Best Practices for Non-profits in Second Life – Fall 2007

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Best Practices for Non-profits in Second Life

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REPORT

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- o **Go Beyond the Classroom Model:** Some of the most successful experiments have involved peer-to-peer learning, with students working together to solve a problem or present an issue in a compelling manner.

- o **Sandbox Learning:** Rich, long-lasting lessons can be imparted to students through activities that challenge them to create something on their own, using the various tools available in Second Life.

- o **Use Avatars to Explore Identity Issues:** Create opportunities for identity play and self-expression through avatar creation and manipulation.

On Outreach

- o **Hold Regular Events:** By holding regular events (discussions, classes, support group meetings, dances, etc.), you give people an opportunity to learn about your group and meet with your staff and members.

- o **Work with Existing Communities:** Seek out existing groups and networks that might be interested in your cause.

- o **Staff Your Office:** Hold regular office hours and install scripted objects that inform your staff and volunteers when someone visits your space.

On Collaboration

- o **Practice Light but Consistent Facilitation:** Facilitation and moderation skills that work in the real world are even more necessary in the virtual world.

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- o **Contests and Competitions:** Friendly competitions are often good ways to get people involved in creating content and working together.

On Fundraising

- o **Multi-modal Strategies:** Instead of relying on one or two methods of raising donations, let the community respond with their own ideas and run with them.

- o **Work with Second Life Content Creators:** Many successful fundraisers have been organized in cooperation with Second Life designers donating special products that are either sold or auctioned as a fundraiser for the group.

- o **Event Fundraising:** High profile events that offer some form of entertainment are good ways to attract potential donors.

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- o **Combine Second Life with Other Outreach Channels:** Second Life activities are good launching points for reaching people through other means (i.e. social networking sites, viral videos, real world events, etc.).

- o **Give Activists Something to Do:** Second Life provides many ways for the average avatar to spread a message to their friends, family and colleagues.

INTRODUCTION

Well-heeled patrons sip martinis while bidding on shimmering gowns to raise funds for cancer research. A humanitarian aid worker just back from Sudan talks about the plight of Sudanese refugees to an international audience. Regulars at a weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meeting sit in a loose circle, helping each other through another day of sobriety. Teenagers are creating sets, costumes and lighting to shoot an educational video about child soldiers in Uganda. Pretty normal non-profit activities – if not for the fact that all of these events took place in the virtual world of Second Life.

Historically, non-profit and charitable organizations have sought to leverage the media of their times to fulfill their missions. Whether it is print publications, radio, television, film, or the internet, non-profits have found ways to disseminate their message and their causes with limited budgets and staffs. So it is no surprise that they should seize upon virtual worlds with a similar zeal.

But what are "virtual worlds"? There have been a number of popular press articles about the growing reach of online computer games like World of Warcraft and the Sims Online, drawing gamers by the millions from around the globe. Meanwhile popular media like *The Matrix* trilogy and *Star Trek* depict computer-generated environments that simulate reality for the participants. While we are far from ready to "take the blue pill," a number of three-dimensional, interactive, real-time virtual worlds have become popular in the past few years, including ActiveWorlds, There.com, Kaneva, Habbo and Second Life.

This paper focuses on Second Life as the current leading virtual world for public interest, educational, advocacy and governmental activities. (In the "Way Forward" section we discuss other virtual worlds.) There are no precise statistics on the number of non-profit groups that have some form of presence in Second Life, but it likely numbers in the hundreds. (For example, the Plush Nonprofit Commons, which hosts 32 different non-

profit groups, often has more than 50 residents attending their weekly meetings.) These range from large international organizations such as the humanitarian group CARE, national groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, and smaller initiatives such as the Lower Eastside Girls Club of New York.

This report is a preliminary examination of some of the best practices of non-profits active in Second Life, inspired by a series of discussions that took place during the "nonprofit track" at the Second Life Community Convention in August 2007 in Chicago. This past year Second Life has become a testing ground for exploring the possibilities of using virtual worlds for the social good. Given the fairly recent entry of many non-profits into Second Life – many non-profit offices are under one year old – these findings and recommendations are very much subject to revision. Indeed, we consider this just the beginning of a much longer conversation about what is the role of civil society, philanthropy, and the public sector writ large in the virtual world. After reading this brief report, we invite you to join the conversation at the website of Global Kids at www.holymeatballs.org.

There are three main sections to this document: Best Practices, Challenges, and Ways Forward. The "Best Practices" section presents some of the lessons that have been learned by non-profits active in Second Life in the areas of fundraising, community outreach, collaboration and advocacy. "Challenges" examines some of the main technical, social and organizational hurdles non-profits have to overcome to work effectively and sustainably in the virtual world. And the report closes with "Ways Forward," discussing what the near future looks like for Second Life. A list of additional resources and selected references can be found in the appendix.

Support for this report was provided by the Digital Media and Learning Initiative of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The inspiration and much of the material for this report was drawn from the Non-profit and Philanthropy Thread that was organized by Global Kids at the Second Life Community Convention in Chicago, Illinois in August 2007. See the appendix for more information about Global Kids and their various programs to empower youth with technology for a brighter future.

Our thanks to the many individuals and organizations that contributed their insights and wisdom to this report.

On Methodology

The conclusions and recommendations from this report were synthesized from several sources, including (1) panel discussions that took place during the Second Life Community Convention in August 2007 in Chicago, IL, (2) surveys and interviews with a dozen non-profit leaders and coordinators conducted by the author, (3) published reports and papers issued by non-profit organizations, and (4) media coverage of non-profit activity in virtual worlds. While the author is deeply indebted to those groups and individuals that generously provided their input and contributions, the final conclusions and analysis are the author's own and do not purport to represent the consensus views of the Second Life non-profit community writ large or any individual group.

A Note about Second Life

This report is not meant as a general guide to Second Life. The Second Life website (www.secondlife.com) and the Second Life grid website (www.secondlifegrid.net) contain a wealth of information about this virtual world. In addition, the list of selected resources in the appendix refers you to a number of articles, reports, websites and locations in Second Life where you can find more information and news.

BEST PRACTICES FOR NON-PROFITS

In the short amount of time that non-profits have been active in Second Life, they have begun to learn valuable lessons in using the medium effectively for their various causes and objectives. This section examines how non-profits are using this virtual world for education, community outreach, collaboration, fundraising and advocacy.

Education

Many institutions have begun to experiment with educational activities in Second Life, including major universities, libraries, and museums. Non-profits have used Second Life to effectively and immersively educate the public and build awareness of their issues.

