

Virtual Education Journal



Virtual
Pioneers SL
Conference
Schedule

Expeditions,
Impacting Student Learning
Games Competition
Scott Merrick Open Letter
and Happy Birthday VSTE !



January 2012

It's Our Turn To
Ask Pooky
The 1st Question...
& More!



Virtual Worlds: Why
Are We Here?





In This Issue

- Observations from the Lowly High Grand Pooh Bah, p. 3
- Pooky Amsterdam Answers *The 1st Question . . . & More!* p. 6
- An Open Letter From Scott Merrick, p. 13
- Virtual Worlds Impact on Various Aspects of Student Learning, p. 24
- Crowd Sourcing a Games Competition, p. 28
- Happy Birthday! VSTE Island Turns Three! P. 32
- On Walkabout – Chapter 1: A Journey Across the Continent of Sansara, p. 36
- Virtual Pioneer's History Conference 2012, p. 46
- The Virtual Pioneer's History Conference 2012 Schedule, p. 48
- VWBPE Conference – Be EPIC! P. 52
- ISTE 2011, Installation 2: Open Letter from Scott Merrick - Scottmerrick OH, p. 53
- It's Not Too Late – VWBPE Wants You! P. 57
- Virtual Worlds: Why Are We Here? P. 59

To Read VEJ online visit:

<http://www.virtualeducationjournal.com/>

For more information about ISTE SIGVE or to join the fun, visit:

<http://sigve.iste.wikispaces.net/>

Happy New Year Everyone!

2012! Can you believe it? Twelve years after Y2K and we are still here! Do you think? Who would have predicted back in 2000 that not only would we have a second life, but also one foot planted in many other virtual worlds? I am relatively new to sl and virtual worlds (3 years on January 24th), yet since I still can't build, I see myself as the ultimate consumer – which keeps me amazed and in awe as I watch what so many of you do so well! I am what Phil Schlechty in his *Early Adaptor Model* would call "a pioneer." Needless to say, there aren't words to describe how much it meant to see my picture added on the ISTE Headquarter Docent Wall with all of the "Trailblazers" who I greatly admire that came before me. As Andy (aka Spiff) says in his Lowly High Grand Pooh Bah Observations (p. 3) "I feel particularly blessed to have come into contact with such great people that over time I have had the pleasure of meeting in person, mostly at ISTE Conferences." Most of us couldn't agree more!

Recently as I stood in front of the wall looking at all of the Docents, I realized that it is time to share the wonderful work that so many educators, especially you, are doing in Virtual Worlds to engage your students in learning, as well as to build your own capacity, create community, and increase your professional knowledge and growth. It is time to tell your inspiring stories and advocate for making virtual environments/worlds an educational opportunity and reality for all of our students in the 21st Century instead of, as Andy laments, "some sort of "Star Trek Cult." After all, many of my K-5 students are already members of Club Penguin – they "get it"! ☺

It is time for us to bring in "the settlers" by showing them what we are doing, why it is important, and how it makes a difference for teaching and learning. That is why the VEJ Editorial Board will select 10 Virtual World Trailblazer and Pioneer educators to spotlight in our March Issue of VEJ. We hope you will be willing to share your passion and joy for working in Virtual Worlds with others by answering our call – Tell us in 250 words or less, **WHY ARE WE HERE/WHY ARE YOU HERE?** This is our chance to advocate and share the importance of education in a virtual environment (p. 59).

As always, a special thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of VEJ. If you have questions, comments, suggestions, and/or would like to submit an article for publication, contact us at rvojtek@edovation.com and put VEJ in the subject.

VEJ – OUT OF THIS WORLD!

Keep smiling ☺

Rosie Vojtek, aka Roxie Neiro



Observations from the Lowly High Grand Pooh Bah or It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”

By Andy Wheelock, aka, Spiff Whitfield

It is with great excitement and optimism that I can share some of the highlights of SIGVE for this “calendar” year. One interesting observation that I want to share is that it seems as though all of us have gotten exponentially busy and have spread our talents and interests in a variety of directions.

I would be guessing as to explanations, yet if I use my own experience as a guide, I will hazard to throw some thoughts about the causes for our explosion of reverse time warp. My first guess is that Second Life, and ISTE Island gave us a great professional learning community that enhanced all of our talents and professional opportunities. I feel particularly blessed to have come into contact with such great people that over time I have had the pleasure of meeting in person, mostly at ISTE conferences.

I know many of us get that “look” from colleagues when we tell them about our meetings in Second Life. They think we are some sort of “Star Trek” Cult or something. And if they have been lucky enough to hear about Second Life’s bohemian side, they think we are truly up to no good. Yet, the joke is on them, isn’t it? Because we know that Second Life gave us our start as a group of educators that can talk education, see a great speaker series, connect with others, and yes, even hazard to play and explore in a whimsical fun way that sparks our curiosity and creativity. (Heaven forbid! Educators Play? How Dare They!)

And look at the results of this play and interaction. Our members are part of every sector of the educational realm, from superintendents, principals, teachers, directors, technology integrators, etc. Yet all of us are working on state of the art, innovative projects. We have taken our knowledge of Second Life and expanded it to new frontiers, such as World of Warcraft, Open Sim, Reaction Grid, Unity/Jibe, Quest Atlantis, Kitely, Minecraft, Machinima – the new educational vocabulary of our collaborations. And yet, we still come back to Second Life despite its aloofness to connect and continue to explore the possibilities.

However, there are other, perhaps not so seemly, reasons for our stretched schedules; tight budgets; new mandates; new curriculum; more responsibility; and the never ending accountability of new assessments. These bring about the worst of times for many of us. Trying to navigate these rapids of educational spaghetti with increased demands and little explanation as to the long term value for students.

But we are armed, aren't we? I believe that the connections and collaborations we have made with SIGVE have given us a coat of mail that can help us deal with the slings and arrows that have come with the new hazardous landscape of educational reform. I truly feel it is the bonhomie that was created with SIGVE that has helped guide and shield us as we make our way through our productive and innovative careers.

Our SIGVE community is strong, vibrant, and ready to help despite challenging times.

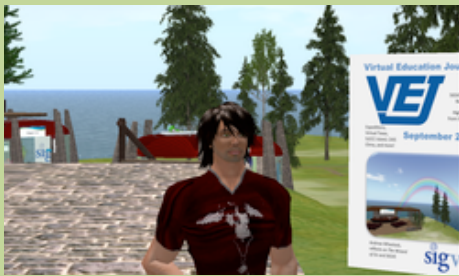
Special Note: ISTE has approached SIGVE about the future of ISTE Island in Second Life. This is certainly a big concern for all of us. With Second Life's revoking of the Educational Discount, the cost /benefit ratio of ISTE Island needs to be addressed. We formed a Task Force

to bring together a list of ideas to ISTE of ways we can keep our community in Virtual Environments healthy and progressive, yet cost effective. This is not meant to be secretive in nature or exclusive of all our vast membership's ideas and thoughts. We will be happy to share all the task force information and certainly will not make a final decision until as many people as possible have heard the recommended course of action.

The Task force Proposal can be found at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cBr266x0-K4388cQvxy5FAVcVQu9nk6WVDqv43Yp65A/edit>

ISTE SIGVE SPEAKER SESSION



WHEN: Tuesday January 17

TIME: 5pm SL time

PLACE: Iste Island Auditorium

Please join us as we interview John Moody. John (Jhnmdy in SL) teaches basic business concepts and computer skills and application courses to middle school students in Asheville North Carolina. He teaches computer programming and html coding and enrichment courses as part of an after school program. John will discuss how he uses Alice with his students. See our Speaker Series site for more information. <http://sigve.iste.wikispaces.net/SIGVE+Speaker+Sessions+11-12>

Pooky Amsterdam

Answers *The 1st Question* . . . & More!



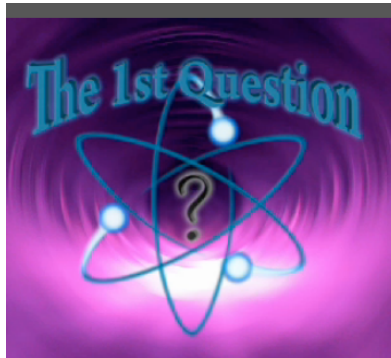
Usually it is Pooky Amsterdam who is asking “The 1st Question.” But today it is our turn to ask the person behind PookyMedia Films, not only the 1st question but several others as well so that we can discover the amazing and talented woman behind one of the BIGGEST celebrity names in Second Life.

I had the great fortune of getting to work with Pooky last year when she was the hostess of the VWBPE Awards Ceremony. She was completely caught by surprise when her company won the VWBPE Machinima Award for Best Story Line / Narrative, “Time Travelers Episode 1 – The Time Machine.”

<http://www.vwbpe.org/blog/poster-and-machinima-winners> .

PookyMedia has since produced several other Time Traveler Episodes along with other business, education and entertainment Machinima films. She is most known in second life, however, for her quick wit, great sense of humor, and intelligent

personality as she and co-host, Hydra Shaftoe, welcome guest panelists who take a stab at answering their fun, fast-paced and often quite difficult fact-based science, innovation, and achievement questions. It is truly one of the most cutting edge productions coming out of Second Life and a not-to-be-missed favorite show for Avatars of all ages! Pooky Amsterdam is the producer and writer for PookyMedia and host for “The 1st Question” and “The Dating Casino.” Her original concept for



PookyMedia has been to make digital animation, which is becoming more affordable and able to work on multi-platforms, a viable, high quality competitor in the realm of film-making. Pooky works with an award winning team of highly skilled experts from around the world. They “work to custom create any location, any person or creature, and any product virtually by using real-time animation for films, series, shorts, commercials,

training films, and live game shows.” PookyMedia utilizes “high quality game engine graphics found on the virtual platform of Second Life to deliver animated content.”

Roxie: So, Pooky, it is with great pleasure that I get to ask you “The 1st Question!” When and how did you get started in second life?

Pooky: I had heard about Second Life in 2003 at the original State of Play conference sponsored by NYU. I met Phillip Rosedale, Robin Harper and others at that time, including Richard Bartle. I was there when Rosedale announced IP rights to residents and was even given a CD Rom - but as I had a Mac, was unable to get into SL at that time. I was involved in the virtual world of Habbo Hotel and doing performances on a weekly, monthly and seasonal basis. In 2006 I made my avatar from a Tekserve on 23rd street in Manhattan on a cold November day. I returned in March of 2008, met very important and significant people to me, and was able to use my production skills on this platform to great success.

Roxie: What projects have you been working on and what makes them significant?

Pooky: *Time Travelers* is significant as a fully sponsored web series that is supported by a



company outside of Second Life. Dr. James Canton, the future guru and head of the Institute for Global Futures, recognizes the incredible wealth of virtual graphics here and is supporting PookyMedia in making the most stunning use of Machinima and the real time graphics engine. Russell Boyd, who is Resident Director, is in charge of the filming and the results are stunning!

Also of note I am working with Draxtor Despres on the Fluffe on a Meshion series that showcases mesh and even more the great and more polished animation we can achieve inworld with film, expertly produced.

