PAZ:
What was the most frustrating experience over the past weeks here?
TEJ:
Building.
PAZ:
What was great?
NONDESCRIPT:
Ease of creation.
OSWY:
Well, I’m having a problem with the idea that my identity is just my body seeing as I am now a small blue dragon. I must be me inside the dragon don’t you think?

MARIANNE:
Must he be himself inside his blue dragon?

CADE:
Surely the dragon is inside him.
CONTENTS
Foreword
Open Habitat: An introduction
Why not use something simpler?
Is this nothing but fantasy?
If we can’t build bridges, let’s plant trees
Learning Recipe 1
The Manual
Aaragh! Why are we all here?
Learning Recipe 2
Discourse
Forward from the past
Principles of good practice
Credits
FOREWORD
Craig Wentworth

JISC funded Open Habitat under its Users and Innovation programme to bring together techies, researchers, and lecturers and students from very different backgrounds, working in very different universities (including fresh-faced art and design students at Leeds Met, and Oxford’s distance-learning philosophers with an average age of 50), but all sharing an interest in how multi-user virtual environments (MUVEs) can be used to enhance teaching and research practice in higher education. While the art and design pilots concentrated on issues of user-generated content, and the philosophy students focused on social presence, both student groups explored important questions of belonging, persistence, group interaction and developing a learning community.

The project has proved very effective in helping to demystify MUVEs, examine the nature of avatars, and celebrate the ease in which people can ‘build’ themselves a virtual world and then put it to some pedagogic use.

This magazine presents a snapshot of some of Open Habitat’s key achievements in a conversational manner; a combination of practical hints and tips, analysis, and guidance for both teaching practitioners and those with a research interest in the area – read from cover to cover, or just dip your toe in and see what grabs you!

CRAIG WENTWORTH
DIRECTOR FOR ORGANISATION AND USER INNOVATION, JISC
OPEN HABITAT:
Introduction

Between November 2006 and October 2007 I had the pleasure of being involved in a number of interesting discussions about Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUVEs), an online 3D environment in which individuals can interact via human-looking avatars. These discussions were facilitated by JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee) as part of a larger community exploring the expansion of ‘Next Generation Technologies’: technologies that could be described as moving the web from being a more than a content-delivery system by adding a layer of social and participatory services.

At that time many higher education institutions were buying islands on the Second Life platform, which remains the highest profile of the MUVEs. On closer inspection it became clear that it was this high profile, not the teaching and learning opportunities, that was driving this uptake as most of the islands purchased by institutions were procured for potential publicity purposes rather than for pedagogic reasons. This brought to mind the feverish purchasing of websites in the later half of the 90s which preceded the discovery of what ‘the web’ could usefully provide. While there were pockets of innovation in the use of MUVEs for teaching and learning these were usually driven by early adopter individuals who were not concerned with systematic reflection on or dissemination of their experiments.

Discussions within the community led to the formation of a cluster of teaching practitioners, developers and researchers who each brought ideas and aspirations from their practice as to how MUVEs could be harnessed for more than institutional publicity. This process was akin to a dating agency for ideas in which individuals from across the board who would not otherwise have come into contact with each other were introduced by JISC facilitator Lawrie Phipps and colleagues. In this way common interests as well as diverse experience and unformed aspirations could be brought together with a view to exploring next generation technologies in a more structured way. So the Open Habitat project was born.

The project was envisaged as student-centred, exploring effective uses of MUVEs for teaching and learning. It had the advantage of having key ‘users’ on its team in the form of Ian Truelove and Graham Hibbert, teaching practitioners from the art and design undergraduate programme based at Leeds Metropolitan University and both Second Life experts. They had gradually integrated the use of MUVEs into their curriculum and were looking for a structured way to develop their thinking and build on their experience. We also had Marianne Talbot, a tutor from the online distance philosophy programme based out of the University of Oxford. Marianne had organised a Christmas party using the Moodle VLE for her students which had been a great success, and she approached members of the project team to enquire whether Open Habitat might allow her to see how the 3D environment would change the dynamic of her distance teaching. She describes herself as a non-techie and had no previous experience of MUVEs but sensed a potential value. These project members would allow Open Habitat to explore complex aspects of MUVEs whilst ensuring it was sensitive to the practical realities of day-to-day teaching.