The most effective educational activities take full advantage of the technological and collaborative tools available in Second Life to offer a unique educational experience to students and other participants. That said, there is a hierarchy of pedagogical tools that a non-profit organization can make available:

- o **Text:** At the most basic level, non-profits can provide texts in the form of notecards and textured prims that present material to avatars. Many non-profits, for example, have notecard givers that present avatars visiting their offices with basic text with the purpose and goals of the organization.

- o **Weblinks:** Non-profits can provide links to external webpages with relevant information, which can be a simple means for a group to impart information if it already has a well-developed web presence.

- o **Video and Audio:** Non-profits can upload videos and audio clips to Second Life, which people can watch and listen to. Groups that already

produce videos, podcasts, radio shows or other multimedia content may find this to be a relatively easy way to educate avatars.

- o **Immersive Environments:** Some groups have created immersive spaces that engage and inform avatars about an issue or cause. Some good examples include Camp Darfur, Baghdad Streets, the International Spaceflight Museum, and Conservation Island. (See the Appendix for links to these sims.)

- o **Classes and other Educational Events:** Instructors can conduct real-time classes with a widely dispersed group of students, including lecturing using the audio stream, providing notecards and weblinks to relevant material, assigning homework, and breaking the class into small groups for discussion and collaboration. Beyond the classroom structure, there are many kinds of educational events that have been organized by non-profits, from roundtable discussions to building contests, book clubs and theatrical presentations.

The global youth leadership organization Global Kids is well known for their educational activities on the Second Life Teen Grid that combine all of the techniques listed above. Some of their recent initiatives include a maze on the issue of child sex trafficking, a mixed reality event on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur held in conjunction with the US Holocaust Museum, and a game called *CONSENT!* that teaches about medical experimentation on African-American prisoners.

One of Global Kid's recent projects was a Convention on the Rights of the Child Machinima Camp, held in the summer of 2007. "Machinima" are digital movies that are made using 3D computer game or virtual world technology. Organized in collaboration with UNICEF, the goal of the camp was to make socially-conscious machinima videos on issues that relate to children's rights specifically contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Thirteen young people participated in the five-week camp, which involved classes on the actual content of the Convention, instruction on how to make machinima, and free time to create one minute machinima videos about one issue from the CRC. These

videos were then uploaded to YouTube, presented at a panel at the Second Life Community Convention in August 2007 in Chicago, and featured on UNICEF's website.

The strength of this approach is that, not only did a small group of young people have an empowering, engaging educational experience over the summer, but they were also able to create content that could educate thousands of others who encounter their videos online.

Education Tips:

o **Go Beyond the Classroom Model:** Connie Yowell of the MacArthur Foundation noted in her address at the Second Life Community Convention in August 2007 that the US educational system is designed to "prepare people to live in the 1950s." Second Life as an immersive, interactive, open content environment presents many opportunities for moving beyond the classroom lecture model of teaching. Some of the most successful experiments have involved peer-to-peer learning, with students encouraged to work with each other to solve a problem or present an issue in a compelling manner.

o **Sandbox Learning:** Rich, long-lasting lessons can be imparted to students through activities that challenge them to create something on their own, using the various tools available to them in Second Life. Organize small teams of avatars to work together to build something with a minimal amount of guidance.

o **Use Avatars to Explore Identity Issues:** Create opportunities for identity play and self expression through avatar creation and manipulation. This can be used to generate empathy, by putting the people literally in the shoes of others. It can be used for theatrical purposes, to enact a skit about an issue. One can explore existing avatar choices to bring up issues of gender and racial representation or use non-human avatars to address issues of discrimination.

Community Outreach

There will be 20 other platforms and virtual worlds launching this year. But Second Life has the killer app, which is community.

- Connie Yowell, MacArthur Foundation, keynote address at 2007 Second Life Community Convention

Second Life for many non-profit groups has become an effective tool for broadening their outreach to new audiences and supporters and increasing community involvement and engagement with their work.

The Transgender Resource Center holds regular support meetings for transgendered people, where they can connect with each other from wherever they are in the real world in a safe and nurturing environment. Alcoholics Anonymous and other substance abuse support groups also meet regularly in Second Life, where the possibilities for anonymity are even greater than at real world meetings. "Awareness seems to be the most obvious benefit of being on SL," according to Randy Moss of the American Cancer Society. "We are able to reach a whole new audience with our health awareness messaging and offer our services to a plethora of new constituents."

Several groups have noted that it is the international, diverse nature of Second Life that attracted them to the platform. A representative of the Global Aid Foundation reported that one of the primary reasons they got involved in Second Life was for "the possibilities of interaction with individuals from all ethnic and national backgrounds through this new communication avenue."

And the grid grows increasingly international and diverse as times goes on. Current demographics according to Linden Labs as of July 2007 show that the top ten most active country populations in Second Life are:

Country	Active Avatar Count	% of Avatar Count
United States	149055	26.55%
Brazil	48023	8.55%
Japan	44847	7.99%
Germany	44483	7.92%
United Kingdom	38876	6.92%
France	31723	5.65%
Italy	28415	5.06%
Netherlands	18807	3.35%
Spain	18589	3.31%
Canada	17615	3.14%

If one adds up all of the Europeans from the most recent active user figures, one finds that more than 40% of the active Second Life residents are from Europe, compared to 26% from the United States.

Some organizations are using Second Life to strengthen and enhance real world communities. For example, Gene Koo and Eric Gordon are teaching a course at Emerson College in the fall of 2007 called "Hub2." Described as "exploring, imagining, and building civic places in real and virtual spaces," the class was inspired by a Boston initiative to spur new kinds of civic engagement. Local community organizers participating in the class will "research and redesign [their] own local neighborhood within the virtual environment of Second Life. In the process, [they] will develop [their] own understanding of how public spaces shape civic life and propose ways to enrich the spaces [they] inhabit in the city of Boston."

Outreach Tips:

o **Work with Existing Communities:** There are likely to be existing groups and networks that would be interested in your cause. Search for related groups using the SL client search function and approach them about possible collaboration.

o **Hold Regular Events:** Second Life is very event focused. As the Alliance Library System learned, "if you build it, they will not necessarily come." By holding regular events (discussions, classes, support group meetings, dances, etc.), you give people an opportunity to learn about

your group and meet other people interested in your cause. Adding your event to the official Second Life events database involves a small investment of time and Linden dollars, but is well worth it.

o **Staff Your Office:** People like interacting with actual knowledgeable and committed staff of non-profits. An empty office may send the message that your group is inactive or unavailable. Hold regular office hours and install scripted objects that inform your staff and volunteers when someone visits your space.

o **Combine Second Life with Other Outreach Channels:** Several groups noted that Second Life activities are good launching points for reaching people through other means, whether it is creating a group in Facebook, uploading videos created in Second Life to YouTube, holding real world exhibitions of art created in Second Life, or organizing "mixed reality" events that occur simultaneously in Second Life and the real world.

o **Give Away Branded Products:** Several groups noted that "freebies" are an effective means of attracting interest in their non-profit. Tee-shirts are common free items given away by non-profit groups, but non-profit organizer Nobody Fugazi notes that "the age of t-shirts is over." Other more clever giveaways include scripted food and drinks, wristbands, baby seals to highlight the issue of seal hunting, and a "ball and chain" to draw attention to child sex trafficking.

