



2 Second Life and Education

- **Type 1:** My school tells me to use Second Life now in my teaching. [insert name of university next door] is using it already. Do I have to do that now as well? And why? Is it really necessary? Help!!!
- **Type 2:** I want to use Second Life but my school doesn't allowed me to install the software for the students and they block all the ports (security!) and they say it's full of awful stuff (health and safety!) and it costs much to much. Help!!!

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3 Second Life and Schools

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4 This Talk is about

Is there anything interesting going on here?

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6 This Talk is about what we have done in Second Life. It is NOT About:

- Lot's of other projects going on in Second Life.
- Such as in: Art, Science, Modelling, Architecture, Training, Distance Learning, ...
- Happy to discuss this after the talk (in particular where to find those projects on the scale below).

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7 High Expectations on Second Life, for instance:

- "As students expectations rise, educational institutions will have to find ways of providing a mass-customised service, and virtual world technologies provide a cost-effective way of providing individualised support in a superior way to the current Web 2.0 platforms such as Blackboard or Moodle."
- From: Kingsley, J. (2007). *Time for educators to get a (second) life?* *EFMD Global Focus*, 2(3):42–43.

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8 Institutional Context

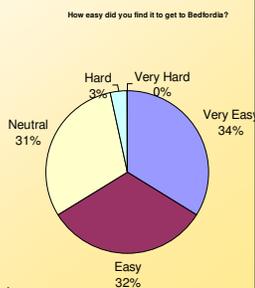
- Island of Bedfordia, owned by Teaching & Learning Dept. of the University of Bedfordshire. Use by teaching staff encouraged
- Championed by Information Services Department (i.e. no problem with software installation, blocked ports etc. as encountered at other institutions)



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9 Prelude: SL Assignment in Semester 1, 2007/2008, IT Project Management (BSc)

- "Evidence of a virtual meeting in Second Life (e.g. screenshots) and identification of a suitable location for the virtual bookshop"
- Some quantitative and qualitative results from questionnaire.
- Students didn't see relevance as a teaching platform. This questions Kingsley's statement.



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10 The Assignment

(Semester 2, 2007/2008, MSc Professional Project Management)

- [...] you are asked to create the following products:
 - [...]
 - A Second Life showcase that would serve to raise the awareness of visitors of the virtual University of Bedfordshire to essential issues regarding your specialist area. This showcase will be presented to the Programme/Corporate Management (i.e. the module tutors) but should be designed and build in a way that it is accessible to the general public.
- [...] No particular help will given from the tutors on how to use and interact with Second Life. [...]

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11 Why is this assignment good for Project Management?

- Covers *all* nine knowledge areas of Project Management as identified by the PMI (Project Management Institute):
- Scope, Cost, Time, Quality, Risk, Communication, Human Resources, Procurement, Integration.

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12 Findings based on interviews

- (A) How did the students operate?
- (B) What did the students like?
- (C) What did the students find difficult?
- (D) What did the students think of operating in a virtual world?
- (E) What did the students think would help them if the exercise was repeated?

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13 (A) How did students operate within SL?

- Many of the groups appointed one "expert" who was responsible for building the showcase, later other members created avatar. Other groups started with teams.
- Once the students had found their way to Second Life many reported they used online tutorials (YouTube and the web in general) to gain the appropriate skills to build items
- "Someone's put an object in my space"
- "We've run out of space"

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14 (B) What did the students like?

- The fact they could have project meetings whilst being in different places
- Students were building something meta-physical
 - They could use their imagination
 - Lots of potential for creativity
- The fact they could alter their appearance
 - Some students suggested that they dressed in a semi-formal manner in the same way they would as for work
- It was very different to other project work they had produced before

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15 (C) What did the students find difficult?

- Learning how to build objects
- The fact that many of them came in too late and couldn't find enough space
- Uploading objects and textures
- Finding places to safely get L\$
- Getting some members of the group to build items
- Finding out exactly what was needed for the project
 - How should I build my showcase?
 - What can I do?
 - Who else can help me?
 - Where can I find help?

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16 (D) What did the students think of operating in a virtual world?

- That a lot of the same rules regarding communication and the distribution of tasks were the same as the real world
- Many of their friends from other courses saw SecondLife as more of a game than a collaboration tool
- If people from different cultures and background wanted to work together Second Life would provide an excellent tool
 - In RL you have to be able to understand others' accents etc. SL has text chat which makes this process easier
- "Furies and animal avatars" are weird – people should be dressed in their own gender.
- Once they had gotten into the system and used the tool, they really liked it
- If the students were given tasks in the real world they would be much more clearly defined than in the assignment.

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17 (E) What did the students think would help them if the exercise was repeated?

- An initial orientation session of maybe one hour or so
- Further help documentation which explains how to build items in world
- Clearer assessment instructions
- More space to build
- More prims available within land parcels

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18 Observations by the Educators (Administrative and Technical Issues)

- Getting students to IM (Instant Messaging) information is very difficult
 - Received around 200 offline IMs
- Organising the group areas proved difficult
 - Students building objects far too big leading to resource problems
 - Keeping the area tidy
- Enrolling the students into the building group took a long time
- No backup facility
- Update of client software

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19 Will we do this again?

- Yes!
- The “building a showcase” is now integral to both undergraduate (~100 students) and postgraduate (~800 students) assignment.

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20 Lessons Learned...

- Need to enrol students in groups
 - Outsourced now to external provider
- Student guidance
 - With the second year running, more experienced staff available. Also students from previous year help
- Frequent updates of client software needed
 - It is now at least a “known problem” and technical staff is aware.
- No backup facilities, relies on availability of Linden Lab’s Second Life Grid.
 - Plan B is to monitor progress rather than focus on end product.

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21 Other Improvements

- IM-ing not used as primary means of communication between educator and student.
- Giving each group a well defined area to build on.
- Upper limits on number of prims to be used is specified on the project brief.
- Provision of links on how to build, first steps on Second Life and so on.
- Examples of showcases (not a “building”)

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22 Conclusion

- Works well for teaching Project Management.
- Using Second Life is fine with students.
- Problems on the technical side. Administrative overhead is challenging.
- Interesting enhancement to normal course diet.
- Second Life is not free. Not clear if the costs justify the possible benefit. “Open grid” might provide a solution to this.

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