

OA spurring research and education

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Joe Smydo, [Internet fuels global learning community](#), *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 16, 2007. (Thanks to the [Alexandria Archive Institute](#).) Excerpt:

University of Pittsburgh epidemiologist Ron LaPorte said humanity benefits when the world's leading researchers share information about disease prevention.

He put that theory into practice seven years ago by creating Supercourse, an online library of 3,300 lectures in epidemiology, cancer, diabetes and other diseases. The lectures, accessible for free, were culled from Nobel Prize winners, professors and government researchers in 175 countries.

It's one example of the global, interdisciplinary learning fostered by the Internet. In field after field, the Internet is breaking down classroom walls and giving students and researchers unparalleled access to data and one another.

"This is the revolution I'd been dreaming about," said Dr. LaPorte, director of disease monitoring and telecommunications at the World Health Organization Collaborating Center at Pitt....

The Human Genome Project, completed in 2003, was a 13-year, international, interdisciplinary effort to map the human genetic code. But the work is just beginning; the tremendous amounts of data posted online are being used as the starting point for other projects, just as organizers of the Human Genome Project intended.

"To my mind, this has been one of the most extensive opportunities for education in biology that there has ever been," said Dan Drell, biologist program manager with the U.S. Department of Energy, who worked on the Human Genome Project and now works on the Microbial Genome Project....

In the same vein as Supercourse are [arXiv](#), a Cornell University repository for articles on math, physics and related subjects; NIH's [PubMed Central](#), a site for biomedical and life sciences papers; and [Open Context](#), an archeology site developed by the California-based nonprofit Alexandria Archive Institute....

Because so much material is "open source," University of Washington astronomer and former Pitt faculty member Andrew Connolly called the Internet a democratizing force in science. Or, as Pitt's Dr. Larsen said, "You have the same chance as a Nobel guy." ...