New wireless portable Omnicharge power banks are being provided by the libraries

by Madison Meeks

3rd year, Communications major, mvm7037@psu.edu

Madison Meeks is the current Editor-in-Chief of the Behrend Beacon and on the Research and News Committee for the Penn State Libraries’ Magazine. She has written many articles in her time, and is looking to go into the journalism field after graduation.

University Libraries has now provided students with the convenience of on-the-go wireless chargers with the new Omnicharge power banks. The devices were first offered to University Park students in 2017 as part of a pilot experiment.

According to Penn State Libraries and the manager of access services systems Chris Holobar, Omnicharge is a portable all-in-one device that can power smartphones and devices like laptops. Within the past five years, the fast-charging wireless capability to augment the charging stations in the University Park libraries has been improved.

The Omnicharge power banks operate using the Omni Power mobile app that is supported by both iOS and Android. The app makes the user create an account with the company and enter a credit card to be able to access the power bank. The credit card will not be charged, and the device will remain free to use if the student returns and docks it in any of the charging stations before the end of the 24-hour lending period.

Three charging stations were installed at Patee and Paterno Libraries after the 2017 pilot experiment. Two stations were located near the Curtin Road entrance and another at one the back of MacKinnons Lounge which is adjacent to Starbucks on the first floor of Paterno Library. Also, a station was installed at each branch libraries according to Penn State News.

Funds were used from the University Park Undergraduate Association and Office of Physical Plant to purchase an additional 17 stations in fall 2019 for installation in locations across the University Park campus. But in 2020, the campus was shut down for several semesters due to the COVID-19 pandemic which made the existing equipment not used. According to PSU News, Holobar was able to upgrade the outdated power banks for the new ones which now have wireless capability.

The Universities Libraries plan to install 10 to 15 more around the University Park campus over the next few months.