The core of Open Habitat activity centred on a series of pilot teaching sessions with both art and design and philosophy students and was designed to take advantage of what we considered to be the particular potential of MUVE platforms. Underpinning the design of these pilots was a collection of themes or concepts which we hoped to explore.
The art and design students could be described as traditional undergraduates. Fresh from foundation they were developing an understanding of their emerging practice. These students had the opportunity to meet face-to-face and were keen to be part of an innovative programme of study. The hope was that the MUVEs could provide one of many creative spaces they encounter on their course and become a form of ‘virtual studio’ in which the physical limits and practicalities of the normal art studio would be reduced and in which the relative anonymity provided would allow individuals to experiment and take risks.

In contrast to this the philosophy students were gathered from a group who had participated in one of the University of Oxford’s online distance philosophy courses. With no feasible opportunity to meet face-to-face and an average age of around 50 they represented a very different type of learner, one experienced in debate and reflection. The project’s aspiration for this group was to provide an online teaching space which went beyond text, allowing a more embodied form of social interaction to suffuse traditional seminar-style discussions around a philosophical theme. The tutor’s experience of running social events through online forums had enabled her to see how this interpersonal dimension had benefited the mood and learning on an online course. Could a MUVE provide the ‘next level’ of interaction in this manner, providing a space for debates which had some of the vibrancy of face-to-face philosophical discussions?

Open Habitat was launched in January 2008. Each of the pilots took place in two stages spread over a period of nine months. One challenge shared by both groups was how to induct students (as well as the philosophy tutor) into the use of Second Life; without the appropriate skills, little learning relating to the subject disciplines would take place. The Leeds Met staff decided to use an additional virtual environment, OpenSim, to orientate their students, which allowed them to separate the practical (building skills) from the social in the first instance (OpenSim allows for one island per student). This experience convinced them of the benefits of not throwing students in at the deep end when planning to use Second Life in their curriculum. The philosophy students, together with their tutor, attended an orientation session ‘in-world’ in which they acquired some of the basic skills such as sitting, teleporting and getting to know the virtual location. Following each orientation the group then engaged in a more formal philosophy discussion session.

This diversity of teaching styles, goals, student ‘types’ and aspirations across the two disciplines allowed those involved in the Open Habitat project to experience and analyse a significant cross-section of activity in MUVEs. This magazine contains a variety of material which represents our piloting activities, together with our reflections on good practice and the role that teaching in MUVEs can play relative to other forms of pedagogical practice. We have included reactions from students and tutors plus a generous selection of images in an attempt to communicate the character of the project and to emphasise that while using MUVEs can be challenging it can also be vibrant, creative and fun. We hope that this will help you to decide if the risk of using a MUVE for teaching is worth the potential rewards.

DAVE WHITE
WHY NOT USE SOMETHING SIMPLER?

MUVEs are inherently complex because they are not a single technology but a collection of tools and services clustered around a 3D centre. They require users to grapple with instant messaging, searching and 2D/3D navigation at a minimum. Even students who enjoy working in a MUVE find the environment challenging, something which raises the question ‘Why not use something simpler?’! This in turn leads us to ask what is uniquely provided by a MUVE that can’t be replicated in a simpler form.

Over the course of the 15 month Open Habitat project one of the notions which emerged from the diverse pilots was the students’ sense that they had spent time with others online in the same ‘place’ and that the pilot activities were ‘experienced’ rather than ‘worked through’.

“You do get a sense of being in a physical group and therefore are more aware of yourself as a group participant, therefore there is far less of a feeling of ‘being on one’s own’, which is of course is very encouraging.”

(Philosophy pilot participant)

The feeling of being part of an event which involved a shared activity intermingled with banter and informal chat began to highlight what MUVEs were best, but not necessarily unique, at providing. The ability to provide a space for informal, social, experiential learning puts the MUVEs’ strengths at the subjective and occasionally esoteric end of the pedagogy spectrum; these are not factors that are easy to quantify but they are present when an ethnographic approach is taken to collecting data.

