

“A Little Bit of This, A Little Bit of That, Chat, Chat, Chat” – Another Dimension in Blended Instruction

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Abstract

With the growing popularity of chat reference in the last decade, there are many opportunities for librarians to provide instruction through these digital reference services. One unexpected opportunity arose from students using the Ask a UC Librarian service. General Chemistry students participating in a library orientation exercise as part of their lab program were using chat reference help to complete their 10-point assignment on Blackboard. This poster presentation reviews the literature on the best practices for providing instruction through digital reference services and recommends ways UC librarians can make it an optimum learning experience for the general chemistry students.



Background

As part of an integrated information literacy effort in the science curriculum, the University of California Riverside science and engineering librarians in cooperation with the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and the Bournes School of Engineering developed an orientation class using blended instruction for first year students enrolled in general chemistry. The goal of the session is to familiarize the students with the library services and resources. General chemistry is a prerequisite for many of the advanced courses and average enrollments in this course are about 1100 students per quarter. The chemistry faculty integrated the orientation session into their first week of labs. Students are escorted to the library by their teaching assistants and a librarian then gives them a brief tour of the facility that includes an introduction to the library's website.

Each student has to complete a scavenger hunt worth 4 points and a series of exercises on Black Board worth 6 points. The Black Board exercises have links to various help guides on the library web site. Students have ten days to complete the exercises. During this time period there has been a tremendous spike in questions from UC Riverside students. After further examination of the chat transcripts it appeared that most of the questions were related to the library orientation assignment for the general chemistry students. Students were introduced to the chat reference service in the orientation and utilizing it to complete the assignment.

A Little Bit of This...

Students are given a 10-minute tour of the Science Library and a 10-minute introduction to the website in the library instruction room. “Ask a Librarian” was introduced during the intro and students were encouraged to use the service. The students are then given a scavenger hunt worth 4 points to complete and return to the reference desk for grading by 5 p.m. Friday of the following week.



Scavenger Hunt



Chemistry 1A Science Library Scavenger Hunt (4 pts.)

Name: _____ Lab Section: _____

Please complete the following exercises and return to the Reference Desk Librarian by 5 p.m. January 16, 2009. The Scavenger Hunt is worth 4 points of your Chem 1A Lab Grade.

Use the Scotty Catalog to help you find the following:

1. A book titled Natural fullerenes and related structures of elemental carbon

Write down the call number: _____

What floor is the book located: _____

What color is the book: _____
(If your book is checked out, have the librarian initial this section)

2. A book about optical properties of fullerenes

Write down the title: _____

3. A book on reserve for Chem 1A:

Write down the call number: _____

Using the Science Library Map from your library tour find the following:

