

RefChatter Widget Comparison

There are three types of widgets available: Embedded, PopOut, and FollowMe. Let's look at the pros and cons and some examples of each type:

The Embedded Widget:

Description: Chat box that sits directly on a web page.

Pros: These widgets are highly visible and can result in higher chat traffic. Widget has a pop out feature that allows the chat to open in a new window.

Cons: Will take up more space on a webpage. If too small, the patron will find it difficult to type and then read the conversation. If the patron clicks on another link on the web page, they will navigate away from the chat.

Notes: Embedded widgets work nicely on a separate 'Contact Us' page, where the patron is less likely to click on other links.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://academic.altarama.com/imquickstart/clientaccesspagerv11.htm>. The page title is "Contacting the Altarama Example Library". The page content includes several links and icons for contacting the library: "Visit the library", "Answers by Email", and "Ask us a question via Instant Messenger". A blue box with a blue border and arrow points to the "Ask us a question via Instant Messenger" link, containing the text "This is how the embedded widget appears on the webpage." To the right of this box, a blue arrow points to a screenshot of the RefChatter service interface, which shows a chat window with the status "Available" and the text "Type here to chat. Press ENTER to send."

The PopOut Widget:

Description: A chat box that opens as a separate window when the patron clicks on an image that reads "We're Online. Click to chat now!", for example. The patron can navigate to other websites and still keep the chat box open and visible.

Pros: Widget opens in a new window, so it is always visible. Resizable. Entry point can appear as you wish, such as a clickable image, for example.

Cons: Since chat box is in a separate window, patron will need to go back and forth from chat box window to another window if they need to navigate the web during the chat. On the other hand, patrons who use Instant Messaging are used to this.

Notes: Pop Out widgets have many virtues. They don't take a lot of real estate on your webpage, the patron can move them around and resize them, and they are always visible. Like the FollowMe widget, Pop Out widgets are desirable for pages with high clicking traffic, such as home pages. Also, they are not affected by popup blockers on the patron's browser. Popup blockers protect against popup windows that appear even though the user doesn't click on them, such as advertisements that popup uninvited. The RefChatter Pop Out widget appears only when the patron clicks on the image (like the "We're Online! Chat with us now" image in the screenshot)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://academic.altarama.com/imquickstart/clientaccesspagercpopout.htm>. The page title is "Contacting the Altarama Example Library".

On the left side, there are several service options:

- Visit the library**: Click here to see library locations and opening hours.
- Answers by Email**: Submit your question using one of our online forms and receive a response by email within two working days.
- Ask us**: Add on MSN, Yahoo, AOL, Hours.
- Text/**: Add on Hours.
- Chat with screen sharing window**

On the right side, there are links for "Responses by email":

- [Ask a reference question](#)
- [Request a new book](#)
- [Search the RefTracker knowledge base](#)
- [RefTracker Welcome page](#)

At the bottom right, there is a button that says "We're Online Click to chat now".

A blue box highlights the text: "When the patron clicks on the 'We're Online' image, the chat widget box opens in a new window." An arrow points from this box to a separate window titled "Chat Reference - Mozilla Firefox" with the URL <http://refchatter.net/chat/demo1@chat.refchatter.net>. The chat window shows a "Chat Reference" interface with a text input field and a "Done" button.

Another arrow points from the "We're Online" button to the chat window, labeled "Instant Responses via a Pop-out widget".

The FollowMe widget

Description: Chat box that floats on top of the web page, allowing the patron to continue the chat as he/she navigates to other pages. The entry point is simply a link, so you can design the entry point to look however you would like (with an image on the web page, for example)

Pros: Allows patron to keep the chat as he/she clicks on links on the page. Patron can move chat box around and resize it. Patrons receive a warning message before navigating away from the chat. Widget has a pop out feature that allows the chat to open in a new window.

Cons: The patron's URL will reflect the RefChatter server, although most patrons won't notice this (or mind). FollowMe widgets are built on an iframe, and frame-buster websites can break the chats. Frame-buster websites are not as common as they were years ago, but some still exist. To work around this, the patron will receive a warning message if they navigate away from the chat, and the patron can use the 'pop out' feature on the widget to keep the chat going. However, the librarian will need to have enough technical training to assist the patron with this process.

Notes: Like Pop Out widgets, FollowMe widgets are desirable for pages with high clicking traffic, such as a home page.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the City of Pasadena library website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://refchatter.net/follow>. The website header features the text "THE CITY OF PASADENA" and a search icon. A yellow callout box with a blue border and text points to a small icon in the top right corner of the page, stating: "The FollowMe widget floats on top of the page, allowing the patron to navigate the webpage without losing the chat session." Below the main banner, there are several promotional tiles for "SUMMER 2010 DIVE IN to the Library for Fun", "jobs find your", "2011 GCOS BOOK SELECTION", "Get a Library Card", and "Kids & Teens". The right sidebar contains a "Department Home" menu with links for "Locations & Hours", "My Account", "Find a Book", "Ask a Question", "Services & Resources", "News & Events", and "About the Library". Below the sidebar is a "CITY LINKS" section with a "Most Requested" dropdown and a "Departments & Agencies" dropdown. At the bottom, there is a "LIBRARY NEWS" section with a link to "Pacific Animal Productions Present Animal Edu. treatment" and a "LIBRARY EVENTS" section with a calendar for July 2010. A "LibraryChat" window is open in the bottom right corner, showing a chat interface with a text input field and a "Type here to chat. Press ENTER to send." prompt.