultaneously
- Any number of librarians can use RefChatter at the same time, ensuring that any volume of sessions can be handled—ideal for consortia
- As a hosted, Web-based solution, no IT resources are required for implementation or ongoing support
- Implementation, training, and support are all provided by Altarama, the industry leader in reference management solutions

The screenshot shows a web browser window with a RefChatter chat window open. The chat window displays a conversation between a user and a librarian. The user asks for help with a testimonial, and the librarian responds with advice and contact information. The chat window also shows a search bar and a list of links. Below the chat window is a section titled "Telephone the library" with contact information. To the right of the chat window is an embedded RefChatter widget, which is a smaller version of the chat window. The widget is titled "RefChatter service" and shows a message from the user. Below the widget is a link to a demonstrator version of the page.

Libraries also have the option of enabling patrons to contact staff directly from their website by embedding widgets on relevant pages. Widgets can be configured to point directly to specified points (circulation desk, subject specialists, etc.)

Progress through partnerships:

The underlying technology that makes *RefChatter* possible is a combination of open-source software components and excellent development by the LibraryH3lp creative team. Bundled with Altarama's implementation, training, and customer support, this powerful and proven tool is now available for libraries seeking a purpose-built, fully supported solution.

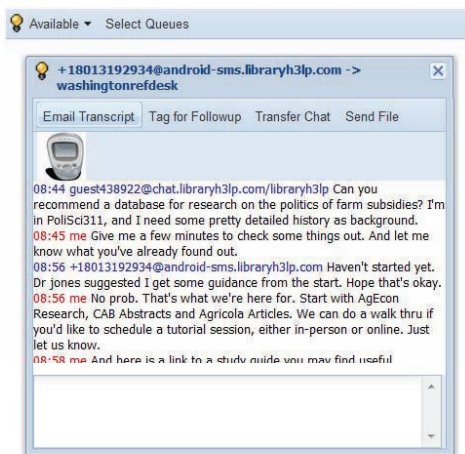
And as part of AIRS, the Altarama Integrated Reference Services family of products and services, *RefChatter* can be integrated with *RefTracker*, *VRI plus*, *SMSreference*, and *DeskStats*.

Optional SMS Module

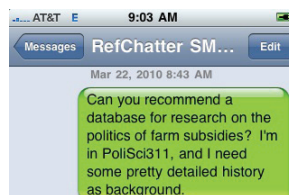
For current *RefChatter* libraries, and for libraries considering *RefChatter*, we are delighted to announce the availability of the *RefChatter SMS Module*. This optional service allows the library (or consortium of libraries) to publish a standard 10-digit telephone number to patrons for sending reference questions by text. Unlike other text-your-library offerings, with the *RefChatter SMS Module* library staff members see and respond to inbound text queries on the exact same screen as they use to chat with IM and widget patrons.

This level of integration—both on the front end for staff convenience and on the back end for reports, transcripts and statistics—is unique among the commercial offerings now available to libraries.

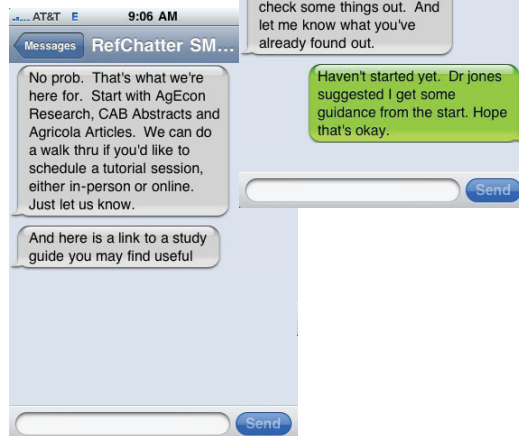
Altarama has been a pioneer in library SMS service, delivering the first such system in 2004. The *RefChatter SMS Module* joins a family of proven solutions that help libraries offer, manage and measure reference service like never before.



On the librarian's side, text messages are displayed on the same screen as sessions with IM and widget patrons.



Patrons communicate with library staff through a text conversation in real time. Those with smart phones can view shared links instantaneously.



You should take a look at RefChatter:

- If you offer online reference using a single Instant Messaging network (e.g. Google Talk® or Windows Live Messenger® , AIM®, etc.) and wish you could support more networks
- If you offer online reference using several separate IM clients and wish that doing so weren't so hard on your staff
- If you offer online reference using an aggregation tool like Meebo®, and find that being limited to a single librarian/operator is problematic, especially during high-volume periods
- If you offer online reference using IM in any form and wish you could capture and report good statistics
- If your online reference service doesn't keep transcripts, or you can't easily get at them
- If your institution's IT policy prohibits use of IM client software on your workstations
- If you offer chat reference based on QuestionPoint™ or VRLplus™ and would like to add IM and texting as options
- If you are thinking about starting an online reference service, but the first step has to have a low cost of entry

