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SPECIAL ISSUE: SECOND LIFE

Always thought of Second Life as a game that only teenagers play? Think again — Second Life is coming strong as a virtual educational environment.

Second Life is a 3-dimensional, multiuser virtual world that allows users to personalize avatars, build, script, explore, communicate, and interact online. Second Life is fairly new. It became public in 2003. Because it is so new, little serious research has yet been conducted to explore it as an educational tool. However, many grants have been given to explore these capabilities. For instance, a grant to develop virtual nursing classroom structures and to research student focus on educational components rather than the novelty of the application. As new grants become available educators are able to research how Second Life can best be used for education from

Why use SL Technology?

Leaning on constructivism and connectivism learning theories and by developing meaningful modules, educators can leverage instruction into the virtual environment and create effective, efficient, and appealing education for the 21st century learners.

an instructional point of view.

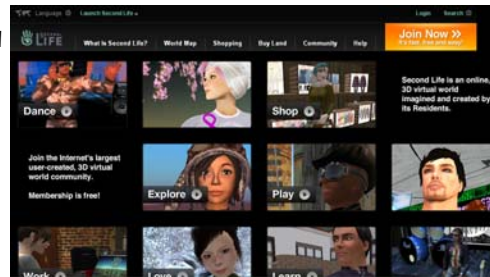
To access Second Life, special software, called a grid, is needed. This can be downloaded from the Second Life web-site and is free

of charge. For an enjoyable experience while visiting this 3-D world, a good computer graphics card is needed.

In Second Life, land can be bought, buildings, stores, and objects can be built and avatars may meet and discuss using chat or voice. Land and items can be purchased in Second Life using the special Linden currency. Students can build 3-D objects, learn languages, take virtual field-trips, and learn about other cultures because Second Life is international.

Basic Second Life accounts are free. Upgraded accounts are needed if users plan to purchase land or want more elaborate help service.

Many companies, organizations, and universities already have presence in Second Life including Coca Cola, ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education), Ohio State University, UNC, Stanford University, MIT,



Second Life's homepage on the Web:
www.secondlife.com

Princeton, and Harvard Law School.

Educators need to be aware of the fact that Second Life also has educationally inappropriate representations of real life. These include night-clubs, opium dens, and sex clubs. The Second Life environment is not controllable or private. Behavior or language is not censored. Abuse, however, can be reported and residents are usually quick to correct one another. You can not die in Second Life.

The learning curve when first entering Second Life may seem steep. It may take several hours to learn to move around in the virtual world and master the avatar's full capability. However, once the basics are mastered, members may enjoy many means of moving around such as flying, teleporting, driving, snowboarding, surfing, dancing, and running just to mention a

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Second Life Quick Facts:

- Second Life became public in 2003
- Second Life is a 3-D virtual world created by its residents
- Second Life allows resident to build objects, create scripts, collaborate, communicate, and much more.
- Avatars are graphical representations of Second Life residents: anything from pink ponies, to picture-perfect humans.

few. The environment is truly immersive and allows for endless exploration. Simulations allow users to explore environment that otherwise would not be accessible such as the testis and ovary tours on OSU Medicine island.

ENTERING SECOND LIFE

When you have your Second Life account set up on www.secondlife.com and enter Second Life, you use your arrow keys, Home, PageUp, and PageDown keys on your keyboard to navigate your avatar.

Your computer screen has a tutorial pop up on the left side of the screen. It is a good idea to go through it to learn the basics about moving around. Practice flying and landing to avoid crashing. This takes quite some time.

Connecting Avoiding Mistakes

You've probably signed up for Second Life to connect with people and make friends with others that have the same interests as you do.

You can chat with people using the chat tool at the bottom left on your screen. Chat in SL is public and you can read what people are saying if you are close enough to them (20 m). Face the avatar you want to talk to and start writing. The avatar's hands move as if writing on a keyboard. Some people use AO's, animation overrides, which disables the hand typing motion. A private conversation is best done using the IM feature.

Using a headset you can use voice to talk to people. There is a talk button on the bottom right corner of your screen. Remember to click again when you are not talking. Voice carries 100 m in Second Life. At times a private voice conversation is more appropriate as not to disturb other residents. This can be done through a telephone option in the IM window.



Chat is public and the most common communication tool in Second Life. Click the chat button at the bottom of the screen and type your message in the box that shows up. Your avatar's hands move like over a keyboard as you write. For private conversations use IM.

There are two ways to make sure you can reconnect with the people you meet. You can choose to share a 'calling card' or you can share 'friendship.' It's important to know the difference between these two:

A calling card is a business card that lets the other person know your basic information. This helps you re-connect when you are both online again. To give a calling card, right-click the avatar to which you want to give a calling card, click 'More' and then "Give card."

It's considered impolite to share friendship with someone without asking first. 'Friends' is a special category that you allow see you when you are online. You may also allow them to follow you on the Map, and IM you. Given permission by you, they may also get into your inventory to edit objects. Only share friendship with those you really feel you want to connect well with.

Inventory

Inventory is accessed from a button to the very right on the bottom of your screen. As you acquire new items during your

virtual visits, make sure to practice good inventory management. Create folders and sub-folders as you would on your computer. Give meaningful names so that you can find items again, as is always carried along.

Many things are free to pick up. Mostly you will either click or right-click to get or "buy" items. Notice that you can "buy items for 0 Linden. Some items require several clicks to be saved so make sure to read the instructions!