Roxie: I can't wait to see the work you are doing with Draxtor Despres as I am a fan of *The Time Travelers Series*. You have been involved in so many great projects in Second Life. What work in virtual worlds are you most proud of?

Pooky: I am most proud of the film work of course – and the way we have fought, coaxed, urged and swore at this engine to get what we want and need out of it. I am also most proud of the TV series I do – *The 1st Question*, for celebrating the



smart and scientific – it is a thrill to do this show, and know that real time audience participation, which is the future of entertainment as we move into the 21st Century – and with ConnectedTV having the potential to be what it is as well. The Dating Casino is also the wave of the future – and with this game, and others, I wish to develop and produce. I am so very proud of being able to manifest this

kind of entertainment for people all over the world.

Roxie: And you seem to have so much fun while you are doing it! I think that is what makes it so much fun for the rest of us to watch! So, how did you decide that second life was the most appropriate platform for the work you do? What makes it that way?

Pooky: I had come to Second Life after 5 years on Habbo Hotel. Habbo is a text based only, no content creation of assets or scripting, 2.5D world. Given those

limitations I was still able to produce theatre, poetry slams, improv, talk shows and more. Coming to SL was an incredibly eye opening experience and truly a step up in what was possible. For me there was no comparison and no turning back. Second life, with all of its major attributes, of assets, of wealth from the many and multi - talented residents, plus voice, PLUS the very intelligent and motivated population, makes SL the premier choice for what I do.

Roxie: You co-host *The 1st Question*. How did this show start? What is it like to do this every week? What is the most stressful part of doing the show? What makes it worth your while? What are some of your best moments or favorite memories?

Pooky: *The 1st Question* - Lots of things you want to know there. The show started when Paradox Olbers said to me shortly after we met that fateful week in March 2008, that he wanted more people in his SpinDome. I said, 'I could put on a show.' He said, "What do you need?" I asked for the SpinDome once a week for a few hours in the evenings. He agreed, and taking a chance on this noob at the time – enabled me to launch. Robwag Soothsayer who became my friend also that week, has helped me, enlightened me, and inspired me since the moment I met him. And, he is instrumental in everything I do. He helped build the first set and has been



with me ever since. There aren't words to describe what a great person he is. I met the amazing and much loved Hydra Shaftoe through another early mentor, Bevan Whitfield, and he agreed to co-host. I knew I wanted a show that made rock stars out of scientists and celebrated the smarts. The most difficult thing is the booking, which can be arduous, and so the show

is now at once a month and we are going through the Championship Series - meaning that past winners and there are about 135 of them or so will "play off" against one another this year for the title of "Smartest and Most Charming in the Land." I love writing the show every week - and feel it's a responsibility and also a joy to break the news from all fronts of science and tech and also with humor and context to our world today. Heck, I told everyone to buy gold three years ago! Best moments are when everyone is sound checked and in their seats and its one minute to show time and we are going to go live - Love that moment of the calm before

the storm! I love the discovery of things to put in the show, also. And I do love dressing for the show, too!

Roxie: And, I have to say that you haven't lived until you have been clothes shopping with Pooky! I can't remember when I have had soooo much fun. You really do know the best places to shop in second life! Changing the subject, as we mentioned earlier, you won a Machinima award for *Time Travelers, Episode One* from VWBPE. What was involved in doing your project? What was the most fun/challenging? What knowledge/skills should educators have to effectively produce Machinima with their students?

Pooky: *Time Travelers* is sponsored by ihelp Student Loans / SLFC. We work to create a really interesting and relevant series that makes people think and be wowed whether they are part of Second Life or not. It is very important to me to have the standards that this could be seen anywhere and enjoyed. To be effective in Machinima:

- You must play to the strengths of the platform, and hide the weaknesses - for example - hair cuts through shoulders looking strange to an outworlder - okay use short hair or pony tails - things like this.

- Highly recommend storyboarding your idea and using the picture taking function to get your shot selection set up.

- Work with animations you think look good, sometimes it's easier to write to the animation, etc., than to try to look for something that doesn't exist (turning a door handle comes to mind).

- Set yourself time to make adjustments. If you feel overwhelmed step away and return to it. Buy only stuff you can mod! (hahah!)

- Know that patience and fortitude is what makes the difference in excellence.

Roxie: These are wonderful suggestions. You have told me on a number of occasions how much you admire and appreciate all the work that educators do to help students learn. What knowledge and skills do educators need to know and do, to help promote education in sl and to make learning meaningful for students?

Pooky: Great question - People love to be involved in what they are doing in Second Life - the beauty and freedom are truly something that we should never take for granted. I think wowing the students with some great visuals and locations is wonderful to set them up for what can be accomplished here. Showing the Dresden Art gallery / Kalepa - DaVinci Gardens / International Spaceflight Museum / NOAA and more helps students to understand the high level of thought going on here. Take them to Virtually Science or to any of the MICA lectures on StellaNova. It is important to show students what can be done here. This creates interest and from this an educator can build what they want the students to know - whether its to research a topic in order to recreate it / build it, or to do a research paper - showing broad brush strokes of what is possible. This piques their interest, and then giving them an assignment can help them keep it.

I also heavily recommend *The 1st Question* because it's such a fun way of learning and involves the audience.

Roxie: What are your future plans and goals for your work in sl or other virtual worlds?

Pooky: I will continue to prototype shows I would like to develop on a variety of platforms as this is a perfect place for me to do this. And, to continue to explore crafting the best quality film imaginable here in SL and also to branch out onto other girds as we are needed there. I will always be a member of the SL community, though. This is the most unique platform on Earth! I feel so lucky to be here!

Roxie: I agree. Second Life has something for everyone. I always tell people that you can do anything in second life that you can do in first life, and a whole lot more. Which brings us to a personal question – the ones *inquiring minds* want to know (LOL). In your free time what do you enjoy doing for fun in second life?

Pooky: I love to shop for outfits and find a great satisfaction in putting together a wonderful outfit. I have always loved clothes. (My mother was a model and had an amazing closet full of couture and designer creations.) I love being able to get exactly the right belt, shoes, earrings etc. I look at an outfit as something to create that has balance and style. I love listening to Janine Scarborough and will generally drop anything to go hear her sing "Lily Marlene." I do love the live music and have

other favorites – Watch Whisper Sadowsky is another. There are a few - the live music is “*chill your bones*” good!

Roxie: Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Pooky: You can take chances in Second life with anything and everything from décor to style to passing interests. It is this freedom to find out who you are and what you want from the safety of your home that is so great. We find our true strengths here and we find one another. Stay strong and connected, we are truly all in this as one.

Roxie: Thank you so much for taking the time to answer not only *The 1st Question* with us, but to share your passion and joy of integrating what you do best in second life – which makes all of our first lives that much more enjoyable. You are an amazing, creative, talented artist, who, as an early adaptor and gamer, is using Machinima to change the landscape of animation. You are certainly a role-model for everyone (students and adults) who have stories to tell and want to share them through this different lens, and art form called Machinima. Thank you for blazing the trail and showing the rest of us the possibilities that can be found in our second life and beyond. And, next time you want to go shopping, give me a call! LOL Lady, you have amazing style!



You can learn more about Pooky and her work at: <http://www.pookymedia.com/>

And the following URLS:

<http://www.pookymediafilms.com/>

<http://www.thedatingcasino.com/>

<http://www.pookyamsterdam.com/>

TIME TRAVELERS 4

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVSrbms2mjo>

An Open Letter From Scott Merrick

Dear Fellow Educators:

We're missing something. Virtual worlds present an amazing array of opportunities for learning and teaching; and small pockets of educators, widely dispersed on a global scale, get it, fundamentally and sometimes passionately. Beautiful things are being done all around, and they have been done for years. Witness the 21 episodic archives of often stunning talks by virtual worlds pioneers that resides at [the ISTE SIGV E wiki](#). Witness all the "Projects" detailed there. The "Presentations," the "Showcase," the "Work." Beautiful things, promising things, exciting things, fun things. Potentially paradigm-shifting things. And that's only one of the several globally dispersed pockets of enthusiasts who are working in the field.

Still, we are virtual miles away from mainstream adoption.

I wrote an article in April 2008 for [innovateonline.info](#), called [Videoconferencing K-12: The State of the Art](#). In it I cited Fred M. Beshears' model for technology integration. At the risk of being criticized for quoting myself, I do:

In an online document illustrating "The Technology Adoption Life-cycle" Fred M. Beshears presents a model for understanding how educators adopt new technologies in their work. Drawing upon a bell curve graph developed by G. A. Moore (1991) to trace different segments of the technology market, Beshears suggests that the adoption of technology by educators follows a similar pattern. Beginning with the "Innovators" and "Early Adopters," the curve includes a "Chasm"—a sort of no-man's land between those early groups and full adoption—as well as a group termed the "Early Pragmatists"—whom Beshears describes as "the solid citizens who do not like to take the risks of pioneering, but are ready to see the advantages of tested technologies. They are the beginning of a mass market" (para. 4).

http://innovateonline.info/pdf/vol2_issue1/Videoconferencing_K-12-__The_State_of_the_Art.pdf

Try as we have, we have not achieved main-“market” adoption. We're still stuck in the early upswing of the bell curve of adoption. We remain fringe-dwellers, razor's edge walkers, and preachers to the choir. Who's reading this article that isn't

already a member of the virtual choir? Who would even approach the topic so beautifully shared in this tabloid labor of love if they didn't at least sense a glimmer of hope for its richly diverse potentials, sparkling weakly in the distance. No one.

Still we plug on, and rightly so. Why? We continue because continuing is what we do. Our strong community of learners and teachers knows the value of the Fun Factor, the power of "sense of place at a distance." If most folks never get it, it won't be because we failed to share examples of why virtual environments can be a valuable tool for learning and teaching. It is in that spirit that I offer a brief overview of what I'm into now—it's just a little share-share, one more tree in the forest.

MNPS Virtual Worlds, an Overview, by Scott Merrick

Unity Jibe, a virtual world platform built with and developed in [the Unity game design engine](#), is the brainchild of <http://reactiongrid.com/2011/home.aspx> a Florida-based company founded by Kyle and Robin Gomboy with Boston-transplanted Britisher Chris Hart. It has enjoyed a brisk rollout and sustains a growing community of learning spun off from earlier efforts in OpenSimulator. An educator beginning to work in Unity has his or her work cut out for him or her. (That pronoun fiasco was a bit awkward, wasn't it?) Like learning anything new, the task looks daunting from the bottom of the steps; but I have one substantial bit of encouragement: **If I can do it, anyone can.** Seriously.