Collaboration

One of the strongest features of Second Life for non-profits is that it facilitates rich, multi-media collaborative activities. This is the reason that "sandboxes" -- open spaces where anyone can create and manipulate objects that exist for some temporary period -- are some of the most popular sites in Second Life.

Non-profits have seized upon this collaborative environment to involve people in immersive, compelling and potentially life-changing experiences that would be impossible or prohibitively expensive with other media. The Alliance Library System noted this as a particular strength of Second Life:

> *As a social space, Second Life seems particularly conducive to collaborative efforts, whether those efforts involve individuals or organizations. The core team involved in the Alliance SLL 2.0 project has worked with a wide variety of libraries and library-related organizations, but also with other not-for-profits, for-profit corporations, media companies, technology companies, educational agencies, and many others.*

One example of multicultural collaboration is the Kids Connect program conducted by the non-profit group Zoomlab. Kids Connect is a series of collaborative performance and storytelling workshops for young people held in multiple locations. The program is designed to "introduce students to theatrical and digital methods, building a solid foundation of audio, visual and programming knowledge through which they can tell stories about their lives."

During the summer of 2006, Kids Connect brought together youth in New York City and Amsterdam in collaborative art creation exercises. Guided by artists and educators, they learned skills including video production, digital storytelling, and 3D modeling. In Second Life, the teenagers met and constructed a hybrid virtual city that remixed aspects of both New York and Amsterdam. Within that common space, they created a performance that occurred both live and online simultaneously.

Inter-organizational collaboration is particularly important for non-profits, particularly smaller, more local groups that might have less opportunity and capacity to engage with their colleagues in other institutions. The ability to interact and connect with other groups and individuals with similar interests and goals is a strong motivating factor for many non-profits to stay engaged in Second Life after the initial "honeymoon" phase is over. For example, the weekly meetings of the Nonprofit Commons group connect non-profits from all over

the world. These kinds of meetings are fertile ground for new partnerships, collaborative projects, and joint events that build community and trust among different organizers.

Tips for Collaboration:

o **Encourage Volunteering and Leadership:** Many non-profits have found that there is a tremendous volunteer spirit in Second Life. "If you look at Second Life, it's filled with volunteers," observed Benjamin Stokes of the MacArthur Foundation at the Second Life Community Convention in August 2007. "There is a lot of commerce, but there is a lot more volunteering. After all, how much are lindens worth? People's time is often worth a lot more." People voluntarily spend hours in Second Life working on painstakingly detailed buildings, vehicles and clothing. It does not take much effort to get people to volunteer to help with whatever tasks your non-profit requires, so be ready to put people to work. And when people come through, give them additional responsibilities and promote them to leadership positions.

o **Practice Light but Consistent Facilitation:** Second Life projects are just as susceptible as real life projects to missed deadlines, communications misunderstandings, personal grudges, flamewars, and gossip. The same facilitation and moderation skills that work in the real world are arguably even more necessary in the virtual world.

o **Contests and Competitions:** Friendly public competitions are often good ways to get people involved in creating content and working together. Offering even modest real or virtual prizes often spurs residents to engage with a subject area and provide feedback and suggestions to other people's work. For example, in December 2006, the United Kingdom charity Save the Children sponsored a Yak Shack event, where residents were encouraged to purchase a virtual yak for $3, which went to a fund for real world yaks in the developing world. To further involve the community, people were invited to decorate and costume their yaks,

which were then showcased during a friendly "best dressed" yak competition.

Fundraising

Much of the public attention to Second Life has come from the idea that there is a lot of money to be made in the virtual world. The article largely responsible for propagating this meme is the *BusinessWeek* profile of Anshe Chung, Second Life's first millionaire, in May 2006. What makes this possible is one important aspect of Second Life's economy: its native currency, the Linden dollar, is convertible to US dollars. (For clarity's sake, all references to currency in this paper will be in US dollars.)

The non-profit world is particularly susceptible to the notion of new forms of finance, given the often-pressing financial constraints that public interest groups often face. Indeed, a large portion of the popular press attention to non-profits in Second Life has focused on the Relay for Life fundraisers organized in Second Life for the past three years for the American Cancer Society (ACS). The Relay for Life began in the mid-1980s as the initiative of a Washington state doctor who came up with the idea of a 24-hour running race to raise funds for ACS. Since then, it has grown into a nationwide effort, with teams around the United States raising donations through sponsorship of their runners.

The Second Life Relay for Life is a direct outgrowth of this idea, translated to the virtual world. The first virtual Relay for Life was held in 2005, a fairly modest, traditional relay race involving avatars running through a few sims, with teams of participants committing to raising funds through sponsorship. That year, around $5,000 was raised from Second Life residents making donations, which was considered a huge sum at the time. In 2006, the number of teams, sims, and preparation expanded so that the Relay for Life activities spanned a larger portion of the grid. That year, a record $41,000 was raised.

For 2007, fundraiser activities associated with the Relay for Life spanned several months, from fashion shows to rodeos to charity auctions to the actual running of the relay race. This was the first year that teens on the Second Life Teen Grid participated in the effort. When the final Linden dollars were counted up, they had raised over $115,000.

Given this exponential increase in fundraising, it is not surprising that many of the non-profits who come to Second Life are immediately attracted to the idea of raising support for their own work. But many experienced non-profit organizers have pointedly downplayed the use of Second Life as a fundraising tool.

> *The money isn't important. What is important is that people learn about Mensajeros.*
>
> *- MensajeroDeLaPaz Jubilee*

Fundraising in Second Life is still a hit-and-miss endeavor. For example, the United Nations World Food Programme sponsored another virtual walkathon entitled Fight Hunger: Walk the World in May 2007 that was widely publicized and had nearly 400 avatars participating. And yet at the end of the event, the World Food Programme had only raised around $1,000.

Smaller fundraisers sponsored by informal groups of residents to benefit friends in need typically raise funds in the hundreds of dollars. Yonder Doesburg worked for more than a year to collect money for the Make a Wish Foundation, creating "donation cubes" and distributing them around the grid. However his net in 2006 was only $200.