Moving On

If you entered at Help island it may seem hard to get away to new destinations. Each destination in Second Life has coordinates and a name. Use the MAP button and enter a destination if you know the name of the island or location you are looking for, then click Teleport Or, use the Search button and search for a name of a university. The search can be tuned using filters.

The 'Map' lets you specify the name of a location or the coordinates of a location and search for it. Then you can teleport for speedy arrival.



Choosing where to go next in SL. Many locations have display boards with suggestions on places to visit. Click the images for information and location then teleport for a fast arrival.

CHANGING AVATAR APPEARANCE

When you first enter Second Life, you choose an initial appearance for your avatar. This can be changed to your hearts content and is often the first thing most new residents decide to do. The arrival platform is therefore filled with people changing

appearance. Changing the body is pretty straight-forward but it may be easier said than done to change into another outfit the first time. Here are some handy hints that will help you out of the obvious 'newbie look' and into something custom.



Right click your avatar and choose 'Appearance' from the circle that appears. The avatar turns around and faces you.

A pop-up box called 'Appearance' shows up. Here you can choose to change the shape of your avatar's body and more. Experiment with the sliders.



Creating a Jacket and Changing to Inventory Clothes



To create a brand new jacket for the avatar, click 'jacket' in the appearance box. A white jacket gets added that can be customized. Experiment with the jacket appearance before you decide to save it. You can always cancel if you are unhappy with the design.

In the menu items, choose length, wrinkles, width, and more for the jacket. Clicking the different boxes (1) lets you choose fabric and texture of the newly created jacket.

The inventory button (2) tells you what items you have available. This includes clothes, textures, objects, and more. To choose a texture for the jacket, click on the texture button (1) and then find the texture you like. Textures include photographs, rocks, sand, etc. Be creative and have fun.



Free stuff for your avatar is often available for residents to grab in different parts of SL. You just have to find them. Linden Island, your first stop when entering Second Life, offers some freebie stuff that you'd be wise to take along in your inventory baggage before you leave (because you can't come back to this island.) Among the items you can take are clothes. These will show up in your inventory under clothes. Drag-and-drop these items onto your avatar for a different look.

To take off clothes, right-click your avatar and choose "Take Off." Be careful not to 'take off all' in public. Find a changing room if you feel like starting getting dressed from scratch. Changing rooms are often available. ISTE Island even offers a freebie changing room that can be added to your inventory. Carry it along and set it up whenever needed!

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Get ready to figure out how students learn in the 21st century and envy the fun they are having in the process. Meet other instructors as curious as you about how to use Second Life to engage students in the learning process and help them become competitive citizens in the Information Age.

As an instructor interested in learning more about Second Life and its use in education, **ISTE Island** is a great place to start and to call home.

ISTE stands for International Society for Technology in Education. In Second Life ISTE has its own islands. Friendly docents meet and greet educators from around the globe almost every night at the main island and provide ideas, answer questions, and give suggestions.

There are virtual bulletin boards and calendars that show the various programs offered. ISTE holds conferences and meetings here, and arranges virtual field trips—'tours', every other Sunday. The tour group teleports together from one location to another and explores different environments while the tour guides explain voice over. A speaker series also features specially invited presenters.

Many educators meet up at ISTE Island. Chances are you'll meet someone here to discuss education and technology with.

Destinations

Many libraries have presence in Second Life and are well worth visiting. **Info Island** is a good place to start.

Also visit some of the many universities that have presence in Second Life. **Princeton** has a large selection of media available (MP3). Some are only for students while other are available for the public.

Ohio University allows tours around their virtual campus and it's a good idea to take the tour, so not to miss out on anything cool.

MIT is the well-known Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

New Media Consortium is the powerhouse for education in Second Life. Lots of great ideas on learning spaces can be found here.

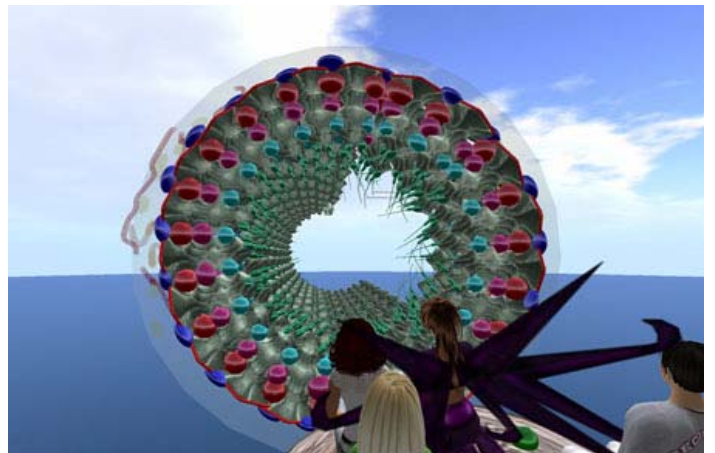
This is just a small sample of ideas and information on what is available for educators in Second Life.



ISTE Island is a place where educators get together—A great place to start your Second Life journey.



Communication in Second Life is through chat in the open or in groups, IM (private chat), or voice in the open or in groups.



OSU Testis Tour — Take a virtual field trip inside a testis at the Ohio State University Sim. Developed by DrDoug Pennell who has also made the virtual immersive ovaries tour for OSU.



Many universities have presence in Second Life. Just to mention a few: Princeton, University of Illinois, University of Hamburg, University of Cincinnati, University of Idaho, University of Newcastle, University of Sussex, University of Brighton, University of Joensuu in Finland, University of Arkansas, University of York, Texas Woman's University, and now the UT System universities. Use the SEARCH function and the education option to browse and find more of these cutting edge universities.