Teaching in a Virtual World

Katrin Becker (aka Nirtak Ely)
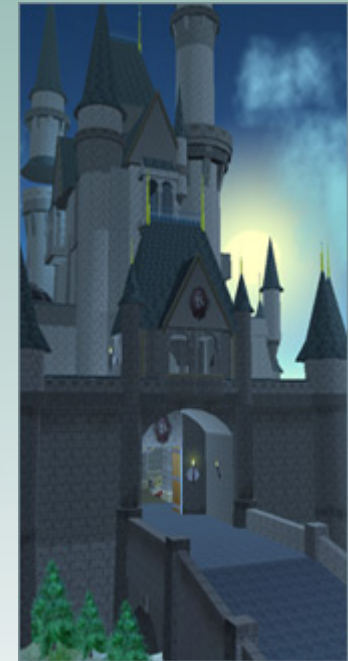
Michele Jacobsen (aka Michele Helgerud)

Virtual Worlds
(are not games)

The Sims Online

Active Worlds

Second Life

Entropia Universe

There

Red Light Center

Some Virtual Worlds support Educational endeavors

Active Worlds

There

Second Life

Welcome to Second Life

Created in 2003, this VW has been growing exponentially…
- Dec 06 - 1.5 million participants
- Jan 07 – 3 million
- May 07 – 6 million

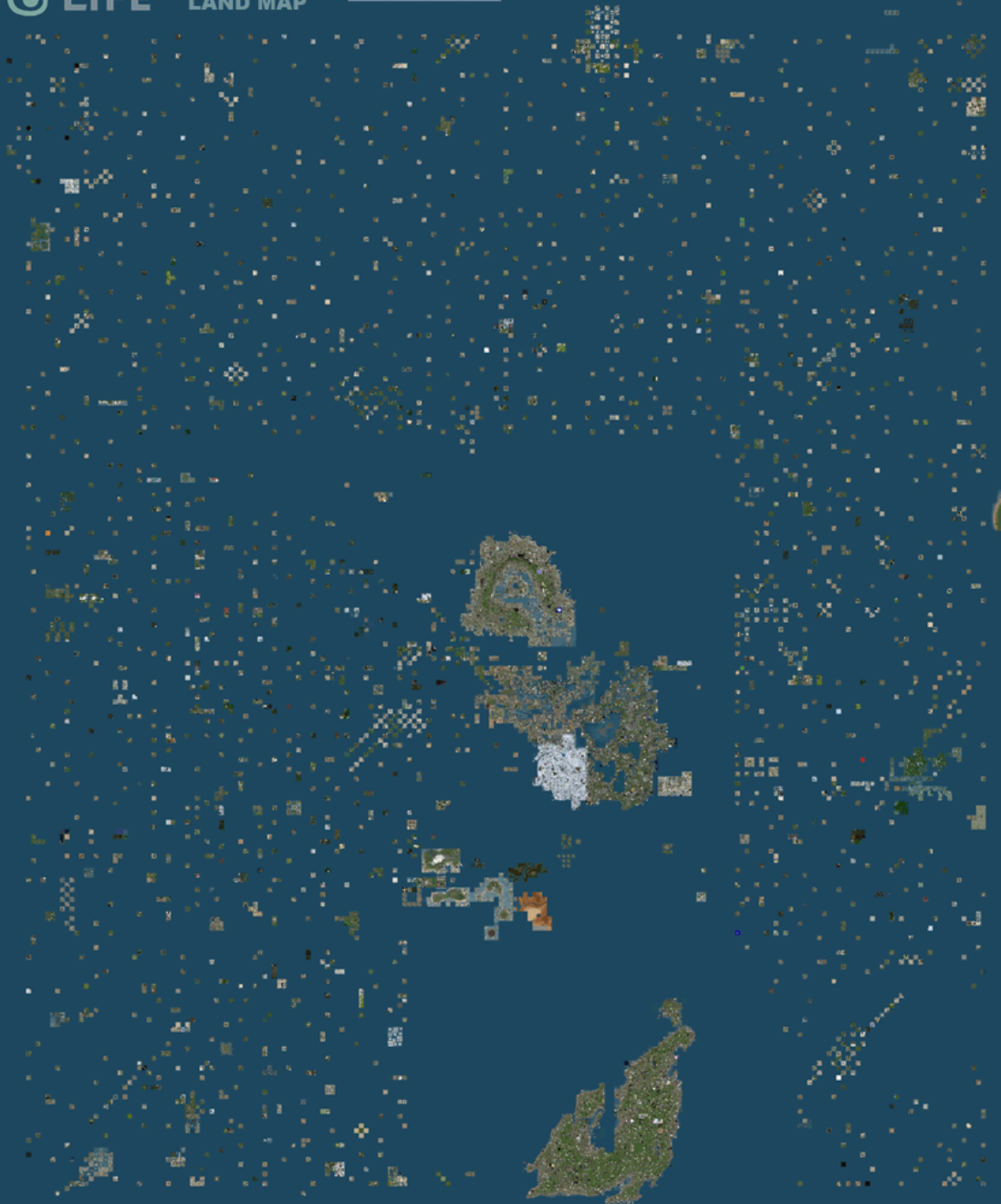| Total Residents: | 6,193,565 |
Logged In Last 60 Days:	1,624,434
Online Now:	40,508
US$ Spent Last 24h:	$1,567,852
LindeX Activity Last 24h:	$222,772
SEE MORE economic statistics here!	