First a little background:

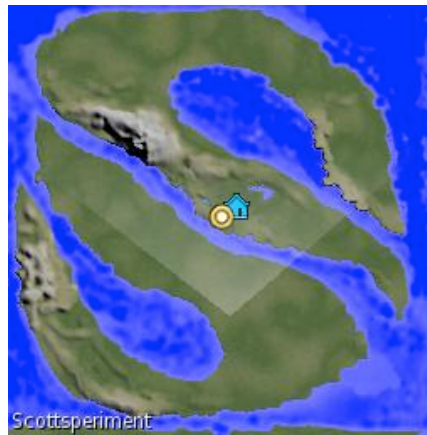
I have been experimenting with ReactionGrid in OpenSimulator for quite some time, beginning in, I think, late 2009. At least it was in November of that year when I posted an announcement on my blog, "[Oh! VirtualLearning!](#)," about ISTE Special Interest Group for Virtual Environments tour of ReactionGrid, including, as I announced,

--A fine and complex project to honor the 1939 New York World's Fair (maybe these will soon be called "Worlds' Fairs"), see a Flickr slideshow [here](#)

--A budding Michigan pioneer village at My Michigan

- Our own fave Aussie Jokay further expanding her virtual education empire, [Jokaydia](#)
- the [Greenbush CSI](#), yes, Crime Scene Investigation
- [CoolCatTeacher Viki Davis](#) engaging her Georgia students with virtual world challenges
- a wonderful art gallery with thought provoking displays of eclectic art
- dozens of educators flexing their perceptions of what learning is and how best to share it with their students

Very shortly after that, I took a little plunge and purchased, at my own expense, a trial sim in ReactionGrid, calling it “Scottsperiment.” In a perhaps megalomaniacal gesture of modification, I terraformed it into a giant “S.” A river ran through it.



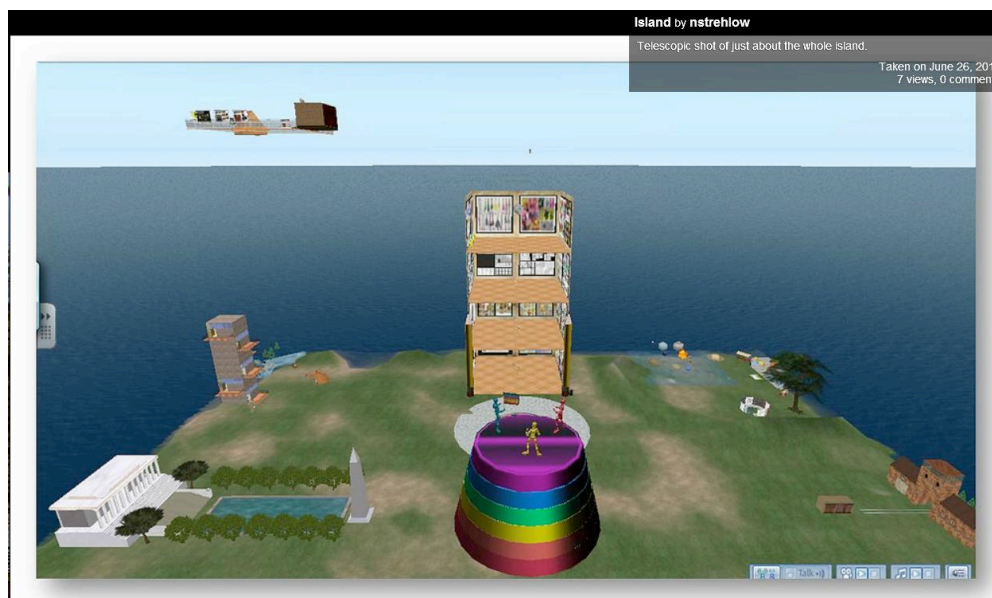
I spent months playing with my island in my spare time, creating sandboxes parceled out to enable customized building permissions, displaying replications of real-world art shows from the school where I taught K-4 Technology, offering free parcels to educators on a global scale, and generally taking the tool for a months-long spin. The following spring, our own Roxie Neiro (Rosie Vojtek), drew a crowd at the Virtual Worlds Best Practices in



Education conference when she collaborated with Haley Dunning to lead educators on a Scavenger Hunt designed to introduce them to ReactionGrid.

Attendees were guided by [a Google Presentation document](#) that pointed the way and contained links and resources. Disappointingly, though, I never got students into Scottsperiment. I just couldn't bet beyond the hesitation an educator in a private school feels when, yes, it is possible for children to tweak their appearances inappropriately and to run around naked if they are of an inclination to do so. I did take 4th graders into [Quest Atlantis](#), though, and that was a richly rewarding two years. Its wealth of quests and fun ActiveWorlds-based environments made for some learning exploration that I hope some of those students, high schooler's now, will not forget.

One of the most wonderful examples of a best use of ReactionGrid was and continues to be Noreen Strehlow's work as an art teacher. Noreen at that time used her ReactionGrid island as an LED projector ready online repository of teaching resources, useful as she travelled from school to school as an itinerate art instructor



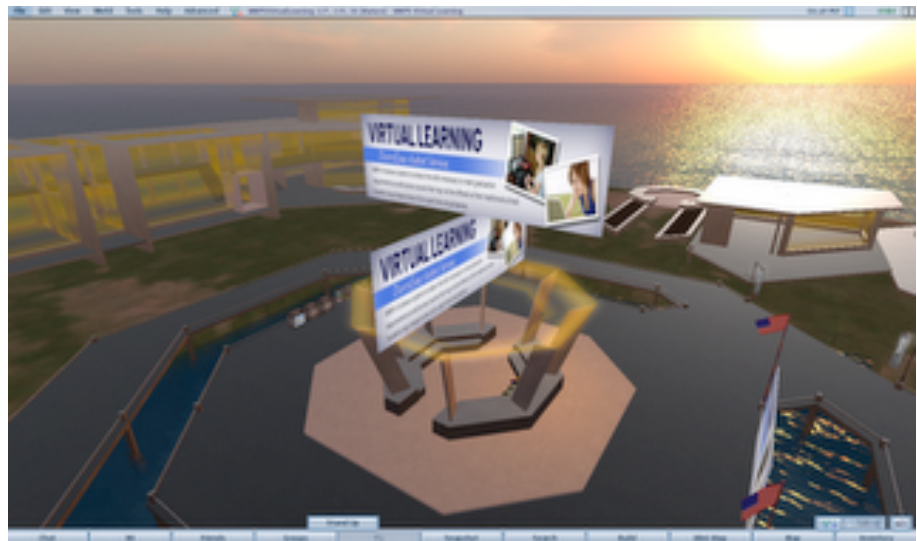
for little kids. I remember her saying how much more attention she could get from a Kindergartener when she was an avatar who could fly. There is a wonderful

Flickr set of her initial forays into ReactionGrid [here](#). And here is one long view from that photo set:

In August, 2010, I began work building out a space in ReactionGrid for Metro Nashville Public Schools Virtual Learning program. I had left my 15 year-long employment with University School of Nashville to establish an online virtual high

school for our ~80,000 student public school district, and I was told that one factor influencing my job offer was my expertise in virtual worlds. I was ecstatic about that, and I set about building a space we could use for students to meet and socialize. In my mind, the affordances of virtual worlds for socialization are important and valuable: One of the biggest objections from opponents of distance learning is the lack of social opportunities. This could be big.

Well, it's *still* not big. Our public school project, now the first State of Tennessee licensed public virtual school, has not yet found its footing enough to be fertile ground to implement this kind of



innovative resource. We served several hundred students with two different Learning Management Systems in 2010-11, graduating seven full-timers and helping many part-timers--who took one or more online classes while attending brick-and-mortar schools--gain credits they otherwise would not have been able to accrue. We used another LMS for our hurried start-up for 2011-12 and we now facilitate nearly 200 part-timers and 17 full-timers. With the challenges of initial online learning experiences themselves, it simply seems too much to roll out an apparently radical option at this time, especially considering that the District has now settled on the LMS it, and we, will use permanently. Having facilitated the now defunct E4TN's Desire2Learn, Aventa K12's LMS, Florida Virtual School's proprietary LMS, and then BrainHoney through FLVS's Easy Start program, we will be moving to Blackboard for 2012-13 and beyond. This will require unimaginable but essential efforts of design and implementation. I can't see our using anything virtual worlds based until at least 2013-14. Wow! That's the first time I've admitted this! Writing can be a self-illuminating process.

Still, I'm hopeful. Why? Because Hopeful is what we do!

I'm so hopeful that I've been working in a completely new virtual worlds platform for over a month now and I'm beginning to see potentials. Here's what I see.

Unity Jibe can be embedded on any web-page and is “playable” with no local client download, just a simple plug-in. A new user can choose an avatar from a set of options, download plug-in and then the world's code locally, and be inside the world within 60 seconds. Coming soon is mobile device capability. That is huge!



With Blackboard, of course, the welcome page above, and the world within, would be displayed as its own html object, a web-page. This is a new option for virtual worlds—a world within a webpage. It suggests some obvious (or not so, so I shall elucidate) affordances. The webpage can be modified as needed. Just yesterday I included an iframe on the right with welcome text and an embedded video.

Display of informational material

It is relatively easy to construct objects in Unity and to texture them with images one has created on one's computer. I have done that with our introduction pamphlet (already out of date, by the way, but easily updatable once I have the new information). Unlike Second Life and OpenSimulator, there is currently not a capability to add user-created content. An avatar, cannot, for example create an object and modify it in any way from within the world—it is a world for visiting, not for building. That said, with proper access and basic skills instruction, students certainly could create image files for displays that would be installed by their instructor. Displays of that sort could be “Demonstrations of Understanding” on any topic.

Online courseware

Course content itself could be loaded into a Jibe world. I've set out in our world a suggestion of how this might take place, using the first couple of screens in the

How to Navigate in Jibe

- Press WASD or arrow keys to walk
- Hold W to start running
- Press E or C to fly up or down
- Press space while moving to jump
- Click-drag on screen to move camera
- Click on chairs to sit
- To stand up, walk forward or backward



Pearson/FLVS “Learning with BrianHoney” course. I envision setting out all the slides (once I have permission to do so) in a

progression an avatar would walk along, perhaps submitting assignments at stations interspersed between the slides. As of this writing, the reading of the “slides” is a little wonky, but that soon will be easily remedied by setting out cube chairs an avatar would sit upon at each slide to force a camera view which is set to fill the screen with the slide. Here is a long view (to adjust my sharing here for copyright considerations) of my avatar hanging out in front of the introductory slide:

How to Navigate in Jibe

- Press WASD or arrow keys to walk
- Hold W to start running
- Press E or C to fly up or down
- Press space while moving to jump
- Click-drag on screen to move camera
- Click on chairs to sit
- To stand up, walk forward or backward



[View: Is MNPS Virtual school right for me?](#)

Welcome!

