

Supercourse Newsletter

April 21, 2010

www.pitt.edu/~super1/

www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/Index.htm

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

Recruit a friend outside your silo to the Supercourse:

The beauty and misery of global health is that it has to be interdisciplinary, and we as scientists are not very good at being Interdisciplinary. But we want to try to shatter some silo walls. We would very much like it if you could forward this note to someone who is not a mirror image of you! Please send this note to Engineers, psychologists, historians, yes, and even Lawyers.

Egypt:

The Supercourse was hosted at the 2010 BioVision meeting at the Library of Alexandria by Dr. Ismail Serageldin. It was a phenomenal event for the Supercourse. There were over 2000 people there. On the first morning Francois and I received a call saying that we would be meeting Lady Mubarak at the Library. We had a chance to say a few words to her. Dr. Serageldin had previously briefed her on the Supercourse. I shook her hand, and considered never washing the hand again (the idea quickly faded). She is a wonderful, gracious first Lady. I wonder if I can get dual citizenship with Egypt.

The Sessions were outstanding. Dr. Serageldin presented a rousing talk, and had 10-15 slides about the Library of Alexandria Supercourse. We are so lucky to have a partnership with the Library of Alexandria. There were 5 Nobel Prize winners at the meeting. I got to talk with 4 of them to tell them about the Supercourse (and to recruit their lectures). These Nobel Prize winners are smart cookies!

What is nice about a meeting like this is that we can share our knowledge across disciplines. There were 5 lectures on Robots, which were most cool. In one lecture a professor in Japan made a life size robot looking exactly like him, and talking much like him. It was most weird. Another robot man made robots out of Animals, such as snake. He also made miniature robots in the shape of a worm with a camera inside. He is going into clinical trials to have people swallow the Robo-worms, and then have the worms do a colonoscopy. The final robot was the most wild. An inventor took sensors and implanted them into his arm, and his wife's arm, as well as wiring up his brain. He could control the movement of his wife's hand just by thinking. He bills himself to be the first scientist cyborg. It was truly fascinating.

Jesse Huang and Nicholas Padilla were also at the meeting along with Faina, Francois, Eugene, Gil and the team from the Library of Alexandria. We have a 1.5 hour plenary session of which Dr. Serageldin and Adly presented. Dr. Serageldin pointed out how closely we are working together, in addition, he made the observation that the Supercourse is almost exactly the same age as the Library of Alexandria. I hope we can grow old together. Jesse and Nicholas indicated

how the H1N1 lecture impacted their countries where in China, many people at the Chinese CDC viewed the lecture and Nicholas indicated that quite a few people in the MOH in Latin America used the lectures.

Noha Adly presented more information about the Library of Alexandria Supercourse. What she is developing with her team is quite phenomenal, where one can assess all the PowerPoint lectures on the web, easily click on individual slides, and rapidly construct a beautiful lecture. This was one of the best meetings we have ever gone to.

Spaceship Classroom: We are rapidly becoming the Spaceship Supercourse for the 21st century as our lectures are “out of this world”. It is most fun.

Deep Dean Fishing: Meredith presented to us the remarkable work of the Dean Fishers. The fishers caught over 3800 deans, heads of public health/medical associations. This represents over 3,000,000 faculty, students and staff. They fishers caught over 96% of the deans that they went for. It was truly a remarkable effort. We estimate that the 10 fishers put in over 500 hours. Now we have something very, very unique, access to all the schools, faculty and students in the world. We want to network these together.

Dr. Najeeb Shorbaji, the director of Knowledge Management at WHO, Dr. Ismail Serageldin the director of the Library of Alexandria and I are forging a WHO-BA- Pittsburgh WHO Collaborating Centre message. We would love your advice. We believe that most deans will forward our letter to their faculty, especially with the endorsement of WHO, and the BA. In addition, we are offering these medical, public health, societies and MOH the opportunity to be a part of a global effort in health that benefits their country, and the world. We will also be working through you on our network to distribute the materials to your faculty and students.

Windshield Wiper effect:

I ran across a most interesting concept about us in global health and epidemiology. This is the idea of the “windshield wiper effect”. We see this effect on our news almost every day. On one day H1N1 is going to be the worst pandemic ever seen, the next day H1N1 is presented to be as virulent as the sniffles.

The books that help you the most are those which make you think the most.

Science Books: What type of science books do you like to read? My friends, you all are very much like me, we are researchers, educators, scientists, and bright. Many of us also went to school, almost to the time that we could retire. In addition, we can communicate with each other because we have the skills to teach 20 year olds with no idea about the world, epidemiology, pathology, statistics and Nuclear Engineering. Despite the fact that we are all in different areas, we have a common interest, science.

I wanted to tell you what my favorite books of science are. I would like you to tell me your favorite book as well, so that we can share our interests among friends, and also have some darn good vacation reading.

My favorite books are by Jacob Bronowski, *Science and Human Values*, and *The Nature of Scientific Reason*. Bronowski is a physicist-philosopher who basically shows you why he love science. When I was in graduate school in psychology, I thought much of the training was mundane, with no big picture. I started read Bronowski, and found out that others had the love of science that I had. I have all his books and every 4-5 years re-read them for a little scientific buzz. You can find these on Amazon. If you read books by Bronowski, I would very much like to hear your thoughts.

It would be wonderful if you could tell me you favorite books about Science and/or health, and I will distribute this to our Supercourse family.

“I am like a book, with pages that have stuck together for want of use: my mind needs unpacking and the truths stored within must be turned over from time to time, to be ready when occasion demands”

I think dogs are the most amazing creatures; they give unconditional love. For me they are the role model for being alive. ~Gilda Radner

Ella:

We chose our dog, Ella (named after Ella Fitzgerald, the singer). We hope that we are chosen to have her. There are 5 small puppies to chose from, all little “fuzz ball” Shetland Sheep dogs. The mother of the puppies was beautiful. I picked up Ella, and we bonded. She sat on my lap, not nervous looking all around. Ella was the 2nd smallest but got in her brother’s face. She immediately bonded to Jan, as she sucked on her finger, and bit her watch. We hope that we can bring her home next week. Our problem with dogs is that if Jan and I were Lion Tamers, we would have no legs or arms. We are pretty soft people. We hope that we will be able to bring her home next week. If we can adapt her, we will tell you.

Newsletter:

I talked with several really nice young students in Egypt. We are very proud that these young people are forwarding our newsletter to their parents. Now all can keep up with the Ron-Jan and Ella family.

Best regards from the Supercourse Team, Ron, Faina, Eugene, Meredith, Francois, Mita, Ismail, Ella, Benson, Ismail, Vint, Gil, Ismail, Borys, Andrey, Nicholas, Jesse

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