As of May 8, 2007

Exploring the ELearning Frontier

- SL: permits online exploration and a form of interaction not hitherto possible

What does it Look like?

- Main Grid
  - Public & Private Islands
  - (512 sq.m.)
- Teen Grid

What does it cost?

- Basic account is free
- Premium accounts $9.95/Mo. U.S.
- Currency: $1 US ~ 275 L$ (varies)

Additional Land (over 512 sq meters)	(In square meters)	Monthly land use fee
1/128 Region	512 m2	US$5
1/64 Region	1,024 m2	US$8
1/32 Region	2,048 m2	US$15
1/16 Region	4,096 m2	US$25
1/8 Region	8,192 m2	US$40
1/4 Region	16,384 m2	US$75
1/2 Region	32,768 m2	US$125
Entire Region	65,536 m2	US$195

Is it Just for Education?

- Social interaction
- Communication with friends
- Meetings
- Schizophrenia hospital
- War memorials
- Advertising
- Churches
- Hotel design
- Commerce
- "adult" content

RL Businesses in SL

1. BigPond
<http://my.bigpond.com/pond/secondlife/>
2. Pontiac
3. IBM
4. Showtime (L Word)
5. ABC TV Australia
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200701/s1836755.htm>
6. NetG Training
7. Mercedes-Benz
8. Nissan
9. Mazda
10. Dell
11. MTVN
12. Toyota
13. Sun Microsystems

14. Sears
15. Sony BMG
16. Cisco
17. Adidas Reebok
18. Sony Ericsson
19. PA Consulting Group
20. Circuit City
21. Reuters
22. Intel
23. AOL
24. American Apparel
25. Starwood Hotels

Source: http://www.personalizemedia.com/index.php/2007/04/28/my-virtual-world-brand-talks-and-comparative-data/

The top eight corporate sites in Second Life
Real-world business is booming in the 3-D digital landscape

8. **Best Buy Geek Squad**
7. **H&R Block**
6. **Cisco Systems Inc.**
5. **Reuters**
4. **Dell Inc.**
3. **Sun Microsystems Inc.**
2. **Pontiac**
1. **IBM**

Geek Squad Island: a great place to get free technical support.

The Dell campus boasts a factory tour, design-a-computer stations and a model of Michael Dell's college dorm.

John Brandon, ComputerWorld: Networking & Internet – May 2, 2007
http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9018238

Exploring the ELearning Frontier

- **120+** schools and colleges have a presence in SL
  (http://simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_in_SL)
  - Research and teaching online
- PLUS:
  - National & educational organizations (non-profit), private educational institutions (for profit), libraries, museums,

NMC Campus

<<seriously engaging>>

How can SL change e-learning?

