

## *Ross' Rave: Don't Buy Tilex*

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This morning, when I was driving to work, I heard a bit of a lecture on KFCF, our local Pacifica, left-wing, pinko, community supported, radio station. It was 6:30 in the morning. I was expecting political banter and artsy interviews, but this is fund raising time so they had pulled out the heavy artillery. The lecture was about *Physarum polycephalum*.

To save you the trouble, *Physarum polycephalum* is affectionately known around my house as slime mold.

I'm not sure how a lecture about slime mold could motive listeners to cough up money, but I'll admit that after a minute I was sucked in.

Apparently, according to Professor So-and-so, slime mold is much brighter than we thought. Several Japanese scientists, he said, had spooned some slime into one end of a maze, and some dinner at the other end of the maze, then watched it scurry! Their hunch was the critters would ooze and multiply indiscriminately, but they was wrong! The little rascals headed straight for the chow. Imagine that. *Physarum polycephalum*, a heretofore assumed primitive life form, turns out to have an IQ. Not exactly MENSA, but definitely Jerry Springer.

The lecturer seemed fascinated by this. And who wouldn't be? A spoonful of single-celled, soupy swill avoided the blind alleys and dead ends and went directly to Go. Of course this got me thinking about library instruction!

Please, don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting that our students have the intelligence of slime mold. Au contraire, I'm proposing that in addition to the characteristics they already share (i.e. sluggishness, great urges to reproduce, and the raucous exchange of bodily flu-

ids) we can now add intellect. If intelligence is evident even at the cellular level, and an average freshman is made up of billions of cells, then it follows that the guy in sag pants, \$200 kicks, and Lakers lid is like a kazillion times smarter than slime mold.

The prof went on to explain that this discovery may lead to a new kind of intelligence: survival. Our friend the slime mold, it seems, used its mini-brain to reach the goal in the most expedient, least difficult manner possible. Sound familiar? ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education: Standard Two: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.*

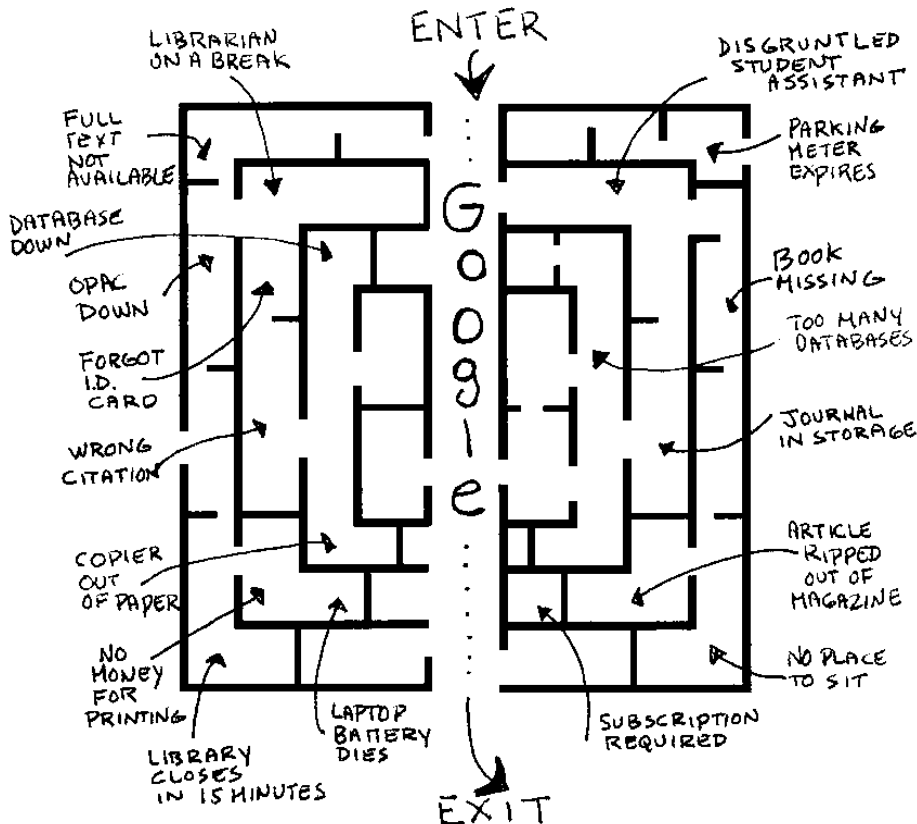
Not too many years ago the California State University system conducted a series experiments to test out students information seeking behaviors in libraries. A flock of students were lured from their campuses, taken to a large academic library where they were given a task to perform. Observers followed them through the stacks, meticulously documenting every moment of their experience. When the evening whistle blew, we all reconvened. The student participants felt they had pretty much completed their task and could they please go home. The observers gave them bus fare and pizza money, then sat in a room and cried. To learn more about this, check the California State University, Information Competence Task Force web site at <http://www.csupomona.edu/~kkdunn/Icassess/ictaskforce.html>.

I got to thinking that through student eyes, our highly organized library may look surprising like a maze. On one end they have the "ready-set-go" (e.g. rhetorical problem, prompt, research assignment) and on the end they have the "whew, I'm glad that's over" (e.g. paper, presentation, exam). For most of us who have

sat a reference desk, we've had ample opportunity to observe students oozing about the OPAC, sloshing about the stacks and gunking up a database or two.

Joe, one of our Gen Y student assistants, and I were blabbing about this recently. I asked him to visualize this for me. He came up with something like this:

When I get a chance, I'm going to see if I can find out more about the Japanese research study about slime mold. Wish I could remember the name of that professor.



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ticle [<http://www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ERM0561>], Gardner Campbell speculated about the possibilities of a learning environment where podcasting was an integral part of the institutional culture. He imagines an educational setting where podcasting supplements the traditional modes of learning and students are engaged and excited about the learning process as a result.

Although educators are only beginning to explore the possibilities, it is clear that there is a movement afoot to incorporate podcasts into the educational realm. For examples of educational podcasts, visit the Education Podcast Network [<http://www.epnweb.org>], which provides “podcast programming that may be helpful to teachers looking for content to teach with and about, and to explore issues of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. Similarly, the Podcast Directory for Educators [<http://recap.ltd.uk/podcasting/>] is a UK-based directory containing podcasts for educational use. In addition, they produce their own podcast feed to promote educational podcasting in schools, colleges, and other organizations.

### Creating a feed

Having been introduced to the concept of podcasting and its potential as an educational tool, you may be inspired to create your own feed. You may want to create a podcast to supplement your library instruction classes or to promote your instructional program. Either way, a description of how to create a feed is beyond the scope of this article. Fortunately, there are a variety of excellent online tutorials to help you get started.

Here are a few:

Beginner's Guide to Podcast Creation by Kirk McElhearn

<http://www.ilounge.com/index.php/articles/comments/beginners-guide-to-podcast-creation/>

Create Podcasts Using Your PC by Jake Ludington

<http://www.windowsdevcenter.com/lpt/a/5735>

Creating a Podcast by Bart Farkas

(Sample chapter from the book: “Secrets of Podcasting: Audio Blogging for the Masses”)