



Chat Reference at UNC Law

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Why is chat reference important?

- Lots of people are already familiar with using chat and appreciate its convenience. Since we are always on their buddy list, some students do just chat with us!

1. Policy <http://library.law.unc.edu/im/index.html>

Important W Questions

Where to set it up (ref desk / indiv. offices)

When to offer it (same as ref desk?)

What types of questions are allowed

Who can ask questions (students v. everybody)

What is the privacy policy (keep transcripts v delete)

What group has priority (people in person, on the phone, email)

Check other schools and learn from their policies-don't limit to law school

2. Picking a Service/Buddy Name

Free Service (AOL, Yahoo, MSN v commercial software \$)

Pick an "uberservice" that supports AOL, Yahoo etc.

--Trillian, Gaim

Buddy Name

Brainstorm

Student- lawrefchat, chatnow, got_a_?, just4U

Professors- lawref, lawlibrary

Check best ones and see if they are already taken

AOL is most popular

Best have same buddy name for all the services

Different groups

We have unclawref for law professors only

Helps to set priority; no professor chats yet

3. Training

Practice- Months before we started the service, everyone got a buddy name and we instant messaged each other. This increased everybody's comfort level. We also use im among the librarians every day.

4. Marketing

Strategy

- to alert them to the new service and to our buddy name
 - o link from webpage
 - o listserv messages/newsletters posts
 - o class announcements
 - o posters/flyers on study tables
 - o flyer in admissions materials
 - o public terminal wallpaper
 - o orientation demonstration
 - o stickers with logo/buddy name

---Stickers -1000 cost \$370

Sample Email

*Subject line:

UNC Law Library-IM any ?s

Body:

HELLO MY BUDDY NAME IS **lawchat4U**

New this year, the UNC Law Library offers instant message reference!! You can use AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, or MSN Messenger to IM a law librarian at **lawchat4u** with any questions you might have before school starts and any time after. Follow the link to our [flyer](#) and [frequently asked questions](#).

Good luck and hope to hear from you soon :)

5. Statistics/Common Questions

66 total First 3 months of fall semester 12, 10, 20

Last 3 month of spring semester 9, 2, 3

6. Challenges

Learning Curve/Fear of unknown and extra work

We have not been overwhelmed

Practice chatting is best way to feel more comfortable

7. Going Forward- Keep marketing, open to wider audience?