# Second Life for Educators

A BC Campus Project
Managed by BCIT
With support from SFU

Nola Johnston
njohnston12@my.bcit.ca

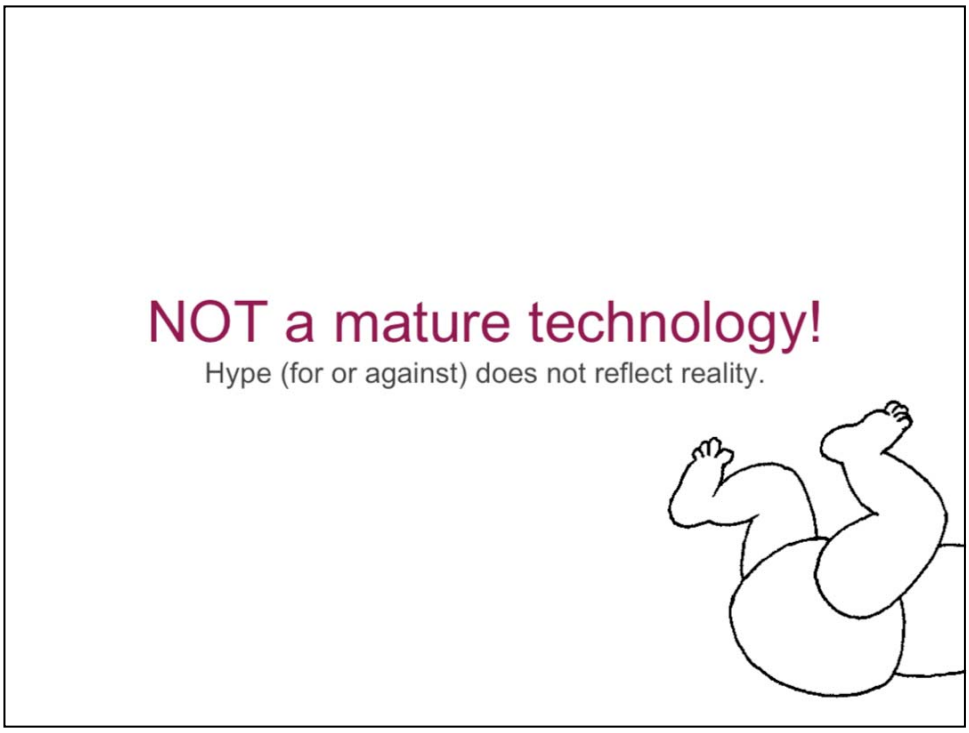

This project originated with a BCIT research project that looked at the virtual world of Second Life and its potential for education. Although it found excellent opportunities for expanding pedagogy, it also acknowledged that there are some real and significant barriers that discourage educators from its exploration. This BC Campus project aims to mitigate some of these constraints by providing information, resources and training that will reduce the learning curve that accompanies any entry into Second Life.

# What is Second Life?

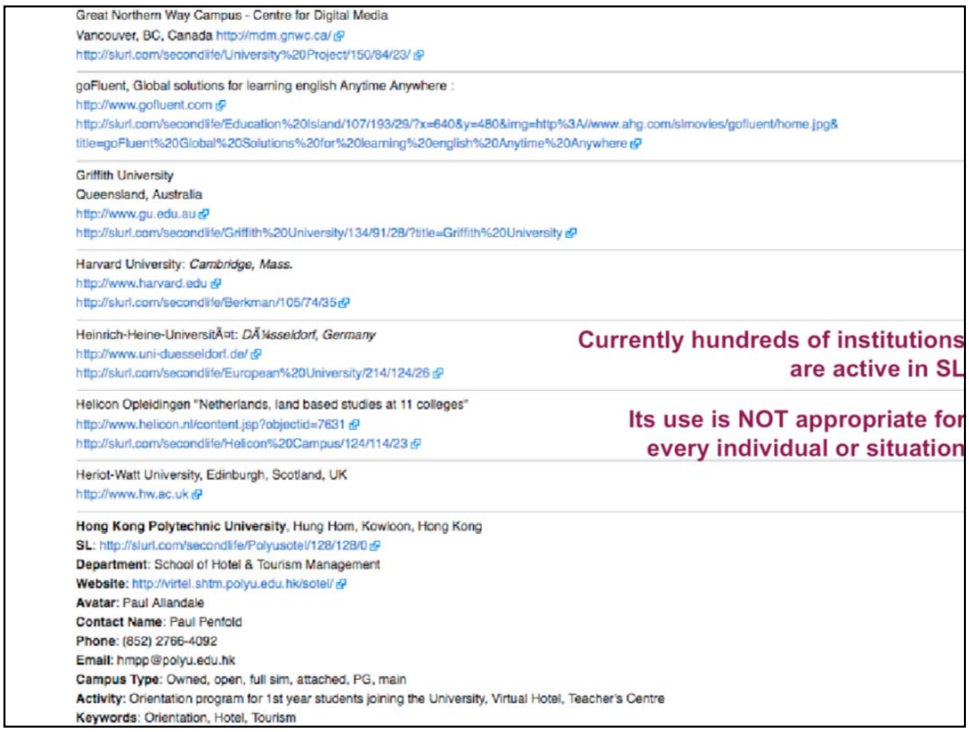
- Platform, not game
- 27,483 islands as of May 15, 2009
- Free basic account
- Residents have ability to create content
- Content is persistent
- Ability to rez (display) content is linked to land ownership
- In-world economy permits buying and selling, convertible to US$

## Activities

- Social (e.g. parties, clubs)
- Exploration
- Entertainment
  (e.g. live concerts, streaming media, game
- Creative expression
  (e.g. art, design, music, dance, machinima
- Subcultures and communities of affinity




It is important to understand that Second Life is not a mature technology, and is constantly evolving. This means that early adopters will encounter a range of problems that are expected to disappear or lessen over time. Anyone who goes into SL now must be prepared to work within this context and the constraints it imposes.