Teens have also initiated their own fundraisers on the Teen Grid. In 2006, young people under the auspices of Global Kids created the Maze Against Sex Trafficking that used the experience of finding your way through a labyrinth as a way to raise interest in and awareness of the issue of child sex trafficking. Alongside the maze, teen residents were encouraged to donate to ECPAT, an anti-child exploitation group. About $130 was raised through this effort.

Many groups that came into Second Life initially attracted by the potential for fundraising have since been confronted with the reality of how difficult it is to raise financial support. "Our expectation was certainly unreasonable when we entered this exciting world," wrote Alanagh Recreant of Uthango Social Investments based in South Africa. "We looked at the turn-over in USD and (being under-resourced) were unrealistically enthusiastic to 'raise funds' for our real life projects."

After this initial reality check, many groups move on to focus on the other strengths of Second Life: community outreach, education, and collaboration. That said, here are some suggestions for how to fundraise effectively in Second Life.

Fundraising Tips:

o **Event Fundraising:** High profile events that offer some form of entertainment are good ways to attract potential donors. The Relay for Life offers avatars the opportunity to tour through custom-designed sims as they "race" for the American Cancer Society. Charity balls, concerts, fairs, and art shows are other ways of attracting potential donors and future supporters. The Second Life group U2inSL holds virtual concerts with doppelgangers of the rock band U2 to raise funds for various humanitarian causes.

o **Multi-modal Strategies:** One of the main strengths of the 2007 Second Life Relay for Life was that it opened up its funding model, allowing people to create their own fundraiser events within a few general guidelines. Thus, instead of relying on one or two methods of raising donations, the organizers let the community respond with their own ideas and run with them.

o **Work with SL Content Creators:** Many successful virtual fundraisers have been organized in cooperation with Second Life designers donating special products that are either sold or auctioned as a fundraiser for the group. These include fundraiser fashion shows, yard sales, and auctions.

Advocacy

My purpose in SL is to educate, evangelize, and occasionally blow someone's mind in a very friendly way. Or maybe even do a little comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable.

-- Shava Nerad, development director of the TOR Project

Several political advocacy and lobbying groups in the past couple of years have begun utilizing social networking sites to spur people to action. Witness the enormous growth in YouTube channels, Facebook apps, and Twitter feeds devoted to different political campaigns. Similarly, Second Life has emerged as a new avenue to train activists, organize joint political actions, and engage in political dialogue and debate with a diverse population.

For example, the organizers of this year's YearlyKos conference, an annual gathering of more than a thousand progressive bloggers and internet activists, understood that Second Life had the potential to greatly increase their reach and impact. So they videocast the main sessions of the conference into Second Life and scheduled time for virtual participants to interact with real life participants. Even though the registration fee was quite high by Second Life standards ($25), more than 100 avatars participated in YearlyKos, communally watching the video feed, commenting to each other in real time, and submitting questions to panelists.

Jane2 McMahon, one of the YearlyKos organizers, explained why Second Life added value to the event:

> *The biggest difference is the social or shared experience... I've heard from more than one registrant that watching it on TV last year was unsatisfying. What I'm finding is that people are doing what people everywhere in SL do...form relationships, discuss "live", make friends, explore...that's the added value of the SL event IMO. Not to mention the fact that they are all of a sudden perfect dancers... CSPAN can't do that!*

That is, Second Life added a social dimension to people's participation that a webcast or a TV broadcast could not. The YearlyKos organizers are planning ongoing activities in Second Life to continue to bring together some of the most active progressive bloggers throughout the year.

The SL Rootscamp group is another informal gathering of progressive activists from around the United States focused on the upcoming US elections. They meet every Thursday on --

appropriately enough -- Progressive Island, to talk about current political events, share information about upcoming actions, and help each other be more effective in their communities. Their current action is a Rez the Vote voter registration campaign that will encourage Americans to participate in the upcoming elections.

Several grassroots networks of supporters of various candidates for the US presidency have formed in the past year, with the Barack Obama, Hilary Clinton and John Edwards groups being the most active. Most of these groups have Second Life headquarters where you can find information about the candidate, interact with supporters, and attend forums and discussions on various election issues. Beyond the US, political groups in France, Japan, Brazil, and Holland have engaged in Second Life politicking.

These grassroots networks are more than just another communications channel for these activists. They provide "social glue" that connects these people to each other in ways that hearken back to how labor unions, League of Women Voters chapters, and local party headquarters have traditionally brought people together into tight social networks that provide camaraderie, support and fun. This is why many of the virtual offices of the different candidates often host dance parties and concerts for their members.

It should also be noted that groups do engage in various forms of political protest in Second Life, as well. Some examples include a protest against the war in Iraq, IBM employees going on a virtual strike in late September, and the much-publicized "griefer" attacks on the virtual world headquarters of the French Le Pen party. It is important to note here that "griefer" attacks are typically nothing more than annoying images and sounds that disrupt events, confuse innocent bystanders, and slow down -- and in extreme cases crash -- a particular sim.

There are certainly good questions about whether virtual protests are politically effective. For the moment they are very effective at getting real world press and blogosphere attention due to their novelty. Perhaps by next year they will cease to be newsworthy without some other hook. But for now virtual demonstrations involving 75 avatars often get more popular press attention than street protests of thousands of real-world protestors.

Advocacy Tips:

o **Spread the Message Beyond Second Life:** Political activists can scale up the reach of their virtual political activities by using other communications channels to get out their message. The Avatars Against the War protest in January 2007 was attended by just over 100 avatars, but the machinima created from footage of the protest has been viewed more than 54,000 times.

o **Give Activists Something to Do:** Second Life provides many ways for the average avatar to spread a message to their friends, family and colleagues. Encourage your members to blog, post screenshots to Flickr, create machinima, or design tee-shirts. One of the most involving parts of the "Avatars Against the War" protest was the preparatory meeting where everyone gathered to learn how to create their own protest signs.

o **Work the Real World Press, While You Can:** The window of opportunity for being the "first" virtual protest, strike, sit-in, or fly-in is rapidly closing. Use the uniqueness and novelty factor of Second Life to your group's advantage.

NON-PROFIT CHALLENGES

Non-profits active in this space have had to overcome various hurdles to translate their work to the virtual world. Three significant challenges that have emerged from various panels and discussions among non-profits are: the various barriers to entry, questions surrounding real world impact, and longer-term sustainability. Groups that are interested in beginning to invest time and resources into Second Life would be well advised to consider these challenges early on in the project development cycle.

Barriers to Entry

There are various kinds of barriers that confront non-profits attempting to engage with Second Life.

