

**HOW THEY CLOSED**

TSE	7584.02	-59.88
S&P 500/CDNX	1085.49	-2.64
DOW	9712.27	-211.88
NASDAQ	1944.44	-56.47
GOLD (N.Y.)	\$287.30	+\$2.90
CRUDE OIL (U.S.)	\$18.88	-2¢
DOLLAR	62.53	-0.41
PRIME RATE	3.75	UNCH

# The Gazette BUSINESS

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## MAGICAL BREW



MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER, GAZETTE

The brains behind the Mad Science Group are (from left), president and chief executive officer Ariel Shlien, director of research and development Sharon King, and executive vice-president Ron Shlien, waving a wand.

# Interactive wizards

## Local Mad Science Group develops Harry Potter-based shows for the U.S.

**PAUL DELEAN**  
The Gazette

Montreal's Mad Science Group has a powerful new ally: boy wizard Harry Potter.

Under a deal concluded with a U.S. firm, Mad Science has the mandate to develop science-themed educational programs inspired by author J.K. Rowling's phenomenally popular fictional character.

"They'll start being presented next week at schools, libraries and community centres throughout the U.S. 'Some sessions are sold out already,'" said Sharon King, Mad Science's director of research and development.

None are planned for Canada yet, because the rights for this country still haven't been secured.

"We've asked, but can't have them now. Maybe in the future, when we demonstrate to Warner Bros. we can do an excellent job in the U.S.," said

Ron Shlien, executive vice-president of Mad Science, which has 140 franchises in 20 countries.

In the U.S., a New Hampshire-based company called Delta Education obtained from Warner Bros. the license to market a range of science-activity kits using the Harry Potter trademark.

Last September, Delta approached Mad Science Group, which has been presenting interactive science shows for large and small groups of children for more than a decade, with the idea of collaborating on an after-school program featuring experiments tailored to Harry Potter fans. The two companies had already worked together to produce a series of books with accompanying science kits.

"They called us out of the blue, said, 'we have this deal and are you interested?'" King said.

Mad Science, which has a distribution network of thousands of schools that regularly book its presentations in

the U.S., jumped at the opportunity.

"We're huge Harry Potter fans," said president and chief executive officer Ariel Shlien. "Even before this deal, I'd read all the books, and I don't even like to read that much. They have a way of drawing you into a magical world."

King said there was a natural connection and compatibility.

### SPARKING KIDS' IMAGINATION

"Harry Potter is about magic and wonder and sparking kids' imaginations, which is what we try to do with science in schools," he said.

Using a series of kits developed by Delta as props, a four-member creative team from the Montreal office conceived six one-hour presentations for the Mad Science Presents Harry Potter program. Everything had to be approved by Warner Bros., from the chemicals used in the activities to the language on promotional fliers.

"We had to take (Delta's) retail kits

and turn it into a program kids could do in groups, in an hour, and which added to the magic of Harry Potter while delivering the Mad Science experiments they've come to expect," King said.

The end result includes activities like dissection of owl pellets (which are regurgitated food), colour-changing chemical reactions and creation of a four-ingredient "golden snitch" (a winged rubber ball), using branded products like cauldrons and wands.

Ariel Shlien doesn't think Pottermania is going to vanish any time soon. More movies and books will keep him flying, which makes the tie-in especially attractive to Mad Science.

"That's why we chose to do this. It's a property that'll be around for a very long time," Shlien said.

"If it had been just a movie, we would not be interested. I see this as a long-term venture between us, Delta and Warner Bros."