'Education is actually growing to become a very significant part of how SL is used,' says John Lester, community and education manager at Linden Lab, the San Francisco-based company that owns and operates Second Life, now in its third year." (Lamb, 2006).

Harvard has its own island for their classes, and Ball State even has dorms for their students.

In Winter 2007, the two of us involved University of Calgary student teachers and graduate students in some SL learning experiences and experiments.

What did we do with our students?

From: Benadam Amat <suissay@telusplanet.net>

Learn how to use SL by using SL
Send us a postcard…

- Preparation and set up (created goals)
  - Grad and student teacher class
  - Two learning goals prior to F2F
  - Installation
- Free exploration (grad)
  - Play, then easter egg hunt
- Targeted journey (student teachers)
  - Play, then Terra Incognita

Discussion & Debate

- Post-class, Online Discussion: a sample of student observations:
  - Adult content & behavior – this is not for kids
  - Lack of dress code, or rules about _wearing_clothes…
  - Need to develop some skill so you know what you CAN do
  - Use needs to be purposeful for learning
  - Addictive versus compulsive? Is it more/less compelling than other media? Other substances?
  - Some feel immune to the pull of video games, online worlds
  - Second life, online world (interactive, user controlled) is better than Television (passive, broadcast) medium

Themes from online discussions

- Realize they need to learn more to understand what SL is good for…

- Security concerns – bad language, other avatars approaching you

- Question usefulness with younger audiences

- Virtual field trips are incredible for providing opportunities to visit remote places

- Several had computer problems at home, slow connections, etc. but were successful in class

Flying is cool!!

- Student teachers liked flying, visiting museums,

  "It's wild and creepy-weird and there were moments when it gave me vertigo. When something gives me vertigo (and I'm not actually looking over a cliff) something about world-view is shifting for me."

  One of the neatest concepts about it is that there is a whole world out there to explore, and students can go anywhere in a matter of seconds. And that's neat!

A place to call our own...

- **I** can see the benefit of creating your own private land for a classroom to meet in - a "safe and caring" environment.

- **I** guess in this virtual environment people want to interact, but in "real life" are we really in the habit of walking up to complete strangers and start asking them questions? Maybe, maybe not.

More ideas raised in online discussion

Identity & behavior

- "people behave differently when they are in costume"
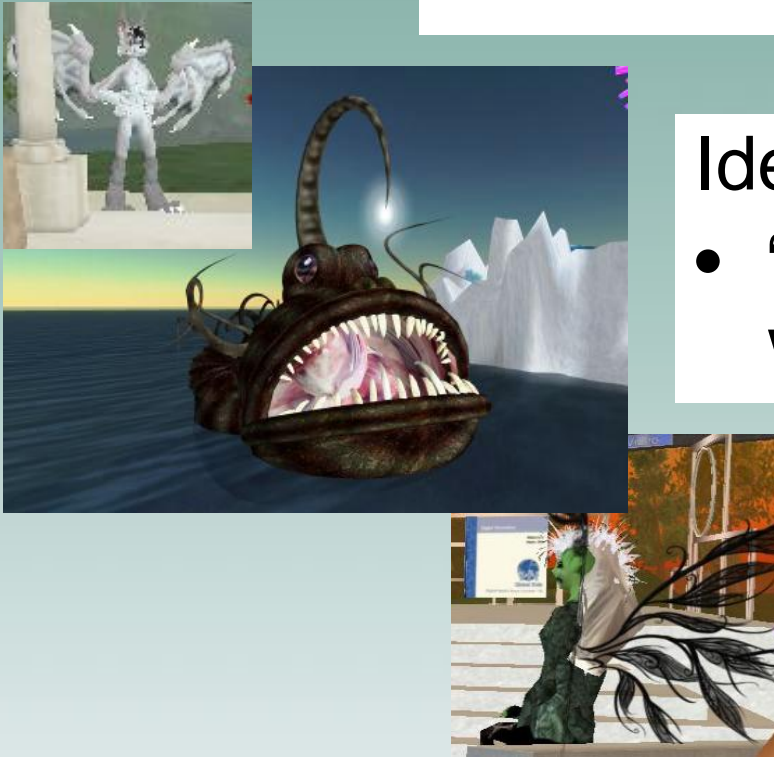
Communication discomfort.

