A Wolfram Apha Contest

Saskatchewan School Library Association

Chris Arnstead
SSLA Executive

SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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If you think that Wolfram Alpha is somehow connected to the current interest in vampires and werewolves fueled by Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, you are incorrect. Wolfram Alpha is a knowledge engine that collects and calculates a myriad of information in a user friendly manner. Almost like magic, with one click, it answers a simple English query and includes maps, charts, graphs, computations, pictures and a whole host of comparative data.

The Wolfram Alpha website (http://www.wolframalpha.com/) explains the long term goal of this project is "to make all systematic knowledge immediately computable and accessible to everyone". In order to do this, the project collects data, models, methods, and algorithms of all kinds. Using "free-form input", Wolfram Alpha can generate clear, powerful results covering vast ranges of knowledge. It attempts to provide comprehensible, useful answers to people regardless of their education or careers.

The easiest way to grasp the phenomenal capabilities of Wolfram Alpha is to watch the screen cast of Stephen Wolfram introducing it found at:

http://www.wolframalpha.com/screencast/introducingwolframalpha.html

The Medium's Wolfram Alpha Challenge

What use can teachers make of Wolfram Alpha? From the unlimited possibilities, *The Medium* challenges you to plan a classroom application for Wolfram Alpha. Then briefly describe your idea and submit it to *The Medium* editor Chris Arnstead. We will include your ideas in the next issue of The Medium. Deadline for receipt of submissions is midnight February 28, 2010. You may enter as many times as you want. Wolfram Alpha will inspire you!

All entries will be entered in a draw to receive the book *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action* by Harvey Daniels and Stephanie Harvey. All participants will receive a SSLA magnet.

Submissions should include:

- Teacher's name, email address, mailing address (for prizes)

- Grade level and subject area for which the idea is intended

- Curricular connections if possible

- Brief description of the activity

    o How will Wolfram Alpha be used?

    o What could students do with the resulting information?

- Teacher prepared materials and/or student samples are most welcome and encouraged but not required.

Please direct entries and/or questions to Chris Arnstead, Editor

The Medium

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Have fun! We look forward to hearing your ideas!