First, there is what is often called the "digital divide." Entering Second Life requires the installation of a large "client" program that will only run on a relatively modern computer (Windows, Mac or Linux), with a fast and stable connection to the internet. Given the financial constraints that many non-profits operate within, this can present a serious stumbling block. And beyond enabling your staff to run Second Life, your target population may not be able to participate if they are on the wrong side of the digital divide. A number of bloggers have criticized non-profits for engaging in virtual world activities that are closed off from much of the world, particularly the poorest and most marginalized populations.

Even with a higher-end computer and fast internet connection, many groups find that the learning curve for Second Life can be quite steep. The Alliance Library System notes in a recent report how difficult the initial weeks in Second Life can be for a "newbie":

When a new user enters Second Life, they often express feelings of disorientation and clumsiness. It can take hours of practice and exploration to become acclimated to a virtual world environment. When Kelly Czarnecki made an online presentation at the SirsiDynix Institute on May 22, 2007, she took a poll asking attendees what is the biggest barrier to working in a virtual world. Fifty-four of the respondents indicated that time to learn was the biggest barrier, larger than technology hurdles, administrative support, and other potential barriers.

Given the relatively recent launch of Second Life in 2003, there are not very many resources that a new user can draw upon to get oriented to what may appear to be an alien and often daunting landscape. The appendix at the end of this paper lists some resources, including books, websites and email lists. But still, the reality is that many, many people try Second Life, get frustrated or disoriented and then leave, never to return.

Another kind of barrier is the fact that, unlike other Web 2.0 technologies like blogging and podcasting, Second Life is a synchronous environment where events happen in real time. Allen Benamer on the Non-profit Tech Blog (http://www.nonprofittechblog.org) argues that this requirement of synchronous communication is a significant weakness of virtual worlds like Second Life:

Second Life and other virtual worlds want to re-introduce those old barriers of time and space by subjecting you to a 3D experience. Sure, you can teleport, but the server limitations on Second Life reimpose a kind of time/space barrier… as to how many people can congregate in one space. I keep asking myself, why would I want that? Why reimpose what us sci-fi nerds call meatspace back into cyberspace?

This is an interesting point since, for some non-profits, it is this sense of immediate presence and interactivity that is compelling and useful beyond other kinds of internet technologies.

Real World Impact

Prokofy Neva, one of Second Life's most notorious gadflies and pundits, asked a difficult question to a panel of philanthropists at the 2007 Second Life Community Convention:

> *For me the challenge for nonprofit work is how to get past the "right-click wall." What can people do when they are exposed to your causes? They can either right-click and pay and then they are done. Or they can right-click and go out on the internet and see your site, maybe send an email somewhere. How can we get people to integrate back into their real life communities so that they are building institutions from their experiences in Second Life that they have gotten from meeting people in other countries? So that they are voting, so that they are part of their PTAs, so that they go and talk to people from China or the United Kingdom about their issues instead of just having it filtered through media?*

Indeed, the "right-click wall" is one that faces all non-profits at the end of the day. How are your virtual world activities making change in the real world?

For some groups, the answer is easy. "I have no doubt that the volunteers at the TRC [Transgender Resource Center] have prevented, whether knowingly or unknowingly, a number of suicide attempts," said Melady Preece, a clinical psychologist at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. Educators who are using Second Life as a new distance learning tool have their students' enhanced knowledge and skills as proof of their impact. The American Cancer Society can look at the money they have raised in Second Life as justification for their involvement.

But for groups seeking to protect the world's ecosystem, end human rights abuses and fight hunger and grinding poverty, the challenge of proving the value of virtual world investment

is much greater. As John Gehner of the American Library Association observed, "it's disappointing at times to think that some of the best and brightest information professionals are devoting their substantial talents to the denizens of a virtual world founded on leisure time rather than a real world with millions of people struggling for a better life every day."

Each group needs to define for themselves what their goals are and how Second Life can help them achieve them. Shava Nerad, development director of the non-profit technology group the TOR Project, argues that Second Life provides opportunities to reach important audiences:

> *No, we aren't buying poor kids lunch here. But we are reaching an often insulated group of the cream of the topside of the digital divide, and maybe getting an unusual opportunity to reach them at play -- and change their minds about things they may never have questioned or given consideration to.*

The future viability of Second Life as a non-profit tool will be largely judged on whether these questions of impact are answered. Connie Yowell of the MacArthur Foundation, in her keynote address at the 2007 Second Life Community Convention, noted that MacArthur's interest in virtual worlds rested in finding out how they can be used to solve real world problems.

Sustainability

All projects, whether in the for-profit or non-profit world, have to have sufficient "return on investment" to justify the cost and time spent by the organization. Non-profits in particular do not have large research and development budgets to experiment for long periods of time in Second Life, even if the initial cost of entry is minimal. After all, a staff person spending several hours a week in Second Life is a staff person not working on other areas of the organization's mission.

Often Second Life projects are initiated by one highly motivated individual within an organization who becomes the primary interface for the group. However, other priorities start to take precedence in the person's work and personal life, other colleagues don't take

up the slack, and eventually the office becomes just another abandoned, forgotten build. The Alliance Library System report describes this phenomenon as "self-inflicted burnout":

> *Eventually, that first adrenaline rush wears off, or the conflicting demands of one's first life and second life come to the fore, and the individual realizes that something has to give. Some very dedicated and talented volunteers decided to drop out of Second Life completely, either for a limited time or, as far as we know, permanently.*

Beyond the investment of staff time are other real costs, including the monthly payments for a virtual island or plot of land, sim development costs, and other associated fees. Without a clear financial plan to continue to support a Second Life presence, a non-profit will likely have to shut its virtual doors.

It might be helpful to think of Second Life not as a permanent presence like a building but more like a campaign with a definite beginning, middle and end. What would a six-month exploration of Second Life for a particular political or awareness-raising campaign look like? How would you measure success? What would be the deliverables that the organization would possess at the end of the project cycle?

This kind of approach can help an organization more strategically allocate staff time, raise external funds, and measure their impact. Indeed, this is how much of the corporate engagement with virtual worlds is now conceptualized and implemented.

WAYS FORWARD

We are just the first people at the party.

- Philip Rosedale, Founder and CEO of Linden Labs
at 2007 Second Life Community Convention

This paper has briefly explored some of the principal benefits, best practices and challenges for non-profit groups interested in using virtual worlds in their work. As stated in the introduction, this is very much the beginning of a journey, and a report of this nature would likely look quite different twelve months from now. We conclude this exploration with some forecasting of what virtual worlds are likely to look like in the next year or so. We highlight four main trends: open sourcing the grid, integration with the wider internet, international growth, and the explosion of virtual worlds.

