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A Spring 2008 “snapshot” of
UK Higher and Further Education
Developments in Second Life

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May 2008

Funded and supported by the Eduserv Foundation
www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation



Summary

The number of UK academics who are developing or operating teaching and learning resources in Second Life (SL) has grown rapidly in the last year. While an accurate figure is difficult to determine (partially due to the non-public nature of some developments), as a rough estimate some three-quarters of UK universities are actively developing or using SL, at the institutional, departmental and/or individual academic level. Of these, many institutions support several ongoing SL developments, often involving groups of people rather than individuals. However, the proportion of UK FE institutions actively using SL was much smaller.

Many of these developments are funded internally, with staff often donating significant amounts of their own time. There have been a few heavily over-subscribed sources of funding for SL work in the last academic year; feedback indicates a need for more resources and funding opportunities. To quote:

“Funders are always welcome. That’s the question I am asked most at my seminars and workshops - ‘where can I look for funding?’”¹

An increasing body of academics are reporting substantial use of their SL developments, and successes in teaching and learning activities. Measuring the usage of these developments tends to be through raw visitor statistics or informal feedback, though a few academics teaching in Second Life use more rigorous evaluation techniques.

Academics who have successfully developed in SL report that their host institution and technical services are largely supportive, though with the latter there are often problems with firewalls, PC capability and enabling voice functionality. Academics report varied reactions to SL from colleagues, ranging from interest and curiosity to suspicion and “hatred”. Unlike their US counterparts, UK academic libraries are not significantly involved in SL activities.

Academics described a very wide range of SL activities spanning teaching, learning, research, performance, construction and demonstration. The key advantage of SL in teaching and learning is that there are many activities in which the student must be more than a passive learner in order to progress. The student has to develop “stuff”, collaborate and participate. Before these can occur, he or she has to master a new and transferable skill set, meaning that, in SL, learning is done more by participating and doing than by listening and absorbing.

Though use of SL in UK HE/FE is growing, many academics are not “welded” to it, being aware of its deficiencies and open to moving to alternative virtual environments, especially open source and more localised versions, in the future.

Overall, and perhaps not surprisingly, the three most mentioned requirements of UK academic SL developers are:

- more funding opportunities
- more time to develop
- better technical facilities within SL, or a viable alternative environment

¹ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

1. Introduction

1.1 The “snapshot” series

This report is the third in a series of four, stretching from July 2007 to October 2008. As the name suggests, the reports attempt to give a “snapshot” impression of SL developments within UK Higher and Further Education. The underlying research has four main goals:

1. to determine the state of play of SL developments within the Higher and Further Education sector
2. to discover how these developments are supported, in terms of time, funding and other resources
3. to explore the functionality of these developments, i.e. which types of media or interactive service they incorporate
4. to establish how busy, or well-used, the developments have been and discover any impacts resulting from their implementation and use

The previous reports in the series are available² on the Eduserv Foundation website.

1.2 Methodology for this snapshot

During the spring of 2008, the following searches were carried out to find instances of SL use in UK HE and FE:

- on the web in general
- in specialist domains, e.g. .ac.uk
- across the blogosphere
- through mailing lists
- in SL itself

Within SL itself, the search mechanism returns disappointing results. This is partially due to academics giving their developments different names to that of their host institution. However, a technique for finding developments that proved surprisingly fruitful was to look two or three islands in each direction from an academic institution’s island, as SL seems to cluster similar types of development together.

Every UK university was examined in two ways:

1. An email was sent to the most central email address that could be identified on the university website that was considered likely to result in a response. It was interesting to note how differently universities handled research enquiries, from distribution internally on the one extreme, to having no suitable enquiry email address or not replying on the other. 46 universities did respond. Many said there were no SL developments at their institution (in several instances this was incorrect), or that they were unaware of any.
2. A search was done of the university website. Due to the poor results (precision) produced by many university website searches, I switched to doing a Google search across each university website domain. Usually, this generated much better results in terms of recall

² Snapshot series of reports: <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation/studies/slsnapshots>

and precision, and many of the instances of SL which generated quotes for this report were found in this way.

Contributors to previous snapshot reports were also contacted, though not all responded or wanted to reply for this particular snapshot.

An initial questionnaire was constructed and sent to some of the academics located in the search. However, a low response rate ensued, with feedback indicating that the questionnaire was too long/arduous. A refined one, similar to that in Appendix A of this report, was sent out, resulting in many more replies.

Some respondents didn't fill in the questionnaire at all, but sent responses of some kind, or summaries of their activities. These have been slotted into the questionnaire analysis (section 2) as appropriately as possible.

About half of the respondents responded to all the questions, the rest answering some or just a few. At the time of submission of this report, several promised questionnaire responses were outstanding, and four other academics said they would respond for the next snapshot. Perplexingly, one academic returned a response of great detail, but requested that none of her answers were made public, even anonymously.

Queries were sent to several UK library-oriented mailing lists to find cases of HE/FE institution library activity in SL.

1.3 Non-respondents

A significant minority of UK academics developing in SL did not wish to fill in the questionnaire; this included a few people who had contributed to previous snapshot studies. One reason for this is that some SL developments are non-public until completion, and some others are intending never to be public (perhaps some 10 to 20%).

“Research fatigue”, a problem which has befallen previous snapshot studies, was also apparent with this study. Several academics indicated that they receive frequent requests for interviews and comments from SL and virtual world researchers. Two respondents requested total anonymity as a condition for answering the questions, so it would not be easy for other researchers to track them down.

In addition, responses are outstanding from several universities and academics who have confirmed they are developing or teaching in SL. If/when they are submitted, they will be included in the next snapshot (see section 4 and Appendix A).

2. Survey responses

2.1 Why are you developing “stuff” in Second Life?

Many responses covered a range of activities including research, learning, teaching, promoting the institution and offering students the opportunity to develop within a virtual environment.

A collection of responses focused on using SL in research:

“We are evaluating whether Second Life has good potential for encouraging and supporting problem-based or enquiry-rich learning experiences and for encouraging 'immersion' to master unfamiliar situations. Several groups at the university are interested in looking at what Second Life can offer to education and the learning experience, and have already started some exploratory activity. These include the E-Learning Unit³, SCEPTRe⁴, Lee Gillam (Computing) and students from CoLab⁵ (a small, entrepreneurial student organisation) including 3D development of a CoLab café. We are also liaising with external colleagues in other academic institutions who have more virtual world experience.”⁶

“At Huddersfield we are interested in SL as an environment for virtual psychological experimentation.”⁷

“Research, consultancy, teaching.”⁸

“We wish to investigate its usefulness in education. Investigating how students can work collaboratively. It allows us to use problem based learning. It allows students to investigate developing material in a new environment. It is a fun place to be.”⁹

“At present we have a small footprint within SL being used mainly for augmented meetings and experimentation.”¹⁰

“We are interested in the potential of SL to support students undertaking research methods studies and how we can integrate a Web 1.0 site (the Research Observatory^{11,12}) with a Web 2.0 site like SL. We also have a research interest in different online environments and interfaces to support students with various learning preferences and abilities, e.g. autistic tendencies (over-systemizing, under-empathizing).”¹³

Some academics are focusing on teaching and course activities:

³ E-learning unit, University of Surrey: <http://www.tinyurl.com/4hctku>

⁴ SCEPTRe (Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education), University of Surrey: <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sceptre/>

⁵ CoLab, University of Surrey: <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sceptre/Co-Lab.htm>

⁶ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

⁷ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

⁸ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

⁹ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

¹⁰ Harry Greiner, Head of New Media, City College Norwich

¹¹ The Research Observatory: <http://ro.uwe.ac.uk>

¹² Research Observatory blog: <http://researchobs2.edublogs.org/>

¹³ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

“I’ve been involved with looking at collaborative developments¹⁴ between computing students and urban design students, within Second Life.”¹⁵

“Our developments:

- For course promotion & to provide programming taster courses for HND/FdEng Computing and Networking applicants.
- For virtual learning & self teaching in languages such as C, CSS, Java, Javascript, HTML, SQL XML and WML.
- As part of assessed coursework within a Database Programming course, requiring HND Computing students to practically investigate Web services such as XML-RPC.
- The development of an action quiz based in a medieval castle.
- A skybox astronomy centre.”¹⁶

“Our project is ‘LiVE’ - Learning in Virtual Environments. The aim is to investigate the use of Virtual Environments for collaborative working. In this case Second Life was used because it was an easy learning curve and easy to set up. However, we are also considering other platforms for other projects.

We provide film production degree courses. Part of the course is for students to perform a ‘location scout’ to plan shooting, investigate what resources are available (e.g. power sockets and where they are located), setting up lights and cameras. Clearly, since Second Life is not a ray-tracing platform, lighting itself can’t be planned, but the logistics of setting up scenery and other activities can.

This can also allow a risk assessment of the shoot to be considered ... or can it? That’s the purpose of the project - to see how effective the virtual activities are. Our students would normally perform a location scout for real by carrying equipment across to a patch of wasteland near the university building. So, we can assess how useful the virtual task is in relation to the real task.”¹⁷

“Partly curiosity/novelty-related¹⁸ but justified on the basis of the unique affordances of SL, especially the social context (for teachers in terms of peer support as well as for students).”¹⁹

“A group of academics at the University of Hull’s Scarborough Campus have recognised the potential of using SL for learning, teaching, research and other academic related activities.”²⁰

“Part of online training course for teachers at all levels²¹.”²²

“We use it as a tutorial space for learning about and discussing online identity within modules within the MSc in E-Learning. It is also used in the Digital Game based Learning module on the same programme as an environment again for tutorials spaces (which

¹⁴ Amiagua Antigua island: <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Amiagua%20Antigua/125/208/21>

¹⁵ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

¹⁶ Clive Gould, Bromley College

¹⁷ Jerry Foss, Technology Innovation Centre, Birmingham City University

¹⁸ Peter Miller’s blog: <http://tidalblog.blogspot.com>

¹⁹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

²⁰ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull

²¹ Online Education and Training: <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/english/OET.htm>

²² Anita Pincas, Institute of Education, University of London

we've built) and treasure hunts (throughout SL) and more. Role play has also been looked at (for language learning) but will be looked at more from this September.

Since the Masters is online distance only, SL is used as a social space for students (and tutors) to gather and meet. Yes, meet each other. Feedback from students has been overall positive, especially around the 'learning as socially grounded' aspects of the course. The social advantages for a distance learning course seem to be very valuable to students, beyond the use of webct, Facebook, blogs and wikis."²³

Combining the previous two categories, UK universities including the Open University are carrying out research into teaching and learning using technologies such as Second Life:

"We had been struggling with how to help folk think creatively about schome²⁴ (not school - not home - schome) - the education system for the information age. All our focus groups and much of the work within the Aspire Pilot were coming up with visions of schome that could best be described as 'school but a bit better'. This seems to be because we are all deeply entrenched in our experiences of the current education system - and this makes it difficult for us to think creatively about what our ideal education system could/should be like.

Kieron Sheehy suggested that we might use Second Life to try out ideas, which we couldn't implement in practice (because of expense, complexity, risks, etc.). This seemed a brilliant idea - maybe having a 'lived experience' of something radically different might help folk come up with more creative visions for schome in the real world. So we started to explore ... and we now have islands on both the Main Grid and the Teen Grid of Second Life."²⁵

"Both for research and teaching purposes."²⁶

"Kingston University established 'The Knowledge Zone', an island within Second Life, in June 2007 with the aim of trialling and evaluating the role of internet based multi-user 3D virtual worlds for supporting learning and teaching."²⁷

"Exploring its potential in teaching and learning."²⁸

"The official goal for the CILASS project is to identify the potential for SL for learning and teaching, in particular teaching with an Inquiry Based Learning approach. Part of the project is disseminating to colleagues so that they can start to form their own opinions about the value of SL to their teaching.

I²⁹ also have overarching aims and specific aims concerned with three areas of intervention. My personal overarching aims are to enhance the learning and teaching experience for staff and students, and to develop understanding and creativity of students and practitioners of my discipline. The specific aims are:

In an intervention with first year undergraduates in a core module 'Information Literacy':

²³ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

²⁴ Schome: <http://www.schome.ac.uk/>

²⁵ Peter Twining, Open University

²⁶ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

²⁷ Dr Tim Linsey, Head of e-Learning, Kingston University

²⁸ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

²⁹ Adventures of Yoshikawa blog: <http://adventuresofyoshikawa.blogspot.com/>

- To investigate SL as learning space.
- To focus in depth on specific parts of the research process (data collection & analysis).
- To strengthen the theoretical element of the module with genuinely novel investigation.

In an intervention with taught Masters students taking an optional module, Educational Informatics:

- To investigate SL as learning space (a co-investigation, since the students are using SL as an element a learning design assignment).
- To enrich the students' experience by engaging them with a wider range of learning tools.

In professional networking and development:

- To design events and activities that engage researchers, educators and practitioners with questions in their discipline and practice.
- Through this engagement to stimulate new ideas, explore concepts, share and critique practice and create fruitful connections.”³⁰

“I'm part of the Learning Technologies Group at the University of Brighton, and part of the team here, who've recently purchased and begun development on our (private) island.

In our case, this is most definitely an extension of the learning and teaching tools we already offer at the university. Our remit as a group is to help staff make appropriate choices in their choice of technologies, and this extends to SL. At the moment it's hard to define where SL can really excel in teaching and learning, so we're undertaking some pilot projects with tutors and student groups to begin evaluating potential on our courses.”³¹

“For research and teaching of Psychology³². To provide added benefit and an alternative platform to our existing e-learning capacity for teaching Psychology in Higher Education.”³³

“Researching the potential for using Second Life in teaching undergraduate psychology. Progresses long-standing research interests in computer-assisted learning and human-computer interaction.”³⁴

Second Life is used in some institutions to allow students and academics to develop, perform, experiment, research and demonstrate their skills within a virtual environment:

“Fourth year and MSc students on a Multimedia Design course learned a range of technical and creative skills through designing and building the Heriot-Watt island within Second Life. Students were using the environment while building the environment while developing a portfolio of skills.”³⁵

³⁰ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

³¹ Dr Katie Piatt, Senior Learning Technologies Developer, University of Brighton

³² Simon Bignell's blog: <http://www.miltonbroome.com/>

³³ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

³⁴ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

³⁵ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

“To offer alternative formats for students to present their work and to create alternative teaching spaces for blended and distance learning.”³⁶

“Mainly for artistic practice-led research, performance work, narrative and installation.”³⁷

“SL'ÉTUDE: Performative Presence Rendered Across Worlds.

The Sonic Arts Research Centre is currently running a pilot in Second Life dedicated to the performing arts, with particular focus on multimodal interaction between actual performance and in-world activities.

Last year SARC carried out a real-time network performance that involved musicians in Belfast, Hamburg and Graz. The performance took place on the 29th of November 2007 and was presented within the context of the EU Culture 2007 project COMEDIA between the Sonic Arts Research Centre, the Hochschule für Musik und Theatre in Hamburg and the Institut für Elektronische Musik and Akustik (KUG Graz). The performance was streamed into Second Life.”³⁸

“Our developments include:

- A presentation learning space accompanied by an interactive library to leverage the advantages of social collaborative learning.
- A museum of modern computing featuring learning objects.
- An SL Forum and an SL Wiki.
- The Astro-park, which has been under further development and now includes a lunar feature, streaming media and SL-Web quests. The facility was featured at this years BETT show at Olympia.
- Castle Bromlstein: an action quiz, currently under trial with students.

A set of videos³⁹, showing our developments, are on YouTube.”⁴⁰

“Lancaster has an island in Second Life with currently restricted access, controlled by Lorna McKnight. Lorna is - in addition to her PhD - also observing the actions of (and providing support for) a Masters course (MRes in Human Computer Interaction, Computing department) who are using Second Life as part of a collaborative design project. Their brief is to explore how usability methods could be supported in Second Life, and build tools for this.”⁴¹

“I'm an artist and designer⁴², as well as an art and design educator, so I enjoy tapping the massive creative potential that Second Life offers, and I enjoy enabling my students to tap this potential. We're like kids in a sweetie shop.”⁴³

“The Straad Players is a project being developed by the Institute of Digital Innovation at the University Of Teesside. Essentially it involves creating and performing plays in Second Life and making films. It allows participants to simulate many of the activities

³⁶ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

³⁷ Paul Sermon, Salford University

³⁸ Franziska Schroeder, Queen's University Belfast

³⁹ SL developments at Bromley College: <http://www.youtube.com/user/barrysw>

⁴⁰ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

⁴¹ Dr Julia Gillen, Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University

⁴² Ian Truelove blog: <http://iantruelove.blogspot.com/>

⁴³ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

involved in creating productions and movies without the costs and many of the difficulties encountered in the real world.”⁴⁴

While most academic developments are driven by research and teaching, promotion of the institution or recreating it within a virtual environment is also a factor for some. This, however, is not such a recurring theme as it was in previous snapshots:

“We aim to be seen as a model 21st century university so we are using Second Life both for marketing and to enhance teaching and e-learning. We have created a fairly expansive virtual campus that we are planning on use for all kinds of education purposes.”⁴⁵

“Through UEL LEO (Learning Enhancement Opportunities) funding, the School of Distance and E-Learning has recently purchased an island in Second Life world to create a virtual campus for UEL. We have also established a Virtual Worlds Working Group to focus institutional efforts in this area. The island is currently being developed but will be released for public access within the next couple of months.”⁴⁶

“Potential educational usage, plus Department marketing.”⁴⁷

At the moment, it’s not clear why some institutions are using Second Life, but this should hopefully become clearer by the time of the next snapshot report:

“It’s an official university [of Westminster] funded island. It won’t be open to the public for at least a year. There will be teaching activities using it.”⁴⁸

“The University of York has recently started a small project and we have some (currently private) space online.”⁴⁹

Some universities have several people or teams developing or researching in Second Life; an example is Lancaster University:

“As part of her PhD in Creativity in Virtual Environments (Computing/Psychology) Lorna McKnight is using Second Life as a platform for studying 3D object manipulation and synthesis. This involves running experiments where participants perform simple building tasks in-world - participants are either located in Lancaster and come into a lab to participate, or are located remotely.