More ideas raised in online discussion

Unwelcome interactions with an avatar with poor language skills while trying to get your orientation stars.

More ideas raised in online discussion

Purposeful interaction -- having a goal in mind for SL interaction

Using SL for things we cannot do in real life

Exploring "what if"

More ideas raised in online discussion

- Education in another dimension

Hare Krishna Community

More ideas raised in online discussion

Going places we can't in real life.

Like, Amsterdam.

More ideas raised in online discussion
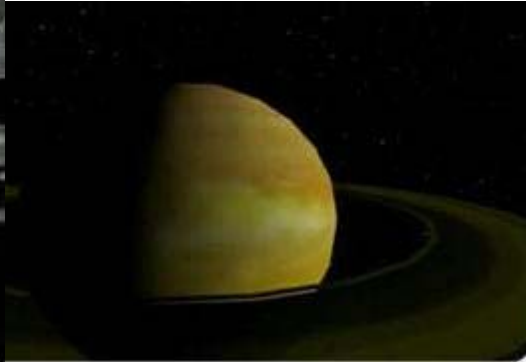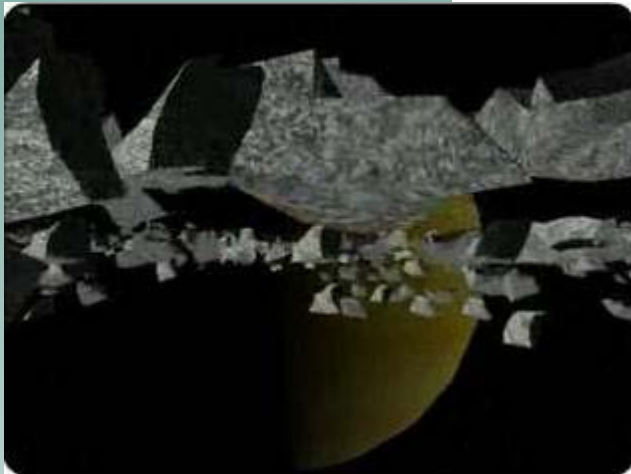
Going places we can't in real life.

Or space.

http://secondlife.com/community/media.php
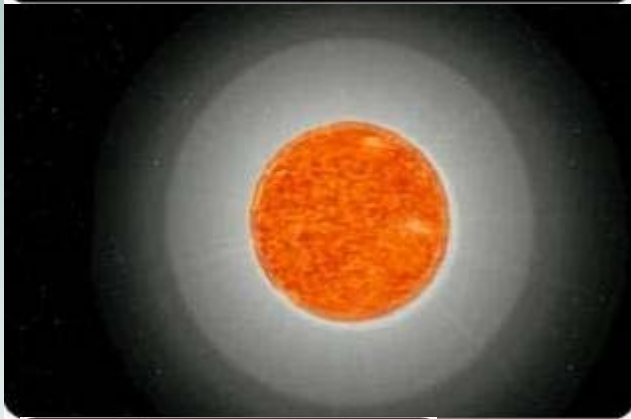
Storytelling

- I think it would be interesting to challenge students to create and develop a character and maintain that character for some time.
  - What would (s)he look like?
  - How would character be revealed through actions or dialogue?
  - If each student were to create a potential story for his/her character, how would it be complicated through interactions with other characters who were simultaneously attempting to play out his or her own story?