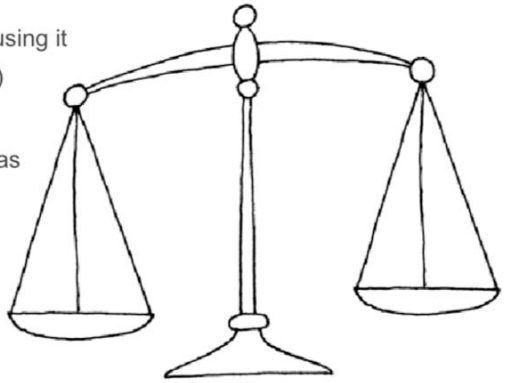

Taken from http://www.simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_in_SL#UNIVERSITIES.2C_COLLEGES_.26_SCHOOLS


Engagement is particularly enhanced if students are allowed to build (create content).

An excellent example of a project not possible in the real world is the one illustrated here, Memorial University's shipyard (see slide #13).

## If you are thinking of using SL

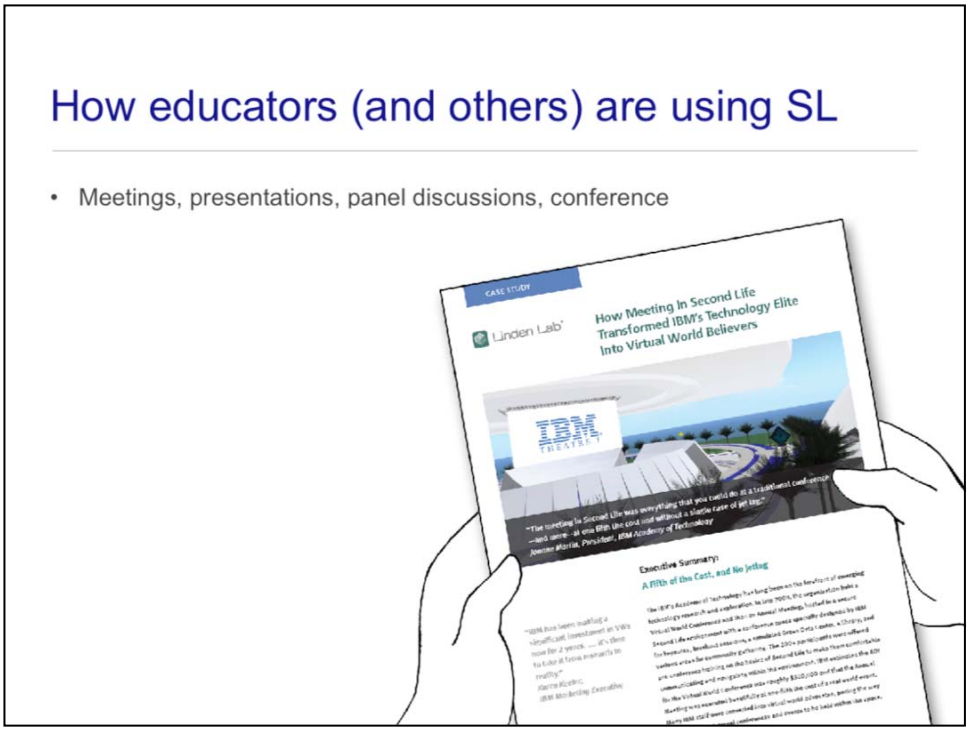
- Look realistically at the pros and cons
- Find out how it has been used in your field
- Talk to educators who have been using it (especially in your area of practice)
- Look outside your field for new ideas



## How educators (and others) are using SL

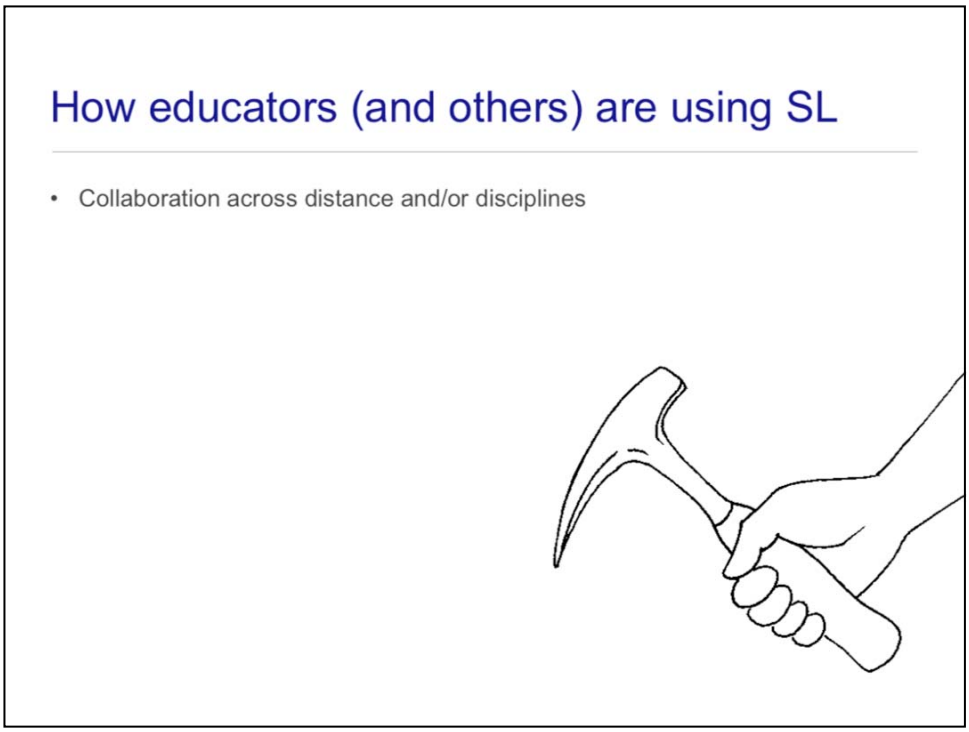
## How educators (and others) are using SL

