

Virtual Reference: The Role of Personalization on an Impersonal Service

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Questions to Consider

- ❖ What effects do name usage have on patron interactions and feelings about services?
- ❖ Is there a need to create guidelines/policies for the use of names in virtual reference?
- ❖ Does using personal names increase employee ownership?
- ❖ Will employee privacy needs be neglected if the use of personal names is required?
- ❖ How will patron react to the name of service?



University of Kentucky

Chat reference is staffed by "reference librarian." Email responses are signed with the reference department name followed by the responder's initials.



Oklahoma State University

Use of names are left up to individual users and no guidelines. No requirement for responder to answer questions in virtual reference system (i.e., personal e-mail). Wild wild west!

Chat reference service names



Email address names

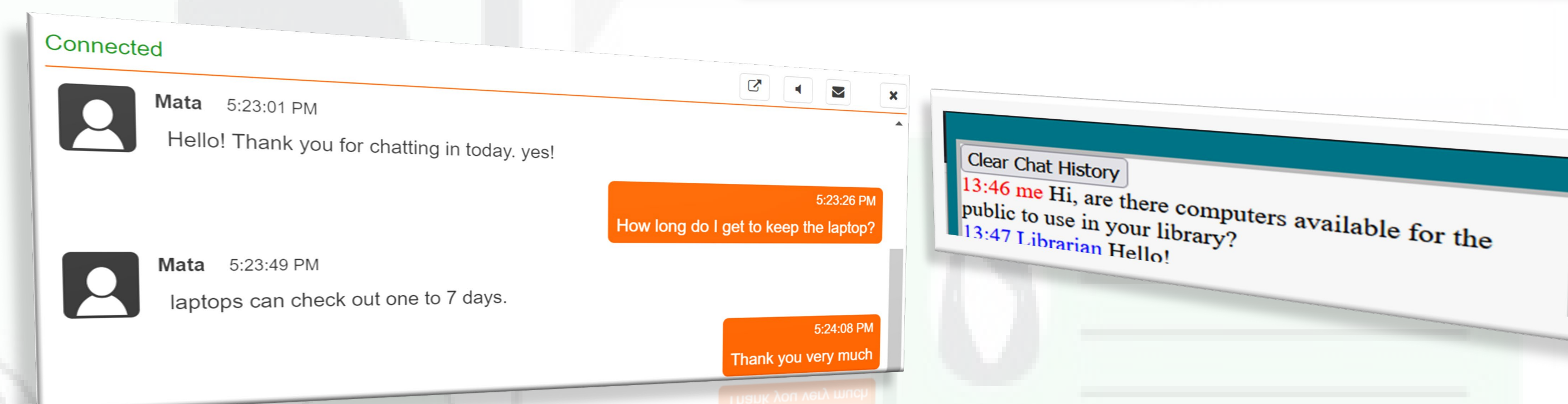
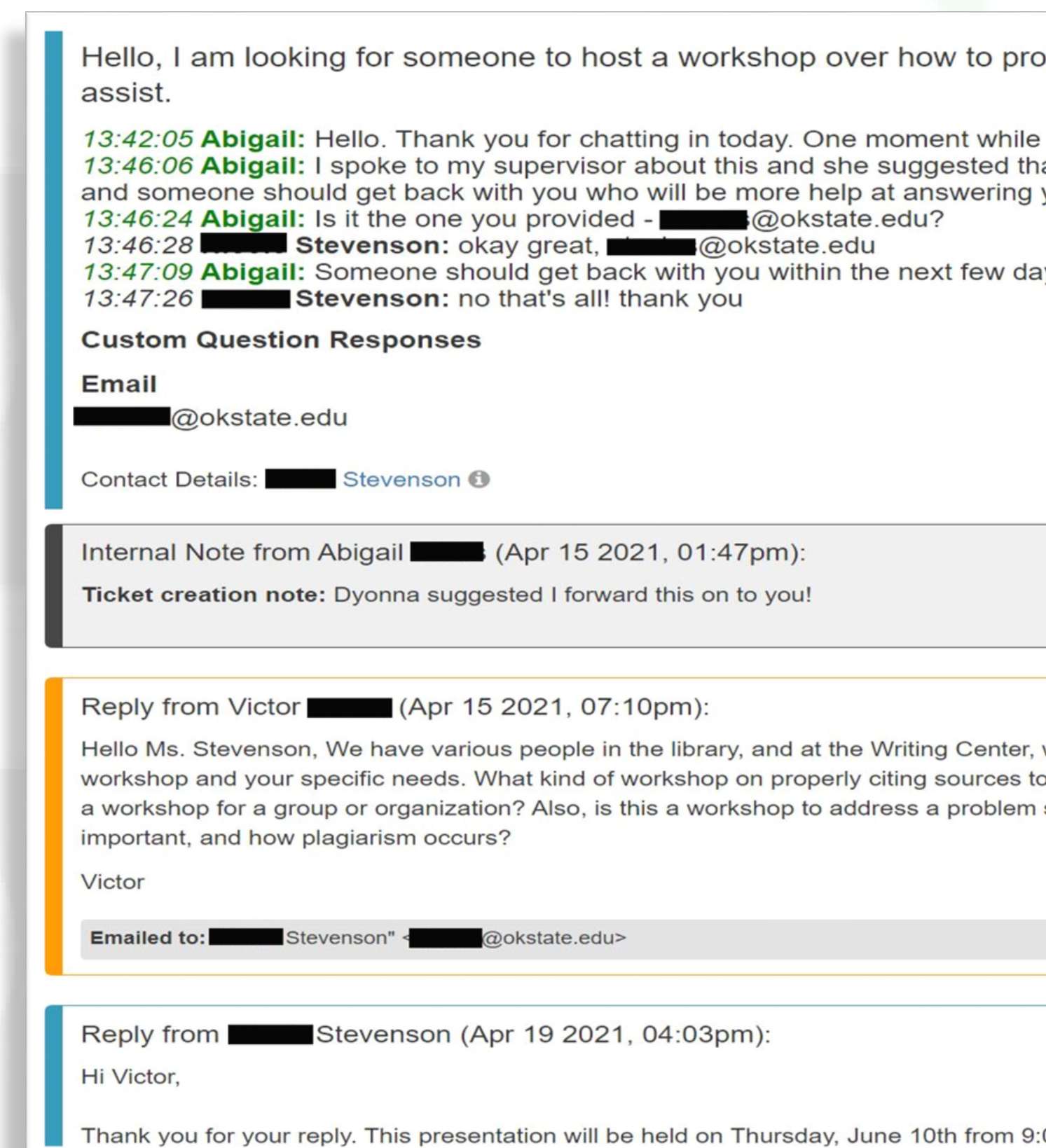
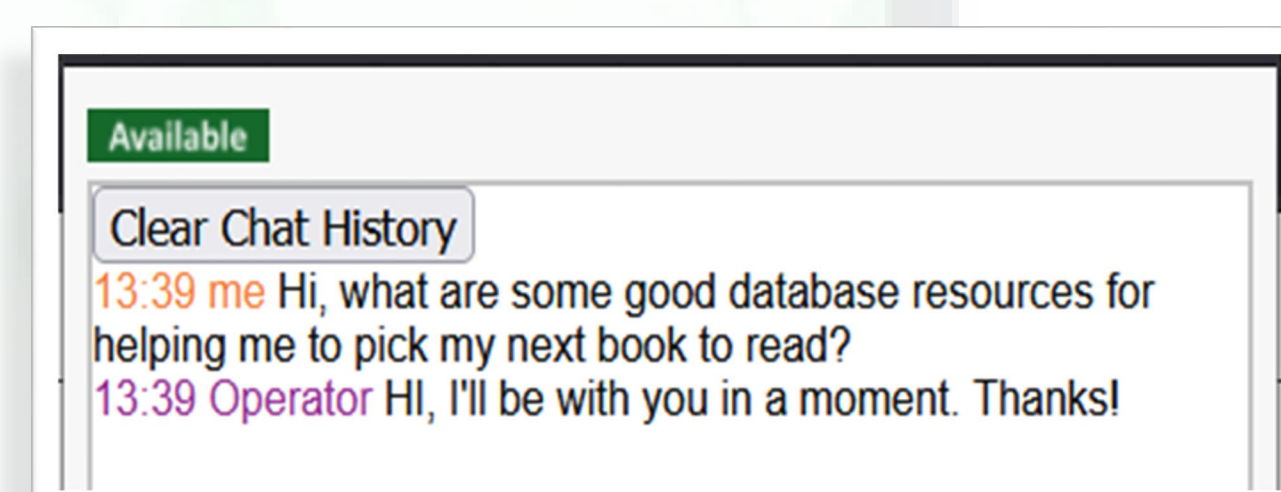
- E-mail: refdesk@uky.edu
- Chat: <http://libraries.uky.edu/Help>

Send us an email at libraryhelp@okstate.edu.

By Email

Email Reference service allows you to submit questions to the Help Desk via email. Send your question to askalibrian@stillwater.org.

Chat reference name usage



Service Recommendations

- Consider the use of "library" or "librarian" in service name
- Be aware of patron assumptions based on service name
- Service name should communicate purpose and level of service
- Provide text links to service for greater accessibility
- Develop and publish naming practices for institutional memory (future reference)
- Consider providing alternatively named links to virtual reference services

Name Recommendations

- Use patron names in replies (Dr. Baeza or Hello Beth)
- Require employees to use a personal name (real or alternate)
- Be consistent on employees using personal names or remaining anonymous
- Provide policy for use of alternate names for consistency
- Create best practices for employee reference
- Always consider employee safety concerns in personalizing services

Virtual Reference Naming

What do you do?

Use sticky notes to add your thoughts!

Name Usage When Communicating