Michele Ryan - full time PhD student (Management Learning & Leadership) Research Question: How can virtual worlds, such as Second Life, be used to enhance business education, management learning and leadership? Research Status: Pilot projects due to end soon. Large scale research begins in fall 2008. Work involves action research using mixed method testing for educational effectiveness using SL as a variable in the business education process.

Andy Smith - part time PhD student (Educational Research), provisional title: ‘A Pedagogical Framework for Games and Simulations’.

⁴⁴ The Straad Players, University of Teesside: <http://www.straad.org.uk>

⁴⁵ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

⁴⁶ Remy Olosoji, School of Distance and E-Learning, University of East London

⁴⁷ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

⁴⁸ Isaac Yates (SL name), University of Westminster

⁴⁹ Kriss Fearon, Web Coordinator, University of York

Lisa Whittlecroft, Palatine, Higher Education Academy subject centre supporting innovative teaching and learning in the performing arts. Palatine is involved in managing a number of Second Life educational projects based elsewhere including a reconstruction of theatrical spaces at Kings College London (funded by Eduserv) with associated pedagogical projects.

Steve Wright, Institute of Health Research/Centre for the Study of Advanced Learning Technology/Educational Research. Learning technologist also engaged in research.

Other people are beginning to explore the potentiality of Second Life for learning and teaching including several members of staff from Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, Continuing Education, and Imagination @ Lancaster. Governance & Planning are also taking an interest in the University's developing interests. It was decided to set up a Lancaster University Educators' group on Second Life."⁵⁰

Similarly, the University of Ulster is actively developing a range of SL "stuff":

"The Global conversation cafe. This involves porting an existing online wiki based course on the impact of global warming to civil society into Second Life to take advantage of the advanced communications features the platform has. The course in its current form is offered to students at four Universities worldwide. We are offering an informal meeting place for the students to interact and access course content.

The integration of VLE's and virtual worlds e.g. the Sloodle project which looks at linking Moodle and Second Life. This project looks at the integration of VLE's and virtual worlds and how to use / combine these different platforms and use their individual strengths in the creation of experiential based learning experiences.

The integration and display of external hardware sensor information into virtual worlds. This project looks at using the advanced rendering capabilities of Second Life to display real time/real world information from external sensors

Scenography. This is a teaching tool to allow drama students to try out actor placements on stage and see the impact of the stage props on audience viewing angles. We use the modelling tools in Second Life to create different stage layouts and then observe the stage from different angles.

The giant Computer. This is a large scale PC which users can wander around inside and see the individual components of a PC and how they interact together."⁵¹

Toni Sant⁵² described how Second Life was used by various students and courses in Hull University:

"A number of level 6 (3rd yr) students, taking a module called 'The Psychology of Internet Behaviour', explored issues related to the performance of self in Second Life during the first semester of 2007/08.

Level 6 (3rd yr) students doing a module called Game Art and Design were shown ways to use Second Life towards different aspects of their studies in gaming during semester

⁵⁰ Julia Gillen, Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University

⁵¹ Michael Callaghan, University of Ulster

⁵² Toni Sant's blog: <http://www.tonisant.com/blog/labels/Second%20Life.shtml>

2 of 2007/08. A small number of them did a comparative analysis of Second Life and The Sims as part of their assessed coursework for this module.

A Digital Arts student produced a piece of machinima for her final Independent Study. Although the final product was produced in World of Warcraft, she also explored Second Life in the process of making her machinima and wrote about this in her dissertation.

A Theatre & Performance student produced a performance in Second Life for his final Independent Study. The performance was an exploration of Julian Dibbell's famous account of 'A Rape in Cyberspace' about an incident that happened about 15 years ago on LambdaMOO."⁵³

St Andrews University has acquired an island for a range of activities:

"The University of St Andrews recently purchased an island (Minerva Island) for a year, and has several projects underway in Second Life. The island itself is funded by the Laconia Acropolis Virtual Archaeology project (LAVA), which is using Second Life to let students explore an archaeological dig site. There is another project which shows simulated network traffic using prims to represent each packet. The schools of Computer Science and Management also have plots of land on the island, as does the special collections department in the library."⁵⁴

Fiona Littleton, at the University of Edinburgh, listed the considerable number of units involved in SL developments:

"Colleagues across other schools in the University and ourselves all work under Vue (the Virtual University of Edinburgh). The Vue group is a virtual educational and research institute bringing together all those interested in the use of virtual worlds for teaching, research and outreach related to the University of Edinburgh.

For example:

- Development and Alumni
- Information Services
- Library and Collections
- School of Informatics - Knowledge Transfer and Commercialisation
- Edinburgh-Stanford Link
- AIAI
- HCRC/ICCS
- School of Education - MSc in E-Learning, Higher and Community Education and Childhood Development
- Management School
- School of Medicine and Vet Medicine
- School of Arts, Culture and Environment
- Medical Visualisation Centre

There is a map link⁵⁵ to these works."⁵⁶

Jane Chandler at the University of Portsmouth outlined some of their activities:

⁵³ Toni Sant, Scarborough Campus, University of Hull

⁵⁴ J Ross Nicoll, University of St Andrews

⁵⁵ Vue map link: <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/VueWiki/Vue+Plans+Gallery>

⁵⁶ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

“Currently the University of Portsmouth is leasing land from NMC on Teaching 2. However we have completed the purchase of an island - UoP Island - and will be 'moving in' over the next few weeks - initially we intend putting things on a platform over the island while we sort the landscaping out so it will be something of a work in progress for a while.

We have 2 projects in progress - one funded by the ExPERT Centre CETL looking at the affordances of SL/virtual worlds for teachings, and the other funded by the HEA-ICS looking at tools in SL for teaching.

We also have a number of final year students doing their projects/dissertations in SL and groups of School of Computing students doing courseworks in SL for a HCI unit.”⁵⁷

Some institutions are active in SL at centralised, departmental and individual levels, such as the University of Strathclyde:

“Institutional level: We have purchased an island for the University which is now under development. We have just received a grant to undertake a scoping study of the pedagogical and research potential of SL for Strathclyde within a group of specific disciplines.

Departmental level: Dr Scott Chase in Architecture currently undertakes Masters level teaching within the Strathclyde SL environment.

Individual level: Dr Scott Chase is actively involved in developing the Strathclyde space. Prof Ray Land has recently completed a joint study with Edinburgh University of Social Technologies (including SL) for the Higher Education Academy. The report will shortly be available from the HEA.”⁵⁸

Some institutions also have multiple islands, indicative of several people or groups working within the institution. For example, Graham Hibbert from Leeds Metropolitan University outlines:

“Leeds Metropolitan University have two islands in Second Life: LeedsMet and LeedsMet FAS, we're also just about to build our third.

As well as that, we built the Emerge Island for JISC. There's a lot more information online^{59,60}.”⁶¹

A collection of future-oriented responses are in section 3.3 of this report.

2.2 What types of functionality have you developed?

Many of the responses to this question overlapped with those of the last question. Again, many respondents are developing a variety of facilities within Second Life e.g. running courses, doing research, and allowing students to develop and demonstrate within Second Life. The result of this is a range of functionality, some of it essential or useful to planned activities in Second Life, and some of it more decorative or experimental.

⁵⁷ Jane Chandler, University of Portsmouth

⁵⁸ Ray Land, University of Strathclyde

⁵⁹ More particle-based experiments: <http://sleeds.org>

⁶⁰ LeedsMet FAS in Second Life: <http://hbuilding.org>

⁶¹ Graham Hibbert, Leeds Metropolitan University

“LSL Tutorial Exhibition, LSL Exhibition Reading Room, Virtual Learning Centre and Computer History Museum.”⁶²

“User resource logging, user quiz logging, dynamic game score logging, web-SL control using XMLRPC and Interactive star charts.”⁶³

“A CoLab café has already been built which is going to be re-designed but has been used by Lee Gillam and student/s for 3D modelling. An island has been bought and activated and a workshop planned in May to start development/discussion.”⁶⁴

“My main interest⁶⁵ is in presence and absence, in second and first life, developing telepresent experiments that merge first and second life together using live video and mixing techniques.”⁶⁶

“We have one island in the Main Grid of Second Life world called ShomeBase - which provides a landscaped environment with a range of facilities to support groups of folk (learners and staff). We provide some ‘loan spaces’ to particular groups (e.g. The Learning Sciences Research Institute at the University of Nottingham) so they can explore ways of using virtual worlds to enhance learning. ShomeBase is integrated with the Open University’s island.”⁶⁷

“Incorporate video podcasts etc.”⁶⁸

“The Ebusiness Island⁶⁹ has teaching space, retail space, gallery, student space, entertainment space etc.”⁷⁰

i. Protein Rezzing Toolkit.
ii. StoryMachine (dynamic scriptable spidergram).
iii. General purpose tower structure for display/annotation of anything that can be conceptually mapped onto five linked platforms.”⁷¹

“We’ve created meeting spaces, a building for drama students to use in role play, a maze for use in some Psychology research, a fledgling retail outlet for use by Fashion and Retail students, some 3D learning objects that represent cellular organelles and some that are representations of ideas or concepts, such as Marx’s Base and Superstructure.”⁷²

“Initial Modelling in Second Life: Besides the Sexual Health SIM, we are currently developing a sophisticated simulation of CAALYX⁷³ sensors (only ECG and GPS in this video/first pre-alpha model) and how they pair and communicate measurements to the

⁶² Clive Gould, Bromley College

⁶³ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

⁶⁴ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

⁶⁵ Paul Sermon’s website: <http://www.paulsermon.org/>

⁶⁶ Paul Sermon, Salford University

⁶⁷ Peter Twining, Open University

⁶⁸ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

⁶⁹ Ebusiness island-related blog: <http://www.ebusiness-newcastle.com/blog/>

⁷⁰ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

⁷¹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

⁷² Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

⁷³ CAALYX Framework Programme 6 project: <http://caalyx.eu/>

Wearable Light Device/Data Logger, how heart beats respond to movement/activity levels, and how simple threshold triggers can be set to raise alarms.

More sophisticated modelling will follow in due course, with the purpose of:

- showcasing the sorts of communications taking place between the different components of CAALYX
- demonstrating CAALYX functionality to wider audiences (novel dissemination)
- modelling and investigating the real system's bottlenecks and scalability. The simulation makes use of Second Life's advanced physics and programmability."⁷⁴

"We have a datalinker; a scripted object that pulls information from our resources, news and events databases on the web into SL. We currently have 13 of these in operation on various educational locations in SL. For example, see the blue object with the slowly spinning logo."⁷⁵

"On 18 May 2007 Goldsmiths Design Students hosted a virtual representation of a real life degree show on Second Life.

Visitors were free to look around the show, titled 'Annotations', at any time and could attend a virtual event on 6th June where they were greeted by the students, in their avatar form. The class stood next to virtual representations of work from their real life degree show exhibition, which includes brushes made from human hair and kettles that race! Along with the opportunity to talk to students about their work, visitors saw Goldsmiths tutor Matt Ward giving a speech about the class of 2007.

The virtual exhibition space was a scale version of the real Truman Brewery on Brick Lane in London, including the graffiti, weathered brickwork, and old fly posters. It marks hundreds of years of real life, distilled down into pixels."⁷⁷

"My colleagues in the Design School are building a 'Solent Life' island for Fashion, Media Styling and Digital Music students.

The island contains a catwalk, nightclub, exhibition/gallery areas for students, and meeting places to name a few. Teaching starts in October [2008] with fashion students initially. My involvement includes looking at integrating our VLE (based on Moodle) with SL using Sloodle.

Also to develop full student support materials for use of the SL environment and consider issues such as identity management, accessibility, technical issues and the whole user experience - no student's learning should be disadvantaged through their inability to fully utilise the environment for whatever reason.

I believe that potentially the island will be opened up to the rest of the university."⁷⁸

"My current role is to develop models of best practice in e-learning and encourage practitioners to use them to support the development of high-quality e-learning. To enable this, I've created an online community of practice with faculty members from both the university and beyond that allows the models, case studies, and tutorials to be

⁷⁴ Maged N Kamel Boulos, Faculty of Health and Social Work, University of Plymouth

⁷⁵ Datalinker example: <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Cetlment%20Island/129/68/23>

⁷⁶ Rob Pearce, Higher Education Academy Engineering and Materials Subject Centres, Loughborough University

⁷⁷ Matt Ward, Goldsmiths, University of London

⁷⁸ Roger Emery, Learning Technology Unit (LTU), Southampton Solent University (to mailing list)

viewed as well as containing forums for discussion. To stimulate use and discussion of the models I have run a number of online workshops using Moodle.”⁷⁹

“Dave Wood has set up the Maths Island, University of Warwick, in Second Life. He's using it to teach mathematics to students in his department.”⁸⁰

“I run a short, 3 week, option on Second Life in my course Online Education and Training at the Institute of Education, London University. It involves attending a conference that happens to be running in SL at the time, and reporting back on it.”⁸¹

“Virtual lecture, seminars, scripted tools, blended learning with existed Psychology course content.”⁸²

“We have been building various experimental tools and artwork, usually as proofs of concept and to demonstrate to our students what is possible. Some of it is serious and gets used quite a lot, like the sleds chat-log tool that my colleague Graham Hibbert developed. Some of it is silly, like my chat lip-sync attachment, but you never know where these things might lead.”⁸³

“I guess the learning that occurs on our courses within Second life could be seen as a function of Second Life? For our MSc we didn't need buildings, simulations, animation or media - we needed an open space, with distinct tutorial spaces (we created a beach area, a grove area, a garden area) and a social area (a café). It's a park surrounded by sea.

Here is a list of Vue uses in SL:

- Awareness Recruitment and Promotional Activities
- E-Learning and Social Networking Course Support
- Distance Learning
- Continuing Professional Development
- Innovative Assessment Practices
- PhD Research Projects using Simulations
- Collaboration
- Links from Real to Virtual Meeting Spaces and Teleconferences
- Alumni Networking

Courses:

- MSc in E-Learning
- MSc in Design and Digital Media
- MSc in Entrepreneurship - Business Building
- Management School and School of Medicine Courses

Coming Soon:

- Live Event Streaming into Virtual Worlds
- 3D Views onto Historical Materials, Arts and Museum Style Access
- More MSc courses, Field Trips etc.
- Communication for Autism and Disability Awareness

⁷⁹ Helen Walmsley, E-learning Models Co-ordinator, Learning Development and Innovation, Staffordshire University

⁸⁰ Mark Childs, Learning and Development Centre, University of Warwick

⁸¹ Anita Pincas, Institute of Education, University of London

⁸² Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

⁸³ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

- Arts Informatica”⁸⁴

“Materials for use in conducting cognitive and social psychology experiments in 3D virtual worlds, e.g. buildings (such as 3D mazes) and interactive devices (using Linden Scripting Language).”⁸⁵

“Virtual campus and the integration of Second Life & Moodle VLE (Sloodle)⁸⁶. Additional works to be announced.”⁸⁷

“We have a ‘building’ on a piece of land on Education UK Island, where we have developed a rather unorthodox design approach. Some meeting areas are under water; some are suspended in gravity-free pods in the air and accessed by an elevator. We ran a design competition for our first year Architecture students in October 2007, and got some great entries.

The building on our site is the result of the inspiration from the 2 winning entries. We have concentrated on designing and building two types of space/functionality - those that support students meeting for chats and seminars, and those that give individuals things to do. Examples of the latter include bots that answer questions, drop boxes for notes and ideas, email facilities and an automated decision aid that moves avatars around interactive question boards, depending upon their responses to questions.”⁸⁸

“Virtual wind tunnel, Holodeck with various scenarios that can ‘spawn’ on command, more to come really soon.”⁸⁹

“A series of puzzle/game squares.”⁹⁰

“I have not been aiming to develop ‘functionality’. In developing the island I aimed to create learning spaces:

A variety of places and spaces for discussion and reflection. These range from the underwater doughnuts (3 doughnut seats under the sea) to a Japanese house surrounded by water and cherry blossom, to the cliff top campfire (etc.).

Sites of information. Mainly the Centre for Information Literacy Research (with posters with information about past discussions and ongoing projects); the central tp board; the library (still in development by Lyn Parker and her colleague); sets of posters about basics of SL and landmarks.

Homing points. ‘Offices’ for staff who have expressed interest (this both helps people to feel ‘at home’ on the island, and gives visitors an idea of the personality of the people there); homes for any students on the above two modules who want to claim and furnish them (4 did so actively).

