

Instant Messaging Reference at Doctoral Research Universities: What Is Success?

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Virtual reference services have been evaluated from a variety of standpoints, including user satisfaction, librarian accuracy, and choice of technology, to name a few, but current literature does not provide an evaluation of virtual reference service by usage volume across institutions. Volume is a critical metric in decision-making. Often, when an institution chooses to discontinue any type of virtual reference presence, “low volume” is cited as a key factor (Radford & Kern, 2006).

This poster discusses a study which aims to benchmark what Instant Messaging (IM) usage volume looks like across a number of *Doctoral Research Universities* (Carnegie Classification: *DRU*). Though the scope of this study will focus on one virtual reference modality (Instant Messaging) and on one group of institutions (academic libraries classified as *DRUs*), the benchmark criteria it seeks to establish will hopefully also inform future research and best practices regarding various virtual reference services offered at many different types of libraries – both academic and public. The poster discusses the methodology that will be employed and also contains examples of survey questions.