

Library of Alexandria Supercourse Newsletter

Ronald LaPorte, Ph.D. (ronaldlaporte@gmail.com) For the Supercourse team

"You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore" (Columbus)

Retiring: I was very pleased as to the response to my retiring and Library of Alexandria Newsletter. Many people asked me why I crossed the ocean to retirement, when I was still able to do a good job. I found a new world, and it is nice. There were 3 primary reasons, the first was I wanted to make room for younger people. I was given wonderful opportunities when I was young, it is time this "baby boomer" I to step aside and give others a chance.. The second major reason is Jim Brown. He was the greatest American football player. He led the league in rushing 9/10 years in his carrier. In his 10th year he set a record for running, and then retired on top. My 64th year with Faina, Eugene, Ismail, Francois, Eric, Mita, Vint, Gil, was my best year, time to be like Jim Brown, time to go! Time to cross that ocean. The final reason was that my 31 former Ph.D. students achieved far beyond what I have, two Ministers of Health, one of the leading epidemiologists in Mexico, one of the top publishers in science, the world's leader in exercise, an IOM member, a major Journal editor, the first woman chair and dean in Internal Medicine in Japan and many others. I am most proud of them, and they are my legacy.

"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments but what is woven into the lives of others" (Pericles)

Many of you are in the periretirement phase even in your 30s. I had a condition called **Emeritus Phobia** which you may relate. This is the pathologic fear of being bored in retirement and watching the Price is Right all day. During my periretirement phase, I joined a historical society and a good friend of mine in Japan had me convinced to buy a tenor saxophone. The sax did not work as I have no musical talent. But I decided to take the plunge into the unknown abyss of retirement. I did not think that adding one more publication would add much to my life, nor would the current philosophy of doing research to get money. Time to move on and cross that ocean.

"Break on through to the other side" (Doors)

You might be interested that there is a theory of the 7 stages of retirement, which is most fascinating. Just search on this.

“Don't simply retire from something; have something to retire to” (Fosdick)

“Retire from your job but never from meaningful projects” (Covey).

I have been asked to write an editorial titled “Epidemiology transition” to successful retirement. If you have any tips, please write at ronaldlaporte@gmail.com.

As I see the shore ahead, I see the Library of Alexandria. My purpose is to work with you and other scientists to help the Library of Alexandria to achieve the scientific glory of 2300 years ago and to build global capacity of science in developing countries.. We have several fascinating new projects that I will describe in subsequent newsletters. As I indicated the head of the Library of Alexandria, Ismail Serageldin, is one of the brightest and bravest men I know. With you will make the library and Africa into a major scientific hub using the concepts of, Internet, networking and frugal science . We hope you can join.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others” (Gandhi)

Library of Alexandria Tours: I am very pleased that 8 of you contacted me to help arrange a tour of the Library of Alexandria. Hanan Mournir at the library has been wonderful in arranging the tours. People from the US, Oman, Thailand and elsewhere loved their trip. I think that all academics, faculty and scientists should visit the library before they die as it is the bastion of knowledge for the world

“When I retire or pass away, I will be able to look back and say that this has been an exciting life That is all that matters” (Yan)

Library of Alexandria History (Part 2)

Ismail Serageldin, Ph.D.

“And the list of great names and great achievements goes on and on... Diophantes, Appolonius of Perga, Heron and visiting scholars such as Archimedes... They and many others were all members of that amazing community of scholars, which mapped the heavens, organized the calendar, established the foundations of science and pushed the boundaries of our knowledge. They opened up the cultures of the world, established a true dialogue of civilizations. Indeed, it was at the ancient Library of Alexandria that 72 specialists first translated The Old Testament from Hebrew into

Greek (the famous Septuagint). Together these scholars promoted rationality, tolerance and understanding and organized universal knowledge. For over six centuries the ancient Library of Alexandria epitomized the zenith of learning, as later scholars, such Claudius Ptolemy and Dioscorides built on that explosion of knowledge and added their contributions.

To this day it symbolizes the noblest aspirations of the human mind, global ecumenism, and the greatest achievements of the intellect. The library completely disappeared over sixteen hundred years ago... but it continues to inspire scientists and scholars everywhere.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina was located in at least three buildings: (i) the original Museum in the royal district of the city, (ii) the additional building mostly for book storage, located on the harbor, and (iii) the “daughter Library” located in the Serapeum, the temple to Serapis, cult god of Alexandria. The Serapeum was located in the southwest part of the city, the popular quarter.

The Library disappeared slowly, suffering a slow decline from the time of Caesar and Cleopatra. Indeed, the first disaster was in 48 B.C., when the part of the library located at the harbor was accidentally set afire during the Alexandrian war of Julius Caesar. However, Marc Anthony gave Cleopatra the 200,000 scrolls of Pergamon, to make up for the losses. Yet, subsequent upheavals within the Roman Empire resulted in the gradual neglect and ultimate destruction of the library. Roman armies came to Alexandria to “restore order several times between 200 and 300 AD, and it was on one of those occasions, (probably the campaign of Aurelius in 272 AD) that the entire royal quarter and the original Museum were destroyed. Christianity was brought to Africa through Alexandria by St. Marc in the first century AD, and it was followed by merciless and brutal persecution of the Christians by the Romans in the first three centuries. Persecution ceased with the conversion of Constantine the Great, but schisms erupted in the church. Tensions were running high and tolerant church fathers such Clement of Alexandria had to leave the city and his disciple Origen suffered much for his views. In 391 AD Emperor Theodosius issued a decree banning all religions other than Christianity and Christian Groups under Bishop Theophilus burnt the Serapeum in 391 AD. This was the end of the ancient library as a public institution.

What remained were the scholars in an uneasy co-existence with an increasingly militant Christian mob. Tragedy struck in 415 AD. Hypatia, daughter of Theon, last recorded scholar in Alexandria, herself the first woman in mathematics and astronomy, a neo-Platonist philosopher and charismatic orator, was brutally murdered by the mob in 415 AD. She became the first martyr to science.

Thus by 400 A.D. the Library had vanished, and the era of Alexandrian scholarship came to an end a few years later. It had thus disappeared over two centuries before the arrival of the Muslim Arab armies in 641 AD.

But the memory of the ancient Library of Alexandria lived on. It continued to inspire scholars and humanists everywhere. Many dreamt of one day reviving the great Library...

Come cross the ocean with us to the Library of Alexandria to build the best science.

Faina's Lecture of the week

Article of the week is an interesting article from India describing present and future of mobile health. Please go to the Central Asian Journals of Global health. We would very much like for you to publish in the Journal that Faina and our group has established. (we have found that if our articles include a URL it is much more likely to be culled out)

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined" (Thoreau)

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". (WHO)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z_CsRVbBCI
Youtube Supercourse of Science
<http://ssc.bibalex.org/helpdesk/introduction.jsf>
(BA Research Library)
www.pitt.edu/~super1/
(Supercourse)

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