ONLINE REFERENCE PRIVACY POLICY

Your privacy is very important to us. Our online privacy policy is intended to let you know what information is collected by our online reference service and how it is used.

What is "online reference"?
To assist our patrons, Stony Brook University Libraries offers online reference services in two ways:

• **LibAnswers** - This is a database of answers to frequently asked questions. Patrons can view public answers any time of the day. If an answer is not currently available, patrons can submit their question and a librarian will respond via email as soon as possible.

• **LibChat** - This is an instant messaging system that allows patrons to speak with a librarian in real time.

What Information is Collected?

**LibAnswers**
To submit a question to LibAnswers, a patron is required to leave an email address. He or she also has the option of leaving a name. This information cannot be viewed by the public.

After 12 months, the patron's name and email address are deleted from the system.

**LibChat**
The LibChat software keeps a transcript of every chat reference session, including the complete conversation between the librarian and the patron. It also collects every patron's IP address. If the patron chooses to leave a name, it will collect that information as well.

After 12 months, the transcript and all other information is deleted from the system.

The patron also has the option of submitting an email address to receive a transcript of the chat session. The email address, however, is not collected by the system and not available to anyone.

How Are Transcripts of Chat Reference Sessions Used?
Transcripts of chat sessions are used to:

• improve online reference and provide better service to all patrons
• analyze the amount and types of questions we are being asked
• train librarians for the service
• compile statistics about usage

Who Has Access To this Information?

Information collected by LibAnswers and LibChat is only accessible by members of the SBU Libraries Virtual Reference Team.

With Whom Does the Library Share the Information?

SBU Libraries does not share private information about specific individuals (e.g. IP address, e-mail addresses, names, phone numbers, etc ...). Usage statistics from the service may be used for library reports or publications, but they never include private information.

What Choices Do Users Have?

Any patron who wishes to have their private information deleted from the system before the normal 12-month deletion schedule, including the transcript of a chat session, may e-mail the administrator of online reference library_reference@stonybrook.edu To request the deletion of private information, please send the date and time the LibAnswers question was submitted or the LibChat session began.

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