

Supercourse Newsletter

July 13, 2009

www.pitt.edu/~super1/

www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/Index.htm

www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm

Please distribute this to people interested in disasters and starfish

Starfish and the Spider

Vint Cerf, the father of the Internet and one of the major developers of the Supercourse referred us to a remarkable book titled the Starfish and the Spider http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Starfish_and_the_Spider. The Starfish and the Spider concept is one of the new, flat organizations. The traditional organization is like a spider if you cut the head off the spider, it dies, if you cut legs off Spiders, it hobbles, and eventually dies because of the rigidly hierarchical centralized structure. However, if you cut a starfish in 2, it generates 2 new starfish, or if you cut a leg off a starfish, it grows a new one because of the decentralized biologic organization of the starfish. Vint suggested that organizations like Wikipedia, the Internet and the Supercourse are Starfish. We had not thought about this as we developed the Supercourse, but we have build quite a disseminated organization with 42 mirrored sites, and very close collaboration with Ismail Serageldin at the Library of Alexandria, Eugene Shubnikov in Russia, Nicholas Padilla in Mexico Jesse Huang in China, Kawkab Shishani in Jordan, and Ali Ardalan in Iran among many others worldwide. We are evolving towards the organizational structure of Wikipedia, with a small central core set of coordinators. (The total funding for the Supercourse is about 1.2 FTEs, the rest are volunteers). Our dream that we develop the structure similar to that of the Internet, where no one will really know who developed the Supercourse model in a few decades, but it will be ingrained and live on throughout science as a means to network scientists, knock down silos among people and bridge research to education. We want people think of the Supercourse like a dictionary, a Kleenex, a Wikipedia, and not know who Ron, Faina, Eugene, Mita and Francois and you are in 10 years. If this occurs we will be happy as we will transform part of science.

Nina Fedoroff, US State Department: Ismail Serageldin had the honor to meet with Nina Fedoroff. Nina received the National Medal of Science in the field of Biological Sciences, the highest award for lifetime achievement in scientific research in the United States. She is Science and Technology Adviser to U.S. Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton. We discussed with her about the Supercourse for 90 minutes, and it was very productive. We are talking about how the Supercourse might interface with various projects in health and agriculture in the new administration.

Nina already has 3 excellent lectures in the Supercourse, one of which has a Google Page Ranking number one out of 136,000. We included her Key Note address from the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, which is presented as our lecture of the week.

Reaching all Faculty in Medical, Public Health and Nursing Schools:

Please distribute this note to young people in your school who might be interested in joining an important effort. We are planning to visit all 2100 medical, public health and nursing schools web sites that have been identified by WHO. We will obtain the email addresses for the schools as well as the deans. Then we will contact all to see if they received the Supercourse DVD, as well as to ask them to distribute information about the Supercourse to their faculty. It takes 5-10 minutes to visit a school and obtain the names and email addresses. We are building a global team of young people to develop this effort in Global Health. Already we have people from India, China, the US, Egypt and Jordan. We would like to involve 10 or more students to join this health effort from all regions across the world. This will make most faculty around the world familiar with the Supercourse, Global Health and Prevention. For the people who participate, I will help write a publication or two, of which the young people will be the main authors. We are building the team to complete this by September. It will be most fun, and there will be a Pittsburgh prize to the students and young faculty who “fish” the most schools and deans the “fastest” . Please contact me at ronaldlaporte@gmail.com. If you are interesting in fishing

Global Disaster Swat team: We are developing the methods for a Global Knowledge Disaster SWAT team with the Library of Alexandria. The concept is simple we have 65,000 global leaders in many phases of health and disasters in the world. Using Iran as an example, we have 150 experts on public health in the Supercourse from Iran. Should another earthquake occur, we can easily find public health experts in Iran (and others) and refer them to the MOH in Iran or WHO, or the Red Crescent. In addition, we can rapidly build a JIT Supercourse lecture as Ali Ardalan did with the Bam Earthquake. We want to also serve as “ask the librarian” type of model where with you we can “ask an epidemiologist”, or “ask a nutritionist” or “ask a nurse” where we link up those needing advice with experts such as you via the Internet and cell phones. Also, we want to do like Jesse Huang has done in China. Jesse presented parts of our H1N1 lecture in Chinese to the CCTV, and a major Chinese news magazine, reaching 50,000,000 in China. We can provide the best possible lecture on another earthquake in Iran by Ali Ardalan and reach millions of people. We found in China that people very much appreciated Jesse and his advice from academia. As in most countries academics are trusted more than the Media or Government, we want to feed our best knowledge to the media. We are discussing this also with Najeeb Shorbaji a very good friend at WHO, to see if we can link together.