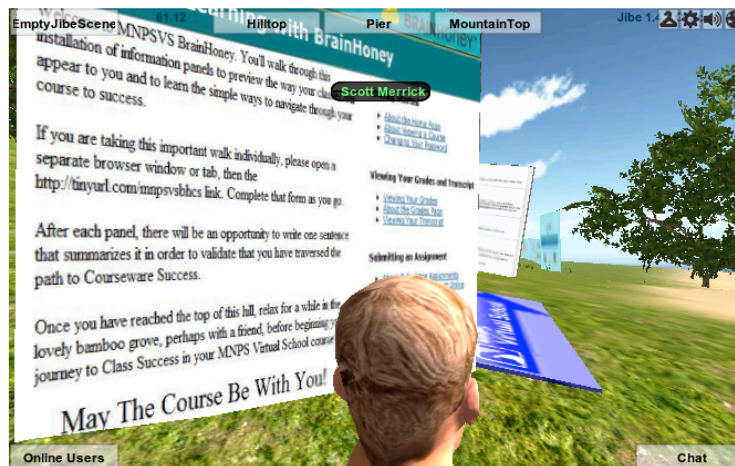
Welcome to this experiment in 3D Virtual Learning. Feel free to explore and experience. If you have any suggestions at all about how this space might best be used with online high school students who are working in conventional Learning Management System with increasingly traditional online coursework, please share those with [Scott Merrick](#)

I modified the image from the online course content in BrainHoney with instructions for the inworld experience of it. Different scenarios could be created to

ensure and verify/assess student completion of course work. In an actual class, of course, a means for assignment submission could be offered at each station. A “dropbox,” perhaps, where a student could drag a document or a link to an online document into an object.

How to Navigate in Jibe

- Press WASD or arrow keys to walk
- Hold W to start running
- Press E or C to fly up or down
- Press space while moving to jump
- Click-drag on screen to move camera
- Click on chairs to sit
- To stand up, walk forward or backward



Meetings

As I have already mentioned, one popular objection to distance learning is the lack of social contact. Virtual Worlds can help provide “sense of being together at a distance.” Text chat is already available at the Jibe MNPS Virtual School. More advanced Jibe packages than I can afford at this time include Vivox voice capability, a la “Voice” in Second Life; and in my little beta development stage, I would use Skype or Google Chat to add that feature to the inworld toolbox. We already set up all our adjunct teachers with Google Chat and Google Voice numbers to enhance communication capabilities, and with the addition of voice capability, this could be one more way for them to complete required course module “Discussion Based Assessments,” class meetings, and one-to-one tutoring. I’ve set up several small chat areas for privacy in our MNPSVS Jibe world, each of which is readily accessible via the link always present at the top of the viewer screen.

There's the Hilltop:

How to Navigate in Jibe

- Press WASD or arrow keys to walk
- Hold W to start running
- Press E or C to fly up or down
- Press space while moving to jump
- Click-drag on screen to move camera
- Click on chairs to sit
- To stand up, walk forward or backward



[MNPS Virtual School](#)



The Pier:

How to Navigate in Jibe

- Press WASD or arrow keys to walk
- Hold W to start running
- Press E or C to fly up or down
- Press space while moving to jump
- Click-drag on screen to move camera
- Click on chairs to sit
- To stand up, walk forward or backward



and The Mountaintop:

How to Navigate in Jibe

- Press WASD or arrow keys to walk
- Hold W to start running
- Press E or C to fly up or down
- Press space while moving to jump
- Click-drag on screen to move camera
- Click on chairs to sit
- To stand up, walk forward or backward



[MNPS Virtual School](#)



All of this content was created using the free basic version of Unity, inside a hosted server space funded by a portion of the modest annual “classroom money” I receive as a public school teacher. I purchased a lease for my MNPS Virtual School Island with the “Oceanic” license package at a cost of \$125.00. That bought me three months of hosting and the Jibe Developer Kit, a huge set of textures, objects, scripts and other resources that have allowed me to make as much progress as I have made, working here and there, mostly at home but sometimes at work in between the pressing projects and challenges that are part building an online school.

A school or school system with real financial support for a Jibe project should likely purchase its developer [the Pro version of Unity](#) (\$1500) and a much more facile and feature-rich package than our beta “Oceanic” package from Reactiongrid. There are many options to choose from but I believe the Mars package would do everything we would need, for \$650 annually. Here’s a screengrab from the licensing breakdown at the <http://reactiongrid.com> “shop:”



Well, that's the quick and dirty rundown. I hope this overview has fueled some imaginations, created some controversy, or will serve as some good leisure-time reading. I'm done--at least with this article: I'm *not* done exploring!

You may enjoy visiting our experimental spaces in ReactionGrid OpenSimulator (visit ReactionGrid, register an avatar, and login to their OpenSim space, click "Places" and visit MNPS Virtual School) and in Jibe. Go to <http://jibemicro2.reactiongrid.com/MNPSVS/> and have at it!

May you cherish those you love, work untiringly for the good of our youth and our future, and trust in your own good judgment as you learn and you teach. Keep the Faith, whichever it is.

November 26, 2011, Scott Merrick

Virtual Worlds Impact on Various Aspect of Student Learning

By Dr. Amy Fox Billig

A significant component of my ninth grade computer applications curriculum is devoted to digital citizenship and cyber safety. In 2009, a colleague and I wrote a solid curriculum addressing digital citizenship, creative content, and copyright law as well as various aspects of cyber safety including cyber bullying, revealing too much information, tracking, grooming, social networking, and texting while driving. This was in response to e-rate mandates. We brought in components from pre-published material as well as articles, videos, and online research. The lessons were well planned and activities were interesting albeit routine. Social interactions were often forced among group members.

After teaching two semesters of the course this way, I wanted to see if I could use virtual worlds to create a more engaging environment that would still support learning and critical thinking skills. It made sense to teach online skills in an online environment that supports constructivist, constructionist, and social learning theories. I developed a quantitative action research experimental design study to test whether this was possible.

That spring, another colleague and I created our own self-hosted open-sim grid, *Grand Central Grid*. We developed the region to support instruction and restructured each of the lessons to better fit a virtual environment while preserving the content. We were ready to use this environment by the fall semester of 2010.

Content delivery in the virtual world was through the use of inworld instructional media and interaction with the content as it is being delivered. The delivery methods included: reading; researching; presentations; videos; social networking profiles; Facebook Security Day; inworld group discussions; inworld group written assignments; inworld constructions; inworld role-play; and the creation of an inworld screencast public service announcement on any one aspect of the unit taught.

Students of digital citizenship and all group discussions and work was done within group pods. Pods are simply a group of sitting-cushions in a circle that are lifted into the air and each group is out of text reach of other groups.

One project in the digital citizenship portion of the unit involving the use of the discussion pods and content construction was creating representations of the four fair use factors. Groups of students had to construct objects or scenarios in the virtual world that depicted fair and unfair use of one of the four factors of fair use. The groups first met in their pods to brainstorm ideas for the factor they were assigned. All conversations were text based since members of the groups were dispersed in the physical classroom.



One group, illustrating the factor regarding the content's impact on the market, chose to build an iPhone© and a PearPhone with a bar chart showing the rising sales of the PearPhone compared with the iPhone©. Another group, illustrating the factor regarding educational use, created a classroom with a copyrighted poem to read and study in class and then a computer screen showing a blog posting that poem as if it were the blogger's original poem. After the project, the groups went back to their pods to discuss questions regarding the four factors and to submit the answers to the teacher on an inworld notecard. The researcher was able to monitor each group's text chats and refocus and redirect the conversation as needed.

Another activity in the virtual world was about profile security. Each avatar has a profile that other users can access. After a class discussion on safe practices, students completed their inworld profiles. The next day each student's profile was displayed on the white

board. The rest of the class was able to review each profile and make suggestions for further safety improvements. This activity was followed by *Facebook Day*, an activity in which both groups participated.

On *Facebook Day* the students were shown all of the safety features available and locked down their accounts to make them visible only to friends and to prevent third party applications from accessing their personal information. They also modified their profiles appropriately.



Role-play in the virtual world was used to have students learn and practice how to react and behave in various online situations. The students played a role-playing game in which each student was partnered anonymously with another student inworld. Each was to try to simultaneously elicit the real life identity of the other while protecting his or her own identity in instant messaging chat. Their text conversations were logged, evaluated, and reviewed with the students. The final project of the unit was to create public service announcement videos inworld using the screen-capture software Jing. These videos, called Machinima, were then brought into iMovie for final editing. Students in the control group engaged in the same activity, but did their filming in the classroom and school.

The results of the study were encouraging. The data supported the null hypotheses that integrating the virtual world into a federally mandated curriculum on Digital Citizenship

and Cyber Safety was equally as effective as traditional methodologies with respect to student achievement, higher order thinking skills, and test motivation. This was consistent with a significant body of research finding that online-learning, or e-learning, is as effective as face-to-face learning. Informal observations of the classroom showed increases in engagement, staying on task, socialization, and risk-taking.

The success of the work we did last year encouraged me to continue teaching the curriculum in a virtual world through the 2011-2012 school year. We are currently using Jokaydia Grid and have again developed a structured learning environment there where our students can work, learn, play, create, and demonstrate understanding of content. We invite all to visit our class region, *The Den*, to see the great work our students are doing.

Dr. Amy Fox Billig is a computer science and mathematics teacher at Valhalla High School in New York and can be reached at amy.billig@gmail.com



ISTE Speaker Series January 16, 2012

Crowd Sourcing a Games Competition

By Kae Novak aka Kavon Zenovka

We're grass-roots and community. We can't offer the financial incentives of National STEM video game challenge <http://www.stemchallenge.org/>, we don't have the backing of the U.S. Army's Federal Virtual Worlds Challenge <http://challenge.gov/Army/53-federal-virtual-worlds-challenge> or the MacArthur Foundation's HASTAC Digital Media and Learning Competition 4 <http://dmlcompetition.net/Competition/4/teachers.php> But, we have seen and participated in extraordinary learning, creativity and content building with our students and our peers in virtual worlds and MMORPGs (Massively Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Games). So we decided to find a way to showcase and celebrate it. We crowd sourced a games competition and used it as a 'Call to Arms' for user created content and purposeful play.

The Virtual Worlds UnSymposium <http://vw.unsymposium.org/vwgus-2011-schedule> was held in Second Life on CAVE island on November 4 and 5, 2011. The official theme for 2011 was Games, Community and Play but the broad message that came out of the educators' discussion was really the importance of user generated content. This message infused each discussion whether it was about building in an user created virtual world like Second Life or even the opportunity to contribute to the theorycraft in World of Warcraft.

The UnSymposium had two sessions on Machinima, how it was created and how it could be used in the classroom. KnowClue Kidd showed her students' Machinima; the attendee's favorite was "**LEGO Universe – Crumple's Pet Skunk Tutorial**" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llflzfk4nmQ>. It is a Machinima of a student explaining how to make user created content in a video game. Crumple gives a very detailed explanation on the trial and error attitude you need to have towards building. Gord Holden, in his **SIMPLE Education** –

Simulations and Immersive Play for Learning Experience session gave us a tour of a language focused environment in ActiveWorlds, where we saw examples of how his students were learning and building. For the finale, Bron Stuckey and Joanna Kay of MASSIVELY MINECRAFT, <http://www.massivelyminecraft.org/> gave a tour of Minecraft, the user experience and their guild.

So, for the **Crowd Sourcing a Games Competition** session, this group of educators, came up with a Games and Simulation Fest that will be held for the first time at 2012 VWBPE. The crowd thought it was especially important to celebrate creativity and user created content whether it was in a very open system like Active Worlds or if it was developing additional quests for World of Warcraft. Of course, all of this was influenced by Knowclue Kidd's students' paintball game that they presented at the VWBPE Paintball tour <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXF0o0nFdZU> and the people at MASSIVELY MINECRAFT. The system they created for their guide, experience points and leveling is truly awesome. What they did along with the system built by 3DGamesLab inspired us to add the last category of "Guild Structure/Badges and Pontification."

