

Supercourse Newsletter
September 27, 2007

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

Poor House

When I was young my mother said to me: "Ron if you do not save money you will end up in the poor house". My mother and her 10 brothers and sisters went through the depression. I asked her where the "poor house" was. She said it was someplace in downtown Buffalo. But because we did not have GIS then, she did not know the address. I asked my 30 cousins as to where the "poor house" was, and they asked their parents, as they too had the fear of ending up there someday. None could give us an address. As I aged I drove around Buffalo, Tonawanda, Cheektowaga, and Amherst and still could not find it.

Alas, this week we found it, 45 years later. It is the Supercourse. Sadly the Supercourse is almost out of money and we need to do something before we have to close up shop. We are therefore not taking on any new activities such as Certificate courses, JIT lectures, or expansion to other areas of science.

On Jan. 1. 08 we will stop collecting new lectures.

My best friend, Francois Sauer, has been a CEO at many IT companies. He suggested that perhaps we should re-think our business plan.

Our current business plan is to have Faina, Eugene, Mita, Ali, Nicholas, Francois, Rania, and I work for free, and give everything we collect to you for free. We also have been very productive in writing 30 NIH, CDC and Foundation grants, none of which have been funded as NIH asks "where is the hypothesis", CDC asks "is this education?", and Gates asks "where is the vaccine that you are developing?".

The second part of the business plan is when we need money we go to "Ron and Jan's bank account". This is truly a treasure, however a bit meager. I wonder why this plan does not make us as rich as the inventors of Google?

We are asking you your help in identifying potential sources of funding AND to identify contact people who might be interested.

Some suggestions might be to charge scientists from developed countries for their contributions. Some journals now charge \$1,200 to publish articles. The second is to set up a micropayment system like I-tune for the .ppt slides and lectures. The third is for all of you to include the Supercourse in your will as in the Prevention Life table, 45,000 aging preventionists produce more than a few deaths each year. The fourth is industry or foundations.

Now to be serious, we are not in a good position to continue. We need suggestions as to how we fund our infrastructure and continue. There are billions now targeted for International Health, and education. Despite having taught 2,200,000 students in the past year at a penny each, we have not been able to tap into any sources. Please email ideas and names. Also, please talk with people you know who might be able to help.

"If a poor house is well kept, or a poor girl well groomed,
there is elegance if not beauty. If good people should come upon

hard times, why should they immediately give up on themselves?" Chinese Taoist Quote

The Supercourse will never give up on ourselves!! Onward

Thoughts and Ideas?

Sincerely yours from the Poor House

Ron, Faina, Mita, Eugene, Francois, David Cooperfield, Rania, Ali, Alice, Soni

These are the times that try men's souls, T. Paine, 1776

Supercourse Reach:

During the past few days we have been making some calculations as to the impact of the Supercourse and how many people we have been teaching. We reach students directly from the main Supercourse in Pittsburgh, through the downloads of the PowerPoint slides, through the Mirrored servers world wide, and through the over 10,000 DVDs we shared. The results are amazing. We estimate that in the past 12 months we have taught 2,200,000 students. This is a crude estimate based upon visits, numbers in a classroom, and sharing of the DVDs, but probably is conservative. Even if we were off by a factor of 2, we still would have taught over a million students world wide about prevention. This must be put into context. There are less than 100 Schools of public health world wide, teaching about 100 students each, or about 10,000 students each year are learning about prevention from these schools. In contrast we are teaching 22 times more students. The reason people come to the Supercourse is because of the outstanding lectures you all have contributed. You, the faculty deserve all the credit. People come to our site because of your wonderful lectures...It is the result of all 45,000 people in the Supercourse working together. Based upon the money we spent last year, the cost to teach each individual was 1.8 cents. Now that is cost efficient! In a few years we could achieve something even more remarkable. We could teach more students about prevention than EVER have been taught in history. That can be an incredible legacy for all the faculty in the Supercourse.

On the negative side, sadly we will have to stop accepting new lectures by Jan. 1, 2008. The CDC grant that we thought was to be funded; was not. We shortly will only be funded by Ron's and Jan's bank account. We have applied 26 times to the NIH and have been turned down each time. When we apply for research grants, we are told that our work is not hypothesis testing. We apply for educational grants we are turned down because we are not taking a traditional educational approach. Gates foundation has not been interested as well. Sadly unless we can find a reasonable stable source of funding we will not be able to continue. The Ron and Jan bank account cannot take many more "hits". We can continue for about another year, and then some hard decisions will need to be made.

We would appreciate your thoughts about how the Supercourse can become financial stable. We are especially interested in you have names of people who you and we might be able to contact who might consider funding at least part of the Supercourse. For example we thought that IBM, Intel or Google might be interested in funding a Global Disaster Network, or a Drug company would fund a Pharmaco-Epidemiology Supercourse, or a Saudi Oil company might fund an effort on Arab health. Or UNICEF could fund an effort on children's health. We have also thought about charging lecture contributors to the Supercourse which is being done now in some journals for publishing articles. Also, we provide for everyone free access to the HTML versions, but charge for downloads of the .ppt files. We need a sound business plan, which is difficult as we are global health people, not business people.

As they say for Public Radio, how much is the Supercourse service worth? Is it worth the cost of a Starbucks coffee? We can also develop a web site for personal donations.

We would therefore appreciate any thoughts you might have as to how to support the Supercourse and names of people who we could contact as we will not be able to continue as we are. You and we have contributed too much effort for this not to continue. We would very much appreciate your help.

Lecture of the week

Malaria is an infectious disease that causes many deaths worldwide. It presents in many different ways - fever, anemia, renal failure, cerebral malaria, etc. This disease is a very great public health problem in developing countries, including India. Our lecture of the week is a lecture on Malaria sent to us by Dr. Swati Bhave from India, professor of pediatrics and President IAP 2000. This lecture describes the epidemiology, management and complications of malaria. We invite all of you to view this lecture at <http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec25091/index.htm>

Thank you very much,

Ron, Faina, Eugene, Mita, Francois, Abed, Arlene, Rania, Socrates, Ali, Nicolas, Soni

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