Build/creativity area. This takes up about a quarter to a third of the island currently. Material here is transitory - mostly so far material that I have built, but with the educational informatics students there should be more student-generated and co-

⁸⁴ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

⁸⁵ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

⁸⁶ Sloodle: <http://www.sloodle.org>

⁸⁷ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

⁸⁸ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

⁸⁹ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

⁹⁰ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

created material. At the moment there is a 'conference house' relating to a workshop at a RL conference and to the Information Literacy Group, a 3D model of 'the research process' created to be explored with undergraduate students, a 3D model of the 'SCONUL 7 Pillars of information literacy' and some odd bits of half finished stuff.

With the discussion/information/home areas the aim has been to make it comfortable and stable enough that people feel able to relax and concentrate, yet interesting enough for people to want to explore and feel stimulated. Although I think that the ability to create 3D enactments, role play etc. are big strengths of SL, so is its ability to enable people to meet, argue and exchange ideas etc. across geographical and other boundaries. You can't do everything on one island so I think it is legitimate to have some focusing on facilitating this kind of activity.

Additionally I don't think that people who don't learn building should feel 2nd class citizens - learning how to build takes time, and I don't think we should be forcing students to learn skills they don't need for specific interventions. If they do want to learn more then that's great, but I think you can do a lot in SL without creating much, considering how much has already been created by others. In an ideal world, though, students would progress SL skills through their programme of study as part of using SL as one of their learning spaces, as you certainly get most out of it by being able to use those skills.

I bought (or got as freebies) the houses, plants, trees, skating poses, barbecues, squirrels, coffee makers, swings etc. as well as educational tools. I think the island has been furnished for less than a hundred pounds. I've done all the landscaping and 'dressing', apart from the library and the student residences."⁹¹

"Two buildings, one with links to the Department (under construction) plus another building which has links to useful resources in SL - this developed by an undergraduate finalist who did his work on SL - hopefully, he will be joining us to do a PhD in the area. I also stream video and audio into SL via Wirecast for teaching."⁹²

"Participation was opened to all staff of the institution with a number of awareness raising events run. Members of staff who wished to participate were allocated a plot of a virtual land within which they could construct objects and experiment. In addition, an open 'experiment zone' was also created. It was also agreed with staff participants that initially the island would remain closed to other than invited participants, allowing staff to experiment away from the public glare. Initially development was piecemeal as staff from across different faculties experimented with multiple approaches to design and interaction. This was a necessary stage but a decision was made that to advance development, a coordinated approach was required."⁹³

"This question cannot be answered per se. All of the objects and all of the terraforming of the HWU island has been done by students. Those students were one cohort of 4th Year undergraduates, and another cohort of MSc students. Students were tasked to work in SL on:

- An area of land in the Heriot-Watt Second Life island (group work). This was a challenging section because the students had to negotiate with each other about the creative ideas they wanted to work on. The constraints placed imposed by the section of land randomly allocated to them also made it hard.

⁹¹ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

⁹² Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

⁹³ Dr Tim Linsey, Head of e-Learning, Kingston University

- A multimedia tutorial to help other students learn about Second Life. The purpose of this section was to assess the student’s understanding about an aspect of Second Life, but also to assess their judgement in selecting an appropriate medium for an instructional purpose.
- A fun interactive Second Life exhibit for visitors to the Heriot-Watt island. The exhibit was to be a major attraction of the space, and it had to be imaginative, fun, interactive and have a useful purpose. The exhibit was meant to demonstrate a complex behaviour which requires in depth knowledge of an advanced scripting topic or advanced knowledge of several scripting topics.

The students developed such fascinating objects as gaming parlour, water park, underwater disco, cocktail jugs floating in the air, interactive guitars, dragonflies and magic carpet to ride, instructional tee-trail, Heriot-Watt conference centre, welcoming pyramid, boats, sharks, shooting range, carousels and coconut shy, Ferris wheel, and many more.”⁹⁴

2.3 Who’s funding the developments?

Whereas earlier developments tended to be funded from internal, university or college, sources, there are increasing numbers of external sources of funding:

“Funding has come from a range of external and internal sources, including:

- The National Association of Gifted and Talented Youth.
- The Innovation Unit.
- Becta.
- The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology.
- The Pedagogy, Learning and Curriculum Research Group.”⁹⁵

“I have received Arts Council England funding to undertake research and projects.”⁹⁶

Staff from a number of organisations (universities, schools, etc.) contributed their time. Individuals - particularly Dan Seamans and Shri Footring - have provided a great deal of their personal time to supporting this work.”⁹⁷

“EU Framework Programme 6.”⁹⁸

“AHRC Fellowship funding specifically for performances in virtual worlds, and Queen’s University’s Sonic Arts Research Center (SARC).”⁹⁹

“We have a project funded through a programme (‘Interactive Digital Media’) operated by our New Technology Institute and funded by Advantage West Midlands.”¹⁰⁰

“We have 2 projects in progress - one funded by the ExPERT Centre CETL looking at the affordances of SL/virtual worlds for teachings, and the other funded by the HEA-ICS looking at tools in SL for teaching.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

⁹⁵ Peter Twining, Open University

⁹⁶ Paul Sermon, Salford University

⁹⁷ Peter Twining, Open University

⁹⁸ Maged N Kamel Boulos, Faculty of Health and Social Work, University of Plymouth

⁹⁹ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

¹⁰⁰ Jerry Foss, Technology Innovation Centre, Birmingham City University.

¹⁰¹ Jane Chandler, University of Portsmouth

Some activities are supported by a mixture of internal and external funding:

“LeedsMet fund some of the time via our contractual research and scholarly activity allocation. JISC funds for the Open Habitat¹⁰² project, which is one day a week each for myself and my colleague, Graham Hibbert. We also devote a good chunk of personal time to SL, because it is the best form of entertainment around at the moment.”¹⁰³

“Mainly small internal innovation funding and teaching and learning project grants (plus enormous amounts of personal time!). We use a private university island funded by a larger project grant to another school, and also appropriate public areas such as Education UK. My PC was recently replaced and enhanced with a suitable graphics card. My avatar is old enough to receive the \$50 per week stipend, which pays for small purchases.”¹⁰⁴

“Funded partly internally through allowances for staff time, and partly externally by spending consultancy earnings and e-learning development grants on the SL developments.”¹⁰⁵

However, a significant proportion of UK academic activities in Second Life are funded internally, or by the staff donating time or resources themselves:

“The development was funded internally. The island was bought by the School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences, and staff time was part of the Module delivery (lecturer and tutors), while additional educational support was provided by the Educational Development Unit (Flexible Learning Co-ordinator), who also conducted participant observation, surveys, and student interviews.”¹⁰⁶

“The College.”¹⁰⁷

“Research income from other projects.”¹⁰⁸

“Until now, this has been very much a personal initiative although senior people in the University Library and the e-learning advisor have been supportive.”¹⁰⁹

“The University’s Teaching and Learning Project and the School of Education and Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.”¹¹⁰

“Currently a self financing venture on my part.”¹¹¹

“My colleagues in the Design School are building a ‘Solent Life’ island for Fashion, Media Styling and Digital Music students. Although this is a ‘school’ project it has been both centrally and faculty funded, and so has the full backing of the university.”¹¹²

¹⁰² JISC Open Habitat project: <http://www.openhabitat.org/>

¹⁰³ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

¹⁰⁴ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

¹⁰⁵ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

¹⁰⁶ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

¹⁰⁷ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

¹⁰⁸ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

¹⁰⁹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

¹¹⁰ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

¹¹¹ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

“The University of Hull ... but no extra/special funds have been allocated for SL. It all comes from existing resources.”¹¹³

“Funded as part of general academic research time by University and via a specific internal research award that supports the development of a research project in Second Life.”¹¹⁴

“Staff time for development within the MSc in e-learning is funded by the MSc itself, through the Department of Higher and Community Education, School of Education. Fees to Linden are expensed also back to the department. The Island and maintenance fees are paid by Information Services.”¹¹⁵

“Person time given voluntarily. Land costs (4096 sqm x2) to date met by developers (Clive Pro and Skipper Abel).”¹¹⁶

“For teaching use, staff budget is paid as per usual. Linden fees were financed by a University grant to support consultancy activities (subsequent consultancy work has earned more than this amount). We already require PCs capable of 3D graphics for much of our teaching and research, and these were already in place for the most part; Sloodle is funded and supported by Eduserv.”¹¹⁷

“Our Computer Science department, from the VC of the university.”¹¹⁸

“A university development fund (6 months funding).”¹¹⁹

“Centre for Inquiry Based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences - cost of buying one island & fees to LL for a year. They are also funding a few hundred pounds for material on the island. This has been the most obvious ‘up front’ cost.

We are only using computers in the Department - the costs have been primarily those of technical support staff in installing and updating the viewer.

Staff involved are being funded in the normal way - though I am a CILASS fellow at the moment which means about 15% of my time is being funded by CILASS. The staff are mainly me and Lyn Parker, who is in Sheffield University Library and Vicki Cormie who is in St Andrews University Library. Some other staff in my Department have spent a little time on SL.

The staff time cost is undoubtedly the larger cost, in my view.”¹²⁰

“University grant, in 2007. Not sure how we’ll get funding for the next year.”¹²¹

¹¹² Roger Emery, Learning Technology Unit (LTU), Southampton Solent University (to mailing list)

¹¹³ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull.

¹¹⁴ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

¹¹⁵ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

¹¹⁶ Clive Gould, Bromley College

¹¹⁷ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

¹¹⁸ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

¹¹⁹ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

¹²⁰ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

¹²¹ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

Some of the responses to question 18 (What would help you to do more “stuff” in SL) indicate that a lack of funding is an issue (though arguably it is for academics in most disciplines). There is certainly significant interest in developing, teaching and/or learning in SL; this is testified by the number of UK colleges and universities on the Education UK Island,¹²² or by the large number of proposals received for funding calls such as the Eduserv Foundation 2008 grant call.¹²³

2.4 How much time do you reckon you’ve spent developing in SL?

As with previous snapshot reports, academics have found it difficult to quantify the amount of time they spend developing in SL. This is partially due to time spent in SL being taken up with constant learning, exploration, discovery, and communication with other academics and developers. It is notable that no-one said they disliked the amount of time they spent on (or in) SL, the trend being that they enjoyed it in preference to other ways of spending their time (both academic and recreational).

“Months, on and off.”¹²⁴

“Not enough. But I am part of a community which spends a lot of time (The Blue Obelisk.)”¹²⁵

“I personally have spent around 40+ hours personally experimenting, attending meetings inside SL - approx 5-10 of those within official work time (i.e. most people working to US hours so can’t often do during UK working day).”¹²⁶

“We estimated that we had invested 1500 staff hours in preparation for our first pilot project in Shome Park which started in March 2007. This includes time for staff meetings, testing out ideas, planning on paper, as well as actual development work in-world.

Shome Park was totally redesigned in May/June 07. Shome Park beta was added, designed and implemented in December 07/January 08. As a rough estimate those two developments required an additional 1,000 hours of staff time.

The above figures ignore the time have staff spent in-world working with students since March 2007 - and also ignores the development work that the students themselves have done which is considerable.”¹²⁷

“I started in May 2007, about a day or two a week.”¹²⁸

“Varies. Will spend a couple of days at a time putting up a new exhibition. Otherwise, go in for 1-2 hours a week to do maintenance and network.”¹²⁹

“2 weeks.”¹³⁰

¹²² Education UK Island: <http://www.sleducationuk.net/>

¹²³ Eduserv Foundation 2008 funding call: <http://efoundations.typepad.com/efoundations/2008/04/brief-grants-up.html>

¹²⁴ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

¹²⁵ Peter Murray-Rust, Cambridge University

¹²⁶ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

¹²⁷ Peter Twining, Open University

¹²⁸ Paul Sermon, Salford University

¹²⁹ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

“As an estimate I would think 10-14 hours per week.”¹³¹

“Lots but time I would otherwise have spent watching telly, i.e. mainly evenings. Telly is rubbish anyway (as lots of people in SL will agree). I spend a fair amount of time just chatting in SL so it’s hard to assign hours spent on development (which is very episodic depending on personal circumstances and the day job).”¹³²

“Urrmmmm. Too much? That’s not very helpful is it? I reckon I’ve probably spent around 50 hours as a low estimate, but not all of that has been directly connected to work.”¹³³

“More than 60 hours over a period of 12 months.”¹³⁴

“It’s difficult to say exactly. I would estimate the initial development time for our teaching facility on Education UK Island took about 100 hours total. I would estimate that our ‘SL-Labs’ research facility on our first university island took about 150 hours. Each development requires a small amount of time for maintenance each week but once the initial building was done it’s a matter of using it and tweaking the scripted objects and setting up dedicated teaching places for classes or research.”¹³⁵

“Months. Years. Too much. Not enough.”¹³⁶

“Self/hobby - haven’t kept a log of hours.”¹³⁷

“!!!!!! Where do I start?! Well on tutoring, per course, you would spend a few hours a week at the beginning with students supporting email, SL instant messages and so forth. I also created a handbook for SL which needs updating every few months - but 2 hours work completes that. Then the orientation sessions, tutorial sessions and building sessions I run each take about 2 hours work (for one tutorial). And of course the building of the SL environment (Holyrood Park) which is now mainly completed took a few weeks last summer to develop on paper to actual SL development. But once built it didn’t require much more work.

Other colleagues have spent as much if not more. It does take time definitely. The cost of island and maintenance don’t cost much in the grand scheme of things, but the ‘man’ hours needed to manage it, develop it, use it and so forth are considerable.

I for one am always asked about hours spent on SL. And I will be very curious to see costing from others in the UK. See what is being spent!”¹³⁸

“Guestimate - about 8 hours a week over the past two years.”¹³⁹

¹³⁰ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

¹³¹ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

¹³² Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

¹³³ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

¹³⁴ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull

¹³⁵ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

¹³⁶ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

¹³⁷ Clive Gould, Bromley College

¹³⁸ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

¹³⁹ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

“A lot! I also use the environment to network and for research - and have even been known to make stuff for fun in my own time. So a lot.”¹⁴⁰

“It has largely involved two members of staff spending an average of 3 hours each per week since July 2007, together with an external consultant (Citrus Virtual) who has been/is undertaking design and management contracts with us.”¹⁴¹

“Difficult to say as we have 3 people in the team working full time since November. 2 developers and me doing training and meetings etc.”¹⁴²

“Very difficult to measure. 50 times 6 hours actually developing, 50 times 9 hours learning and discussing.”¹⁴³

“To be honest it’s difficult to say, partly because I am sometimes in SL for my own enjoyment rather than for work, but the two are intertwined, and I have been developing my understanding of the affordances of SL through all activities. Currently, when not off at a conference etc., I probably spend about 7-10 hours a week on SL activities directly related to teaching and development on the island or my personal development of teaching in SL (e.g. attending educators’ buzz meetings). In semester 1 it was a lot higher than that.”¹⁴⁴

“24+ hours over the last year - probably more actually - some of which is re-learning skills which have been quickly forgotten.”¹⁴⁵

2.5 Have you statistics on how much your SL “stuff” is ‘used’?

Usage data - which doesn’t include classes and special events - seems to be gathered mainly in terms of the raw number of visits. This is not surprising, as the functionality to measure this is easily implemented:

“We have sensors in-world which take a record once every 5 minutes of the names and locations of all the avatars on our islands.”¹⁴⁶

“I have somewhere in the region of 1,000 visitors to my site since August 2007.”¹⁴⁷

“Not yet - other than visitors to the exhibition which have topped 7,000.”¹⁴⁸

“We keep parcel entry records and receive reports each week of which avatars visit the virtual facilities. Separate data is recorded for unique and returning webpage hits. This data is automated and emailed through for monitoring and archiving each week.”¹⁴⁹

“I have records of events that show how many people attended and what they said, but that’s the only raw data that I keep.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

¹⁴¹ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

¹⁴² David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

¹⁴³ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

¹⁴⁴ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

¹⁴⁵ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

¹⁴⁶ Peter Twining, Open University

¹⁴⁷ Paul Sermon, Salford University

¹⁴⁸ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

¹⁴⁹ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

“While logging has not been consistently carried out (with some notable breaks during some busy periods), we have records of approximately 2,000 unique visitors to our Second Life presence.

There have been two deliveries of an honours year module ‘Collaborative Virtual Environments’ which made heavy use of Second Life, alongside a range of other Web 2.0 and collaborative technologies.”¹⁵¹

“About 35 visitors a day are currently visiting the LSL Exhibition. Several in-world classes and meetings have been held in the Virtual Learning Centre.”¹⁵²

“User statistics logs recorded in external MySQL database for individual access:

- Student quiz - 217
- Resources - 1,816
- Museum - 162”¹⁵³

“Our welcome bot shows around 90 new avatar visits in a 6 week period. We don’t have statistics on repeat visits yet, but will be setting that up before long.”¹⁵⁴

“Yes - I use a free metrics script to log visitors to the campus, but as there is no public access yet, it is obviously limited to people I let on the campus.”¹⁵⁵

Some academics receive feedback or other informal data regarding the use of their development:

“No. Quite a few took copies of the tools at the Buzz and I heard back that one was intending to use it in a demo. I know of at least one person who has used the Protein Rezzing Toolkit. Coincidentally, she is co-author of a textbook we have just adopted and, of course, now a ‘friend’. Interesting potential synergies like that have cropped up a few times and, I think, reflect the kind of people presently in-world who are prepared to take the environment and those they meet at face value.”¹⁵⁶

“Feedback from students, but not statistics on the number of visitors and so forth. We’ve talked about maybe adopting something like a ‘number of visitors recorder’ to the land, but to be honest a lot of visitors that visit (when we aren’t there) contact me directly if they are interested and want to know more. I have signs and notices everywhere encouraging this contact. And then every semester we have 4 tutors and sometimes 16 students involved in SL at one time.