Open Sourcing the Grid

Linden Labs took a major step at the beginning of 2007 by releasing the code of the Second Life client software under an open source license. This has created enormous possibilities for programmers and user interface designers to create customized client software and tools that might improve on the current, all-purpose, somewhat unwieldy Second Life client. Imagine a custom "thin client" that was only a 50 megabyte download that was easier to use, with basic movement controls, a smaller set of "off the shelf" avatars, and simple communications and search capabilities. That is, something more suited for your average internet surfer, a participant at a one-off event, or a technically unsophisticated staff person.

Beyond just opening up the client program, Linden Labs have announced their intention to do the same for their server code, which would effectively enable anyone to set up their own servers and sims that they would wholly own and control.

While running a separate server might be out of the reach of many individual non-profits, one might imagine a consortium of groups (perhaps with foundation support) creating a separate non-profit grid with a suite of special services and tools that the current Second Life grid does not support. This is roughly analogous to how groups like the Institute for Global Communications and Oneworld.net in 1990s served as webhosts and communications networks for various progressive non-profits and charities that were not able to afford their own web servers and discussion forums.

One concern is that if there were a proliferation of separate Second Life grids -- some corporate, some non-profit, some governmental -- this might lead to many "walled gardens" and a decrease in a common "public sphere." One of the benefits of Second Life is the potential to reach people who might not normally find out about your cause or issue, but who happen upon your event or virtual offices while shopping or exploring Second Life. If there were many, separate grids these kind of serendipitous encounters would be much less likely.

Integration with Other Technologies

Currently, the famous Las Vegas slogan is also largely true for Second Life: "What happens in Second Life, stays in Second Life." That is, interactions and communications that happen in the virtual world are not normally accessible to people who are not in Second Life. However there are a number of efforts to integrate the web, instant messaging, mobile device, and Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies with Second Life.

For non-profits, this might mean that your web-based and virtual world-based marketing efforts can complement each other. Non-profit events would become much more accessible if people could view and participate in them from the web or via their internet-enabled cell phone. GPS integration might facilitate better matching of virtual volunteers with real world projects (i.e., "Hey, it appears that you are based in San Antonio. There is a local women's shelter that could use a graphic designer. Should I send you their information?")

Distance educational efforts might lead this multi-technology integration trend. One example is Sloodle, an open source project that seeks to integrate web-based instruction and virtual world education, combining virtual classroom discussions with web discussion board

conversations. Universities with substantial technology budgets, computer centers and staff are well placed to lead the way in this.

International Growth

Virtual worlds are already an international phenomenon, particularly if one examines Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG) like World of Warcraft and Eve Online. Thousands of Chinese, Brazilian, Russian and French people have become active residents of Second Life, with their own native language areas, events, shops, and communities. This trend is likely to continue and expand as broadband access spreads and computing costs decrease.

Non-profits should be prepared to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse population with multi-lingual content and staff, events held at times that are sensitive to various time zones, and culturally sensitive material. There are certainly many challenges to effectively addressing these different nationalities and linguistic groups. But there are even more opportunities presented by a virtual population that brings together some of the most creative, technically savvy people from around the globe.

An Explosion of Virtual Worlds

Second Life, as mentioned in the introduction, is only one of a number of existing virtual worlds. Other popular virtual world platforms include the web-based ActiveWorlds, the kid-friendly Club Penguin, the youth-oriented There.com, and the multimedia space called Kaneva. In the coming 8-14 months, there is likely to be a rapid proliferation in the number of virtual world platforms and grids.

One interesting new project is Metaplace, a web-based virtual world creation platform scheduled for a beta launch in Spring 2008. Led by renowned game creator Raph Koster, Metaplace is "a web browser with virtual world capability" that enables anyone with basic programming skills to create their own custom virtual world that would be accessible to anyone on the web.

As new virtual world platforms emerge, non-profits will have more choices before them. The challenges discussed in the previous section will continue to be salient, wherever a non-profit decides to set up their virtual home.

Not the Last Word

This brief exploration of opportunities and challenges for non-profits in the virtual world is just the beginning of the conversation. We hope that we have provided a vision for what is possible as well as some suggestions for how to get there. Our main advice is this: jump in, start experimenting, network with like-minded groups and individuals, and keep an eye out for new opportunities that will no doubt emerge.

Second Life in some ways is simply a gigantic digital sandbox that non-profits should feel welcome to play in. You can create gripping experiences of what it is like to live in a war torn village, or a profound vision of humans living in harmony with the environment. You can inform, cajole, inspire and activate people. You can join with hundreds of other groups seeking to establish and develop the first beachhead of a larger virtual public interest space.

We encourage you to continue this conversation online by going to Global Kid's blog at www.holymeatballs.org, where this report will be posted with an open comment area. Together we can create a better world – both in Second Life and in the first one.

APPENDICES

Further Resources

Blogs
Note: many of the websites listed below also have associated blogs that are worth reading.

Beth's Blog: How Nonprofits Can Use Social Media
http://beth.typepad.com
Beth Kanter is a non-profit consultant with an in-depth knowledge about how non-profits can effectively and strategically integrate technology into their work.

The Click Heard Round the World
http://Rikomatic.com
This is the personal blog of Rik Panganiban that covers, among many other topics, the growing non-profit presence in virtual worlds.

Planet.worldofSL.com
An RSS aggregator of much of the Second Life-related blogosphere, this is a good place to get a snapshot of what's going on within various Second Life communities.

Terra Nova
http://terranova.blogs.com/
This group blog encourages in-depth and sometimes heated intellectual debate about virtual worlds, including Second Life.

Email Lists

Second Life Educators Email Lists
https://lists.secondlife.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/educators
https://lists.secondlife.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/educatorsandteens
Two lists for educators and educators working with teens in Second Life.

Second Life Non-profit Email list
https://lists.secondlife.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/nonprofits
A mailing list for non-profit organizations interested in or currently using Second Life, as well as any residents interested in sponsoring or hosting non-profit events in Second Life.

TechSoup Email list
http://groups.google.com/group/TechSoup-Second-Life
An email list for members of the TechSoup group in Second Life to discuss issues pertaining to the virtual TechSoup office in SL, and meetings, projects and events that will occur there. Often contains useful information, discussion and links for other non-profits in Second Life.

Important Resources and Sites within Second Life
NOTE: These "SLURL" links will teleport your avatar directly to the site indicated if you have installed the Second Life client and created an account.

Better World Island
http://slurl.com/secondlife/Better%20World
Camp Darfur, Baghdad Streets and other non-profit projects are housed here.

Commonwealth Island
http://slurl.com/secondlife/Commonwealth%20Island
A nature-themed home for progressive advocacy groups, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the ACLU, Code Pink, and the Prison Dharma Network. See their website at http://commonwealth.wikispaces.com.