So here's the final version of our "Call to Arms" or perhaps "Call to Play"

Games and Simulations FEST

Celebrating User Created Content in Every Game and Virtual World.

What have you created? Show us!

Submissions Due 2/15/2012

To encourage the production of user created games and the growth of a community of educators, researchers, and students who produce games and simulations, VWBPE will be holding a games and simulation fest during the 2012 conference. An individual or group can make submission. A panel of educators, researchers,

students, and gamers will choose a best in each category. Additional recognition may be given based on the recommendation of panel. We are looking for games and simulation whether they be solely for fun or purposeful play for education and training. So be bold and brave and most of all **BE EPIC!**



Games and simulations produced by educators, researchers, students and the community will be accepted in the categories listed below.

Games Submission Categories:

Mini-Game

Short quick play games that are designed for multiple iterations. An example would be a puzzle, board game, or quick quiz show all contained in a virtual world.

Games Submission Categories (cont.):

Game within a Game

Short game contained within another game. An example would be a user created questline in City of Heroes or World of Warcraft. This could also be an adventure or competition within Minecraft.

Role-play

Games that require players to login to a specific location and actively play key roles or characters during the game while others are also acting out roles. These may include a free flowing extemporaneous style that does not necessarily need to have a win/lose conclusion.

Simulation

Games that model specific situations that the player may face in real life. Examples would include business meetings, ordering food in a restaurant, flying a plane, or operating on a patient.

Guild Structure/Badges/Pontification

This category focuses on the use of various tools for motivating the player to continue play and/or received feedback on progress.

Other

This category can include any game or simulation that does not fit the categories above.

This may be a NPIRL (Not Possible in Real Life) scenario that is played as a game or simulation, a scenario created from a novel, historical recreation or anything else that involves play.

For more details, please go to <http://www.vwbpe.org/blog/games-and-simulations-cpf-technical-details>

Happy Birthday!

VSTE Island Turns Three!

By Marie Booz aka Mandie Mimulus

The Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE) has had a presence in Second Life opening the first VSTE World Headquarters on EduIsland 3 in 2006. Three years later, VSTE Island came online and will celebrate its third birthday in January 2012 – Yay!



With the help of passionate volunteers who recognized the potential of using a virtual environment as another avenue for professional development, VSTE in Second Life has been providing its membership with program content every Monday night (5-6PM SLT) since November 2008. Each week one of four main programs strands is presented: Guest speakers, tours of educational sims in Second Life, make-and-take building workshops, and networking events. Recently, we hosted Leko Littlebird's session on Creating Textures using Photoshop.

The VSTE Island facilitators also host open mic nights, mobile technology user group meetings, and book discussions. This past summer/early fall VSTE Island hosted Julie Ramsay, *author of Can We Skip Lunch and Keep Writing?* as we held conversations about the importance of student collaboration.



This fall VSTE Island was the virtual classroom for a Center for Teaching Excellence at UVA-WISE undergraduate course – The 21st Century Instructor: Transforming Education through Technology. Course participants explored five key trends for technology's role in education through interactive presentations from experts in the field, virtual field trips to see these trends in action, and through working and learning collaboratively with peers in Second Life.



As you can imagine, we were buzzing here at VSTE Island as we put the final touches on this year's Second Life playground events at the annual Technology in Education Conference, December 4 -6, 2011, in Roanoke, Virginia. We had several inworld guests joining us:

Thunder Road: Walk with Thunder Insippo into VSTE's Second Life space. She demonstrated what happens on the road to VSTE Island and how it helps with real life teaching and learning.

Electric Avenue: Mandie Mimulus lead a tour of some educational simulations in Second Life that makes this virtual environment shine for educators.

SIGVE: Virtual Environments Special Interest Group – Participants met Scott MerrickOh and Spiff Whitfield, "In World" as they introduce us to ISTE's SIGVE.

Senior Project: Emilia Cornwall, Technology Manager, Senior Project at P4DL, Inc. presented the Senior Project program for high school students.

Blood on the River – A Collaboration Project: Jewels Shilova and Alfredo Bedrosian discussed how Henrico County and Virginia Beach 4th grade students held a collaborative novel study using the book, *Blood on the River, Jamestown 1607* and VSTE Island's Jamestown recreation.

Expedition Central: Cyrus Hush took participants on a tour of art, science and history-related exhibits built in Second Life.

Understandably, not much stays constant in Second Life and here on VSTE Island, we are consistently adding new builds. VSTE Island's Jamestown and the Powhatan Indian village debuted when VSTE Island opened in January 2009. During the summer of 2009 we opened the exhibit, First Africans at Jamestown, and in December 2010 we opened the virtual recreation of Natural Bridge, a geological formation found in western Virginia.

At this year's VSTE Educational Technology Conference we opened a recreation of Virginia's Luray Caverns beneath the VSTE Island Community Center. Discussion has already begun on recreating Chincoteague Island, home of the wild ponies who provided inspiration for the novel, *Misty of Chincoteague*.



You can visit VSTE Island and tour the builds at:

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/VSTE%20Island/125/137/24>

On Walkabout

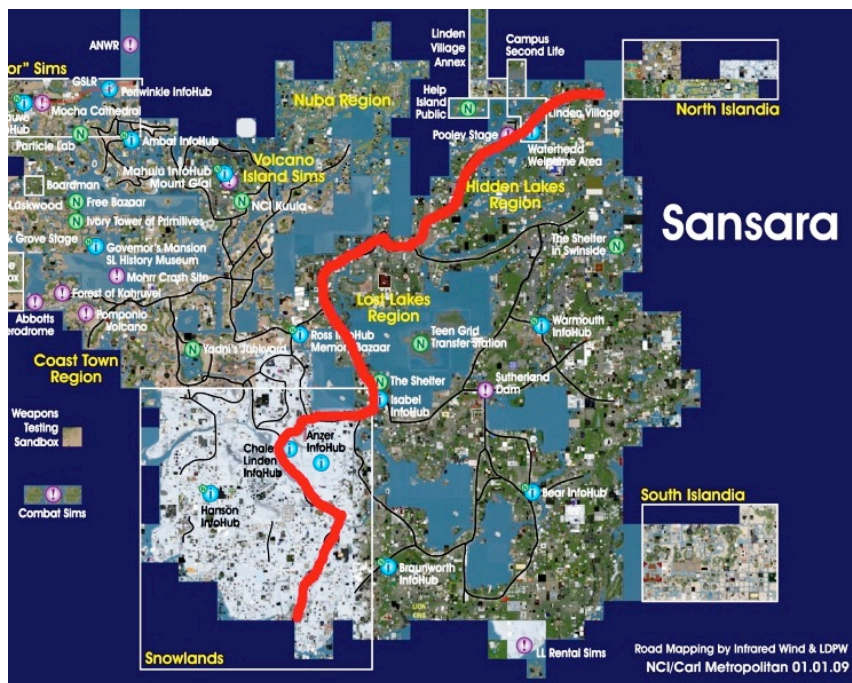
by Cyrus Hush aka Matt Poole

(a continuing series. . .)

The great epic travel novel has already been done and done well many times by lots of gifted writers. To my knowledge, however, it hasn't really been done in Second life yet, or not like this anyway. And if it has, well... too bad... —I'm going to do it again! Would you like to come along?

The plan is to walk, ride or swim across every continent in Second Life, checking out interesting people and places along the way. As there are nine continents this will probably take a while even if we elect to pass up Zindra...

Chapter 1 –a journey across the continent of Sansara



Entry #1: The Snowlands of Sansara



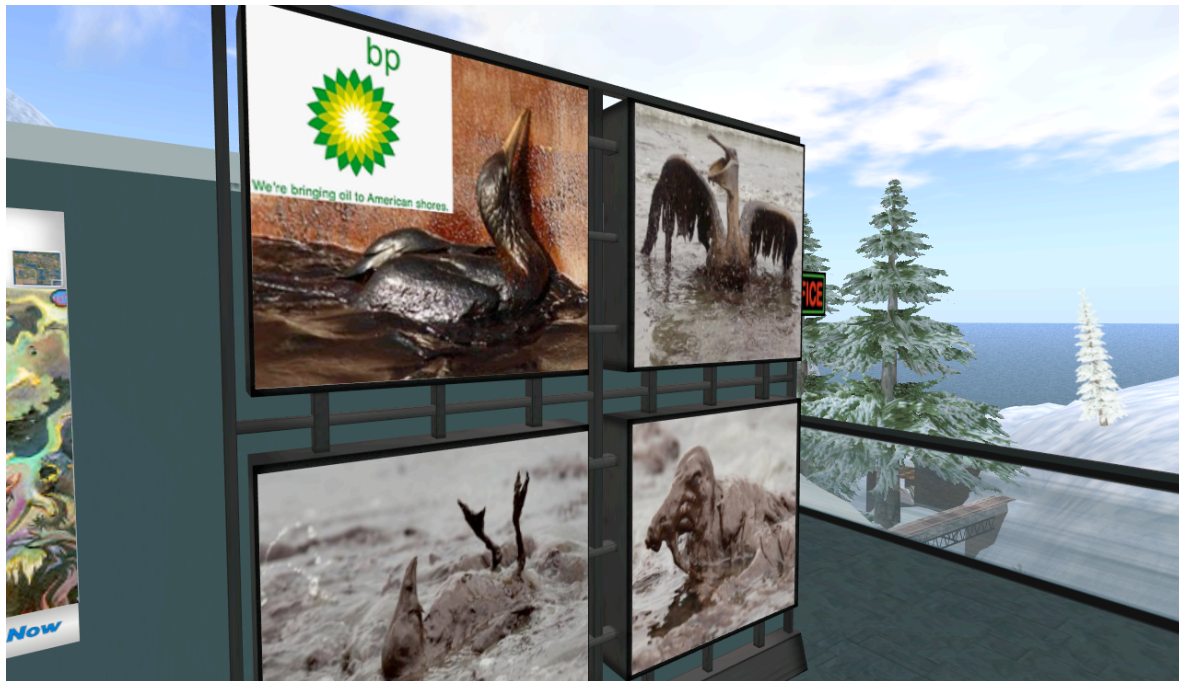
Our journey begins on Sansara --the old continent; the first continent. The Snowlands of Sansara is the place where I first teleported when I created Cyrus back in 2006. On the map it's a big white patch on the southwest corner of the continent. After Help Island I remember teleporting there at random and walking along snowy roads with snow-covered trees on either side. There wasn't a lot of clutter and it seemed very peaceful. This seems like as good a place as any to begin.

We start our adventure on a wooden dock on the southern shore of Sansara, in the Berthouldt Pass Sim. Looking at the map we see and start to follow... not a road really although it looks like it might turn into one. We wander over white rolling tree-covered hills, passing a few woodsy houses and a wandering prim wolf. The path we are following turns into a railroad... sometimes elevated and sometimes

not, with futuristic-looking trains cruising along it at regular intervals. These appear to be automatic. We follow the tracks up the side of a mountain. Up ahead, we see a train station coming up on the left with maps and landmarks extolling the Second Life railway system.

