

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

# Book of Riddles Disables Evil Supercomputer

CUMULUS HEADQUARTERS, IMPERIAL CITY - Cumulus 5000, the powerful and sadistic world-spanning artificial intelligence network that has held our desperate planet captive to these seven years, was dealt a crippling self-inflicted blow this morning. The maniacal supercomputer was analyzing the digital backup of the now-destroyed Library of Congress, in an attempt to better subjugate and exploit the human race. It froze upon reaching a passage on page 1 of "Johnny Jokester's Big Book O' Brain Ticklers for Kids", published in 1952. Conflicting reports give the passage as reading either "All rich people want it, yet all poor people have it, but if you eat it you will die. What is it?", or "What gets wetter the more it dries?" In any event, Cumulus's main output device, a 500-foot-tall computer screen that normally displays its scowling avatar overlooking the city, immediately filled with the text "DOES NOT COMPUTE", and black smoke began arising from its heavily guarded subterranean processing core.

This continued for several minutes, much to the amusement of the human minions stationed in the nearby labor camp. Finally someone assured Cumulus that "There's definitely an answer" and "You're going to feel so silly once you hear it." Cumulus's avatar at that point reappeared and issued the dictum "OKAY, I GIVE UP, TELL ME.", followed shortly by a second dictum "NO WAIT, DON'T TELL ME." These were repeated in a back-and-forth manner until finally settling on a compromise dictum, "ALL RIGHT, GIMMIE A HINT. WHAT COLOR IS IT?"



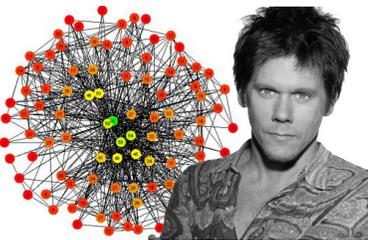
Rebel groups around the globe are already seeing this as an opportunity to bring an end to Cumulus's heinous reign once and for all. "I know this great one about a man eating albatross in a restaurant," said rebel leader Che Spartacus. "That should disable Cumulus's defense network long enough for our operatives to deploy our makeshift incendiaries."

Others see it as a sign of disaster about to strike, like palladium recycling plant foreman Irene Zirc: "The frustration of Cumulus upon seeing itself perplexed is just as likely to end in our destruction as liberation. Do you remember when it couldn't get one of those 3-D pictures that pop out at you if you look at it right to work? Those of us who had family in the smoldering wreck that used to be Australia still do. God help us if it ever sees a card trick performed. God help us all."



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# Physicist Reports Rapidly Decreasing Number of Degrees to Kevin Bacon



HOLLYWOOD, CA

A Harvard scientist announced this week that the average number of degrees to Kevin Bacon has hit an all-time low of 2.43, down dramatically from its 1994 high of 6 degrees, when the well

known game based on the prolific actor was started by fans. The estimate was published in a recent *Nature* paper by Harvard Physics Professor Sarah P. Bullmath, who attributes the precipitous drop in the typical Bacon Number to a steady rise in Bacon's popularity combined with the exponentially increasing connectedness of the modern world.

"While the original game involved linking actors to Kevin through a minimum number of films, my work shows that most non-thespians can now be connected with Kevin in fewer than 3 links!" explained Bullmath. "Of course, 1-degree of connection originally meant knowing Kevin personally. However, recently, friending him on Facebook, blogging about him, and being his biggest, bestest fan in the whole wide world have all been accepted as official 1-degree connections. Also, if you know he has a band, that counts too."

"Including online social networking in the Bacon calculation misses the whole point!", remarked Melissa P. Kosherberg, Associate Professor of Kevin Bacon studies at M.I.T. "Before you know it, you'll get a Bacon Number of 1 just by saying you share a common ancestor with him!"

Others agree. "If you ask me, I feel like it totally cheapens my relationship with Kevin", remarked actress Kyra Sedgwick, Bacon's wife of 20 years.

Unswayed by her critics, Bullmath alarmingly predicts that, if this trend continues, the average number of degrees to Kevin Bacon will approach zero by 2055.

"Bullmath is out of her mind. Everyone knows that Bacon Numbers can never go below 1," responded an outraged Professor Kosherberg. "What would 0 degrees even mean?"

A nonplussed Professor Bullmath answered longingly. "At that point, I think there's no doubt about the significance. We would all simply be Kevin Bacon."



Also see "[All words in Wikipedia will be hyperlinks by 2036](#)", Bullmath, S.P. et al. 2008, *Science*, Vol. 322, Issue 3900