Free website enhances medical education globally

As the millennial generation enters medical school, educators are presented with new challenges. Among the challenges is the issue of how to reach students who have grown up on the Internet and therefore are accustomed to information delivery models that vary significantly from the traditional lecture-style teaching of university classrooms.
Sanjay Sharma of Queen's University, Canada, has created a free website (https://medskl.com/) designed to address the challenge by supplementing traditional classroom learning. Medical students can register for a free account at the site to access short and engaging videos, animations, and summaries covering a wide range of medical conditions. Although the site's content aligns with the teaching objectives set out by the Medical Council of Canada, the information is not specific to Canada, making it relevant to medical students throughout the world. Currently, medical students from more than 50 universities are accessing 100 teaching modules contributed by 170 professors, organized by specialty. The number of modules is expected to grow quickly and significantly.

The website has been well-received by students. Per one fourth year student, “it makes it easier for me, for example, who’s on a gynecology rotation, to go look at all of the different case presentations of gynecological complaints that patients come into the hospital for. So based on that undifferentiated complaint, I can then go study direct material that pertains to that problem that my patient presented with.”


Researchers revolutionize prevention of infectious disease spread

In September of 2016, Genome Canada (https://www.genomecanada.ca/) announced funding of $4 million Canadian to support 16 new projects. One of the funded projects seeks to address the impacts of infectious disease outbreaks on population health, agriculture, and the global economy.

A research team at Simon Fraser University (http://www.sfu.ca/) (SFU), British Columbia, Canada, has developed software that tracks disease outbreaks, with the goal of improving data integration and sharing between public health agencies. This, in turn, would enable public health staff to more quickly and accurately identify outbreaks to inform their actions and notify other agencies of the threat. The software has the potential to significantly reduce the negative impacts of an outbreak worldwide.

“When outbreaks become global,...it's critical that data is shared across public health organizations securely and efficiently. Unfortunately, data is often held in institution-specific formats, and sharing becomes difficult, time-consuming and costly,” said a coleader of the project.

The team at SFU is partnering with researchers at Dalhousie University and McMaster University specializing in antimicrobial resistance, as well as researchers from countries in four continents, to install and pilot test the software.


Polish copyright law enhances library service

Exciting new amendments to Polish copyright law will modernize library services in the nation. Most notably, the law now permits digitizing materials for “socially beneficial purposes.” For libraries, the most significant amendments include “permitted uses by libraries, permitted uses in education and science, permitted uses of orphan works, permitted uses of out-of-commerce works, introduction of a public lending right (PLR), and abolition of the paying public domain.”

Prior to the amendments to copyright law, ambiguity abounded around interpretation of copyright law regarding digitization. Librarians are now able to digitize materials with certainty that they are complying with the law. It also enables them to offer distance education.

For the first time, librarians in Poland were included in high-level discussions about copyright policy and are now recognized as key stakeholders: “We hope that the new resources provide a useful insight for librarians and policy-makers involved in copyright law reform around the world,” says a spokesperson of Electronic
Information for Libraries (EFIL).


Libraries do their part to promote peace

September 21 has been declared the International Day of Peace (http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/) for the sake of “strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.” To commemorate the day, the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs (http://www.library.illinois.edu/mortenson/) invites stories of libraries promoting peace. The initiative supports the United Nations 2030 agenda item to “promote just, peaceful societies and inclusive societies.”

Stories can be submitted via the Libraries for Peace website (http://librariesforpeace.org/stories/) or using the hashtag #librariesforpeacestory.

Learn more about Libraries for Peace (http://librariesforpeace.org/).

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