- Meetings, presentations, panel discussions, conference

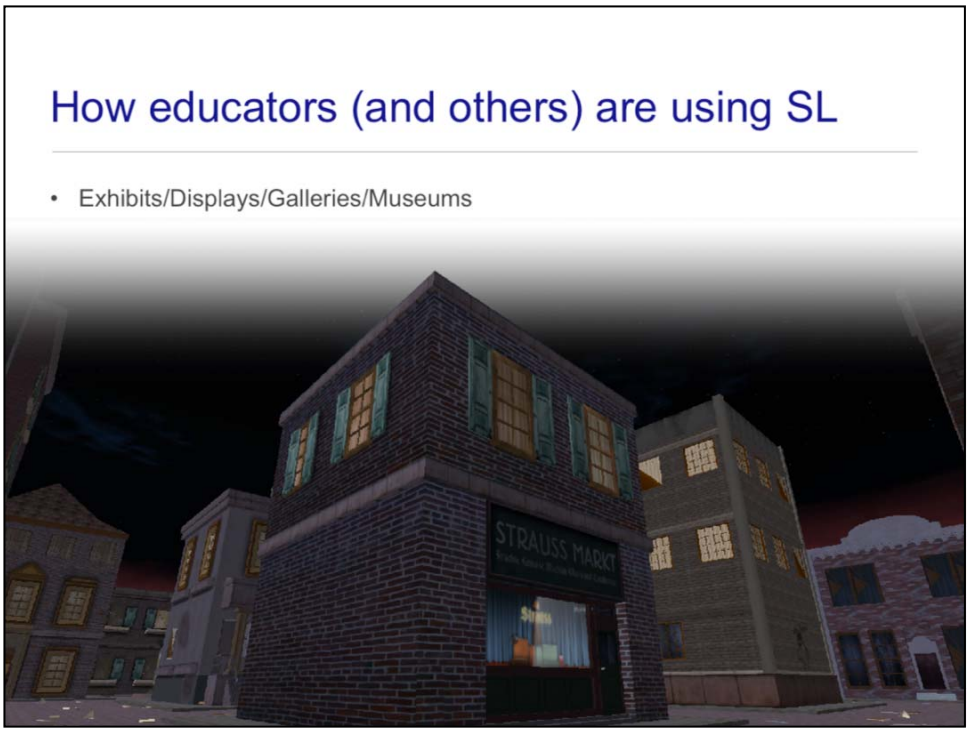



***IBM Academy of Technology Virtual Worlds Conference***:

- 200+ attendees, 3 keynotes, 37 breakout sessions
- initial investment $80,000, saved $250,000 in travel/venue costs, $150,000+ on productivity = $320,000 savings compared to real world event
- significant socializing and networking occurred
- because conference was so successful SL was used as a component of AoT AGM (together with webcasting and video conferencing), hosting poster sessions




Students in New York City and Chicago collaborated with each other in SL and with researchers in the "***I Dig Tanzania***" virtual summer camp, a collaboration between Global Kids and the Field Museum of Chicago's Biodiversity Synthesis Center. Teen Second Life was used to support the students' collaboration and learning about paleontology and Tanzanian culture (see http://www.holymeatballs.org/2008/08/idt_i_dig_tanzania_promo_video.html).




***Holocaust Museum***—Kristallnacht (documents, artifacts, images, audio)


***MacBeth*** sim: "Foul Whisperings, Strange Matters is a symbolic treatment of the key themes of Shakespeare's play, Macbeth. Exploring the island allows you to experience the key milestones on Macbeth's journey. Shakespeare's Macbeth is the story of a serial killer whose emotional journey is one from the will to power, through to bloodlust, moral confusion and ultimately to death. You can also drill down to investigate themes such as the notions of authorship, adaptation, the playhouse, power and ethics. (selected texts, interactivity, questions for discussion/reflection)"


Memorial University received the ***Canadian Network for Innovation in Education Conference award for excellence and innovation in the use of technology*** for teaching and learning ( https://blogs.secondlife.com/community/community/education/blog/2009/05/15/memorial-university-is-nationally-recognized-in-canada-for-excellence-in-innovation-using-second-life)

Engineering students (Engineering 4061, Marine Production Management), with the help of DELT (Distance Ed and Learning Technologies) built a shipyard to specified parameters in order to provide sense of actual scale/spatial relationships and to get appreciation of how materiel flow works in relation to space. “I was interested in using 3D virtual world technology in my class to better engage students in their learning and generate excitement about the course content. I wanted students to experience and realize the scale of real life shipyards, and gain a deeper understanding about the importance of material flow and the positioning of materials when building something of such enormity.” (Dr. David Murrin, adjunct prof) … For the students in Engineering 4061, their level of engagement enhanced their overall performance in the course, in comparison to students who had taken the course before the integration of Second Life.