We can easily find top people in countries and refer them. We need to determine the manpower needs to link the Supercourse network to these needs. We are geared up for example in India to reach and help for any disaster as we have over 6500 collaborators.

Nursing: Kawkab Shishani, has been doing wonderful work in building a Global Health Disaster network for Nurses. There are 28 million nurses in the world, but with little networking and connection to disaster relief organizations. We plan to change this. We have developed a golden

lecture of Nursing which is designed to provide initial training about disasters to Nursing faculty and students. We also are developing a set of lectures that can be included in any nursing curricula about nursing. What is most important is that we have about 40 nurses worldwide who are our “champions” who will work with us to spread the word about the Nursing Supercourse. Please tell your friends in nursing about this, as we want to build this program over the course of the next year. You can find out more about this from Kawkab.shishani@gmail.com. We have wonderful collaborators including Richard Garfield a WHO Collaborating center director and Najeeb Shorbaji from WHO Geneva. We will be contacting those in the Supercourse separately who are identified from Nursing Schools.

Eugene will build the Nursing supercourse in the next few weeks.

The Starfish, a Parable

A well known author was vacationing. One morning, he was walking along the beach - the sun was rising, the rainbows were magnificent, the sea was calm. He glanced down the beach and saw a lone figure dancing about.

As he drew nearer, he realized that the person was not dancing, but in one graceful motion was picking up objects from the beach and tossing them into the sea. He approached the young man and saw the objects were starfish. "Why in the world are you throwing starfish into the water?" "If the starfish stay on the beach, when the tide goes out and the sun rises higher, they will die," replied the young man as he continued tossing them out to sea. "That's ridiculous! There are thousands of miles of beach and millions of starfish. You can't really believe that what you are doing can possibly make a difference!" The young man picked up another starfish, and tossing it into the waves, said, "It makes a difference to this one."

(anonymous)

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina is organizing its fifth international biennial conference, BioVisionAlexandria 2010, held 11-14 April 2010 in Alexandria, Egypt.

As a continuation of the tradition that started in BioVision 1999 in Lyon, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina has been honored to be an associate with BioVision by which it holds the BioVisionAlexandria every even year alternating with the World Life Science Forum held in Lyon every odd year.

The theme of the BioVisionAlexandria 2010 will be “New Life Sciences:

Future Prospects”. It will aim to identify and explore the new frontiers and new areas in life sciences that will hugely serve humanity and provide hope for solving the world’s most pressing issues. <http://www.bibalex.org/bva2010/home/home.aspx>

This is one of the best meetings I have been to, we would encourage that you come.

Lecture of the Week

Nina Fedoroff, Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State, donated her AAAS plenary lecture to the Supercourse library titled: Flattening the World: The Role of Science and Technology Diplomacy in the 21st Century. According to Dr. Fedoroff, Tom Friedman has attracted a great deal of attention with his declaration that the world is flat. By this he means that the Internet revolution and globalization have put all peoples of the world on an equal economic footing. A comforting message.

But despite the extraordinary increase in our ability to communicate and access information, we all know that the world is far from flat. This lecture discusses many interesting issues including digital divide, the role of agriculture in feeding world's population, the role of state department, etc. It even discusses the work of George Soros in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Please visit Dr. Fedoroff 's lecture to find out more.

I would love to hear from you about any thoughts you might have about the Supercourse. Please write to me at ronaldlaporte@gmail.com

Best regards from Ron, Faina, Ismail, Eugene, Mita, Vint, Francois, Ali, Kawkab, Jesse, Nicholas, Starfish, Najeeb, Gil, Rashid, Nabil, Abdel, Soni, Ian

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