We can obviously keep ‘track’ of the number of students and staff using it. Also now though other colleagues in the university and also across UK universities use Holyrood Park for their meetings, tutorials and so forth. No idea of traffic there. But we had to set up a SL timetable on a wiki for Holyrood Park use!”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

¹⁵¹ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

¹⁵² Clive Gould, Bromley College

¹⁵³ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

¹⁵⁴ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

¹⁵⁵ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

¹⁵⁶ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

¹⁵⁷ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

“We tend to set our stuff to full copy/modify permissions, so once it gets released into the wild, it’s difficult to keep track of its use. We occasionally hear of our things popping up around the place. Someone recently sent me a snapshot of one of my pieces of artwork that they had found on a ‘Freebie of the Month’ stall.”¹⁵⁸

Other academics are not measuring feedback, or indicate that it’s less of a quantitative and more of a qualitative aspect:

“Not yet. We are not officially live, although we have seen lots of people having meetings in our spaces and have a regular few classes now.”¹⁵⁹

“No, but it’s not really finished yet. And that wasn’t our intention in this project.”¹⁶⁰

“No. I would say that a success indicator would be a qualitative one, had someone deepened or enhanced their learning, do they enjoy their learning/professional activity more etc.”¹⁶¹

“This is not applicable, because the island is generally closed to be public because of being the area where students work and create.”¹⁶²

2.6 Team working

The impression from responses to the previous snapshot surveys was that academic SL developers were generally working alone or in isolation in their institution. This appears to have changed, with most SL developers or researchers working in teams or in collaboration with other colleagues (either informally or formally). Universities such as Lancaster, Edinburgh and Derby have established working groups or similar structures to bring together or support their staff and researchers working in SL and virtual worlds.

“We have a dynamic web-oriented group here. They are cuddly. However they aren’t very keen on SL - not antagonistic but not keen. I’d be happy to explore potential friends elsewhere.”¹⁶³

“A number of different academics are contributing to the project and we have a nominated individual on the network team to whom we can refer queries about access and downloads.”¹⁶⁴

“Some researchers at SARC are currently developing an installation/performance environment entitled ‘SL’Étude’. This work explores the relation between a physical and a virtual performance environment. ‘SL’Étude’ consists of a series of pieces for SL and a real life (RL) performance space capable of sound spatialisation. The RL and the SL space have a very similar layout.

In the RL space the performer is equipped with motion tracking devices (LED lights on the saxophone) that allow the performer’s gestures and movements to be tracked.

¹⁵⁸ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

¹⁵⁹ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

¹⁶⁰ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

¹⁶¹ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

¹⁶² Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

¹⁶³ Peter Murray-Rust, Cambridge University

¹⁶⁴ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

These movements will be displayed in SL as a rendered trail of performative presence, thus intensifying a two-way connection of the two worlds.”¹⁶⁵

“The partners include Daden Limited, BT, Birmingham City Council and Digital Birmingham, along with BCU's Learning Technology Development Unit.”¹⁶⁶

“Yes, we have a team of academics and technicians that meet once every two months or when necessary. The University of Derby Second Life Working Group steer the future direction of our work in Second Life and assist in policy, funding, development and publicity decisions.”¹⁶⁷

“Currently Skipper Abel and Clive Pro within the ICT School liaise on developments. Looking toward expanding to include staff in the Construction Department.”¹⁶⁸

“I work on SL stuff with my colleague, Graham Hibbert, who teaches alongside me in the School of Contemporary Art & Graphic Design at Leeds Met. Although we do not work directly with them on Second Life developments, we benefit from the wisdom and experience of senior colleagues across the university, in particular the Technology Enhanced Learning team and the good people in the Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Assessment, Learning and Teaching.”¹⁶⁹

“Though there are other lecturers working in Second Life at Bromley College (clive pro and vle pro), we each have our own SIM.”¹⁷⁰

“Colleagues across other schools in the University and ourselves all work under Vue (the Virtual University of Edinburgh). The Vue group is a virtual educational and research institute bringing together all those interested in the use of virtual worlds for teaching, research and outreach related to the University of Edinburgh.

I personally work now ‘full time’ as educational development adviser assisting colleagues to take their SL ideas from conception to delivery, via assistance on funding applications, presentations on Second Life, acting as co-investigator on some projects (if needed) and providing support to whoever needs it.”¹⁷¹

“One collaborator plus a loose internal interest network.”¹⁷²

“There is a scattering of interested individuals through the University - though for the most part there is little other work currently happening. One internal workshop on teaching and learning in virtual worlds conducted earlier in current academic year, and another to follow shortly.”¹⁷³

“We have been working with colleagues in Computing, Engineering and Mathematics this academic year and have just helped some colleagues in Sociology to gain internal

¹⁶⁵ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

¹⁶⁶ Jerry Foss, Technology Innovation Centre, Birmingham City University.

¹⁶⁷ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

¹⁶⁸ Clive Gould, Bromley College

¹⁶⁹ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

¹⁷⁰ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

¹⁷¹ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

¹⁷² Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

¹⁷³ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

teaching and learning funding to work with us on the RO and SL, beginning in September 2008.”¹⁷⁴

“There are 3 of us doing day to day work and a project board of 4 more people.”¹⁷⁵

“Yes, School of Architecture and School of Education.”¹⁷⁶

“1) CILASS, in terms of them funding, carrying out some evaluation, and supporting dissemination.

2) Lyn Parker from the Library, who was part of the SL team for the undergraduate students, and her colleague Jenny Pacheco.”¹⁷⁷

“We have a University SL group, but I’ve not attended meetings due to teaching commitments.”¹⁷⁸

“Staff who had been active in development work on the island were invited to join a Developer group. This group produced a development plan for the island and at the current time this plan is being implemented. It includes, for example, faculty spaces, meeting spaces and exhibition zones, and even a virtual court room.

There has been a conscious decision not to replicate existing physical spaces or parts of the university estate, but rather take advantage of the virtual environment. Student groups from primarily Art, Design and Architecture and Computing, Information Systems and Mathematics have had access to the island since January. Some students have been involved with design work; in addition a module has also been taught from within Second Life with students involved in designing and scripting complex 3D objects. Key to future development is growing student involvement in the design and implementation of the island infrastructure, and multi Faculty collaboration.”¹⁷⁹

“Yes. The lecturer, Judy Robertson¹⁸⁰, worked with the Flexible Learning Co-ordinator¹⁸¹. Furthermore, both have been raising awareness about the project. In addition, Dr Robertson will be offering a seminar on her experiences with learning and teaching with Second Life in Computer Science (Multimedia Design) for interested colleagues, and is helping to disseminate and explore possible educational uses of SL in other disciplines.”¹⁸²

2.7 What is your host institution’s attitude to doing “stuff” in Virtual Environments?

Several respondents requested anonymity in their reply to this question. Therefore, in this and other sections where anonymity was frequently requested, responses are listed unreferenced.

Replies to this question were generally positive. A collation of responses gives figures of:

¹⁷⁴ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

¹⁷⁵ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

¹⁷⁶ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

¹⁷⁷ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

¹⁷⁸ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

¹⁷⁹ Dr Tim Linsey, Head of e-Learning, Kingston University

¹⁸⁰ Judy Robertson’s blog: http://judyrobertson.typepad.com/judy_robertson/

¹⁸¹ Nicole Cargill-Kiper’s blog: <http://flexiblelearning.wordpress.com/>

¹⁸² Nicole Cargill-Kiper, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

- Largely positive: 24
- Neutral or mixed: 14
- Largely negative: 1

However: this may not reflect an accurate overall picture of institutional attitude towards Second Life. Academics defeated in using it due to said attitude may have given up using SL, and therefore have not encountered and responded to the survey.

- Marketing are aware of SL and are interested but do not feel it is an area they want to pursue at the moment.
- Cautiously supportive.
- Research and distance learning mainly.
- Interest is growing.
- Getting more interested, but nothing concrete for a University presence.
- Interest only at the present time.
- There has been some interest and various people have undertaken a number of initiatives.
- I don't know that it has a view. Our Computing Services were happy to mount the client software so long as I do the updating.
- The attitude is complex. SL has provoked strong reactions with some colleagues excited and inspired by it but most academics seem doubtful or disconcerted. The attitude of senior managers has been positive and encouraging, from providing the funding to run the pilot to plans for them to obtain avatars and become active participants.
- Great interest and we have been given the green light to run pilot projects.
- There are varying levels of interest.
- Techies interested, but have little time to do anything.
- University of Derby is very supportive.
- They are very enthusiastic and supportive. They have invested money, time and a great deal of trust in us. Interest in the educational possibilities presented by virtual worlds is growing across the institution, as part of a progressive strategy around TEL in general.
- Very, very high. And looking not just as Second Life, looking at all possible (and future) Virtual Environments. In the school of education, we have used Active Worlds, Palace and There to name a few. And are now looking at Open Sim and have an internally hosted server in the AI department hosting a grid. We hope to pilot use of this¹⁸³ (in the School of Education) within a year.
- Very encouraging at departmental level, reasonably encouraging at School level (e.g. through small project funding to buy out time) but technical services drag their feet - we still don't have voice chat despite continued request and our project reports identifying this as an important facility, e.g. for virtual tutorials.
- As an institution, they are aware of it and not above slapping the words 'Second Life' in places where they think they should. But really they don't have much idea. Too busy with other stuff.
- Probably cautiously optimistic! There is some scepticism about the role of SL in education (to some people it still looks a bit 'silly'), but there is a noticeable opening of minds now that we can demonstrate some of its educational potential.
- Very good, people are very excited about the prospect at the moment, yet strangely not keen to put much work in to it.
- Ambivalent attitude, interested to see what comes out.

¹⁸³ Vue Wiki: <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/VueWiki/Open+Vue>

- Since they currently refuse to put SL on the ‘managed desktop’, I cannot describe it as supportive. The security is such that the ‘data stick’ work round cannot be used, and except for departments (like us) who have some computer labs and technicians of our own, all the computers are ‘managed desktop’. This is obviously a major barrier to any further SL or virtual world take-up in the university. Some individual lecturers ARE interested in doing things in SL - I’m talking to a few colleagues in different departments.
- Varies tremendously. Some people keen to have a go. Others keen to throw obstacles in the way. One professor tried to persuade the VC that Second Life would, and I quote, ‘open the floodgates’ for sexual predators to prey on students, but luckily the VC was clued up to know he was talking [expletive].
- Happy to leave us to it. Marketing department decided against land purchase for fiscal reasons. The School of ICT is considering buying land in the main and teen grids and offering access to it to students as an incentive for good attendance and achievement. The Head of the School of Technology is considering using SL as part of Project work with part-time students on the HNC in Construction.
- Computer Science is supportive, with the Head of Department having readily invested in the island. The Head of School is very supportive, too. Additionally, there are colleagues not only in the School, but also across the institution, who have expressed interest and support. At this date, the interest does not go above and beyond that level/stage, though. Perhaps this is due to not awareness having been raised yet.

2.8 Has your institution’s library taken an interest/role in developing in SL?

Most survey respondents either gave no reply to this question, or a negative one. About half of those who gave a non-negative reply indicated that their institutions library was interested, but not actively developing. This is perhaps not surprising, as most of the activities described in response to 2.1 would not require the involvement of an academic library.

Queries on several UK library-oriented mailing lists drew little positive reply. This indicates that, proportionally, SL activity in UK university and college libraries is less than that in the US, where a significant number of university libraries have established some kind of presence in SL. From the perspective of awareness of emerging teaching and learning technologies, the lack of involvement or interest of UK academic libraries is perhaps a little worrying.

“I am not aware of this.”¹⁸⁴

“Don’t think so.”¹⁸⁵

“Yes - a colleague attended a workshop and I ran a follow-up session last week - they are interested in including SL in their generic training calendar. In terms of SL presence, unsure at this point, would like at least a small touch screen type kiosk which would open up a web browser with library web pages on - but have not started developing yet.”¹⁸⁶

“Not that I know of.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

¹⁸⁵ Peter Murray-Rust, Cambridge University

¹⁸⁶ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

¹⁸⁷ Paul Sermon, Salford University

“Very interested. Some of the library staff are involved in the Shome Park Programme - working on the development of ‘research skills’ for example.”¹⁸⁸

“The schools of Computer Science and Management also have plots of land on the island, as does the special collections department in the library.”¹⁸⁹

“Nothing firm, although we have had some preliminary discussions.”¹⁹⁰

“Not as far as I know.”¹⁹¹

“Yes - they are part-funding an island and I expect them to be using it if only on a trial/training basis.”¹⁹²

“The library is watching the developments of the pilot and has expressed an interest in becoming involved in the future.”¹⁹³

“No.”¹⁹⁴

“Interest only at the present time.”¹⁹⁵

“No.”¹⁹⁶

“There have been some general discussions with individuals in the Library regarding Second Life, but at this time, as far as I am aware, no firm plans.”¹⁹⁷

“Yes indeed, I am working with the library discussing their potential role within SL. They are very interested in developing more of a presence in our Vue area in SL and the library and information services department funded the purchase of the first island. Of course the (friendly) debate continues over what a library in SL looks like! Some want a tree of knowledge, with apples as books, and some want a building, large and full of books! They are very actively involved in SL, from the beginning.”¹⁹⁸

“Loosely.”¹⁹⁹

“None at all.”

“No, not so far.”²⁰⁰

“No (but they haven’t been asked to).”²⁰¹

¹⁸⁸ Peter Twining, Open University

¹⁸⁹ J Ross Nicoll, University of St Andrews

¹⁹⁰ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

¹⁹¹ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

¹⁹² Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

¹⁹³ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

¹⁹⁴ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull

¹⁹⁵ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

¹⁹⁶ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

¹⁹⁷ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

¹⁹⁸ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

¹⁹⁹ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

²⁰⁰ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

²⁰¹ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

“No; I keep pushing as one of our main features is our Learning Resources Centre.”²⁰²

“Yes, a librarian has been a teaching partner (we have also collaborated for external events) and they are working out what to do with a library space in SL. Lyn is explicitly exploring the role of libraries and the librarian in SL.”²⁰³

“Not that I know of, beyond the fact that one of the Librarian’s has an interest in SL.”²⁰⁴

“An interest, yes, as expressed in some conversations, but because of the more locally confined nature of the project, no one outside of the Module, except for the Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, has been directly involved yet.”²⁰⁵

2.9 Has your institution helped or hindered SL developments?

While noting that academics who have failed to progress with SL for internal reasons wouldn’t have answered this survey, the responses to this question are largely positive. Feedback to this question, other feedback and postings on lists indicates a largely supportive technical environment for SL developments, with three exceptions: firewalls, voice chat functionality and inadequate PCs in universities.

“Generally pretty supportive. We can access Second Life world through the OU Guest Network. It is blocked by the firewall on the OU intranet. The digilab in the library provides Macs which can be used with Second Life world.”²⁰⁶

“The School of Art & Design has been very supportive, particularly with QuickTime streaming support.”²⁰⁷

“We had firewall issues to start with but now that these are resolved it runs fine on most of the machines - only issue are the mandatory upgrades - I always need to check before scheduling a session and get technicians to load them - they are very prompt in doing this as long as I spot that there has been an upgrade in time.”²⁰⁸

“Networking has been an issue when it comes to proxies.”²⁰⁹

“Our ITS colleagues have been very helpful in enabling access to SL for all computers across the university’s networks. We can’t get voice enabled though, as there are security concerns about the nature of the connections (peer to peer?)”²¹⁰

“Computing Services did the first install. At the moment only a subset of our centres can run the client though this is expected to approach 100% next year.”²¹¹

²⁰² David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

²⁰³ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

²⁰⁴ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

²⁰⁵ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

²⁰⁶ Peter Twining, Open University

²⁰⁷ Paul Sermon, Salford University

²⁰⁸ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

²⁰⁹ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

²¹⁰ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

²¹¹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

“There have been barriers to making SL available on site, not through deliberate hindrance, I would say, but because of technical or logistical reasons. The technical team are willing to upgrade the graphics cards and install SL in the labs but have to do so as part of the rolling schedule of lab upgrades, which has slowed down the process. They have been keen to find workarounds wherever possible, such as installing SL in a small Mac lab that we have in the School until it can be put in place in one of the larger teaching labs. Port issues took some time to resolve and we’re still waiting for the port that enables voice to be opened.”²¹²

“The University IT Committee and team have been very supportive, and now all necessary firewall ports are open on UOPNET for anyone to access SL on-campus.”²¹³

“They have helped immensely.”²¹⁴

“PC’s in one network lab have been equipped with suitable SL compatible network cards and ports opened just for this room to enable SL access.”²¹⁵

“This is not an issue as we operate in a department that is already well-resourced for other purposes.”²¹⁶

“They have been supportive with the technical side. We have two state of the art dedicated Games Development Computer suites. These contain high-specification gaming computers with dual monitors and fast graphics cards. Our Next Generation Development Suite was opened by people from Linden Lab several years ago. We are one of the few universities in the country specifically set up to train students in computer gaming design. These facilities are used by other departments to teach and do development work in Second Life.”²¹⁷

“The support staff in the School of Contemporary Art & Graphic Design have been fantastic. Not only have they installed Second Life in our main Mac suite as part of the standard build, but they have even written a script to automatically update the client when a new version is released.”²¹⁸

“It was never hindered. We have now SL installed on at least one open access lab per university campus (Edinburgh is spread out over many campuses). There are still some departments that have firewall issues, and have found it difficult to have the relevant ports opened, but we are working on those. I have used the open access labs at various times, to run real life labs on Second Life, something I now do around the UK. They have proved very successful in overcoming the access issues that often surround SL. I also provide a handbook which aids those wanting to download SL at home.”²¹⁹

“The main issues were firewall related, as we already had suitable hardware. A standard form was required to request firewall changes, and these were applied. Some issues took a while to resolve, but we now have full access including voice - but not to

²¹² Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

²¹³ Maged N Kamel Boulos, Faculty of Health and Social Work, University of Plymouth

²¹⁴ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

²¹⁵ Clive Gould, Bromley College

²¹⁶ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull.