Postcards: Identity Shifting
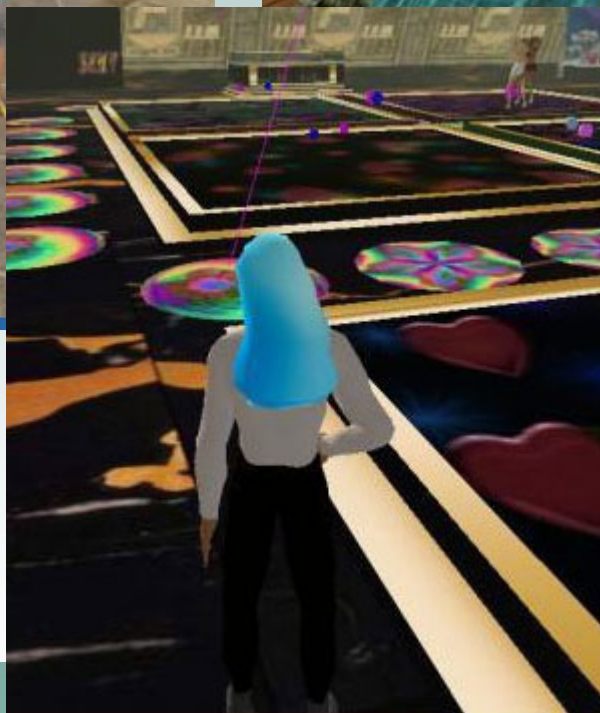
One of the positives of SL is that you can be someone else, for example, you get to choose your character's appearance so you can be whoever you want and introverts may excel in these situations where they are relatively anonymous

"Some people created Avatars that looked like themselves, while many of us created something quite different"
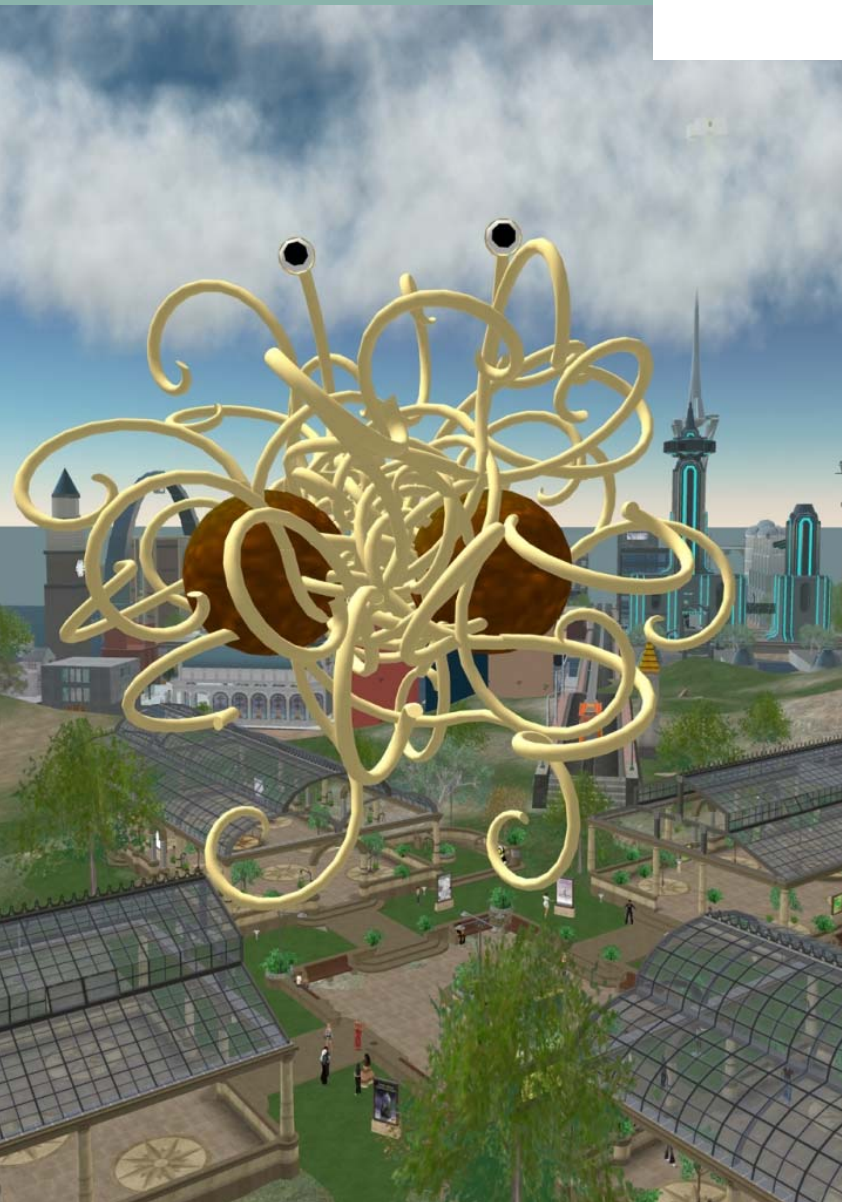
Henry Jenkins talks about the value of a second life to our first life in his recent posting -
http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/my_main_question_to_jenkins.html