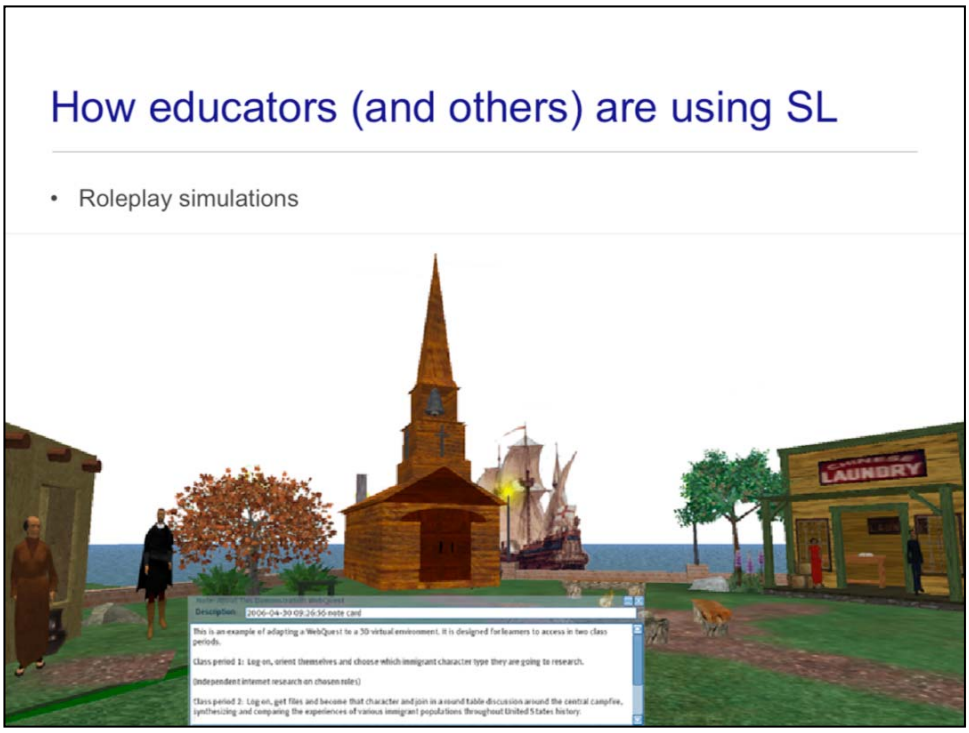

This simulation shows the process of an algae bloom.


UC Davis: Virtual Hallucinations Lab.

Avatars walk through a medical clinic, where they hear voices and experience visual effects that simulate the experience of being schizophrenic.

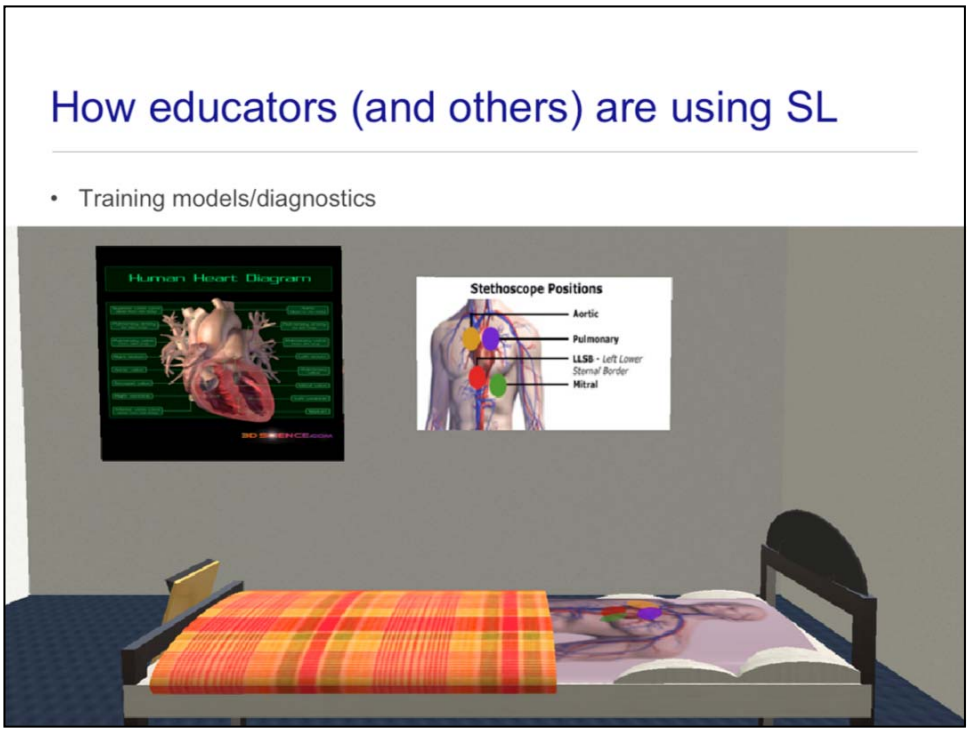
## How educators (and others) are using SL

- Experiential simulations




***Meet the immigrants***: The information card accompanying the location indicates that the space is: an example of adapting a WebQuest to a 3D virtual environment. It is designed for learners to access in two class periods. Class period 1: Log on, orient themselves and choose which immigrant character type they are going to research. (Independent internet research on chosen roles). Class period 2: Log on, get files and become that character and join in a round table discussion around the central campfire, synthesizing and comparing the experiences of various immigrant populations throughout United States history.