²¹⁷ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

²¹⁸ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

²¹⁹ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

Shoutcast audio streams (which are not hosted by Linden Lab, and do not always use standard IP port numbers).”²²⁰

“They have funded our machines but the machines in our institution are generally under spec’d for SL.”²²¹

“Helped, part of the funding was for technical support.”²²²

“They have assisted in allowing us to establish an SL compatible computer room/lab.”²²³

“No, but getting access in computer labs presents problems, notably with the very regular software upgrades to SL. I’m not sure realistically whether it’s feasible for student machines in the future, barring a sea-change in the way they roll out patches.”²²⁴

“The School and its computing officers have been very helpful, readily upgrading the computing labs that were used for teaching, and otherwise being of great help.”²²⁵

2.10 How has your institution coped with the financial aspects of Second Life?

As it turned out, this question was phrased ambiguously and was therefore misinterpreted. What I was trying to determine was whether the financial procedures within institutions could cope with e.g. the purchase of virtual land from Linden Labs. However, some of the responses were interesting so the question was left unchanged.

A few academics have purchased “land” in SL themselves, though this perhaps raises interesting questions about “ownership” and access rights to developments on it:

“Land costs (4096 sqm x2) to date met by developers (Clive Pro and Skipper Abel).”²²⁶

Different experiences were reported within institutions:

“Oh, that’s tricky!!! They have no idea how to classify SL expenses. They have no ‘code’ under which to file this expense. But we are getting there. We can pay it under some other ‘code’.”²²⁷

“We have two virtual Islands and a few parcels on communal land. Organising the financial aspects of research and teaching is one of the most challenging to overcome. We have a dedicated budget under an internal funding stream. Separate departments administer their finances through their own budgets.”²²⁸

²²⁰ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

²²¹ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

²²² Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

²²³ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

²²⁴ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

²²⁵ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

²²⁶ Clive Gould, Bromley College

²²⁷ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

²²⁸ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

“University private island funded through a project grant to the School of Education. However, financial procedures were unable to cope with payments when the land came up for renewal, resulting in around 6 weeks’ down time. Fortunately, Linden did eventually reinstate it with all assets.”²²⁹

“There was some initial complications about how to deal with invoices, but these were resolved without too much difficulty.”²³⁰

“Surprisingly well. I had to write a note explaining the process, and what was involved but then the fees were re-imbursed.”²³¹

Some academics have minimal procedural problems as they do not have land purchase issues:

“We have not purchased land. Nor are there plans to purchase land.”²³²

“We haven’t done it yet, as we have done our development as the result of winning a land grant on Education UK Island. However, we are just about to purchase our own e-learning island.”²³³

Interestingly, some academics reported procedural problems with Linden Labs as opposed to their own institution:

“LeedsMet invested early in land, and has committed to two more years of support for our current islands. We are in the process of purchasing our third island. Linden Lab has not made it easy for us to purchase land. The financial systems and support that LL has in place are inappropriate and ineffective, and our finance department has encountered real problems over the last year with Linden Lab. The open source alternatives to Second Life become more and more attractive each time we encounter yet another problem with Linden Lab.”²³⁴

“Fine; we have a project budget for it. I am now managing all the land etc., LL can be hard to work with on the payments side - there have been a lot of times where the payments have been messed up.”²³⁵

“Hmmm, this is a bit problematic and certainly not helped by the inefficiency of Linden labs sales office. To be honest I think it is up to Linden Labs, as vendors, to come up with more institutional-friendly payment options.”²³⁶

2.11 What teaching and learning (in SL) have you done?

Most of the responses to this question describe courses, or events which would be recognised as having “real world” parallels, e.g. classes or lectures. However, it should be noted that some of the responses to questions 1 and 2 also fall in this category.

²²⁹ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

²³⁰ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

²³¹ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

²³² Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull.

²³³ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

²³⁴ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

²³⁵ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

²³⁶ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

Many actions in SL which would not be traditionally classed as “teaching” or “learning” arguably fall into these categories. For example, developing - either collaboratively or individually - within Second Life requires a variety of ICT, logistical, architectural and mathematical skills. Communication within a virtual environment, be it through voice, text or other media, also requires some learning and skill development.

“Working with 13 to 17 year olds - lots! Primarily focused around supporting students in taking ownership of and responsibility for their own learning. We are more focused on ‘knowledge age skills’ than ‘domain specific knowledge’.”²³⁷

“Have run inductions for students and a session for teachers who wanted to use it in their practice.”²³⁸

“None, other than demonstrating the environment to a few students, taking them through induction. Also, demonstrating the Protein Rezzing Toolkit to a few people, and the Buzz.”²³⁹

“Weekly classes with the MSc Multimedia in Education group. Activities by Psychology and Drama students. Team meetings. We held a ‘speed dating event’ which entailed avatars talking in groups of two or three around a circuit of discussions on particular themes to do with their MSc. They found the smaller group sizes easier to manage, especially if they were not touch typists.”²⁴⁰

“We have taken Psychology undergraduate students into Second Life for a ‘Psychology Skills’ module. This was a pilot project to assess and develop blended learning skills in Second Life. We have also run workshops at conferences where delegates took part in learning activities such as virtual lectures and seminars, interactive quizzes, surveys, quick-fire debate and other workshops and demonstrations.”²⁴¹

“We have taken a cautious approach to teaching and learning in SL, gradually feeling our way around the issues. We have run quite a few induction and informal learning sessions for art and design students, evaluating the effectiveness of our approach and adapting accordingly for the next session. This has led to our JISC funded Open Habitat project, where we are performing a more robust and formal evaluation of the learning that takes place in SL.

We are fortunate in our school that our pedagogical approach values and rewards informal learning. This is where I have witnessed the real educational power of virtual worlds. The most effective structures that we have put in place have been the ones that enable and encourage freedom. This is usually in the form of a coaching-based approach, with staff and other students acting as mentors and guides to the virtual world and all it has to offer. We also place a great deal of emphasis on the educational benefits that can be realised when students create content. The whole of one of our islands is a giant sand-pit where our students learn through making.”²⁴²

²³⁷ Peter Twining, Open University

²³⁸ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

²³⁹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

²⁴⁰ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

²⁴¹ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

²⁴² Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

“Teaching on the MSc in E-learning, University of Edinburgh. MSc in Design and Digital Media MSc in Entrepreneurship - Business Building, Management School and School of Medicine Courses.”²⁴³

“Trial investigations with small groups.”²⁴⁴

“Two deliveries of module ‘Collaborative Virtual Environments’. Additional attendance at online workshops, conferences, talks and events.”²⁴⁵

“Just begun to run research methods seminars in the RO in SL. But, very early days as we have been concentrating upon the design and construction of the site, together with the population of the building with exercises.”²⁴⁶

“We have held a regular class of 60 people using SL to learn about streaming media plus tutorial and help ad-hoc too. We are hoping to get more regular classes soon.”²⁴⁷

“Have been to workshops/conferences (in the flesh and virtual).”²⁴⁸

“a) Compulsory activities relating directly to an assessed piece of work for first year BSc Information Management students (core module), and for groups of taught Masters students (optional module). There were relevant developmental activities in-world and face to face for both these classes.

For the undergraduates, the ultimate goal for each student was to produce an assignment in which they analysed SL interview transcripts in relation to real life information behaviour research models and reflected on their success as interviewers. Students had to submit this assignment to pass the module, therefore the SL element was compulsory. To achieve this, students undertook critical incident interviews with SL residents in SL itself. Students asked each interviewee to remember a time when he or she had an information-need relating to a SL activity.

The specific assignment that the taught postgraduates address through SL is a group project in which ‘Each group will produce an integrated learning experience making use of LAMS, MOLE and Second Life, on a topic of relevance to the Educational Informatics module’.

b) The discussion sessions are also learning activities for the participants (including me) and involve practitioners (educators and librarians mainly), researchers and students (not necessarily mine - it’s nice that students from elsewhere are able to join in).”²⁴⁹

“We have assessed a project with HND final year students investigating Web services through communications between an avatar scanner written in Linden Script in SL and a LAMP environment on one of the College’s Linux servers. Students were initially asked to complete staged SL orientation tasks before going on to implement the solution.

²⁴³ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

²⁴⁴ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

²⁴⁵ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

²⁴⁶ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

²⁴⁷ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

²⁴⁸ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

²⁴⁹ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

We have presented to students in the School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences on Linden Script as part of a Second Life project.”²⁵⁰

“Three trials so far:

- The first to evaluate the facility with a volunteer audience within SL.
- The second, an event for Giovanni Rossini where attendees were engaged in interactive social sessions.
- Finally, hosting strand D of the JISC LEON event in 2007.

In addition, a 3 hour Continuing Professional Development course in SL for staff at Greenwich University.”²⁵¹

“Basic teaching of building, scripting & texturing.”²⁵²

“The whole of the Heriot-Watt island is a place for teaching and learning. Students built their own environment by creating objects/exhibits. In addition to the island being the learning material and the learning place and the object itself, tutorials were held in SL and groups worked sometimes together in SL, with some group members in the lab during tutorials and others in SL at the same time.”²⁵³

2.12 What are the good/bad things about teaching and learning in SL?

There was a mixed bag of responses to this question, but several issues repeatedly came up.

Dealing with the “bad” aspects of teaching and learning in SL, respondents mentioned the amount of time taken for students and developers to learn the necessary skills, and for teaching activities to be undertaken. Some people found events such as lectures difficult to run/manage within the Second Life environment. The range of technical limitations, such as SL being “clunky” or “sludgy”, unreliable, needing powerful PCs, and problems with firewalls, were also cited as negative points.

On the positive side, the sociable nature of interaction in SL was mentioned by several respondents, as was the ability to work or collaborate with, or teach to, people who are geographically distant. The ability for students to be creative, and create a strong identity for themselves within Second Life, was also mentioned several times. In response to other questions, academics mentioned other positive attributes of SL, for example:

“...suggested that we might use Second Life to try out ideas, which we couldn't implement in practice (because of expense, complexity, risks, etc).”²⁵⁴

The need for learners and academics in SL to develop a new or different skill set also came up - as mainly a negative attribute. It would be interesting in future research to identify those skills further, and evaluate if their acquisition is useful or not.

“Like to think of there being a dimension that goes from ‘Learning about’ through ‘Learning by doing’ to ‘Learning by becoming’ - the latter involves actually taking on the role of ... (e.g.) you become a judge trying a case, or a race officer organising a regatta, or a bride getting married, or the director of a film, or ...

²⁵⁰ Clive Gould, Bromley College

²⁵¹ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

²⁵² Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

²⁵³ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

²⁵⁴ Peter Twining, Open University

Our tentative initial analysis suggests that the most powerful learning activities (in terms of knowledge age skills) are those in which you ‘learn by becoming’.”²⁵⁵

“Discussion should be focused on Second Life as a creative platform, otherwise talks are mainly chat-based and the Second Life functionality is not used.”²⁵⁶

“There is a learning curve to using the environment before you can get to the learning.”²⁵⁷

“It’s interesting and engaging and students like spending time in SL. Difficult to use for delivering lectures.”²⁵⁸

“Good thing is the ready availability of tools and exemplars, informality during sessions (jokes, etc.) and the high level of interaction between presenter and audience. The Buzz didn’t go 100% as intended (OK, it ended up being substantially improvised) but was very energising. Bad things are the constant change in the client and server (though it has resulted in improvements), general instability and the permissions system.”²⁵⁹

“It requires a whole new set of skills to deliver if relying on the chat tools. There are plans to hold staff development sessions on how to manage chat sessions that have particular learning outcomes associated with them to increase the chances of addressing those outcomes and ensuring meaningful learning. We have strong expertise in the institution in delivering this kind of session and recognise that it needs to be disseminated more widely.”²⁶⁰

“The bad: Second Life is not as wide-spread in terms of use as some people tend to believe. The good: Anyone who spends enough time exploring Second Life can find that it is an excellent resource for various purposes related to teaching and learning.”²⁶¹

“Good: the virtuality and all the facilities. Bad: technology is great but still too clunky for comfort.”²⁶²

“Mainly cross chat, and retention.”²⁶³

“Second Life teaching is very time-consuming and can lead to a lack of control over the learning outcomes if classes aren’t well prepared. Managing expectations, clear instruction and a good staff to student ratio are essential for live teaching. Asynchronous learning presents different challenges and it’s not always possible to evaluate the student experience of this.

Overall, Second Life provides a tool from which to utilise sound teaching. It can’t replace regular face to face contact with students, just as distance learning finds this hard. However, when blended with good e-learning techniques and all unnecessary

²⁵⁵ Peter Twining, Open University

²⁵⁶ Paul Sermon, Salford University

²⁵⁷ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

²⁵⁸ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

²⁵⁹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

²⁶⁰ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

²⁶¹ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull.

²⁶² Anita Pincas, Institute of Education, University of London.

²⁶³ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

distractions are minimised it can present an effective way to engage a proportion of students who take to this way of working.

From our feedback, a significant proportion of students don't immediately find Second Life useful though. The time it takes to familiarise students to the platform and get over the limitations of orienting to the virtual world is a key factor in the success of Second Life teaching. Good inductions and distraction-free teaching spaces are needed to overcome this. The ability of tutors to understand the students' Second Life experience and to adapt reflexively is important."²⁶⁴

"Our experience in the School of Education: good things - for distance learning masters SL it is an enormous benefit for a sense of digital presence, more than Facebook, webct, email.

The students feel a greater sense of presence within SL. Within the area we have built them in SL. A chance to see student innovation - as they create content, rather than just consume. We had a student submit an assignment²⁶⁵ for an MSc module through SL, using Skyboxes.

Good - the opportunity for role play and identity play amongst tutors and students, which we actively encourage (since the module is actually about online identity).

Good - the opportunity for innovation is enormous - student production of content in SL rather than sole consumption.

Bad - access still remains an issue for some distance learners in some countries. The NHS (for example) also have firewalls that they won't remove so colleagues can't access SL at work."²⁶⁶

"In brief, you have to make activities appropriate to learning outcomes."²⁶⁷

"Bad: Distractions, too much to learn, outages.

Good: Very open-ended in terms of possible content and ways to use in teaching, very engaging, very social atmosphere - rarely do academics spontaneously form such active and supportive communities of practice as seems to happen often in Second Life."²⁶⁸

"Can't really comment as we don't have enough experience yet."²⁶⁹

"Good: it's a free speech environment and people find it easy to communicate. Bad: students can sometimes act like five year olds, running around and being annoying, attaching large objects, etc."²⁷⁰

"It feels clunky from a computing point of view."²⁷¹

²⁶⁴ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

²⁶⁵ The Teaching Game: <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Vue/161/19/23/>

²⁶⁶ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

²⁶⁷ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

²⁶⁸ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

²⁶⁹ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

²⁷⁰ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

²⁷¹ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

“a) Bad: The worst problem is the technology. The students commented on that too. Obviously SL itself could be more stable, but in fact we never had outage problems for scheduled classes and I’ve had it twice affecting scheduled discussion sessions. Goodness knows, our WebCT still has bugs and now and then goes offline. I don’t know enough about the technical side to know whether LL could be doing more to make SL more compatible with a wider range of graphics cards, for example. Unfortunately even in the computers in the departmental labs the SL is a bit sludgy. Some students can access SL from home but most certainly not all of them, so without computers set in place progress is stymied.

