

## Discussion Questions to Consider about Artificial Life and Evolution of Digital Organisms

### Introduction to artificial life and evolution of digital organisms

Read the *Discover Magazine* article, “Testing Darwin” (by Carl Zimmer, February 2005), which is freely available at <http://discovermagazine.com/2005/feb/cover>.

### Discussion Questions to Consider about Artificial Life and Evolution of Digital Organisms

1. Compare and contrast the digital organisms in the AVIDA environment to biological organisms in the natural world. In what ways are digital organisms similar to computer viruses?
2. What do biologists mean when they use the word “evolution”?  
Can we observe evolution? Can we experiment with evolution? What are potential causes of evolution? Explain your answer and give examples from the article or prior knowledge.
3. What makes AVIDA a useful tool for biologists?  
What are the strengths and limitations of such an approach?