The SL Quest version of this exercise presents a virtual diorama with four different settler groups represented by a male and female avatar standing in front of their respective "home" positioned around a central campfire: Chinese Immigrants, New Mexico Conquistadors, Oregon Trail Settlers, and Pilgrims. Each of the eight avatars includes an Avatar-Giver script which allows any visiting user to physically transform "themselves" into a respective settler including avatar shape, hair, and clothing.



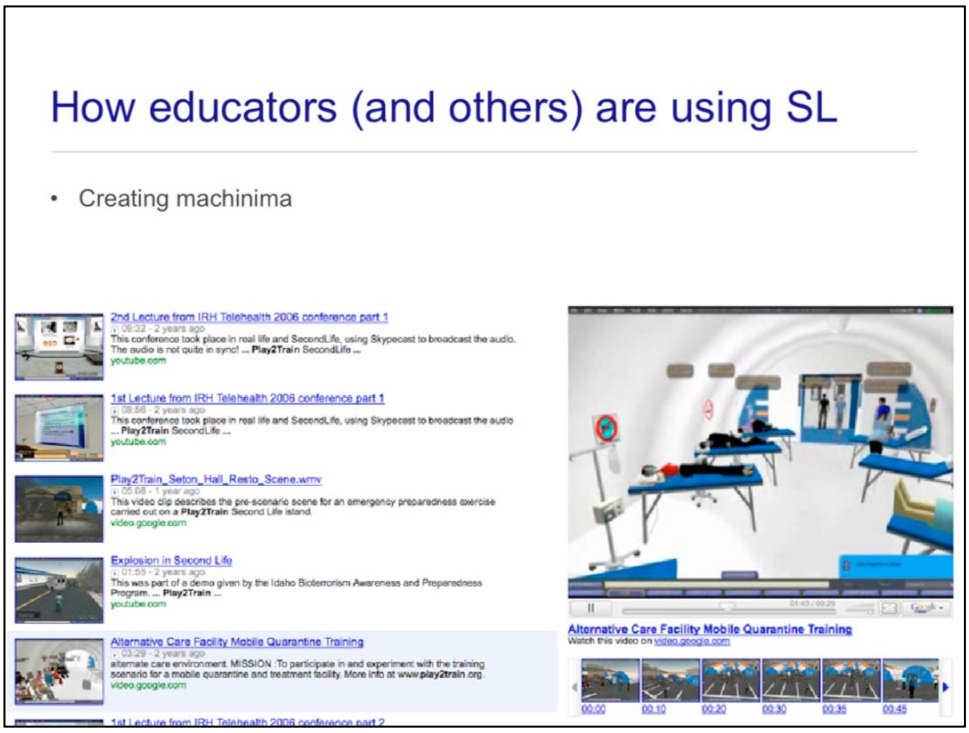

Heart Murmur simulation: ***Cardiac Auscultation Lab. "Patients" on beds demo the sounds of different kinds of heart problems; a final set requires you to identify the medical problem for unidentified heart sounds.***


Players can choose from different fast food outlets and at the end of the game will be told what the nutritional consequences are.

## How educators (and others) are using SL

- Creating machinima

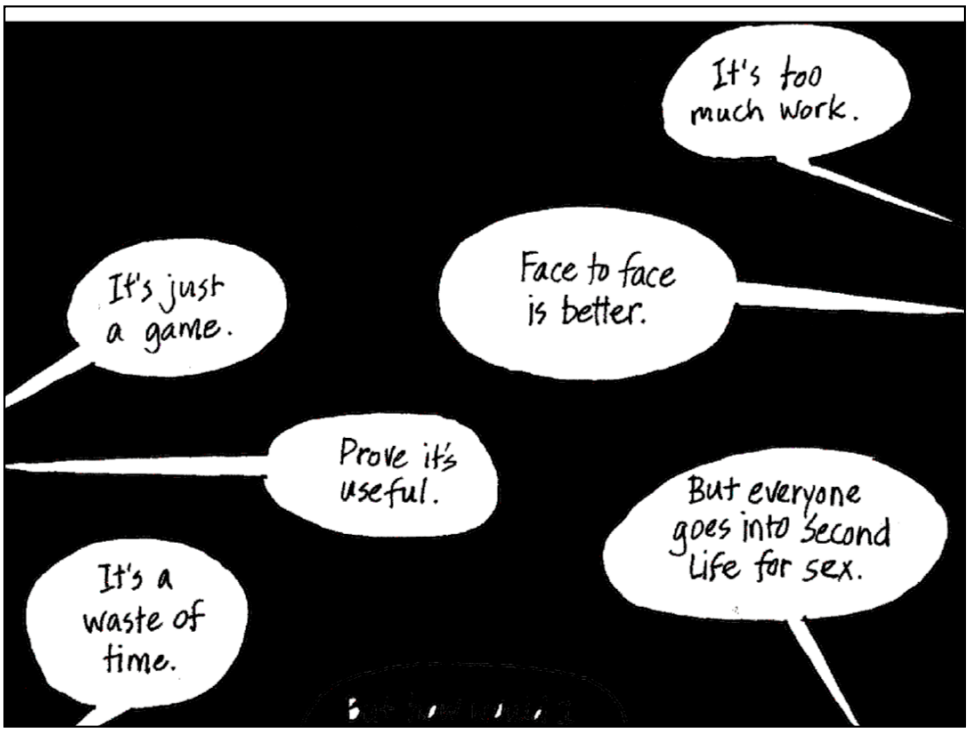
A still from a machinima (video filmed within a virtual world) by Robbie Dingo. “Watch the World” shows the construction of a 3D replica of a Van Gogh painting.