There are the limitations on the number of avatars per island. However, I think that SL is not suited to big lecture scenarios, and I think that this limitation (like the one on text) actually helps steer you away from inappropriate pedagogies in SL. I think we should be steering away from big lecture scenarios anyway, towards a more problem-based and collaborative model, even with large classes of hundreds. The kind of pedagogy SL fosters - interactive, personal, creative - is a transformative pedagogy rather than a passive one. (So I’m making these bad points into good points ;-)

The other element is probably the time it takes to learn enough to do things in SL. On the other hand, as I said, not every student entering SL has to become a SL maven. Still, it is time consuming when you need to support all students to a certain level, when (like me) you made the SL element compulsory. However it does take time to learn how to get the best out of other learning environments too, and whereas a student struggling in a lecture theatre may go unnoticed and unaided, in SL you will notice them (literally!) struggling.

b) Good. Able to connect and work with people geographically distant. Most notably, Vicki Cormie, who became part of the SL teaching team with the undergraduates, was someone I met in SL and did not meet in RL until this March (after we’d worked together!) I am also developing working relationships with people in the USA, Australia, etc. I have people from the US leading some of the discussion sessions, e.g. an American MLIS student talking about the results of her study of information behaviour in SL.

For the students, it means that the undergraduates were able to meet and interview people from other countries. To quote a student:

*‘I’d like to take this opportunity to say I *really* enjoyed doing the interview task - I’d say it made a great use of the advantages of Second Life, connecting to people who might be geographically far, far away, and giving a more personal element to the interaction that plain chat would not have had.’* (Student email, April 2008)

The postgraduate students can go and look at other students’ work (in the USA, etc.) and get a chance to talk to them. I hope to extend this element next year.

One obvious advantage here is for distance learning students, but there are advantages in a blended learning environment too: students may not have to come into the university for sessions; there can be more flexibility in arranging meetings.

More creative and relaxed interaction with students - I feel I am getting to know them better.

Using the 3D/ building capabilities of SL to make more abstract ideas concrete and to explore and co-create meaning. I hope to do more of this with colleagues and students in future. For example, I would like to co-create the model of the research process, as

this will help to explore students' understandings and provide a boundary object for discussion of the why and how of research.

Developing RL skills in communication etc. through activities in SL - you can set up scenarios unfeasible in RL, also the nature of their learning space, and the avatar, means that some issues become easier to talk about. Contrasting RL and SL is also useful in developing understanding of RL ideas and issues.

Experiencing the ideas and creativity of artists, inventors educators etc. through builds in other parts of SL.

You can have a wardrobe of 300 dresses without becoming bankrupt.”²⁷²

“Good: HND ICT year 2 students quickly and easily picked up the interface and were soon customising their appearances and building in SL. Exposure to Linden Script and event driven programming helped students understand the concepts of multi-tasking in Java.

Bad: The students found using a public sandbox where their work was deleted every four hours a bit frustrating. They also found ‘griefers’ visiting the sandbox and disrupting their work distracting.”²⁷³

“It’s a bother, really. Too many issues with access (notably the completely unintuitive ways of granting public access), and routine maintenance (of which I can’t seem to see the logic of ‘routine’, except the fact it seems to happen when I least want it). Navigating the grid is still a nightmare, with a really poor search engine that simply can’t find things I know are there. Good things - the students are genuinely interested in it, and it adds a dimension to teaching. But, overall it’s a fiddle to do properly, is unreliable in terms of grid status, and takes a fair bit of time in just sorting out basics.”²⁷⁴

“For what was bad: SL was also used for the distance learning cohort of the Module, and there were problems, as Judy Robertson reported²⁷⁵ on her blog.

We provided help in-world by the Edinburgh based lab helper at specified times, as well as in class general instruction by the on-site teacher using my materials.

- We had low take-up of lab sessions from students - not sure why but may be due to the fact that the students are part time and also have jobs. It may be that they underestimated the difficulty of the module because it seemed like playing games.
- The tutor and students found it hard to communicate (using text chat rather than voice - bandwidth is a problem). If there is a convention of how to run a lab class in SL I would like to know about it - how do the students know when it is polite to ask a tutor a question, how do they queue etc?
- We had problems in giving students access permissions to edit terrain and build on group land. The same set up we used with Edinburgh students didn't seem to work and it is almost impossible to work out why when you can't see the student's screens.
- No matter what settings we tried we couldn't quickly view the students' scripts to help them solve problems. The tutor had to get them to email the code to her and

²⁷² Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

²⁷³ Clive Gould, Bromley College

²⁷⁴ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

²⁷⁵ Distance Learning Problems in SL: <http://tinyurl.com/4erhl>

then she would paste it into an object in SL to try for herself. This is very time consuming. The copy/modify permissions didn't seem to help. If anyone knows how to solve this problem PLEASE let us know!

So all in all, it has been very difficult for a number of complex reasons. It is fair to say that SL contributed to problems rather than alleviating them. See - technology is not going to solve all distance learning problems! I rather doubt that anyone in university management will ever read this, but in the off chance they will, I repeat: technology is not going to solve all distance learning problems!”²⁷⁶

2.13 Have you assessed how useful SL was in your teaching/learning event?

The response to this question was somewhat disappointing, indicating perhaps a lack of assessment or evaluation of many teaching and learning activities. This may be because of there being little need for evaluation of many events; in “real world” teaching, for example, there is not usually an evaluation after every lecture in every classroom.

In addition, as some of the answers to question 5 show, data is sometimes gained automatically from functionality within SL, or from feedback, while some academics note that useful assessment within an environment such as SL is more of a qualitative question than a quantitative one. Questionnaires, feedback and chat-log examination are also mentioned as assessment tools, with a few notable individuals e.g. from the universities of Sheffield and Heriot-Watt carrying out detailed evaluations.

“It has been very successful in terms of events with visitors to our exhibition - have not done any other evaluation yet.”²⁷⁷

“For what it was used so far little impact. We have plans to do more but never got around to do so.”²⁷⁸

“Not really. One of the students I demo'd to has since set up a small scripting business and makes enough L\$ to meet his tier. After the Buzz Deckah Mah said “Thnaks for movign the boundaries on my understanding of SL possibilities” (sic) - which was probably being a little over-generous (typical situation in SL) but a nice thought. Assuming she meant it in a nice way, of course.”²⁷⁹

“We have developed an island. Media film students initially developed the space and used the island to produce short narrative based animated films. They evaluated this process.”²⁸⁰

“In March 2008, I ran my first event in Second Life. This session was intended to introduce e-learning practitioners to Best Practice Models for assessment design and to consider how this could be applied in their own context and/or in Second Life. There was a presentation on the REAP Model and a group discussion activity followed by feedback and a plenary. I am still collating feedback, but it was a very successful event and I am likely to run it again.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

²⁷⁷ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

²⁷⁸ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

²⁷⁹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

²⁸⁰ John Spencer, Senior Lecturer Media - Moving Image, Liverpool Hope University

²⁸¹ Helen Walmsley, E-learning Models Co-ordinator, Learning Development and Innovation, Staffordshire University

“Only marginally, through Module Evaluation questionnaires.”²⁸²

“Yes, via questionnaires and interviews.”

“Yes indeed, we have gathered feedback from students using our Second Life space within the MSc in E-learning. (Some available on request.) The overall feedback has been positive and most students using the system for the first time are on the main intrigued, curious, some cautious! A few years back there were access issues, and not all students could access it, so we couldn’t use SL as a core learning environment. And although not all students can access SL even now, that number has decreased.”²⁸³

“Too early to comment.”²⁸⁴

“Previous delivery the module was rated very highly by many of the students. Current delivery feedback collected but yet to be reviewed. In both years students found the ability to showcase their work internationally to be rewarding.”²⁸⁵

“Not yet.”²⁸⁶

“User feedback from learning trials.”²⁸⁷

“It’s too early at the moment, but the tutorials have been very successful.”²⁸⁸

“Not yet.”²⁸⁹

“This is ongoing, but so far:

- Through quality of assessed work (I don’t think this aspect should be underestimated - it’s a big factor in how we judge the effectiveness of teaching and learning generally!).
- Observation and examination of chat-logs of sessions (including ones discussing use of SL).
- Informal comment and interaction in RL and SL class and spontaneous comments.
- Personal reflection and gathering of evidence using an e-portfolio (with the first year’s I am aiming to write it up as an action research study).
- Other teaching team members recording and reflecting on the aims and experiences.

What we haven’t done yet is CILASS-mediated questionnaire/focus group activity with students. That is planned very soon.”²⁹⁰

“Yes, and the assessment is still ongoing on the evaluation side. Since the work in SL was assessed as part of two modules, the lecturer has naturally had a good insight into the effects of using SL. To quote from Judy Robertson’s blog²⁹¹:

²⁸² Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull

²⁸³ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

²⁸⁴ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

²⁸⁵ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

²⁸⁶ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

²⁸⁷ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

²⁸⁸ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

²⁸⁹ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

²⁹⁰ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

'I was really pleased with the quality of the work they submitted. There were an unusual number of high As, and few failing marks. When I started teaching that module two years ago, there was a failing average! Maybe the exam board will query the high average but I really feel that it reflects the quality of the learning the students did. I learned a lot from marking them. Having watched their video tutorials and read their scripts, I now know much more about the vagaries of SL than I did before as I knew nothing about SL until September last year. It seems to me only right that I should learn from MSc and 4th year students. (Not being one who goes for the "sage on centre stage" image.)

I was pleased with the portfolio style of assessment. The learning log and tutorial aspects were unexpectedly useful for getting an insight into student learning and gathering evidence of the new skills they learned. They are both good cross references for guarding against plagiarism. Note that after my rant earlier in the term, plagiarism was not a big problem. The students knew to submit commented code and explain it in their learning logs.'

The Flexible Learning Co-ordinator is working on evaluating the questionnaires, and is currently analysing the participant observation logs and the interviews. The students' learning logs have also given a great insight, and that, coupled with the exhibits themselves, has already been making a powerful point for continuation of this project and for use with 1st year students next year. As the most interesting area, group work in SL has already crystallised, because it appears to be complex and offering additional dimensions to F2F or even synchronous/asynchronous text based group work, by requiring developed negotiation skills and more identity-focused interaction with one's own group and other groups.

Issues concerning the relative effectiveness of face to face or in-world communication have become apparent, motivational factors in group work, possible problems within and between student groups, opportunities for informal peer support and review - collaboration outside formal groups and, generally, communication between learners and facilitators."²⁹²

"The students achieved good academic results in the Database Programming Web Services assignment and enjoyed themselves! One student's comments are provided below:

'I didn't have any clue about Second Life, I had heard of it but never used it. Now that I am using Second Life its great fun to play around with it, it takes all your time and you won't know where it has gone. You can create avatars, houses etc. Doing anything on it is great - I like it. When I had a look at the assignment it was like it's easy because I have done similar things. But as I went through it was challenging, but I got there at the end. It works the way I want it to.'"²⁹³

"Not as such, no."²⁹⁴

2.14 Are you more or less inclined to develop stuff in SL in the future?

²⁹¹ Gold Stars for my SL Students: <http://tinyurl.com/3jedmy>

²⁹² Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

²⁹³ Clive Gould, Bromley College

²⁹⁴ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

The majority of respondents indicate they are likely to continue developing in Second Life in the future:

“Yes, there are many new creative projects and research directions to take.”²⁹⁵

“More - we have only touched the tip of its potential.”²⁹⁶

“More.”²⁹⁷

“Yes.”²⁹⁸

“I feel that I’ve barely started, have made lots of mistakes and will make a lot more. I do, however, have a much better feel for the limitations of the environment and the way the social aspects tend to work. Having in-world friends is a great asset in terms of motivating you when you’re a bit ‘stuck’. I have a number of plans, some building on previous work but also some new stuff.”²⁹⁹

“More.”³⁰⁰

“Not develop but maybe run some courses in existing buildings.”³⁰¹

“Yes, on a small scale unless we can secure more funding.”³⁰²

“More.”³⁰³

“More, more ;-)”³⁰⁴

“Very much more inclined, and interest and ideas are growing in the university.”³⁰⁵

“More inclined, definitely.”³⁰⁶

“Still keen on developing our in-world resources.”³⁰⁷

“Yes, SL will definitely be used with next year’s 1st year students in Computer Science.”³⁰⁸

However, a number indicated that they were keeping an open mind to alternatives to Second Life:

²⁹⁵ Paul Sermon, Salford University

²⁹⁶ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

²⁹⁷ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

²⁹⁸ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

²⁹⁹ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

³⁰⁰ Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

³⁰¹ Anita Pincas, Institute of Education, University of London

³⁰² Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

³⁰³ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

³⁰⁴ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

³⁰⁵ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

³⁰⁶ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

³⁰⁷ Clive Gould, Bromley College

³⁰⁸ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

“Mixed opinions - I believe there may be value for a year, but developments with other virtual worlds especially open source virtual worlds may make it more appropriate to explore these other worlds.”³⁰⁹

“Our evidence so far suggests that virtual worlds have great potential, if used in certain ways, to enhance learning. We will clearly continue to explore virtual worlds - however, it is not clear that Second Life world is the optimal environment. One of the things we are working on is scoping out what we refer to as the Virtual Schome Environment (VSE needles too say) which will incorporate some of the infrastructure features of MUVes which help to draw players/learners through progressively richer and more complex levels of engagement (but without the violence or limitations in terms of what you can build/script that are typical of most MUVes at present).”³¹⁰

“I am personally more encouraged to develop further in virtual worlds. As the technology improves, the user-experience will become more intuitive and platforms will merge. I see the rise of virtual world as being a vastly significant development for future education and the mass media. Second Life isn’t for everyone at present; there are great challenges ahead for the technology and the psychological aspects of working and teaching in these immersive environments.”³¹¹

“We are more inclined to develop stuff in like Second Life, but we have one eye on the alternatives.”³¹²

“For our own use in the MSc we are looking now at other virtual worlds and trying to see where the future lies. We want to keep to the forefront of these developments, and not be left in Second Life when there are newer, challenging worlds emerging...”

“Longer term, we are looking at web applications to assist in managing use of Second Life for teaching, and at the possibility of moving to an Open Sim based platform. We are particularly looking at the possibility of assembling a grid of Open Sim servers co-located with JANET and maintaining a custom client, based on Nicholaz Beresford's patches, with a slower release rate than the official client. This would hopefully reduce the downtime, or at least allow us to work to keep it outside 9-5 UK time, as well as making acceptance at universities easier by providing a safer environment.”³¹³

“Not sure.”³¹⁴

“Less inclined, as it has been bothersome.”³¹⁵

2.15 How do you think SL is perceived in the academic world?

There were some uncomfortable responses to this question. Respondents reported a wide range of attitudes, and it’s clear that several have had personal encounters with negative and hostile peers. References to “hatred” and “suspicion” in some of the responses indicate that the use of SL still elicits strong differences of opinion regarding its value. In addition, it is worth noting that some academics still categorise SL as a “video game”.

³⁰⁹ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

³¹⁰ Peter Twining, Open University

³¹¹ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

³¹² Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

³¹³ J Ross Nicoll, University of St Andrews

³¹⁴ Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

³¹⁵ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

Several respondents requested anonymity; hence all the comments have been made anonymous. Two respondents filled in a (negative) answer to this question and left the other questions blank, possibly indicating personal negative experiences.

- Generally a gimmick, though I think a few places who innovate are trying it out.
- Hatred of any new technology by those within a decade of retirement. They hate change, they hate having to learn anything new, and they just want a quiet life until they drift off. Unfortunately, these same people hold the power within faculty.
- Generally - with caution, the value of learning using 'serious games' and virtual worlds in general is being questioned.
- Varies considerably from fear and rejection, to healthy scepticism to evangelical enthusiasm.
- With much interest.
- Mainly with suspicion. To many lecturers, it simply looks too much like a video game, leading to negative assumptions. I am tired with people, and I refer mainly to senior academics, who are too idle to experiment with Second Life. Instead, they prefer to reinforce their incorrect prejudice. Many, I guess, don't like it as it represents change or something different. Which may mean more work for them in the decreasing gap between now and when they retire. Personally, I wish they would all sod off; if they aren't going to help our Second Life activities, then at least stop hindering them.
- Mixed - some people think it is a game and not serious, others recognise its potential.
- I don't think there is much informed awareness of either its potential or its limitations and, of course, there is bound to be a fair bit of concern about the less savoury aspects. The ability to run a private grid behind a firewall in due course may allay the concerns of some, albeit at some considerable loss.
- With enthusiasm and imagination by a minority, and with doubt, fear and even derision by the rest...
- Do you know how [expletive] off I am with people who, on being told about Second Life, respond with 'Maybe you should get a First Life?' Like, they're the first person ever to think up that devastatingly witty reply. Oh, how we laugh. Ha [expletive] ha.
- Has not had great exposure. We will have to be pushing to get SL out there...
- I believe there are three camps: (1) SL is the best thing since sliced bread, (2) SL has some interesting prospects for academia, but I'm not sure what exactly, and (3) SL? It's just hype ... and it will go away.
- Enthusiasm by students and 20-somethings. Intrigue by those in their 30s and 40s. Suspicion and hatred by those from 50 and beyond.
- I think that Second Life has an enduring novelty factor. From my experience, it is only when academics actually enter the virtual world and spend some time there that they come to realise the massive potential for their students.
- Second Life is generally greeted with suspicion, wonder, ridicule, dismissal, hype, misunderstanding and excitement.
- It's improving I think. It is often met with curiosity but most (I've worked with) are intrigued and questioning and interesting. Once they get the support after this intrigue (which is what I try and provide) then that interest actually often becomes a real SL project for them.
- It seems to be following the path of other innovations (e.g. at first Windows was a nice toy).
- Very mixed perceptions.