Very interesting commentary on identity formation, and bringing what is learning online into our face-to-face encounters. Jenkins argues that we learn things about our first lives via interaction in a second life, an online life - alternate identity. In a nutshell, he argues that we cannot escape reality, even if that is our expressed intent.

Quote "Believe me, I look nothing like my avatar (probably a good thing), and there are probably many users that change their appearance all the time to suit their mood or a whim"
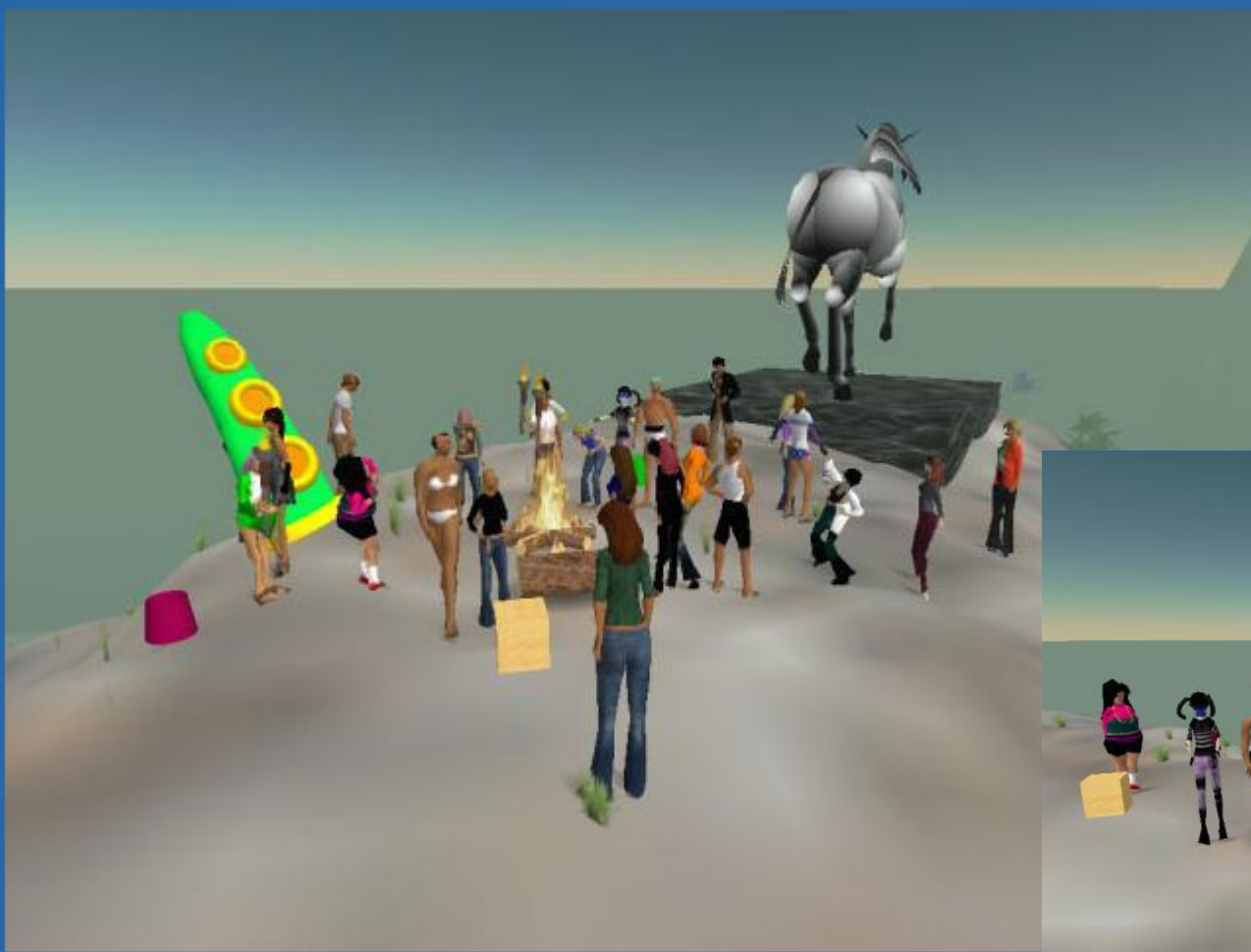
Student teachers around the campfire