4. A current issue of the Journal of the American Chemical Society

The journal is located on: ☐ Top shelf ☐ Middle shelf ☐ Bottom shelf

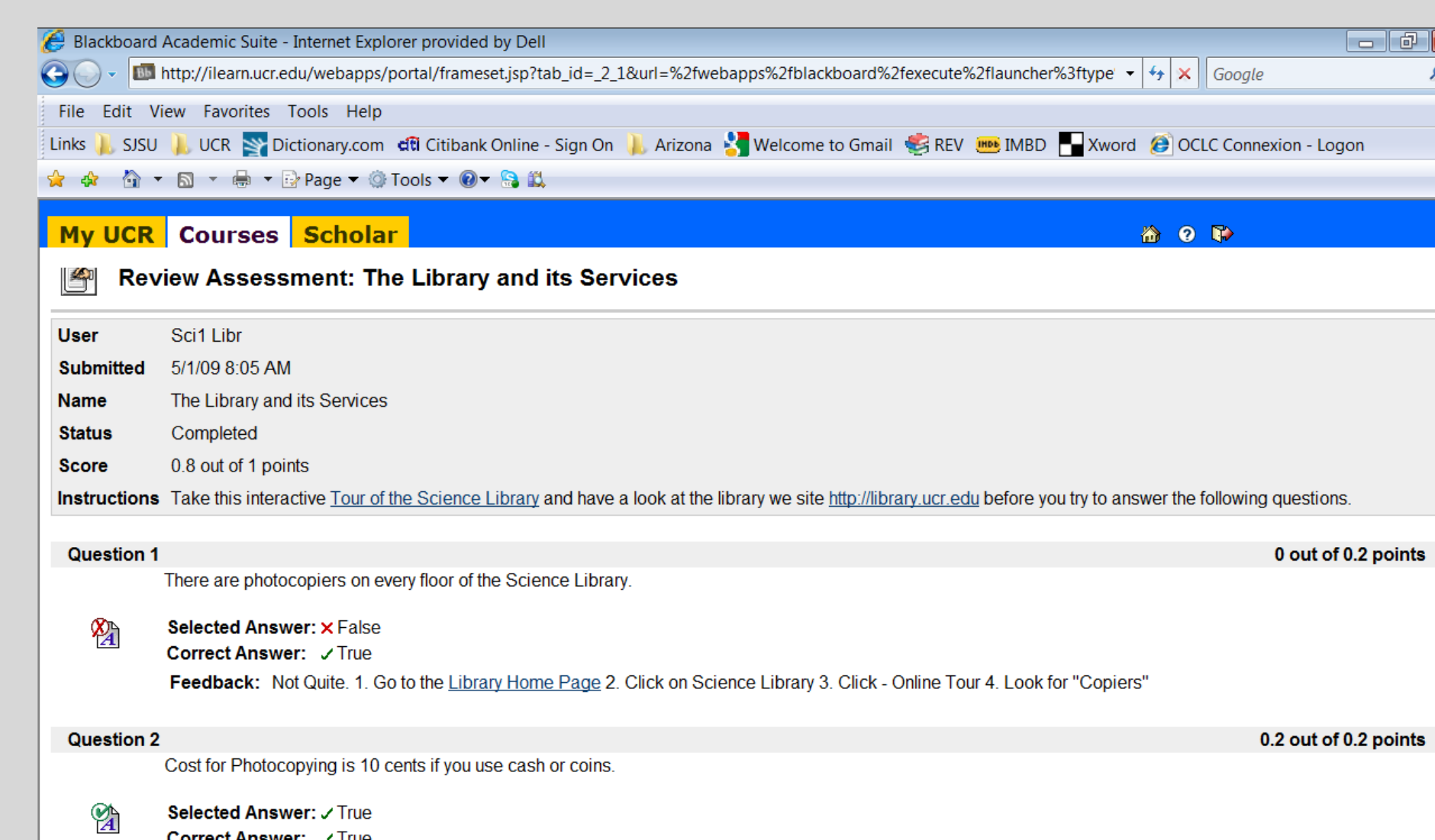
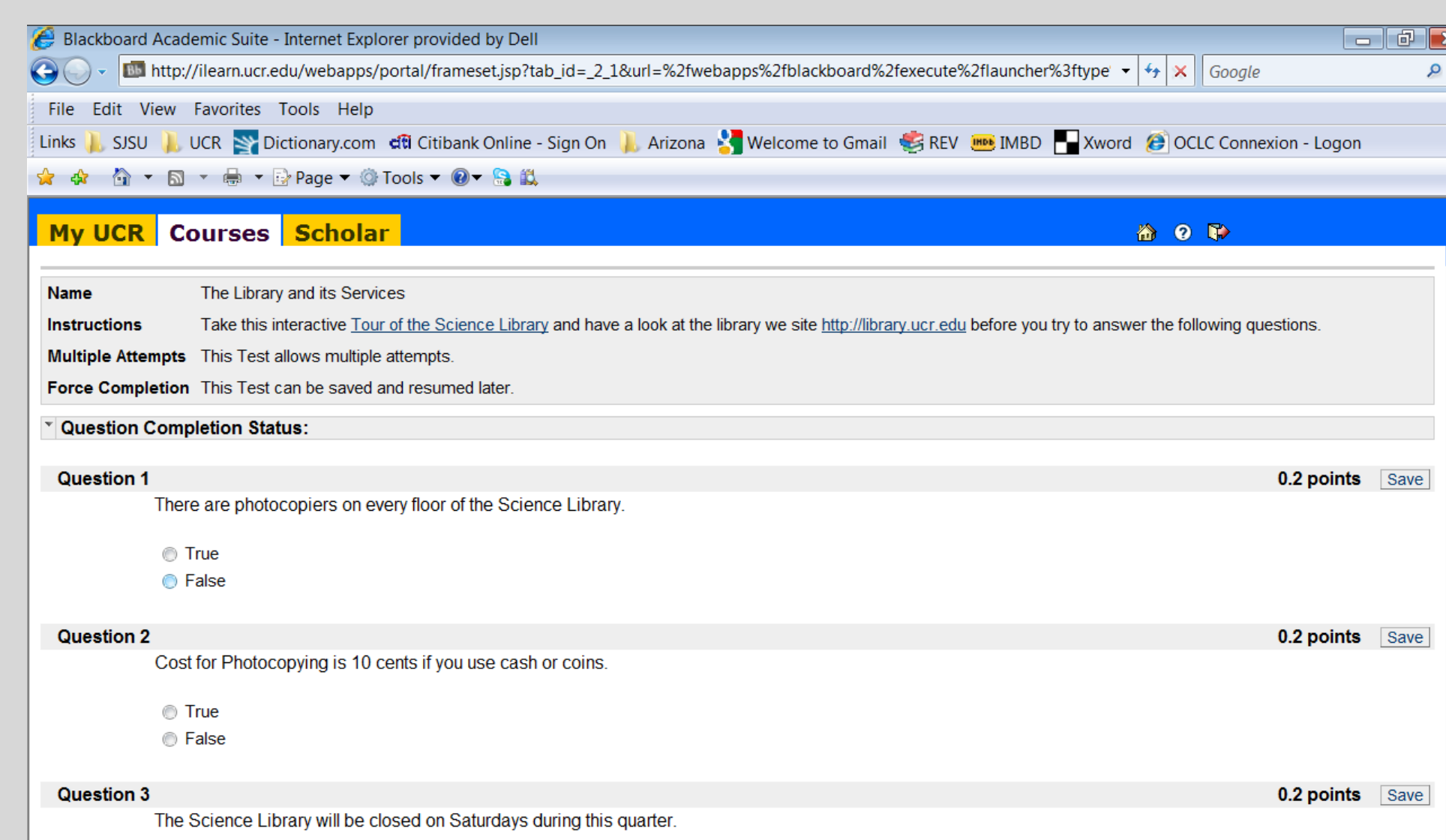
Please turn your Scavenger Hunt in to the Reference Desk Librarian to receive credit.