- Probably still as unproven, and a bit geeky! But, some of the examples of great education ideas (simulations, small virtual economies, collaboration between students, displays of student work etc.) are beginning to make academic colleagues more aware of the potential of SL.
- It's getting quite good press academically it seems, and its popularity is growing.
- On a par with playing games.
- Mostly positive. Though in every presentation I've given, there seems to be a token, self-important, sceptic who tries to monopolise the floor with his views.
- From academics I come into contact with, mixed reactions: the whole range from excited and interested to spooked and distrustful. In terms of 'the academic world' I'm not sure - there may be a hype/anti-hype war going on, and people also have their own interests and reasons to push a particular kind of educational tool or environment.
- Varies tremendously, from 'we should be evaluating this kind of technology more' to 'this isn't respectable teaching and learning, why is the university wasting time and money on it'.
- Small group: enthusiasm. Majority: never heard of it. Small group: can't take it seriously.
- Usually positive.
- Positive with the concept, however some reservations with regard to functional requirements in relation to Firewalls and difficulties surrounding graphic compatibilities.
- Faint interest, but less so than a year ago - that's based on our department.
- Mainly good. Though some of my colleagues have had less favourable reactions.
- Some are intrigued. Some don't care. Some think it's a flimsy excuse for dubious online activities.
- Mixed reactions. There are some enthusiasts, which sometimes appear to be less critical and distanced as perhaps desirable, then a larger percentage of those who are willing to explore and spend time on looking at the potential, and then there is another, smaller percentage of those who plain refuse to be engaged, eyeing such developments warily. However, Nicole Cargill-Kipar's opinion, purely anecdotally, is that the majority are quite willing to be open-minded.

2.16 Do you think there will still be significant UK HE/FE development in SL in (a) 2008-2009 and (b) 2009-2010?

This question generated a mixed set of responses, with general confidence of more SL development in the next academic year, but markedly less so in the academic year after that. A collation of responses gives figures of:

- 2008/2009 academic year: Yes: 21 Uncertain: 9 No: 4
- 2009/2010 academic year: Yes: 13 Uncertain: 16 No: 5

Some of the responses tie in with those of question 14, indicating that virtual environments other than Second Life would be considered by academics as they emerge.

- Yes with regard to a), but not sure about b). The cost of development strikes me as too high for the benefits it apparently confers. Plus, the centralised model still strikes me as ludicrous - perhaps the OpenGrid will take off and we can do what we do in SL for (more-or-less) free. Plus, VAT, of course.
- Yes, but not necessarily Second Life, which could be replaced.
- Yes and maybe in other virtual environments - I don't think we have yet hit the virtual generation in HE.

- I think it depends on student reaction which in turn will depend on the environment (and teachers) being able to deliver learning experiences that are unique, engaging and reasonably authentic. I don't think we'll be anywhere near able to form a sound judgement until 2010 at the earliest and it will take a while longer for the average member of staff to warm to the environment. Hopefully, we'll see learned societies take the lead on this in terms of holding research-related meetings and there will be a trickle-over effect into teaching.
- I hope so. The UK has only started to catch on.
- Yes, as long as there are funds, resources and/or structures to support it.
- It will take a lot longer than that.
- Yes. However, I think that it will be a number of years before this technology becomes considered mainstream. The platform needs to develop from its current incarnation, as a series of evolving but separate projects across educational institutions, to a more coherent and moderated form. There is not enough consideration of pedagogical issues at present and perhaps too much focus on the technological issues. As educationalists, we first need to establish sound pedagogies and codes of practice. Experiential learning is probably a good thing but we should be aware of how the experience itself can influence students' future ability to learn in ways that are more traditional. I feel that care is needed in embracing the more experiential and immersive way of learning afforded by virtual worlds; structure, self-discipline and 'old fashioned' reading are as important today as they have ever been. Second Life should supplement and enhance rather than replace existing successful methods of educating future generations.
- All the evidence gleaned from my own experiences would suggest that SL development will grow exponentially.
- I would think so yes. I would say more 2008 (now) rather than 2009. But I don't want to be out of a job! So I am thinking if not Second Life for 2009, then some other (better?) virtual world will take its place. Environments to suit the type of learning that goes on in Second Life with our students have been around since late 70s! So I am thinking if it isn't Second Life in later years, it will be something better, but similar.
- Yes, and slowly growing in significance, but depends on developments such as virtual clients and so on.
- Yes and yes.
- Probably.
- Not sure.
- Yes.
- Yes and I would have THOUGHT (b) yes as well. Some major disciplinary areas (hard sciences and medicine) are showing some solid interest in virtual worlds. Whether or not SL is THE virtual world in the long run, you need to plan investments a bit in advance, and it seems unlikely that a major new virtual world with all the content options will come along soon enough for 2009-10. But what do I know?
- Personally, I (Nicole Cargill-Kipar) am inclined to think that there will be a steady increase in developments. Immersive learning and virtual worlds are undoubtedly buzzwords, and while more and more HE and FE institutions are looking into possibilities, the early adopters might already be looking at other platforms and a widening of the scope. I do believe that we will see similar adoption albeit on a smaller scale, for virtual worlds as we have seen for VLEs - but possibly wither with the restriction of caveats regarding the use of non-institutional platforms, or with the development of institution-owned ones.

2.17 SL mailing lists - useful, or a deluge of noise?

A common complaint from academics is trying to keep up with SL developments online. There are several mailing lists, but these generate large volumes of content. The JISCmail SL list seems to be preferred to the SLED list.

Some people reported positively:

- A little bit of both! The JISC list is far more manageable/useful than the official SLED list.
- Useful.
- Useful I guess. I am on too many mailing lists, but yeah they can be useful. We have one in the university here re Second Life and virtual worlds and some academics would definitely say 'too much stuff' but for me it's very useful and we've decreased the traffic on the mailing list. Of course nothing beats a personal email following up a group mailing list email. Even if you are saying exactly the same thing!
- Useful; well, the JISCmail list seems to be.
- Unfortunately, both. Perhaps you can't have the one without the other in the current SLED community, since people who seem to witter on endlessly are also people who come up with real useful nuggets of information and are tremendously helpful if you need advice. I'm outside the Emerge community, and perhaps (I get the impression) a UK SL community has developed there, but I don't get a feeling that a UK SL community has developed outside that.
- JISCmail list is worthwhile. SLED is out of control.

Others reported about the volume or irrelevance of content:

- I had to unsubscribe as I couldn't handle the volume of messages. I regret it as there was lots of useful information in them.
- A lot of noise but I filter out what I need.
- Occasionally useful, but in the way of all lists, has a fair amount of flaming wars and the downright odd.
- I wish people would use them properly and not re-quote the text they are replying to - it takes ages to find the new stuff amongst the noise but I do find some very valuable links and information in the SLED. As I usually access it from my Blackberry the quoting bit is very infuriating, along with the out of office messages.
- I found SLED very useful for the first year or two, but I find it difficult to keep up with it now. I always point educators new to Second Life to the SLED archive, and encourage them to sign up to the digest.
- I rarely read them.
- Nicole Cargill-Kipar has been on the SLED list for quite a while, stating that if one does not keep up constantly with wading through and deleting, then the noise because a deafening roar. However, there are some gems amongst the deluge, thus the list has been useful, albeit time consuming to keep up with the useful contributions.
- Don't subscribe as they are far too teccie and fill up my email inbox!
- Came off the SLED as left no time for SL work!!!
- Subscribed to SLED list and sometimes find the odd post useful, but most of the content is not relevant to me so if I'm busy end up deleting the daily digest without reading it.
- I remain a member of the SLED, and though there can be a substantial amount of noise at times you do develop an eye for content.

Alternatives to mailing lists were suggested:

- Very useful but too many things to follow - would be so much better on the blog. It appears that academic staff prefers lists at the moment.
- If the SLED list split off announcements, I'd probably unsubscribe as I get more from Twitter, blog RSS and in-world meetings. That said I filter it so it isn't a major time sink. I don't follow the JISCmail list or Facebook group so, EduserV apart, I probably have a better feel for what's going on in the US than here. I think I've just described myself as somewhat marginalised but that probably does reflect my activities hitherto.
- Too much information with the same topics perpetually recycled. I currently have 1000+ unread emails from SLED forum. It strikes me that about five percent of subscribed people post to the list regularly, and about 90 per cent of topics have been covered in detail elsewhere. RSS feeds are the best way to stay in touch. Google Announcements by key word are also a good way to be kept informed about SL developments.
- Useful if you can filter the deluge of noise. Use gmail, don't use digest mode!
- Prefer forum and Wikis.

2.18 What would help you to do more “stuff” in SL?

Responses to this question fell into four categories.

Examples of SL use would be useful, though this was mentioned by surprisingly few people:

“More documented case studies/evidence of learning taking place that we can send around our internal network.”³¹⁶

“An education showcase reel on the SL site that highlights some of the good practice in education”³¹⁷

Technical improvements to the Second Life environment, viewer or tools would be appreciated by a number of respondents:

“Stability - don't want to start using if there is above average risk that it will crash / users can't get in / users can't use easily. Possibly private hosting a la IBM initiative could be of interest.”³¹⁸

“Open source code, allowing MUVE's to be installed on decentralised servers.”³¹⁹

“A better system for the management of land purchasing by educators would be of massive benefit. The project currently being developed by IBM, which is hosting virtual Second Life land on its own servers rather than Linden Lab's, might point the way. If someone like EduserV or JISC could manage the hosting of land for UK educators on a large scale, it would remove the bottleneck of land purchasing. It would also help to reassure those educators who feel a little uneasy engaging with a commercial operation like Linden Lab. The open source alternatives, such as OpenSim, may in the future mature to the point where educators can set up their own reliable grids. This sort of development would really benefit from the support of a funding body.”³²⁰

³¹⁶ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

³¹⁷ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

³¹⁸ Nicola Avery, University of Surrey

³¹⁹ Paul Sermon, Salford University

³²⁰ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

“Better scripting language; it is very restrictive at the moment. Also being able to import from 3d max or other software, a good inbuilt browser with flash and java support and mostly A WEB INTERFACE!”³²¹

“A local server edition of Second Life. Second Life updates not needing administrator rights (or not being compulsory).”³²²

“My institution - putting SL on the managed desktop, proactively updating it and testing out how the latest update works.

Linden Labs - lowering the computer spec somehow???

Eduser/JISC - perhaps opening up the Emerge community a little?”³²³

“An integrated toolset that worked in-world and out-world would be a great asset. I think the tools are still fairly primitive. Obviously help in migrating content to alternative virtual worlds would be helpful in due course, though I actually think it’s the pedagogy we’re developing at the moment and, if that works, the rest will follow.”³²⁴

“In the medium term we need the development of an environment which brings in some of the useful strategies for engaging users (and assessing them) from games like WoW (without the violence).”³²⁵

“Better search in SL so you can find things more easily.”³²⁶

“I had to take a private course in how to use SL, but - while I do believe it is the best thing going for blended or distance education - I wish it would morph into a more advanced stage where we didn’t have to use so many awkward commands.”³²⁷

Not surprisingly, money and funding (often tied in to “time”) were mentioned by several respondents:

“Time and money.”³²⁸

“Remuneration for work.”³²⁹

“Time, money and instructional developers.”³³⁰

“Money, I guess! And good ideas from a range of educators in different disciplines. Good design is fundamental to the effective use of SL, and we have found working with an experienced designer and architect absolutely invaluable.”³³¹

³²¹ David Lee, University of Hertfordshire

³²² Tony Ackroyd, Multimedia Programme Leader, University of Greenwich

³²³ Sheila Webber, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield

³²⁴ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

³²⁵ Peter Twining, Open University

³²⁶ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

³²⁷ Anita Pincas, Institute of Education, University of London.

³²⁸ Robert Ward, Division of Psychology, University of Huddersfield

³²⁹ Barry Spencer, Bromley College

³³⁰ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

³³¹ Dr Liz Falconer, Manager, E-learning Development Unit, University of the West of England

“Funders are always welcome. That’s the question I am asked most at my seminars and workshops - ‘where can I look for funding?’. Support within our institution for educational developments within SL is provided by me (Fiona Littleton), from an Information Services and School of Education fund. And I definitely have plenty of work! I also work with other universities around the UK on various projects to do with Second Life and virtual worlds.”³³²

“Money ...”³³³

“Ultimately funding, I guess, and more hours in the day. Having a sabbatical and working with a team would be great but I think I have stuff to prove first.”³³⁴

“More opportunities for funding and other external support are always helpful too.”³³⁵

“More time to develop my own skills and perhaps some funding to enable me to buy in some ‘expert’ help with development of the space.”³³⁶

Several responses included support and more resources, again sometimes tied in to “time”:

“I would like to see a ‘team’ at my institution that would design our projects. Currently I am relying on students to do their summer projects. Once these students are gone I will have to find other people to help. It is not possible to design something on this scale by oneself. There needs to be a dedicated SL group!!!”³³⁷

“I think it should be student driven. That is to say, if the students ask for it, more will happen. At least from an institutional perspective that seems to be the case.”³³⁸

“Linden labs did provide a dedicated Linden to take care of education. His role was a lot easier when I started in early 2006. I met with him in SL, chatted, there weren’t many universities in there at the time. We even had the loan of an acre on Campus Island to try it all out. But Pathfinder Linden doesn’t keep that role anymore and support in general for education islands is not great, from Linden.

Support from colleagues and peers, now that is where the value is. Learning from each other is the key. Maybe a wiki to house that learning and knowledge for the UK?!”³³⁹

“Have more time and resources to devote to the developing.”³⁴⁰

“I would like more hours in the day please...”³⁴¹

“I’ve been asked to support the use of Second Life as part of the Teaching and Learning Conference at the University in September so really need help in finding out how to

³³² Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

³³³ Peter Twining, Open University

³³⁴ Dr Peter Miller, Division of Integrative Biology, University of Liverpool

³³⁵ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull

³³⁶ Dr Julia Gaimster, Head of eLearning, London College of Fashion

³³⁷ Franziska Schroeder, Queen’s University Belfast

³³⁸ Dr Toni Sant, Scarborough School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull

³³⁹ Fiona Littleton, Educational Development Adviser for Second Life, University of Edinburgh

³⁴⁰ Savvas Papagiannidis, Newcastle University

³⁴¹ Simon Bignell, Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby

stream video into Second Life and how to run it alongside and incorporate it into real world events.”³⁴²

“Recognition by host institution of work already undertaken. Time and land costs met by host institution.”³⁴³

“All from LL:

- Lower the cost dramatically.
- Upgrade the software less regularly.
- Improve server performance.
- Sort out the search engine.
- Improve the browser functionality (i.e. access controls from one menu rather than two).”³⁴⁴

“As with almost everything, further funding would be required to engage more deeply with SL. Funding for staff time, such as an RA to research and evaluate use and interaction in a systematic way. Also funding for more tutors and lab assistants, and if SL were to be sued across the board, hardware would have to be upgraded, computing support would have to be available, and - if looking at widening the scope into pastoral care territory - student services would have to come on board and be enabled (time, training, hardware) to do so.”³⁴⁵

³⁴² Cheryl Reynolds, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield

³⁴³ Clive Gould, Bromley College

³⁴⁴ Dr James Dearnley, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University

³⁴⁵ Nicole Cargill-Kipar, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Heriot-Watt University

3. Issues and analysis

Responses and follow-up correspondence highlighted six points in particular.

3.1 Key points

Range of activities: Feedback and the responses to questions 1, 2 and 11 illustrate a very wide range of SL teaching, learning (especially distance learning), research and development activities within UK academia. These include courses, lectures, one-to-one and one-to-many tutorials, demonstrations of student-built “stuff”, interactive displays, campus representations, live performances, real-world representations, university promotions, communication skills acquisition, and experimentation in many areas. The diverse, multi-skill and multi-subject nature of many of these activities make their classification into a traditional or simple activity category difficult.

Lack of funding: The answers to questions 3 and 18 indicate a Second Life academic development community suffering from a lack of funding opportunities. Even with the possibilities of cheap or free “land” at places such as the UK Education Island (and see how that area alone has grown since the last snapshot), the time required - see question 4 - to acquire development skills and generally build in SL is significant. Many academics have sought internal funding, and donated large amounts of their personal time to these activities. The amount of ongoing SL development *despite* the general lack of funding, and the number of applications to funding calls, indicates a substantial body of developers in need of resource support.

Individual versus collaborative efforts: The shift from individual to collaborative SL efforts is partially due to the increasing number of academics using SL. However, it is also probably due to:

- The large amount of time required to develop significant resources within SL, making it difficult for one person to manage.
- Internal funding for SL developments being spread, more creatively, across a range of activities.
- Like-minded SL advocates within institutions finding each other and working collaboratively.
- The nature of SL lending itself to more fulfilling collaborative pursuits. As one respondent put it:

“Rarely do academics spontaneously form such active and supportive communities of practice as seems to happen often in Second Life.”³⁴⁶

Support and attitude: Academics reported that their host institutions were largely supportive. However, it should be borne in mind that academics who have tried and failed at SL activities due to insurmountable institutional or technical problems would not have responded to this questionnaire. Institutional financial procedures usually coped with the purchase of “virtual land” where required, with several academics reporting that Linden Labs’ procedures caused problems in this area. Technical services were also largely helpful, though problems with firewalls, inadequate PCs and voice chat access were reported. Attitudes of colleagues covered a complete range from positive to (very) negative.