Play2Train uses Second Life for training and is making training machinima within the world.

# Barriers to using Second Life

- Identified by IBM Research Social Computing Group
  (Acquiring a Professional "Second Life:" Problems and Prospects for the Use of Virtual Worlds in Business)

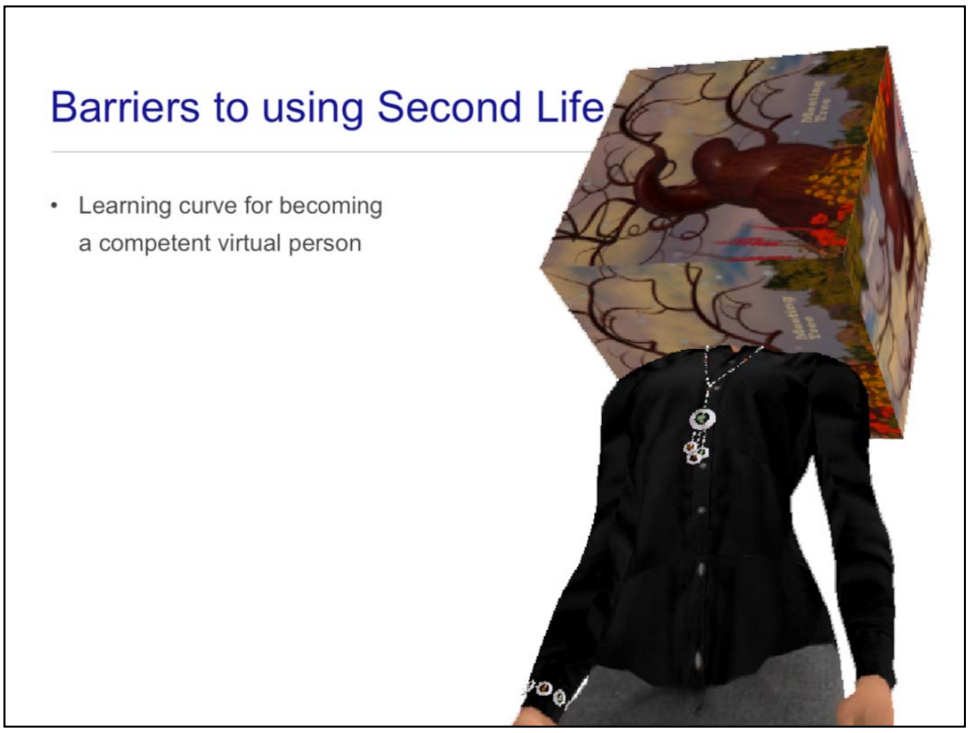



Motivation—“The hardest challenge we faced in carrying out our studies was convincing employees to participate.” People are skeptical, think it’s a game, not work, at best a distraction with poor return from the time commitment, at worst risky or immoral; they want proven benefits. They may compare it to face to face rather than other forms of online learning; they may feel anxious about entering a new environment with which they have no expertise.

## Barriers to using Second Life

- Technical difficulties

Technical difficulties may include hardware incompatibilities, client-server issues, and mysterious bugs.




This slide illustrates a common problem, especially for “newbies.” When you buy an item of clothing, the vendor may provide it in a box; you have to rez (display) the box and transfer the contents from the box to your Inventory. Newbies may “wear” the object that appears in their Inventory without first rezzing it—to find themselves wearing the package rather than the article they intended to wear.

Becoming a competent virtual person takes time and effort, but people may not realize this and not bother with the training. The interface may be unfamiliar and previous experience in the real world or even other virtual worlds may not be transferable. Real-world metaphors may confuse people (e.g. when sitting they may expect their action to be expressed by a command to their avatar (which is what moves in real life), where it actually results from a command to an object.

It is easy to become frustrated in SL because you can’t competently do the things that you do without thinking in real life.

## Barriers to using Second Life

- Learning curve for becoming socially proficient in a virtual world

Second Life has its own culture, with its own etiquette, social signals, and norms and practices. We have to learn how to interact with the world and others in it, who may come from a range of international cultures. There may be a tension between private and professional activities and the boundaries relating to them. We also have to learn how to not get in trouble, and what kind of behaviours are prohibited.

Those entering SL must also learn how to deal with griefers—people who have fun by causing others grief. Griefing attacks can range from verbal harassment to "physical" attacks. While griefing attacks are not something that happen every day, and an avatar cannot be actually harmed, the experience of being griefed can be disrupted in distressing ways, so it's necessary to learn how to protect yourself and your students from such attacks.

## Barriers to using Second Life

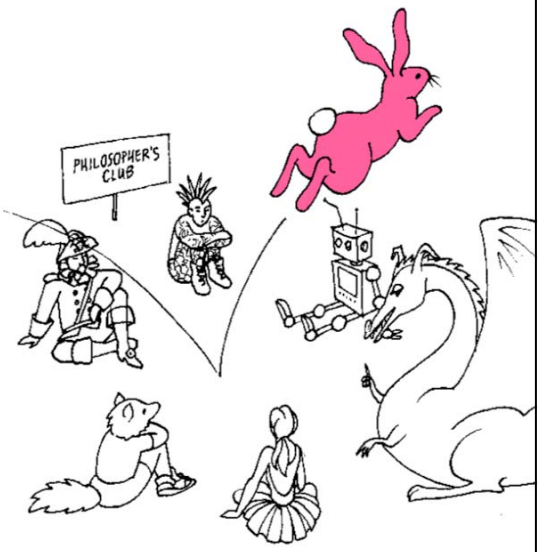
- Ability to find compelling activities

If you can’t find anything but ugly strip malls with no people around, you’re going to get bored pretty quickly. There’s lots of fascinating content in Second Life, but if you don’t know how to find it you’ll lose interest and leave.

