

Supercourse Newsletter  
May 15, 2005

[www.pitt.edu/~super1/](http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/)  
[www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/](http://www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/)  
[www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm](http://www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm)

The more you know, the less you need, Aboriginal Quote from Australia

Dear Friends:

Public Health Informatics: The Centers for Disease Control just issued a request for proposals for Public Health Informatics. We will be applying for this and will need your input. Hopefully this can begin to set the architecture for local to global public health network. We are collaborating with Ron Larsen, Ph.D. the Dean of our School of Information sciences, at Pitt. and a very brilliant person.

We are focusing initially on an important area that of the need to enhance collaboration across different public health sectors. There needs to be better distributed collaboration. In the US we in academia rarely interact with the local health department, the teachers in school who discuss public health, the Centers for Disease Control and other groups. Emma Barinas and I wrote a paper in the late 1900s showing that the health departments in the US, and likely world wide were very slow to come onto the Internet, and once there often restricted utilization. Let's just say that the communications across the different groups and sectors of public health are nothing in comparison to the collaborative communications systems of multinationals such as IBM, Toyota, or Saudi Oil companies. We contacted several top IT people such as John Patrick, who was a former VP in the Internet division at IBM. He always knows what is cool. Vint Cerf, the father of the Internet also responded to me so we have a nice base. We need your input.

Needs for distributed collaboration: Clearly there is a critical need for collaboration from your institution to other public health and non public health people in different sectors. A local health department person might identify a case of West Nile fever, wouldn't it be grand to get input from Egyptian scientists who have seen 1000s cases, at the same time as being able to connect to a hospital down the road to identify new cases, link to WHO and CDC, etc. How can we achieve distributed collaboration? We can use telephone, or email, but both are hampered with the problem of finding the right people, or finding the right information. John suggested a "wiki" (cool name!) such as socialtext.com. Wikis allow free collaboration and editing (<http://wiki.org/>). Vint suggested that we link with Internet2, and I have sent a note to them.

In addition, John suggested that we establish something like wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)) which is a free online encyclopedia, but developed globally. I was thinking that we could create a public health wikipedia, and put in the Supercourse, what we know about public health, contact people. It could also use machine translation to translate it into many languages.

A third component would be "Ask an Expert". In the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh we have a system of "ask a librarian". Wouldn't it be great to build a national and global help desk for research and research design? Anyone of us would be happy to answer 5 questions a week in our area of expertise to help nationally and globally.

The fourth is, of course the Supercourse: The Supercourse would of course be a model for effective translation from research to the classroom.

We would appreciate your thoughts concerning the needs for a global interdisciplinary network for collaboration and information exchange.

From the Hopi, American Indians:  
All dreams spin out from the same web

We look forward to your comments on building an IT backbone to public health.

#### NATO workshop

Please be aware that the deadline to register for NATO workshop in Kaunas, Lithuania is approaching on JUNE 1st. Only those from NATO countries are eligible to apply for participation. Please visit workshop website at [www.pitt.edu/~super2/nato](http://www.pitt.edu/~super2/nato) for more information or e-mail Faina Linkov at [faina.linkov@gmail.com](mailto:faina.linkov@gmail.com)

#### Lecture of the week:

As the world becomes more industrialized bringing changes to our lifestyles and diets, we start seeing rise in the incidence of colorectal cancer. Our friend Professor Janghorbani gave a wonderful lecture on this topic to the Supercourse library. It provides interesting summary of research in this area, including information on risk factors and preventive mechanisms for this deadly disease. The lecture can be accessed through <http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec19771/index.htm>

Best wishes from rainy Pittsburgh  
Ron, Faina, Mita, Eugene, Soni, Tom, Julia

If you would like to come off this list please send a note to [MitalL@pitt.edu](mailto:MitalL@pitt.edu)