³⁴⁶ Daniel Livingstone, Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland

Online support was seen as problematic. Linden Labs were sometimes reported as difficult to communicate with, within academic procedures. Official SL mailing lists were unviable due to the volume of content/traffic, though the JISCmail list received some positive comments.

Evaluation of teaching and learning activities: The responses to question 13 showed that some, but not all, academics using SL for teaching and learning undertook evaluation exercises. While this isn't necessary - most learning experiences in the "real world" are not subject to evaluation - it would be very useful for this information to be publicly available. This would assist other academics in determining if SL, or an alternative virtual environment, is suitable for their needs.

Duplication of research into teaching and learning: Responses to questions 1 and 2 showed that a substantial number of academics, spread across several universities, were conducting research into the use of SL within teaching and learning. Searches indicate other ongoing research in this area; for example, Dr. Steve Warburton at King's College London is:

"...exploring good practices in the use of MUVes such as Second Life in education"³⁴⁷

There is possibly a concern that individuals, and teams of people, within universities are essentially carrying out the same research. This could be addressed by relevant research and findings into the use of SL for teaching and learning being made more easily available, and funding bodies (and institutions) astutely funding more innovative and original research, rather than retreaded work.

3.2 The extent of SL use in UK HE and FE

Web searches and other leads continually reveal more UK university activity in SL. It is also obvious that there is much more SL activity in this sector than there was at the time of the first snapshot a year ago. There are many instances not covered in this particular snapshot report, at the time of launch. For example, universities such as Edge Hill are evaluating the usefulness of SL:

"I'm in the process of trying to calculate what sort of costs occur (time and money) to both Edge Hill staff and students when creating and accessing various resources and learning experiences in this environment and other similar ones. This will help us make decisions about what we can try to achieve if people want to use the technology."³⁴⁸

Lecturers such as Professor Philip Gibbard³⁴⁹ from the Department of Geography at the University of Cambridge, and Professor Euan Nisbet³⁵⁰, Professor of Geology at Royal Holloway, are delivering lectures and presentations through Second Life.

Most UK universities have "land" that they either own or rent in Second Life. Outside of the respondents to this survey are a collection, including Brunel³⁵¹, Sussex³⁵², Glasgow Caledonian³⁵³, Imperial College London³⁵⁴ and Aston³⁵⁵, developing campus representations which they use for promotion, or for teaching and learning.

³⁴⁷ Second Life in Real Life workshop: http://www.alt.ac.uk/workshop_detail.php?e=297

³⁴⁸ CAKES: Learning Technology blog: <http://tinyurl.com/3rku5j>

³⁴⁹ Professor Gibbard lecture in SL: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/news/dp/2007092502>

³⁵⁰ CO₂ monitoring should be 'Second Nature': <http://tinyurl.com/463y3n>

³⁵¹ Brunel University campus: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/silversprite/2323819433/>

³⁵² Second Life at Sussex: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/secondlife/>

³⁵³ Glasgow Caledonian University CU There project: <http://www.gcal.ac.uk/cuthere/>

³⁵⁴ Game-based learning for Virtual Patients in Second Life: <http://tinyurl.com/3kh83l>

Using this list of UK universities³⁵⁶ as a guide, and taking into account institutions who haven't responded but where there is reasonable evidence of SL activity, and institutions who are developing in SL but in a non-public way, then a figure of roughly three quarters of UK universities are estimated to be actively developing or using Second Life at the institutional, departmental and/or individual academic level. Of these, many are involved in several ongoing SL developments.

The situation with UK Further Education institutions is different. Searches, list postings and SL map browsing indicate much less activity than in HE, and this snapshot does not contain much content from these institutions. However, UK FE is not totally devoid of Second Life developments. For example, Barry Spencer from Bromley College forwarded this quote within his survey response:

"Hi Skipper, I'm from Orpington College and I'm currently doing a Foundation degree in Education and Training (eLearning) at Greenwich University. One of my lecturers, Simon Walker, told me that Bromley College had been experimenting in SL and I was interested to see what you've been doing here. Together with my ebuddies, we've been using SL to collaborate on tasks for our Celtt course. I'm looking forward to learning more about SL and hope to get the chance to have a chat here in the future."

Other Second Life activities have been, or are, taking place at FE institutions such as Dartington:

*"As a part of the auraproject, avatar Fraser Fonda - aka sculptor Kate Allen - organised a series of meetings that included talks by architects, designers and the research group Performance in Transit, exploring the Second Life environment as a virtual meeting place and its effect on real life perceptions, art and architecture."*³⁵⁷

Ravensbourne College have worked with various media companies and helped produce a live web cast in Second Life³⁵⁸, while at Glasgow School of Art, two students³⁵⁹ have received funding to 'scope the potential of Second Life to education in creative practices'. At North East Wales Institute of Higher Education, students on a humanities course³⁶⁰ have to 'create and engage with some form of online avatar e.g. in Second Life', while Myerscough college have developed a wooden house³⁶¹ in SL to promote their arboriculture and urban forestry courses.

These, however, are more the exception than the rule, and it is clear that there is not the pace of Second Life take-up and experimentation in FE that there is in HE.

3.3 Future plans and the likely SL path

A number of institutions and academics are at early stages of SL developments which will roll out over the next year or two. For example:

³⁵⁵ Aston University Aspects Magazine, January 2008: article on Second Life development

³⁵⁶ List of UK universities: <http://www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/alpha.html>

³⁵⁷ Meet you in Second Life: <http://tinyurl.com/3kb6dj>

³⁵⁸ BBC Backstage Tour: http://www.rave.ac.uk/showcase/backstage_tour.htm

³⁵⁹ GSA news: http://news.gsa.ac.uk/content/bulletin_print.asp?page=s47

³⁶⁰ HUM171 (Studying the media): <http://www.newi.ac.uk/humanities/schedules/HUM171.htm>

³⁶¹ Myerscough College: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/silversprite/2304661959/>

“I’m in the early stages of working something out with one of our Divinity lecturers to see if we can use SL as a role play environment for students to experience what it is like to be a monk (specifically a Buddhist monk).”³⁶²

“Digital Birmingham are interested in our current work from the aspect of creating a Virtual Birmingham. They have been monitoring the project closely to get insight of the use of virtual environments for public services. I am working closely with Digital Birmingham to plan the development towards the digital city. For example - public-facing services, tourism, planning contingencies for disasters, etc.”³⁶³

“We are running the JISC funded Habitat project which is running pilots with Art and Design students at Leeds Met and some Philosophers at Oxford University. The project will generate solutions to the challenges of teaching, learning and collaboration in MUVes. These solutions will be primarily in the form of guidelines, models and exemplars but will also be supported by the development/appropriation of software tools and services in and around the MUVes themselves. The key thing is that the Art and Design pilot will allow students to submit assessable work in Second Life so we are moving from experiment to curriculum (maybe ☺).”³⁶⁴

“Developments are ongoing at Roehampton in terms of Second Life at an institutional level, overseen by Phil Cheeseman, who is Head of E-Learning Services. I am developing ideas with Phil for the BA/BSc Film programme, looking at ways in which we might incorporate SL into specific modules.

One idea that we are currently working with is to use SL as a space in which students can organise film festivals as part of a module on this subject. Phil and I are also looking at exhibiting student work (films, photography projects, etc.) within SL and we are currently constructing a gallery space to enable this. Developments are at an early stage and are subject to constraints on staff time but we do hope to have made some progress soon.”³⁶⁵

“We will hopefully be plunging headlong into SL in two ways.

- We’ll be developing an Island for the new Diplomas (Construction & the Built Environment and Creative Arts).
- We’ll also be opening an Island that will be centred on Higher Education in the Workplace.

Within both of these strands we have developed proposals for multiple ways in which SL can be used to benefit those particular groups of students.”³⁶⁶

Searches indicate other future academic activities in Second Life. For example, the 2006-2007 annual report from Kingston University includes:

“We also initiated trials to evaluate the use of the Second Life virtual world to support learning and teaching. The University has a virtual island in Second Life which we expect to start using in 2008.”³⁶⁷

Regarding virtual environments for teaching and learning, the future would appear to be positive. There are a growing number of academics using Second Life - and a number using

³⁶² Phil Marston, Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Aberdeen

³⁶³ Jerry Foss, Technology Innovation Centre, Birmingham City University

³⁶⁴ David White, Oxford University

³⁶⁵ Paul Sutton, Programme Convenor Film Studies Programmes, Roehampton University

³⁶⁶ Harry Greiner, Head of New Media, City College Norwich

³⁶⁷ Kingston University 2006-2007 annual report: <http://tinyurl.com/3u7zom>

alternatives - for a very wide range of activities. Many of the people who responded to this survey indicated they would carry on using, and developing within, Second Life, at least for the next academic year.

However, the long-term prospects for Second Life as the “virtual environment of choice” are less certain. The responses to questions 14 and 16 showed a body of academics who were keeping an open mind as to whether to stay with SL or move to another environment, such as OpenSim³⁶⁸ - which was mentioned by several respondents - or whatever comes along in the future. Responses included:

“We will clearly continue to explore virtual worlds - however, it is not clear that Second Life world is the optimal environment.”³⁶⁹

And:

“We are more inclined to develop stuff in like Second Life, but we have one eye on the alternatives.”³⁷⁰

Some of the reasons for academics considering alternatives to SL can be found in the responses to question 10 (the difficulty in financial procedures with Linden Labs) and question 18 (technical issues with Second Life, and the desire by some academics for more localised versions).

While it is unlikely that a commercial entity could quickly create a virtual environment which academic developers find preferable to SL, open source and collaborative academic developments may provide viable alternatives in the middle future unless Linden Labs eradicates some of the obstacles mentioned in responses.

3.4 Dissenters and sceptics

The responses to question 15 showed that a number of SL developers in academia had encountered negative reactions, making this an issue of consideration. Several such “sceptics” responded to the report, each with different levels of experience of SL as an educational platform. For example:

“Nothing is happening at University level because, after initially looking into SL, we found no immediate value in investing a lot of time, effort and budget into this specific platform (why this and not some other virtual community?). From a recruitment point of view, we’d have to buy into both the ‘proper’ SL and the ‘teen grid’. Looking at the offerings of many other institutions, we’ve concluded that most don’t really use the platform to its advantage, basically just putting up a model of the campus, or a few key buildings, and plastering it with existing print/video marketing materials...”³⁷¹

...with another response being:

“As I am the only one in the department to have studied the internal PGCE-Learning course, my comments may be relevant.

³⁶⁸ OpenSim: http://opensimulator.org/wiki/Main_Page

³⁶⁹ Peter Twining, Open University

³⁷⁰ Ian Truelove, Technology Enhanced Learning, Leeds Metropolitan University

³⁷¹ Patrick Lauke, University of Salford

There was a phrase I picked up somewhere in this context which I rather liked. It was that librarians going on Second Life is like the geography teacher at the school disco.

I'm not sure that's entirely right, but I think it does indicate one of the dynamics; the servile drive to be liked by the students, to be down with the youth or whatever the pathetic phrase is.

The criteria for me must be derived from some construction of what higher education is about; so, in brief, how does Second Life contribute to the acquisition of metacognitive skills? And, if it does, does it also simultaneously undermine that process, through a combination of reduction of attention span and rational constructive capacity, and a disregard for truth in an environment in which the imagination, pretence, and wishful thinking tend to become the predominant norms?

I can drone on like this for hours; and I think that there may be answers to my bilious scepticism. As yet, however, I have heard nothing more than enthusiasm based on opportunity rather than any more grounded premise."

More examples, case studies, data and applicable and relevant "proof" of Second Life and other virtual environments being successful in academic applications may encourage the more open-minded sceptics to investigate or reconsider Second Life within their academic work.

4. Further reports and examples

4.1 The autumn 2008 snapshot

The final snapshot report in this series is due to be made public in October 2008. This will, as in the previous reports, collect examples of and comments on where Second Life is being used for teaching and learning in UK HE and FE.

In addition, the report will focus on these areas:

- As several years will have passed since SL initially became available, it is expected that there will be a growing number of academics who have used it for teaching and learning, but have since stopped. The research behind the report will attempt to find some, and find out why they stopped using SL.
- By the autumn of 2008, more institutions will have completed courses or other teaching and learning events using SL. It is hoped that assessment measures result in the availability of more details on the impact or usefulness of SL within academic activities.

Appendix A of this report contains a questionnaire relating to the final snapshot report. If it is relevant to you, then we would appreciate it if you could fill in what is appropriate and return it. In addition, if you know of other UK academics developing in SL, then please point them in the direction of the questionnaire. The more responses received, the more accurate a snapshot of SL developments can be produced.

4.2 Cataloguing examples

Cataloguing examples of UK HE and FE initiatives in Second Life is worthwhile in order that:

- Other people interested in using SL can see if their particular teaching or learning need has been fulfilled by using SL.
- Appreciation of the scale of virtual world developments in UK academia can be better gauged.
- For future study, there is some preservation of detail of virtual world activities in 2007-2008 academia.
- Trends in the use of Second Life and virtual worlds in teaching and learning can be tracked.

There are two ways in which details of Second Life developments in UK Higher and Further Education will be “captured”.

Firstly, a Flickr group has been created so UK educators can contribute screen dumps or image grabs of their SL development or activity: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/slsnaps/>

If you are submitting content, then please follow the instructions regarding tagging images, and also add a meaningful description.

Secondly, a website is under construction at www.worldscrossing.com, which will be made public in the autumn of 2008. This will contain a catalogue, which will include SL developments mentioned in the series of snapshot reports.

5. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andy Powell, Pete Johnston and Ed Barker of the Eduserv Foundation³⁷² for support, contacts, tweets and patience.

Thanks also to Aleks Krotoski³⁷³ for contacts and information, Fiona Littleton for distributing surveys, and Ruth Wilson³⁷⁴ and Rachel Bruce for their input.

Above all, thanks to the many academics who filled in survey questionnaires, often in great detail, openness and refreshing frankness, or who answered questions about their Second Life activities.

³⁷² Eduserv Foundation: <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation>

³⁷³ Aleks Krotoski on Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleks_Krotoski

³⁷⁴ Scotproof: <http://www.scotproof.com/>

Appendix A: Second Life survey

For academics in UK Higher and Further Education

The Eduserv Foundation fund research into the educational applications of Second Life (SL). Part of this involves a series of “snapshot” reports, summarising how SL is being used within the UK Higher and Further Education community. Further details are on their website:

<http://www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation/sl>

Data for the snapshot reports is being gathered through a set of questions (attached). We would appreciate your responses to some or all of these. This is a chance for you to promote what you’ve done and your needs for future SL support.

The final deadline is **October 3rd 2008**, for inclusion in the Autumn 2008 snapshot. However, submissions as soon as possible will help us tremendously.

Please fill in whatever responses you want, to whatever level of detail you want. One thing only: note that what you write may become public in future reports, so please don’t write anything that will get you into trouble! You can also add anything else you think is relevant but not covered by the questions. Please email the response back, as either an attached file or a normal email, to john@silversprite.com

Our thanks for your response. As an extra incentive, when a bundle of survey responses has been received, five will be picked at random. Each of the five respondents will receive a new copy of a social-economic book (the book is also selected at random). Also optional: if you wish to further publicise what you’ve done in SL, you can post screendumps in this Flickr group:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/slsnaps/>

Regards, and our thanks,

Eduserv Foundation (www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation)
John Kirriemuir (www.silversprite.com)

First - who you are

Note that we will not make your email address public

0.1 Name / role.

0.2 Institution.

1. What you're up to

1.1 Why are you developing "stuff" in SL?

1.2 What functionality have you developed?

1.3 Who's funding the development (staff time, fees to Linden, capable PCs)?

1.4 How much time do you reckon you've spent developing in SL?

1.5 Have you statistics on how much your SL "stuff" is used?

1.6 Do you blog, post on your website, or otherwise publicise what you're developing? If so, what are the website addresses?

2. Your institution: cuddly and supportive or obstructive?

2.1 With regard to your SL development, are you working with anyone else in your host institution?

2.2 What is your host institution's attitude to, or interest in, doing "stuff" in Virtual Environments?

2.3 Has your institution's library taken an interest or role in developing in SL?

2.4 Has your institution helped, or hindered, with any technical problems, e.g. access to SL, needing a suitable graphics card or powerful enough machine?

2.5 How has your institution coped bureaucratically with the fiscal side of SL, e.g. dealing with invoices resulting from purchasing land?

3. Teaching and learning (if applicable)

3.1 What teaching and learning have you done in SL?

3.2 From your experience, what were the good/bad things about teaching and learning in SL?

3.3 Have you assessed how useful SL was in your teaching/learning events?

4. Future plans and support: doing more, or giving up?

4.1 Are you more or less inclined to develop stuff in SL in the future?

4.2 How do you think SL is perceived in the academic world?

4.3 Do you think there will still be significant UK HE/FE development in SL in (a) the 2008-09 academic year and (b) the 2009-2010 academic year?

4.4 SL mailing lists - useful for academic developments, or a deluge of noise?

4.5 What would help you (help coming from either Linden Labs, your host institution, funders, or some other source) to do more "stuff" in SL?

5. Free space - write any other relevant thoughts...