## And don’t forget...

## And don’t forget...

- Dealing with educational challenges specific to virtual worlds




Educators working in SL face some additional challenges. These include additional time requirements, difficulties with communications, classroom management in a new and strange environment, technical problems that create a need for flexibility, and the threat of disruptions from other Residents if you are using space open to the public. Although many students’ engagement is increased within SL, it may not meet the learning styles or needs of some students.

## And don't forget...

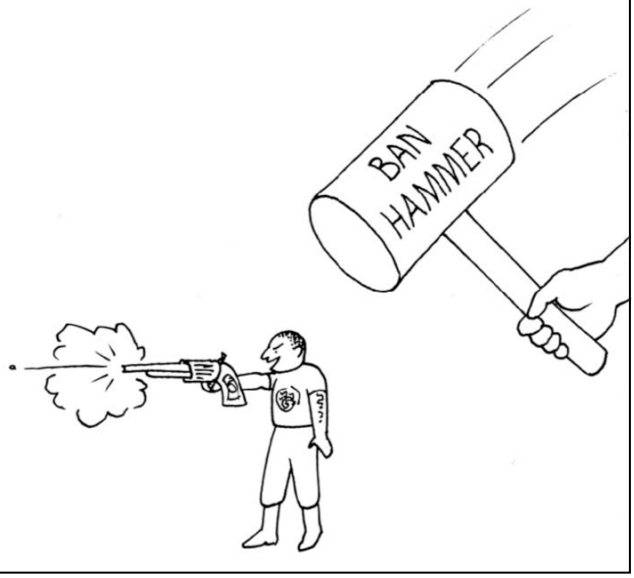
- Legal/governance issues

Legal issues and governance:

- Estate level governance and dispute resolution
- Copyright issues
- Virtual property rights
- Research
- Age limit issues
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) Act issues (e.g. with regard to recording/logging conversations and the fact that all SL data is hosted on US servers)

## And don’t forget...

- Land acquisition and management issues

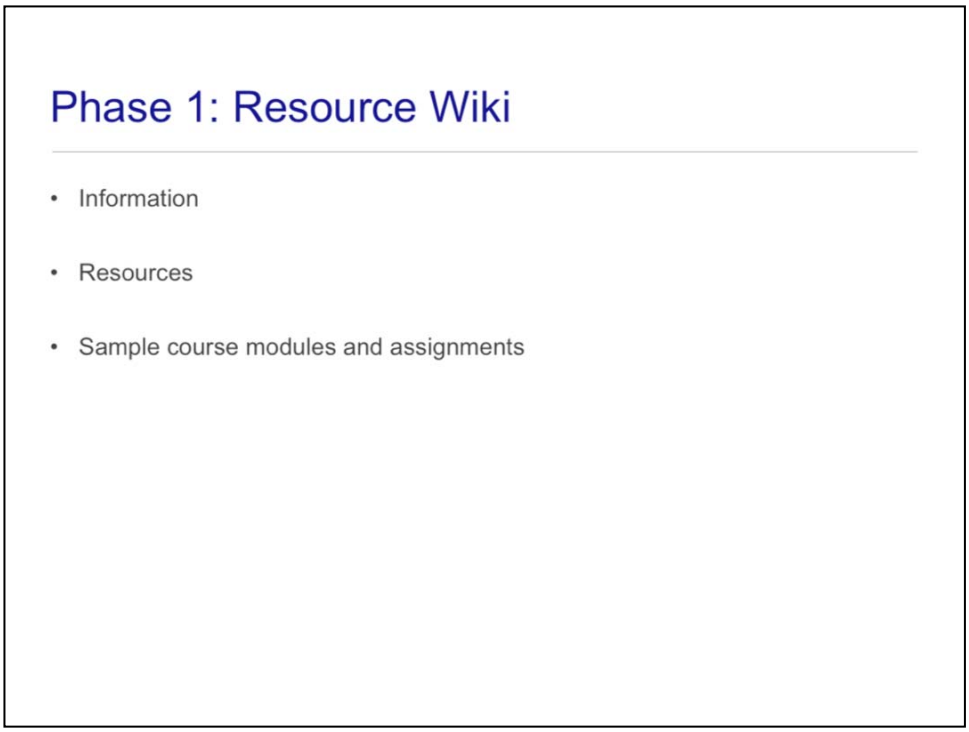



Land acquisition and management issues:

