

Supercourse Newsletter
January 24, 2005

www.pitt.edu/~super1/
www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/
www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm

Dear Friends,

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."--- H.P. Lovecraft

Tsunami update:

We were very pleased to help so many people with the Tsunami lectures. We thank all of you for your help.

There were several important findings. One was that many very much liked the lecture despite Ali Ardalan writing at a very high scholarly level. The thousands of teachers of the world re-did the lectures so that they would be contextually understandable by markedly different populations ranging from students in 3rd grade, oceanography students, physics students, public health students, food science etc. Do a Google search on Supercourse and Tsunami, in a space of 10 days there were over 120 references to our work. It was fascinating to see where the links came from, as most came from Libraries and schools. We gathered about 2300 members to the Supercourse in 5 days, a remarkable increase. The "epidemiology" was most interesting as the major rise in the numbers of people joining was between 4-12 days, then on days 12-15 there was a precipitous decline. The "Tsunami" epidemic curve shows that the lectures have to be built very quickly or else one will not reach very far out. By the time we could translate the lecture, the epidemic of interest was over. Samar Elkhoudary was able to translate the lecture into Arabic, with an extremely positive response. However we should have had the lecture translated into more lectures but ran out of time and energy to do this. The Supercourse team has a huge advantage as we can troll for expertise, thus we spread a note out to the network and "caught" people with the expertise and interest to help. It is the "collective intelligence" of the Supercourse network that is our power. Another important finding was that we can easily cross back and forth scientific borders. Experts on Tsunamis, oceanography, and many other areas of earth scientists were exceedingly helpful. In addition, this worked both ways as many educators from earth science helped us out. The final finding was very enlightening, the target of the JIT lectures surprisingly is not preventing morbidity and mortality in the Tsunami stricken areas. Instead with our lectures we attack the fears of people world wide of the Tsunami. Educators world wide very much wanted lectures that addressed two simple questions: What is a Tsunami? and What causes a Tsunami? We wrote an article in the Lancet a few years ago titled "Epidemiology of Fear". The Supercourse attacks fear and ignorance.

It was an honor to work on this lecture. We have had help from Iranians, Russians, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, faculty in Desserts, and those in the Tsunami hit areas. There were those in academia, in the military, in government, men, women who joined. The beauty of the Supercourse is that we can jump out of our silos to collaborate with those in other disciplines.

We want our Supercourse faculty to provide additional thoughts about the Just in Time lectures. We can drill down to say Cairo for a food poisoning outbreak, or in Madrid for a measles out break and to localized. Should a disaster occur in your country, you should consider now as to who you would need to contact to obtain the information needed.

It was a yet another wonderful experience working with you on the Tsunami lecture. We did not know if it could be done, but with your help we assisted hundreds of thousands of students across the world.

Have a vision not clouded by fear--Cherokee Proverb

Best regards

Ron, Ali, Eugene, Mita, Soni, Faina, Samar

If you would like to come off this list, please send a note to Mital@pitt.edu