Instant Messaging

what's so gr8 about it?

What is IM?

- Communicate real-time
- Users are notified when others come online
- Can share files, communicate via video with most programs

IM vs "chat rooms": When chat first came about, a user would log into a room full of people who were all interested in the same topic, and all those people saw everyone's messages, but users could send "private" messages to an individual, if desired. IM is kind of the opposite: users primarily send messages to individuals but can set up multiple user chat rooms if desired (but users control who's in a multi-user chat by invitation).

Why Use IM?

- Instant communication
- Send links, files, photos instantly
- Can multi-task
- Our users are familiar with it

Common Features

- Contacts list
- Customize your messages' appearance
- Games
- Send and receive files
- Multi-user chat
- Profiles

- "Display picture" – an icon representing you
- Privacy features
- Log conversations
- Set your status: "away," "offline," "busy," etc.
- Emoticons ("smilies")

With major IM programs, users add only the people that they want to chat with to a contacts list (buddy list, friends list).

Messages' appearance: font face, color, size

Files: photos, dox, etc (can sometimes be slow vs using email with attachments)

Multi-user chat: "chat rooms"

Icons: some are static, some are animated or even customizable "avatars."

Privacy: can set it so that only your buddies can contact you; most have invisible mode

But… chat reference?

- IM *is* chat reference
- Hosted systems can be expensive, OR
- Use IM to supplement hosted system

If you aren't using chat reference in your library, IM is a cheap alternative to hosted systems to get your feet wet.

If you are already using a hosted system, IM is a good way to supplement your virtual reference with software that many users will already know and has the added bonus of allowing you to talk with colleagues, friends, family, etc.

Who Uses IM?

- Used by over 53 million American adults (43% of internet users)
- 11 million adults use it at work
- 36% use it every day
- 24% exchange IMs more frequently than email (46% of gen-Ys)

Pew/Internet & American Life Project,
"How Americans Use Instant Messaging," 9/2004

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These numbers don't include the millions of "tweens" (8-13) and teenagers that use IM every day.

Who uses IM?

- Hundreds of libraries!

  • **UNC Chapel Hill: undergradref (AIM)**
  • **CSBSJU: csbsjulibraryref (AIM, Yahoo, ICQ & MSN)**
  • **Wake Forest U: askzaklive (AIM)**
  • **UVa: UVALibRef or SELQuestions (AIM)**
  • **UIUC: askUIUC or askundergrad (AIM)**
  • **Homer Township (IL) PL: homerlib (AIM)**
  • **Marin County PL: MarinLibrary (AIM & Yahoo)**

- Very probably, many of your colleagues…

Most Popular Programs

- AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)
- Yahoo! Messenger
- MSN Messenger
- ICQ

Which one to use?

- AIM is most popular
- Survey your users, family, and friends
- What is in use at work?
- Why not use them all?

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Multi-network IM: Trillian

- Connects to AIM, Yahoo, MSN, ICQ, and IRC
- One contacts list
- Most of the popular features are available

Download the programs here:

AIM: http://aim.aol.com

Trillian: http://www.ceruleanstudios.com/

MSN: http://messenger.msn.com/

Yahoo: http://messenger.yahoo.com/messenger/download/

More information

- "Virtual Reference: Alive & Well" Brenda Bailey-Hainer, *LJ*, 1/15/05
- "To Chat or Not to Chat – Taking Another Look at Virtual Reference" *Searcher*, July 2004 (Part 1) & September 2004 (Part 2)
- *Chat Reference: a Guide to Live Virtual Reference Services*. Jana Smith Ronan. Libraries Unlimited: 2003.
- http://athena.libraries.claremont.edu/~cindi - these slides

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Thank you!

- Cindi Trainor
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  http://athena.libraries.claremont.edu/~cindi
  AIM & Yahoo: cinditrainor

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