Now entering Smythers Bluff. To be continued...

Entry #2: Smythers Bluff



We continue following the train tracks up the snowy hillsides. Snow-shrouded conifers surround us. We take a leftward fork, and around a bend come to a tall building that turns out to be an art museum belonging to somebody by the name of Mary Wickentower. Many of the pictures decorating the three floors of her gallery are real life, not Second Life, images. There are flowers and fractals with bright colors. There are also some disturbing pictures of oil-covered wading birds and the caption "BP... bringing oil to American shores." Mary appears to be based in the UK, judging from a world time zone chart and a memorial to a deceased Irish sea captain just outside the main building.

A bit further on we find a giant, arcing rainbow bridge called Bifrost, which sounds promising but it doesn't appear to go anywhere. We cross over into Nakishka Valley... to be continued.

Entry #3: Nakishka Valley



The train tracks continue on, periodically elevated by cool-looking stone bridges and towers. We pass a building on the left with an enormous, tapering tube sticking out of its top and a large sign reading "Spacelift." Although this sounds intriguing we are determined to cover some distance today so we pass it by, along with the Scenic Snowlands Trollys we can see on the right side of the tracks. Soon a paved road begins just to the left of the train tracks. We begin following that instead. It's a relief not to have to jump out of the way of the trains all the time...

Winter sports seem to be a prevailing theme in the Snowlands. We pass by the Dollinger Ice Rink and then come to a ski lift that appears to cover most of a sim.

The owner, a nice lady named Almut, appears and shows off the sculptie parka she made for herself. We stay and chat for a bit then mush on down the road still heading north more or less.

Eventually we come to a side road that peels off in an easterly direction. From the map it looks like this road will quickly bring us out of the Snowlands and point us toward a network of inlets and peninsulas, which, if navigated successfully, will bring us eventually to Linden Village and to the Northeastern shores of Sansara. Next stop –Moritz.

Entry #4: Chateau Kriscar



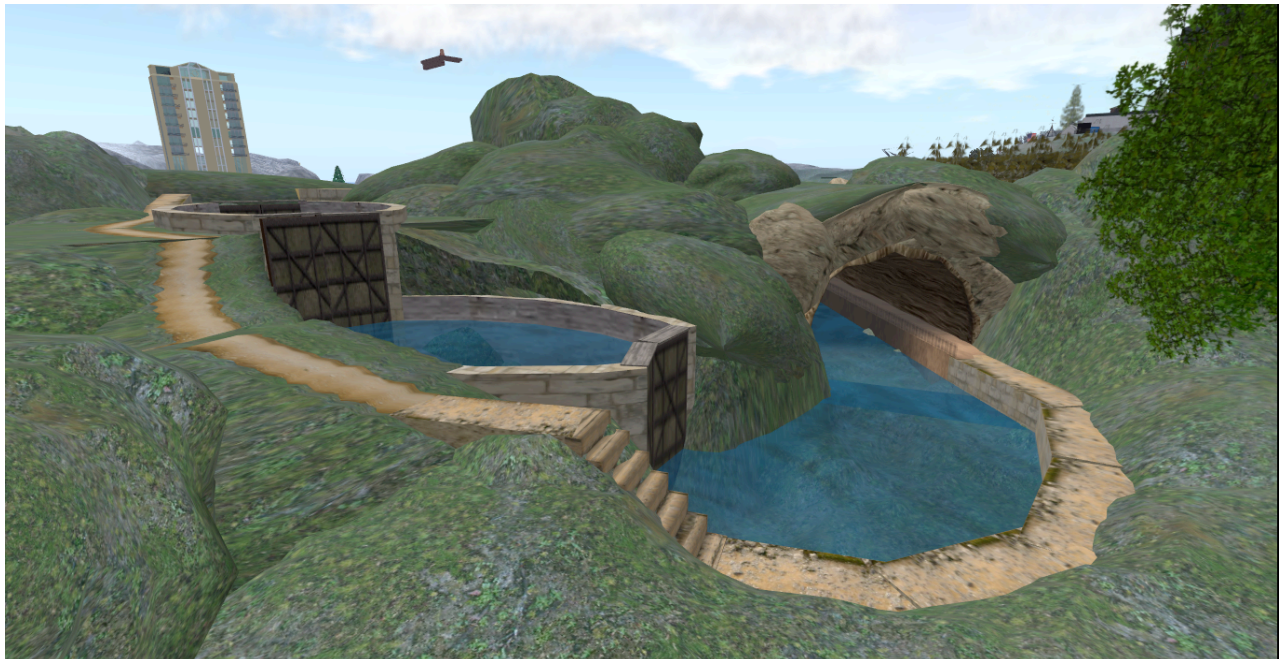
Continuing east, the road climbs up a steep pass in a mountain range. White road-cut walls loom on either side of the snowy road until, rounding a bend, a majestic white palatial building appears to the left. It's really cool, so we park our jacked-up dune buggy (hey why not!) and check it out. Chandeliers, a courtyard, horses, and valet parking... we could get used to this! We wander, pretending that we are children of the rich and famous, and that this is home... A sign says that the place

is called Chateau KrisCar and that it can be rented out for special occasions. Perhaps I'll look for a Will Smith avatar and come back one day.

Leaving Chateau KrisCar we exchange the dune buggy for a cool Italian sports car called a Liberta Vision TT (free from Second Life Marketplace), as we are now feeling all cool, European, and uppity. The official Linden public highway system on the mainland continents offer regularly placed "rez zones" just for bringing vehicles out of inventory. Continuing east we leave the Snowlands and begin to see green fields on either side of the road. An automated hay wagon passes us, coming the other way. So far it's been truly amazing to see just how much automated transportation exists on these Linden highway systems. The nice thing about using the automated systems is that you are free to sightsee more efficiently since you don't have to steer.

We turn North and head into Isabel where there is a big Info Hub and a multitude of other avatars and things start to get r-e-a-l-l-y l-a-g-g-y.... To be continued...

Entry #5: Lakeville



Leaving Isabel the landscape takes on an L. Frank Baum sort of quality as the road meanders past candy trees and banks of flowers with little faces on them. Continuing north, we pass over a big elevated bridge and enter a sim called Lakeville. There is a lot of water in Lakeville, with several rivers and a large lake or estuary off to our left. We see a complex series of locks on a nearby canal, of the type used to raise and lower ships. As we travel an occasional automatic bus or taxi careens by. These automated mass-transit systems operate on the same basic principal as the Second Life railroad system... following an invisible phantom prim down a prearranged track. The theory works great, but in practice these things are subject to the same hiccups when crossing sim borders like other physical vehicles in Second Life... which make them sometimes buck and swerve in their progress as though being driven by inebriated drivers. However, as being run over by a bus in Second Life cannot harm us, there is no cause for alarm.

We take a quick foray off to the right of the road to investigate an interesting-looking spiral hilltop in the distance. This turns out to be an attempt to recreate Mount Olympus... home of the 12 Olympian Gods of Greek mythology. The individuals responsible for the build and associated group are all named something Mole. A visit to the Second Life web site provides more info on this mystery...

http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Linden_Department_of_Public_Works.

Or

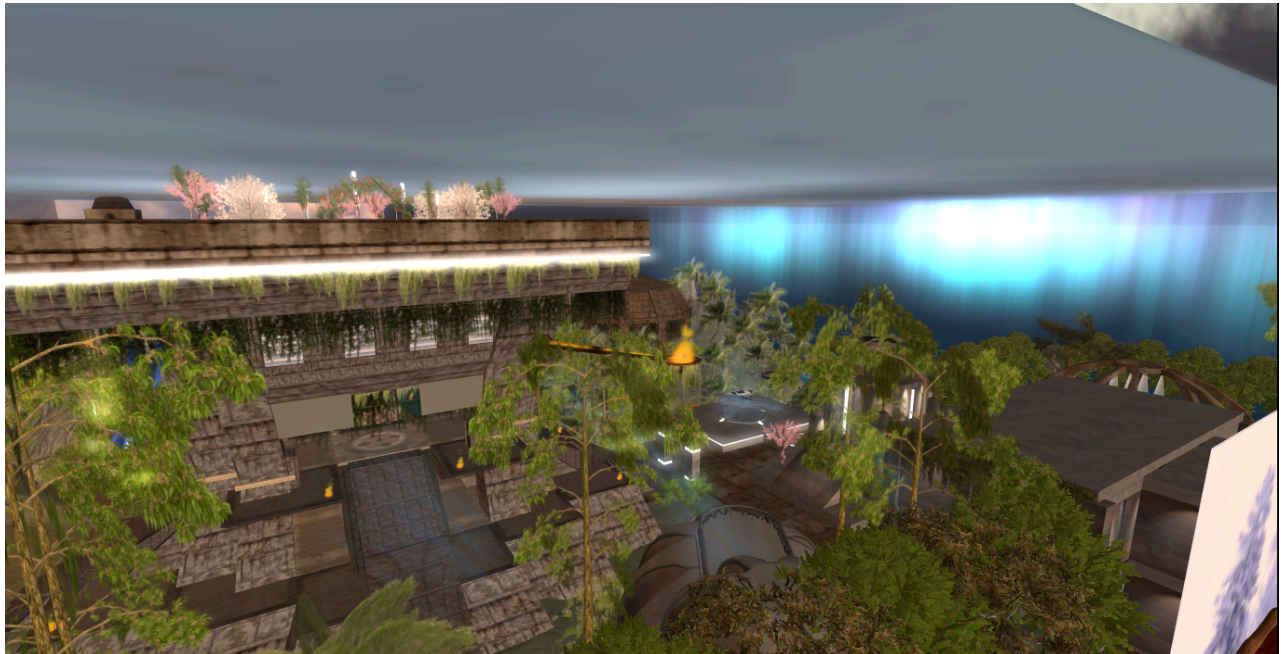
<http://protected-routes.com/>

So the moles are private residents recruited by Linden Labs to assist with mainland content for Second Life public use, and that's what's going on with Mount Olympus. Hmmm... interesting.

On to Bishop sim!

Entry #6: Bishop

Moving through Bishop sim we see a slender tower rising into the sky... really rising... hundreds of meters! We enter a parcel called Hugsy Penguin Skydiving. This sounds pretty tacky but the build is much more interesting



than you might think from the name. Besides the skydiving platform (that was the space needle) there are old medieval towers, forests and what appears to be a horse jumping track. A store there offers many unique freebies, including some free games I have never seen before... a peg-jumping thing reminiscent of the ones on the tables at Cracker Barrel and a water puzzle of some sort.

A bit further on we come to Blue Art design gallery, a furniture store/modern art museum with a really pretty rooftop garden above. The picture above completely fails to do it justice. 'Doing a map check in Brazzos sim... hmmm... It looks like we are on course. If we continue on this road we should be coming to Linden Village after a few more sims...

Entry #7: From Sea to Shining Sea!

Following the road through Maryport sim we spy an interesting-looking building to our left.

