**Presentation Proposal for the 5th International m-libraries Conference**[**http://m-lib5.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/**](http://m-lib5.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/)

Title: WhatsApp at HKUST Library - a New Channel for User Communication

Authors: Victoria Caplan, Head of Reference & Collection Services, HKUST Library  
 Ki-Tat Lam, Associate University Librarian, HKUST Library

**Abstract:**

A recent trend in academic libraries in Hong Kong and abroad is a marked decrease in the in-person and telephone questions received and answered at various library information services desks. At the same time, smartphones have become ubiquitous among Hong Kong universities’ students and staff, many of whom enjoy using Wi-Fi enabled messaging services like WhatsApp or WeChat. After successfully launching mobile applications such as for library catalog searching, room-booking, location finding and document printing, HKUST Library decided to use popular communication apps to create a new avenue for patrons to ask questions and receive answers easily and economically on their mobile devices.

This paper will describe the challenges faced, strategies pursued, and decisions made by both systems and reference staff to launch this innovative mobile information service. It will discuss the pioneering technology involved in creating the infrastructure so that library information services colleagues do not require a physical mobile device in order to communicate with users via WhatsApp and WeChat. It will then describe the human-interaction side of setting up the service, including training, service guidelines, staff acceptance and patron response. Wrapping up, it will consider how this and other mobile communication trends may impact academic libraries communications with its stake holders when many library services and applications are readily available on mobile devices.