

## News

# FQXi Essay Contest Enters Final Stages

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## Abstract

This news article is based on viXra Log at <http://blog.vixra.org>. The community voting stage has now ended and the ratings so far have [been revealed](#). I am very happy to have made the top 35 essays who will now be judged by the expert panel. I am even more happy that five other viXra authors have also made it through. I will be sure to use this as a point of argument in future whenever people say that we are all cranks. The point will be even stronger if one of us gets a prize.

**Key Words:** FQXi, Essay Contest, Universe, digital, analog.

### March 2, 2011: [FQXi Essay Contest](#)

This year's [FQXi essay contest](#) is now entering the last stages of community rating. The topic of the essay was "Is Reality Digital or Analog?", a question that attracted 161 essays from a diverse range of authors. This is the third contest that the institute has run. The first two had 136 and 113 entries, making this one the biggest yet.

I don't want to say much about specific essays while the voting continues, but here are a few statistics: There are 11 authors in the contest who have submitted papers to the viXra archive (including myself.) 6 of the essays by these viXra authors are in the top 35 by community rating. If they stay there they will make the cut into the final round to be judged by the panel of experts. There could be up to 20 prizes awarded altogether with prize money ranging from \$1000 to \$10000. The top 8 prize winners will also be offered FQXi membership if they don't already have it. In fact there are just 5 authors who already have FQXi membership so 3 new members is the likely outcome. Two prizes are reserved for "*non-professional and/or non-academic entrants*." It is not clear exactly who qualifies but by my reckoning there are about 45 authors who would be considered professional or academic going by the biographies they provided. Some of the prize winners may also have their essays featured in Scientific American.

On the question itself, I count that 24 authors concluded that reality is analogue, 50 said it was digital and 37 went for some combination of both. The remaining 50 gave another kind of answer such as "neither" or "we can't tell yet".

Rating and voting is not what determines scientific correctness, but it is a good way to attract interest in such a contest. People base their ratings on all kinds of qualities and writing an essay to appeal to the community is not quite the same as writing about what we think is interesting and important. It follows that the rating and prizes should not be considered the

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main point for most of us. Submitting our work to a forum that gives it good exposure and a chance for feedback is the real reason for taking part. Making the top 35 so that the essay goes before the expert judges would be an excellent result for any amateur independent physicists like myself, even though we won't see their assessment. I'm pleased that the rating system has improved since the first contest to give us more chance. Along with viXra, FQXi is one of the few institutions that gives independent scientists a chance to be noticed, so thank you FQXi and the contest sponsors (the Peter & Patricia Gruber Foundation).

**Update 16-Mar-2011:** The community voting stage has now ended and the ratings so far have [been revealed](#). I am very happy to have made the top 35 essays who will now be judged by the expert panel. I am even more happy that five other viXra authors have also made it through. I will be sure to use this as a point of argument in future whenever people say that we are all cranks. The point will be even stronger if one of us gets a prize.

Here are some extra statistics concerning the 35 finalists: Five are FQXi members. Seven have won prizes in previous FQXi contests. Thirteen are independent researchers who would be eligible for the special prizes for "Non-professional and/or non-academic" authors (the exact criteria for this are unclear and will be decided by the judges).

There will be up to 18 prizes awarded altogether in the 1st/2nd/3rd/4th prize rankings and eight will be offered FQXi membership if they don't already have it. The most likely outcome is that three of the 13 professional authors who are not already members will get the offer, but surprises are always possible. It would be good to see a truly independent researcher make it onto the membership list.

The community rating system is not perfect and inevitably there are some very worthy essays that missed the cut. Some of my personal favourites that did not make it are.