- Land management tools
- Managing and returning objects
- Managing griefers

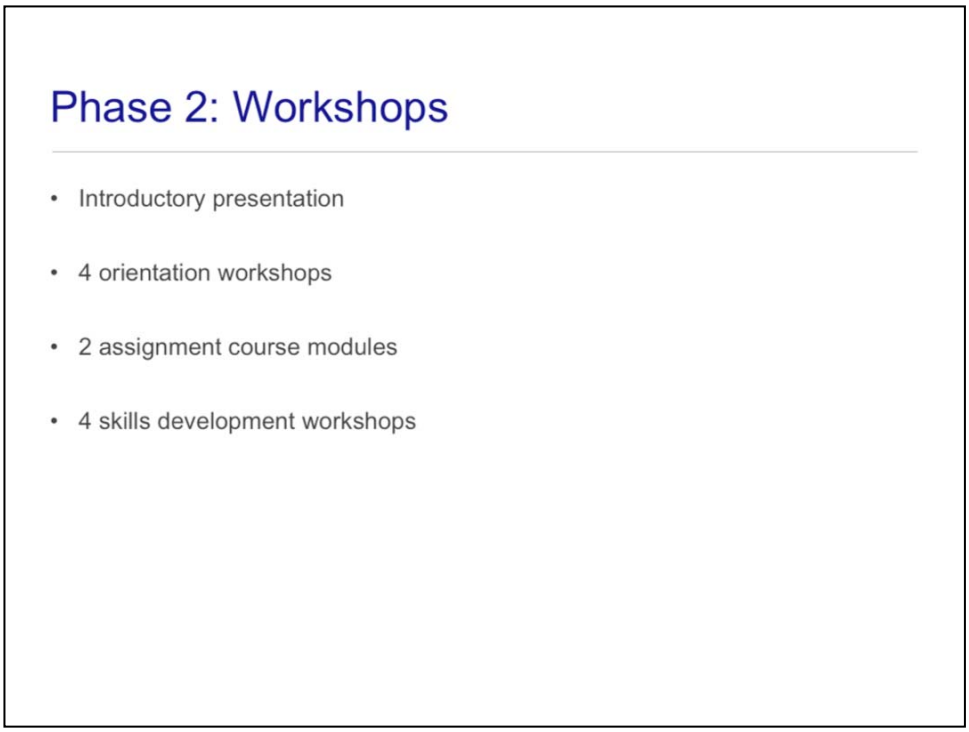
## Second Life for Educators

- Provides solutions to these challenges by creating a framework for providing:
- Information
- Resources
- Training




The first stage of the project has involved creating a resource wiki. (The project is close to going live, and the address will be added to this presentation as soon as that happens.)

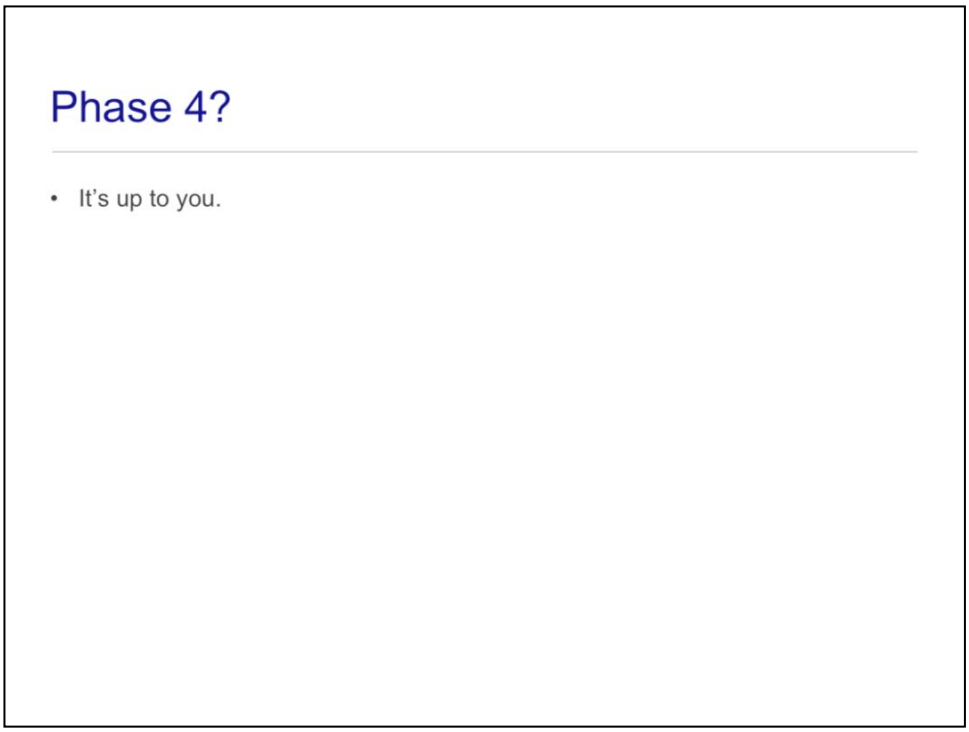
There will be some restrictions on editing wiki content, but any educators interested in contributing content will be able to easily get a password and do so.




Phase 2: piloting orientation modules created as part of the project. Each set of workshops will be offered three times.

## Phase 3: Testing, revision, documentation

- All workshops to be offered 3 times
- Gather feedback on wiki and workshops
- Revise materials
- Document findings
- Recommendations for ongoing peer-based resources and training




The goal of the project is to set the groundwork for a self-sustaining peer mentoring framework for introducing educators to Second Life.

## Workshops

- **Schedule**: Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:30 pm PST/SLT (SL Time)
  - Workshop 1: Thursday June 25 (communication/movement/appearance)
  - Workshop 2: Thursday July 2 (interface/social structure/etiquette)
  - Workshop 3: Thursday July 9 (intro to building & scripting)
  - Workshop 4: Thursday July 16 (basic educational tools & sites)
- **Information**: SLBCed.wordpress.com
- **Contact**: Nola Johnston, njohnston12@my.bcit.ca