Why did we do it?
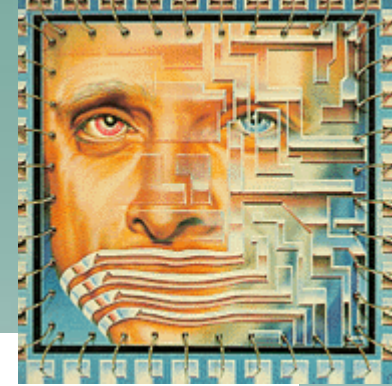
Harlan Ellison said:

When I reviewed television, people said "If you hate television so much, how come you've got a television set in your house?". Stephen King even said "You know, Harlan's got a big TV.". Yes, that's right. I try to be courant. I try to know what it is I'm talking about. I am not like many people who give you an opinion based on some sort of idiot hearsay or some kind of gut feeling you cannot validate. When I give an opinion, I do my best to make sure it is based on information. [http://harlanellison.com/home.htm]

Like Ellison suggests, even if only to be an authentic and reliable critic of something, you have to understand and know it.

I just don't get it…

Some people just didn't feel the pull towards SL

What's wrong with real life?

How can we make education more educational?

"Second Life eats student"

Tuell's roommate, Teck Nolgy, said Tuell was at his desk in Geisert Hall and signed into an online classroom when he vanished in a puff of smoke.

"But it's harder to do it online. It's not like we can just stick missing posters on the Web."

"He's out there floating in cyberspace somewhere,"

Second Life remains up and running despite concerns for student safety.

Associate multimedia professor Ed Lamoureux said shutting down Second Life poses greater risks.

"We knew this was a potential problem when we set up the program," Lamoureux said. "But we really wanted to get the system set up. One student isn't that big of a deal. If we'd lost 17 or 18, that would have been a major problem."

Source: http://buscout.com/ver5/pulsearticle.php?ID=209&date=2007-03-30

Second Life Best Practices in Education: Teaching, Learning, and Research© 2007 International Conference , May 25, In-World

It is OK if you are new to SL or if you can't be there all day. It is ok if you don't yet have students inworld. And it is OK if you just want to drop in for one or two sessions. Among the long list of talented keynotes and speakers, we have the awesome and lovely Intellagirl Tully and IBM's Chuck Hamilton.

Even if you are only popping in to see one session, we would like to know to expect you (to make sure we have enough chairs and all). As of right this moment, we are expecting about 300 people. ISN'T THAT AWESOME??? But, we want to make sure we have enough room for YOU!

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE register on the wiki at
http://slbestpractices2007.wikispaces.com/

If you would like to showcase your work in some way, you can submit your awesome ideas via the wiki, as well.

We hope to see you there!

Open Forum

- Given what you have heard about SL, what are some new ways we can think about elearning?

- Are we ready for prime time?