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Maryport/199/106/56>

What at first glance had appeared to be a store turns out to be an exhibit called Synergy Moon. This is apparently a big international deal with several websites, the focus of which is to encourage the privatization of space travel. They seemed to be doing a lot with space tourism and had several prototypes of what appeared to be a next generation Martian rover. What really caught my eye was a very cool interactive 3D display of the “local group” of stars -- i.e., the stars that lie within about 20 light years of earth... Alpha Centauri, Tau Ceti, Bernard’s Star, etc. If you click on a star you receive a detailed breakdown on its size, color and orbital oddities. ‘A great learning tool for an astronomy class, I should think.



Moving on into Seascale we can tell we are nearing the end of the line from all of the welcome centers. Welcome centers tend to contain a lot of people, which puts a strain on the servers and tends to make them laggy. Luckily, we are on a quest

and can just press on to the next sim. We pass Pooley and head into Waterhead. We then hang a right, pass another welcome center and enter a sim called Kirkby. If Second Life has a wellspring, a center and a source, it would have to be Kirkby so we instinctively slow our pace and remove our cowboy hats reverently as we pass...

Ahead we spy a big classic Greek building in gleaming white marble which turns out to be the Linden Village landing point and office complex. Most of the stuff around there seems to either have been built by or belong to somebody named Linden. However, other than that it doesn't really look that much different from other areas of Second Life. The Linden Gallery of Resident Art and the Wall of History are definitely worth a look.

Heading north again we pass the old location of White Tiger dojo and the new location of Central Washington University before swinging back up to rejoin the road. Finally... after entering Langdale sim we see orange barricades blocking the road. On the other side is a low wide log building called Wolves Den and Hobo Outpost, at the back of which is a wide deck overlooking the eastern sea.

We made it! In these seven entries we managed a brief glance at one part of one continent of Second Life! There is so much more to see just in Sansara: Bay City, the Governor's Mansion, museums, the very first sims to ever come online... However we must press on in our quest and move ahead next time to the atoll continent of Heterocera. 'Hope to see you there!

Happy trails!

-Cyrus

PS Be sure to visit:

Moritz <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Moritz/90/139/101>

Langdale <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Langdale/212/49/22>

Bertould Pass <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Berthould%20Pass/91/179/28>

Virtual Pioneers History Conference 2012

Be sure to attend the 2nd Annual Virtual Pioneer History Conference on January 20-21. The Virtual Pioneers have been an active Second Life group for since 2007, exploring history and culture by exploring the various history islands and listening to guest speakers. The Virtual Pioneers can be found at:

[http://slurl.com/secondlife/EduIsland 9/20/75/22](http://slurl.com/secondlife/EduIsland%209/20/75/22)

The conference will bring together many of the fantastic past sessions for a refreshing look into world history. The Keynote Speaker this year will be David Klevan (SL- Eubie Doobie) from the US Memorial Holocaust- Kristalnacht Exhibit.

[http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/US Holocaust Museum1/3/35/27](http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/US%20Holocaust%20Museum1/3/35/27)



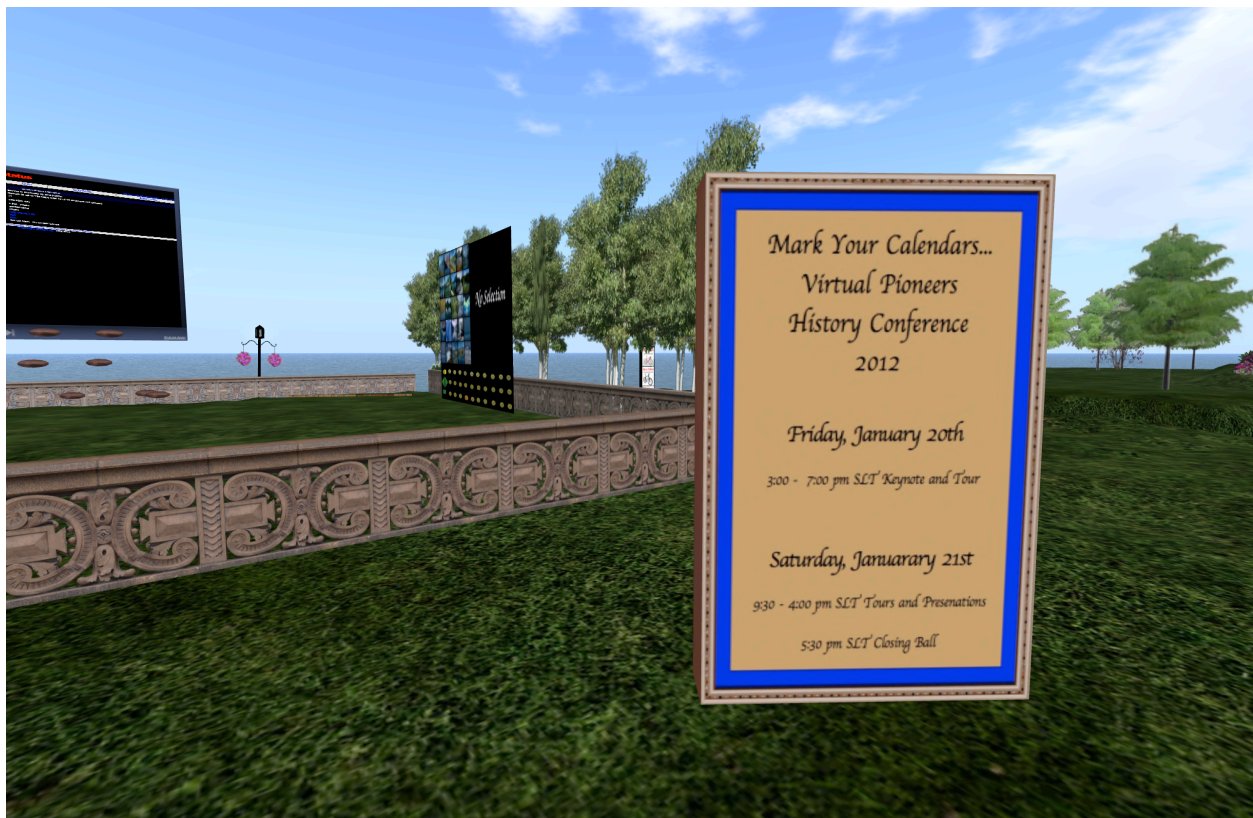
This exhibit is one of the most powerful reflections of virtual environment

learning. This provides the visitor with a mind's eye view of this horrible period in world history by providing primary source documents, audio presentations, video reflection pieces... etc. It is an amazing companion to the Historical Museum's main site in Washington D.C.

After our keynote on Friday we will head over to Renaissance Island to explore, learn, and connect in this long running and exceptional sim.

Saturday will bring numerous other topics and presentations that will cover various virtual environments and learning systems. Please stay tuned for details and updates at our newly renovated home page: <http://virtualpioneers.weebly.com>

Or follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Virtual-Pioneers/106690332686885>



The Virtual Pioneers History Conference 2012 Schedule

January 20-21st

Need help with Second Life? Please go to this location first. There will be volunteers there to assist you.

<http://secondlife.com/destination/phoenix-wave-team>

Friday, January 20

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Biomedicine%20Research%20Labs/107/107/472>

3:00 pm SLT - Newcomer Welcome and Orientation

Ghost Ulich and the volunteer mentors will be available at the New Phoenixia Help Area to assist new residents.

4:00 pm SLT - Keynote

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/EduIsland%209/19/75/22>

The Keynote Speaker this year will be David Klevan (SL- Eubie Doobie) from the US Memorial Holocaust- Kristalnacht Exhibit, one of the most powerful reflections of virtual learning environments. This digital re-creation of a historical time period provides the visitor with a minds eye view of this horrible period in world history by providing primary source documents, audio presentations, video reflection pieces, and graphic representations. It is an amazing companion to the Historical Museum's main site in Washington D.C. In Real Life David is a Museum Educator at the US MM Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. and does workshops and presentations about the Holocaust.

5:30 pm SLT - Tour of Renaissance Island

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Renaissance%20Island/128/128/27>

Amza Hydraconis and other residents of Renaissance Island will show us the many features of the island including a replica of the Globe Theater. We will also have an opportunity to watch an authentic joust. Historical clothes are available in the shops, including some freebies.

Saturday, January 21, 2012

9:00 am SLT - Explore America

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/EduIsland%209/19/75/22>

Scavenger Hunt and Pictorial Collection Kick Off. Come join the fun and your chance to win 1000 Lindens. Notecards and directions available at this time.

10:00 am SLT - The Islands of Enlightenment

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/EduIsland%209/19/75/22>

Spiff Whitfield will highlight his work using a Reaction Grid Open sim environment that gives students a glimpse into history as avatars. The Islands of Enlightenment has 2 Islands that have been developed for historical sims. One of the islands has the Understanding the Holocaust Project whereby students are guided through a series of activities involving the 1942-44 streets of Amsterdam where Anne Frank and her family lay in hiding. Students can interact with the secret annex and learn from source material from PBS, Masterpiece theater materials.

We may get a sneak peek at the second island which is going to be used for a Medieval Roleplaying sim for 6th grade students to learn about the life and challenges of this age.

11:30 SLT - WoW

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/EduIsland%209/19/75/22>

BigD Flanagan and Kimmer Jameson will present on WoW and the skills learned that enable students to build college and career readiness. WoW allows students to build collaboration skills with peers, technical skills as they interface with their own computer platforms, and perhaps most importantly, academic skills in a format where they have enjoyed a modicum of success, i.e. gaming. When the paradigm shifts from traditional classroom delivery models into a more supportive learning community, results can be impressive. BigD will incorporate students from his high school class into this presentation since they are true consumers of this product delivery. In addition, he will utilize existing websites and cite various sources.

1:00 pm SLT - Tour of 1920 Berlin

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/1920s%20Berlin/237/232/751>

Jo Yardley will give us a tour of Berlin in the 1920s. This was a very interesting time, politically, culturally and in many other ways. They have recreated the

atmosphere of this fantastic city in that amazing era. This sim is very realistic and authentic allowing the visitor to experience visiting this time in history..

2:30 pm SLT - Historical Photographs

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/EduIsland%209/19/75/22>

CathyWyo1 Haystack will share her knowledge and love of history in A Non Researcher's presentation on how to study photographs for history, traditions and culture. Cathy will share many photographs and how she has used them to learn about history. Time to dust off those old photographs in your closets and use them to better understand history.

4:00 pm SLT - Antiquity Texas

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Black%20Bear%20Island/115/193/31>

Jacon Cortes, Texas Attorney General, will lead us on a walking tour of Antiquity Texas, an 1800's role playing sim. Jaco is an a creator and designer, craftsman by trade - some of his amazing work is on display and for sale.

5:30 pm SLT - End of Conference Gala Ball

At The Beautiful Duchy Ballroom

<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Languedoc%20Coeur/42/41/45>

Featuring Satin Galli and Erin68 Frog

This real life couple perform together in SL and have proven themselves in Second Life as top vocalists.

Scavenger hunt prizes will be awarded.