Conservation Island
http://slurl.com/secondlife/WWF/138/196/41
A lush rainforest sim created to educate about sustainable development issues sponsored by the WWF (formerly the World Wildlife Fund).

Info Island and Info Archipelago
http://slurl.com/secondlife/Info%20Island/
The Alliance Library System coordinates 15 main islands plus nearly 40 other islands that are part of the Info Archipelago. The SLURL takes you to the main Info Island, where you can find information on the many other islands and sims connected to the network of libraries.

International Spaceflight Museum
http://slurl.com/secondlife/Spaceport%20Alpha/48/78/24/
This sim houses an incredible array of astronomy and astrophysics displays and re-creations, from rockets built to scale to planets that your avatar can teleport to.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Island
http://slurl.com/secondlife/Meteroa/71/159/55/
The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has built an island full of rich displays about various meteorological phenomena, from climate change to tsunamis.

Nonprofit Commons
http://slurl.com/secondlife/Plush%20Nonprofit%20Commons/130/125/22
A sim donated by Anshe Chung Studios that hosts free offices for 32 non-profits. Expanding to a second sim later in 2007.

Reports and Articles

"A Life Less Ordinary Offers Far More Than Just Escapism"
By Anil Ananthaswamy. From August 25, 2007 issue of New Scientist.

"Change the World by Working in a Virtual One: TechSoup Talks to Three Organizations Using Second Life"
Available at http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/page5902.cfm
By Susan Tenby and Beth Kanter, published October 4, 2006.

"Best Practices for Education in Second Life"
Available at http://www.holymeatballs.org/pdfs/BestPractices.pdf
A Global Kids report summarizing lessons and recommendations for how to educate in Second Life.

"The Global Kids Guide to Presenting in Teen Second Life"
Available at http://www.holymeatballs.org/pdfs/GKguidetoSLpresenting.pdf
A practical guide for how to give an effective presentation to teenagers in Second Life.

"Nonprofits Getting A Lease In Second Life"
Available at http://www.nptimes.com/07Sep/npt-070915-1.html
From the September 15, 2007 issue of the Nonprofit Times.

"Virtual Land, Real Money"
In the May 1, 2006 issue of *BusinessWeek*.

Video and Audio

"Avatars against the War" (video)
Available at http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5105316486771142892
A virtual protest against the war in Iraq, organized by the SL Rootscamp group, and filmed and edited by
Rik Panganiban.

"Best Practices for Non-profits" Panel (audio recording)
Available at http://ia341218.us.archive.org/1/items/SLCC07_NP-thread/SLCC_sess4.mp3
A panel discussion on non-profits in Second Life held at the 2007 Second Life Community Convention.

Holocaust Museum Panel on Crisis in Darfur with Mia Farrow (video)
Available at http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1156309363278144913&hl=en
A video of a Second Life briefing on the genocide in Darfur organized by the US Holocaust Museum.
Produced by Lichtenstein Media, machinima footage by In Kenzo.

Non-profit Thread at the 2007 Second Life Community Convention (video)
Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Jt5XKaj8YQ
A short video produced by Global Kids about the Non-profit and Philanthropy Thread at the 2007 SLCC.

Nonprofit Commons Launch Event (video)
Available at http://blip.tv/file/345576/
Video of the August 2007 launch of the Plush Nonprofit Commons sim, with addresses by Jeska Linden,
Anshe Chung, Glitteractica Cookie, In Kenzo and Coughran Mayo.

Tour of Info Island (video)
Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTQkzfz5osQ
A quick "skate-through" of Info Island, filmed and edited by Rik Panganiban.

Web Resources

The Holy Meatballs of Divine Spongiform (The Global Kids Webspace)
http://holymeatballs.org/
A wealth of information on Global Kids work with teens on the Teen Grid.

Info Island
http://infoisland.org/
The website and blog of the Info Island initiative sponsored by the Alliance Library System.

List of Educational Organizations in Second Life
http://www.simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_in_SL
A fairly exhaustive list of educational institutions active in Second Life.

MacArthur Foundation, Digital Media and Learning
http://www.digitallearning.macfound.org and http://spotlight.macfound.org
A five-year, $50 million initiative to help determine how digital technologies are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life.

Nonprofit Commons
http://www.nonprofitcommons.org (blog)
http://npsl.wikispaces.com/ (wiki)
A webspace and blog for the 32 non-profit organizations housed in the Plush Nonprofit Commons sim, under the coordination of the group Techsoup.

Second Life Non-profit Wiki
http://www.simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Second_Life:_Non-Profits
A listing of various resources and links to information about non-profits in Second Life.

Second Life Education Wiki
http://www.simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Second_Life_Education_Wiki
A listing of various resources and links to information about education in Second Life.

SL Netroots
http://rootscampsl.org
Progressive activist group with weekly meetups (noon PST Thursdays) on Progressive Island in Second Life. Rik Panganiban is the facilitator and co-founder of this group.

Second Life Non-profit Events Calendar on Eventful.com
http://eventful.com/groups/G0-001-003770728-7
A frequently updated listing of upcoming non-profit related events in Second Life.

Second Life Relay for Life
http://www.slrfl.org
The official website of the SL Relay for Life, a yearly fundraiser that benefits the American Cancer Society.

About the Author

Rik Panganiban (or "Rik Riel" in Second Life) is a non-profit manager with more than 15 years of experience in the civil society sector. From 1995-1998, Rik was the communications coordinator for the NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court, an international human rights network. He was a principal organizer of non-profits participating in the UN World Summit on the Information Society from 2003-2005. From 2006-2007, Rik worked with the Social Science Research Council supporting various media and communications research initiatives. He also is the administrator of a community website for swing dancing enthusiasts called Yehoodi.com, which maintains an office in Second Life in the Nonprofit Commons. He blogs incessantly about virtual worlds, civil society, machinima and dancing on his website www.rikomatic.com.

About Global Kids

Founded in 1989 and an independent not-for-profit organization since 1993, Global Kids' (GK) mission is to transform urban youth into successful students and global and community leaders by engaging them in socially dynamic, content-rich learning experiences. Through leadership development and academic enrichment programs, Global Kids uses interactive and experiential methods to educate youth about critical international and public policy issues and provides them with opportunities for civic and global engagement.

Over the past sixteen years, Global Kids has reached over 70,000 youth and built strong relationships with the Department of Education and various schools throughout the five boroughs of New York City. In addition, GK's unique work is augmented by strong partnerships with numerous other organizations, including Adelphi University, the Council on Foreign Relations, Ping Chong Theatre Company, The New School, and the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.

Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Global Kids Digital Media Youth Initiative (DMI) was launched in January of 2006. The DMI is a series of interrelated programs designed to support teenagers to think critically about the role of digital media in their lives and document their experiences in various media. These programs will gather youth voices about the role of digital media in the lives of today's young people in order to inform the newly announced MacArthur Series on Digital Media and Learning.

More information is available at www.globalkids.org and www.holymeatballs.org.

About the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning Initiative

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is a private, independent grant making institution dedicated to helping groups and individuals foster lasting improvement in the human condition. MacArthur's $50 million digital media and learning initiative aims to help determine how digital technologies are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life. More information is available at www.macfound.org or www.digitallearning.macfound.org.

About This Series

The Global Kids Series of Virtual Worlds is part of a grant from the MacArthur Foundation to explore the role of philanthropy within virtual worlds. The first two reports are *Reports from the Field: Second Life Community Convention 2007 Education Track Summary (Fall, 2007)* and *Best Practices for Non-profits in Second Life (Fall, 2007).*

Glossary

21st Century Skills: Skills, knowledge and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21st century. Competencies include global literacy, problem solving, collaboration, innovation and creativity.

ActiveWorlds: One of the oldest 3D virtual world platforms. The system was intended to merge 2D web-based surfing with virtual world immersiveness. Users can chat, explore other worlds created using the ActiveWorlds platform, construct buildings, and browse the web. www.activeworlds.com.

Avatar: A visual representation of oneself. One's identity in a virtual environment. Avatars may appear to be two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Most commonly, avatars are represented in human form. Other popular avatar shapes include animals, androids and other fantasy creatures. In some platforms, such as Second Life, users are able to customize and change the appearance of their avatar at will.

Avatar-based Communication: Communicating through the use of avatars. Communication may be chat-based, include the use of voice, and/or non-verbal (i.e.: body language).

Blended Learning: Learning that uses both online and in-person instruction.

Blog: An online journal

Club Penguin: A web-based multiplayer game environment developed by New Horizon Interactive, later acquired by Disney. Using cartoon penguin avatars, players can converse, play minigames, and participate in other activities with one another in an arctic-themed virtual world. The game is intended for children ages six to fourteen. www.clubpenguin.com.

Collaborative Learning Model: A learning model in which learners work together to create and learn content.

Experiential Learning: Learning through experience, either in a real situation, such as a workplace, or in role-play.

Flat Web: First generation websites containing static websites with little interactivity.

Grid (ex: Teen Grid): Slang for the Second Life virtual world and its server network.

Griefer: This term is used to refer to residents or players of online games and virtual worlds who purposely attempt to defy the game's rules or code of conduct or upset other's game experience. This can take the form of harassing behavior against other players or employing annoying tactics and actions.

Habbo Hotel: A virtual community owned and operated by Sulake Corporation. Habbo Hotel is primarily aimed at teenagers, combining elements of an online chat room and online game. www.habbo.com.

Immersive Environment: An interactive artificial computer-created "world" within which a user can immerse themselves. Environments can be either realistic or fantasy-based.

Interactivity: A two-way flow of information between a computer and a user, responding to the user's input.

Kaneva: A social networking and media platform that brings together web and 3D virtual world technologies through shared media that can be collaboratively experienced in a virtual environment. www.kaneva.com.

Linden Dollars: The virtual currency within Second Life. Often simply called just "lindens," linden dollars can be traded against the US dollar, valued in late 2007 at approximated 275 lindens to the US dollar.

Linden Scripting Language: The programming language used by residents of Second Life.   LSL has a syntax similar to C and allows objects to interact with the Second Life world and the Internet via email, XML-RPC and outbound HTTP requests.

Machinima: A form of digital animation filmmaking that employs 3D game or virtual world technologies to create cinematic video. www.machinima.org.

Mash-up: A web application that combines data from more than one source into a single integrated tool.

Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game: Often abbreviated as MMORPG. A persistent online game environment in which hundreds to millions of players can create their own avatars, interact and engage in game play within a shared game plot or quest structure.

Metaplace: A virtual worlds platform designed to "democratize" the virtual world creation market by supplying a suite of tools that both programmers and non-programmers can use to create their own virtual experiences. Developed by Areae, the company established by Ultima Online and Star Wars Galaxies designer Raph Koster. www.metaplace.com.

Moodle: An open source online learning system.

MUVE: Acronym for Multiuser Virtual Environment. MUVEs may be platform for online games or used for serious educational and corporate training and instruction.

Networked Imagination: As referenced by Connie Yowell of The MacArthur Foundation, in her keynote speech for the Second Life Community Convention Education Track, August 2007. Networked Imagination refers to the ability to collectively imagine and explore multiple solutions and outcomes in a multi-user virtual space, such as Second Life.

Persistent: The Second Life environment is persistent. Objects and environments persist, or remain, from user log-in to log-in.

Second Life Teen Grid: The Second Life Teen Grid is a protected space in Second Life designed specifically for Teens 13 - 17 years of age. Adults on the Teen Grid must have background checks and are restricted to specific educational and non-profit project areas.

Second Life: Second Life is a massive multiplayer universe (MMU) set in a 3D virtual world created by Linden Lab.

Sim: Shorthand term for "simulator" within Second Life. Each simulator process simulates one 256x256 meter region. As a resident moves through Second Life, he or she is handled off from one simulator to another. It is common for an organization entering Second Life to purchase one or more sims.

Sims Online: A massively multiplayer online game variation on Maxis' highly popular computer game "The Sims." It was published by Electronic Arts and released on December 17, 2002 for Microsoft Windows.

Simulation: An instructional strategy used to teach problem solving and procedures by immersing learners in situations resembling reality. Simulations can provide safe environments for users to practice real-world skills and are important in situations where errors would be dangerous or expensive.

SLoodle: a mash-up combining Moodle and Second Life

There.com: The There virtual world platform is owned and operated by Makena Technologies, Inc. MTV has commissioned the creation of several virtual worlds using the There platform as promotions for their television programming, including Virtual Laguna Beach, Virtual Pimp My Ride and Virtual The Hills. www.there.com.

Virtual World Literacy: Virtual World competencies needed by a learner to successfully interact within a MUVE. Competencies include interface and tool use as well as an understanding of social and community rules and culture.

Virtual World: A virtual world is a computer-based simulated environment, usually featuring multiple users in the form of avatars.

Web 2.0 or "2D": Social networking sites, such as wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies - that allow people to collaborate and share information online in ways previously unavailable.

Wiki: A website or similar online resource which allows users to add and edit content collectively.

World of Warcraft: A massively multiplayer online role-playing game owned and operated by Blizzard Entertainment. It is currently the world's largest MMORPG in terms of monthly subscribers.