1

There are 400 unique scavenger hunts for the students to eliminate duplication in lab sections.

A Little Bit of That...

The students also have to complete 5 library exercises from their Chem 1A Lab iLearn site (Black Board).



The iLearn exercises are worth 6 points of their lab grade and their score is automatically recorded in the TA's gradebook.

Chat, Chat, Chat...

cost photocopies scan long weeks library saturdays open hours

Tag Cloud representation of suspected Chem 1A Transcripts during the exercise weeks

Best Practice

After review of the Chat reference transcripts, answers varied from librarian to librarian on questions that came from Chem 1A students. About 50% of the time students were walked through the process of how to locate the information while the rest of the callers were given the direct answer. Many times the librarian giving the direct answer had other callers in the queue.

After review of the literature the following Best Practices for integrating information literacy into the Chem 1A student's chat reference experience are:

- ✓ Direct the student through the process of locating the information when possible – incorporate instruction
- ✓ Create a list of Chem 1A scripts that other co-op librarians can conveniently access to aide in the instruction process
- ✓ Train and share instructional techniques with other participating librarians

Further Reading...

“Successful approaches to teaching through chat” by F. Devlin, L. Currie, and J. Stratton in *New Library World* (2008) 109 (5/6) pp.223-234. The authors developed a list of top ten practices in instruction through chat.

“Instruction via Instant Messaging Reference: what's happening?” by C.M. Desai and S.J. Graves in *The Electronic Library* (2006) V.24(2) pp. 174-189. After surveying IM customers for several months concluded that the customers welcomed instruction during the IM session.

“The Effects of Librarians' Behavioral Performance on User Satisfaction in Chat Reference Services” by N. Kwon and V.L. Gregory in *Reference & User Services Quarterly* (2007) 47(2), pp.137-148. *RUSA behaviors are effective in user satisfaction.*

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