Come Join the Fun





**Pictures from the Virtual
Pioneers Scrapbook**



Virtual World's Best Practices in Education Conference March 15 – 18, 2012

Be Epic!

ep·ic

['εpɛp-ik] **adjective**

*An **epic** (from the Greek adjective ἐπικός (epikos), from ἔπος (epos) “word, story, poem”) is a lengthy narrative poem ordinarily concerning a serious subject containing details of heroic deeds and events significant to a culture or nation.*

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry

*“Be all **Epic** and stuff.” a classroom mantra
in Mrs. Sheehy’s WoW in School*

<http://wowinschool.pbworks.com>.

***Epic** is a level of item quality between rare and legendary.*

<http://www.wowwiki.com/Epic>

***Epic** is being able to attend a virtual conference with cutting edge participants and brilliant bleeding edge presenters and explore engagement, immersion and NPIRL* education.*

**Not Possible in Real Life*



For more information visit

<http://www.vwbpe.org/>

Installation 2: Open Letter from Scott Merrick/Scottmerrick Oh

Day 2 of the ISTE 2011 SIGVE Virtual Environments Playground!

In the last issue of VEJ, I set out to summarize the SIGVE Virtual Environments Playground for readers who may or may not have been in attendance, lo these many months ago, at our vast little cozy corner at the edge of the Philadelphia Convention Center at ISTE 2011. It was such a rich experience that I ran out of words before I could get to Day 2. This time, I'll likely keep it shorter for a couple of reasons: 1) I'd like to keep it shorter so I can move on to write another little article about another virtual environments project that I've undertaken since; 2) Time and distance has begun to blur some of the details; 3) I was "off-campus" for some of Day 2 since I was presenting with Kevin Honeycutt and John Ross in a two hour distance learning workshop, "Learning in the Cloud"; and 4) I'd just like to keep it shorter.

This all should be easier (and more detailed) next year, in part because ISTE 2012 Virtual Environments Playground will be held only one day in San Diego. That change—instituted by ISTE conference organizers partly as a response to overwhelming request from other groups for Playground time--has its blessings and its curses, of course. I won't elucidate here, but I will say that the ISTE 2012 Virtual Environments Playground stands to be the most exciting yet. Are you pioneering the use of virtual worlds for learning and teaching? We want to learn from you. Apply NOW to present at ISTE 2012 in San Diego, California and in the Metaverse, by submitting your application at our wiki, <http://sigve.iste.wikispaces.net/VEPlayground+Signup+2012>.

To help with the memory part of this piece, I will quote from the presenters' own session descriptions in the signup form results page we set up early on at the end of 2010 when we called for presenters in the first place. That document is tucked away in my digital memory, and I'm opening it as I write. Here we go.

9:00 a.m.—Betsy Norris stepped up to the plate – our first turn to the bat with “A Tour of the Eduisland in Second Life. This was modestly described as “a look at

the Eduislands and what is available through these sims for educators and professional development. “What it was, though, was a precious chance to sit with the human behind the pioneering avatar, Ima Netizen, a chance to learn what she finds valuable about the educational opportunities and vibrant learning community that continues to thrive in virtual worlds. Betsy, a fellow Tennessean whose volunteer spirit does our Volunteer state proud, took us on the cook’s tour of resources, assisted by her husband Ted, and she wowed those present with her knowledge and her passion for learning and teaching.

9:30—Kae Novak’s description must be quoted in its entirety: “ PechaKucha 4 MMORPGs--On-site and remote PechaKucha style presentation of 6 commercial MMORPGs used for education. 6 educators will present MMORPGs that they know, love, and can use for learning. Co-presenters on site in Philly: Chris Luchs/Abacus Capalini and Rurik Nackerud/Rurik Bellingshausen. Additional discussants will be inworld in Second Life. Skype VOIP will be used.” How could that proposal not be accepted, invoking as it does 20 PowerPoint slides in 20 seconds with a theme of learning and teaching in virtual worlds. The group did not disappoint, and it was a pleasure to “remeet” Rurik and Kae.

10:00—Rob Collett came to the table with his intriguing work in [NirvanaGrid](#), an OpenSimulator project he described as “...a dream come true for people seeking a quality virtual world. This virtual world stretches across the entire globe, bringing talent from Europe, Australia, Asia, United States and Canada. Nirvana is able to bring you the best of the best because we are owned and managed by a small group of “residents.” Grid Nirvana is a not-for-profit entity, which was created out of a love for virtual worlds rather than a lust for profit. The creators work tirelessly to provide a high quality virtual experience.” Many of us left the conference with a resolve to check out the project in more detail, as we ate up Rob’s 30 minutes, skimming over educational Sims too fast to really digest how creative they were. I recall the Japanese builds, put together by a real-life master octogenarian. My suggestion is to Google NirvanaGrid and go explore it with your OpenSim client of choice. I have to do that and I’m putting it on my calendar for this week before I type another word...

There, where are we? Ah, just beginning. 10:30—Another Tennessee pioneer, Debi Crabtree, stepped up and after what I recall as a rough transition between our

Grid Nirvana presence in OpenSim and her presentation resources, we heard about her amazing work with Dr. James Voorhees and how that might be extrapolated into learning and teaching with young students. Dr. Voorhees, has worked with military clients to “demonstrate the use of avatar bots that can answer questions, direct users to services, provide information, query databases, and other functions in multiple languages.” In industry, he has developed “3D training for diesel mechanics and the use of artificially intelligent bots as tutors” and Debi unveiled “a peek at the future of career tech and K-12 education for the virtually human.” Fabulous. Wait, I need to make another calendar entry to call Debi to see what she’s up to...

Okay, now, at 11:00 we moved across the room to the other Promethean Board demonstration display, where we had set up for John Lester to show us Unity Jibe, a customizable platform for web-based virtual worlds based on Unity3d and created by ReactionGrid, Inc. John Lester is the Director of Community Development at Reaction Grid, and he [gave us] a live tour of [his Jibe world](#).” John shared “how you can create interactive and educational experiences using the Jibe platform and how it all works with Unity3d.” This foreshadows the other article I help to write, because this presentation, which I facilitated at the site, convinced me to invest some of my own funds into a 3 month trial to see if I can justify its value enough to convince my large, sometimes conventionality-entrenched school district, to continue supporting its funding. More later on that.

After John, the Sheehy: At 11:30 our own dear Peggy Sheehy took the stand to testify about the State of the [World of Warcraft in School project](#). This was, not surprisingly, the most well attended session of the hole 2 day Playground. Working with Lucas Gillespie, Peggy wowed us with her work. I mean, really? She convinced her school to support taking mostly at risk middle-schoolers into World of Warcraft for learning? And it works? My most valuable takeaway (which I’ve quoted frequently since) was, to paraphrase, “What good does it do to tell a child who makes 50% on an exam or a project that they’ve failed? Why not tell them they are 50% along the path to mastery and encourage them to travel the rest of the way?” It still gives me chills.

Hey, guess what? I'm out of words! I *didn't* keep it shorter! I ***failed!*** I'm pretty sure that Rosie said 1000 words and my trusty wordcounter says that the next one will be **1,184!**

Okay, that does it: You'll just have to wait until the fourth issue of VEJ for the final wrap-up. I'm going to search for some pictures, spell-check this puppy, and send it on to Rosie and Bob. I must do justice to the stellar work of the remaining Tuesday presenters, who were, in order, our much-loved, Bernajean Porter and Diane Lewis, Chris Heart, Rob Williams, Kathleen Norris, Minerva Ladores and Susan Escobar, Don Bickley, and our favorite Aussie Bronwyn Stuckey. Until next time! (Where's the closure? Where's the closure? Arggggggggh!)

I've already previously noted the amazing contributions of our volunteers at the Playground and of those in Second Life, especially the goddess Jane Wilde/Esme Qunhua, but I want to tip my virtual hat to them here as well. Andy Wheelock will be calling for volunteers for ISTE2012 soon!

Shameless SIG promotion: Apply NOW to present at ISTE 2012 in San Diego, California and in the Metaverse, by submitting your application at our wiki, <http://sigve.iste.wikispaces.net/VEPlayground+Signup+2012>.



ISTE Snowman Contest 2012



IT's Not Too Late Sign-Up Today VWBPE WANTS YOU!!!

Based on community request, the Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education (VWBPE) is reopening the call for proposals.

The **Virtual Worlds** Best Practices in Education is a grass-roots community conference; it is **YOUR** conference, and your chance to share your experiences with the rest of your community. We have already received some excellent submissions but we would like more!

Call for Proposals Video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNwtfVg6RH4>

The Call for Proposals (papers, workshops, games, Machinima and posters) has been extended to **midnight 15th February, 2012**. All that's required is a 50 – 100 word abstract (full papers required for research stream) that indicates how your work illustrates best practices in education. <http://www.vwbpe.org/calls/2012-call-for-proposals>

Describes how your work might be applied to a particular or multiple sectors of education, i.e. K-12, large universities, community colleges, adult education, etc. Tell us how you learn and teach. Tell us your stories of what works well and what can be done better. Where does learning happen for you? Who do you teach? How to you engage learners? Why is learning within the virtual important to you? What is the key learning you want to share with others?

We do want to especially encourage submissions for the Machinima Fest

<http://www.vwbpe.org/calls/machinima>

<http://www.vwbpe.org/blog/posters-cfp> and the Games and Simulation Event

<http://www.vwbpe.org/blog/games-and-simulations-cpf-technical-details>

.

Other topics that this year are encouraged for submission include:

Open Sim projects
Haptic
Augmented Reality
MMORPGs
Role-play
Minecraft
SWTOR

The VWBPE is a free conference, organized and run by volunteers from K-12, colleges and universities from around the world. While most activities will happen in Second Life, presentations and field trips can be scheduled for other parts of the metaverse - contact proposals@vwbpe.org for more information.

Be A VWBPE Volunteer

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, we have a number available now. We'd love your help! A call for moderators, greeters, estate managers during the conference will go in February.

Please go to <http://bit.ly/qNmbjP> to fill out information.

Volunteers are needed for the following committees:

- Volunteer Committee
- Program Committee
- MOOC Working Group
- Presentation Team Preparation
- New Avatar Helpers
- Social Committee Member

If any of these committees sound interesting to you, we would love to have your help! You can get more information at <http://www.vwbpe.org> and click on volunteers.

Virtual Worlds:

Why Are We Here?

Our March issue of VEJ is going to focus on why we are here, in Second Life, World of Warcraft, Reaction Grid, Jokaydia, Quest Atlantis, Blue Mars, 3rd Rock Grid, just to name a few.

Please answer the following questions and tell us in 250 words or less what you are doing in virtual worlds, why it is important, and how what your are doing is making a difference. This is your chance to SHOUT OUT about your passion for the educational work you are doing in one or more virtual worlds. If your response is one of the 10 selected for the March 2012 Issue of VEJ you will be asked to submit a couple of pictures to go with your response for publication. You will also receive \$100 Lindens. Let us hear from you!

Visit: [Why Are You Here?](#)

Or

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dEFhUjBKWXBFSlhHc1hVZDNFTTBabGc6MQ>

Deadline is February 10, 2012.

Virtual Education Journal