The notion of being part of a shared event and of feeling present with other students help to map the potential of a MUVE against the other options that a teaching practitioner might choose to deliver learning. Mapping the position of the MUVE relative to other platforms in this way provides a frame of reference for the Open Habitat project. The figure here plots a range of online tools that are increasingly considered to have potential for use in higher education. I have posited two axes, one which I have labelled ‘Eventedness’ and which demarcates a continuum between students learning as individuals and learning as a communal activity; the other is labelled ‘Co-presence’ as it depicts a related yet different concept in which students’ experience of learning is one of isolation or of belonging.

Key here is that the blue areas demarcate the potential experience; they are not a simple objective mapping of technological functionality. Because of the subjective nature of the axes the relative position of the platforms in the diagram will shift depending on individual experience. The important point is that MUVEs have the potential to provide a high breadth of types of experience. This is partially due to their use of avatars but it is also an effect of their containing a complex cluster of numerous communication and development tools. So, for example:
At point ‘a’ in the diagram individuals might feel isolated and alienated, all the more so because they suspect that somewhere in the MUVE vibrant social activity (between people with fantastic hairstyles) is taking place that they are not party to.

At point ‘b’ individuals will feel a strong sense of being part of a group and taking part in a shared experience. When they log off they will feel as if they were part of an intense event in which they spent time with others. They may feel that they got to know the other participants better through this experience.

At point ‘c’ individuals are probably spending time with people they know and trust. They are socialising within the MUVE but are not attempting to achieve anything beyond simply being together. They are likely to feel part of a community even though there is no communal ‘goal’.

It is this breadth of potential that makes teaching in MUVEs a high risk activity. A good session could go beyond anything that could be achieved in other online platforms in terms of student satisfaction whereas a bad session could leave everyone feeling that it would have been better to have used text or voice chat or a simple online forum. We also need to recognise that the experience of learning with and within a MUVE will differ from student to student as demonstrated in the reaction to co-presence of two of the art and design students:

“I’m surprised you can build anything and do anything in it, really. I think that’s what surprised me. But also I think it’s a bit weird, like everyone is actually a person as well. Like I avoid talking to people because I always forget they’re actually really people. I just think it’s a bit weird.”

“It’s inspired new ideas of where I can apply my work and it’s a lot easier to try these things out on SL than in real life… knowing that people are out there and may come across it [her work in Second Life] makes me think about how my work is applied and what other people think about it…”

However, I would suggest that this breadth of potential means that if you do not feel that terms like ‘communal’, ‘experience’ or ‘belonging’ are of any relevance to your practice then MUVEs are not likely to be the best space for your style of teaching or research. On the other hand, we live at a time in which the web is increasingly offering education the possibility of creating community without requiring physical presence and of peer interaction online in a more-than-textual fashion. Education has always valued the social and recognised its importance in students’ overall learning. If this is important to you and your students then, with a little persistence, MUVEs could be a valuable space for you to use in your teaching.

DAVE WHITE
IS THIS NOTHING BUT FANTASY?

One of the reasons why MUVEs such as Second Life are valuable for education is because they offer an experience thus far not achievable in a traditional face-to-face or distance learning context. The characteristics of face-to-face and distance learning are often (exaggeratedly) positioned as polar opposites. The former offers students a rich, albeit limited social experience that develops understanding of the subject matter as well as transferable skills such as critical reflection and interpersonal skills; the latter offers an equally rich set of resource materials which students can appropriate at will within their own social contexts. The medium of instruction for one is primarily speech; for the other, text. Typically, although increasingly controversially, distance learning has been the poor relation within education: the immediacy of the spoken word which allows rapid questions, answers and discussions, together with the enjoyment of social interaction, has been understood to provide a superior educational experience.

MUVEs not only offer a middle road between these two poles, but also lift the experience of learning into a new domain. Both students and teaching staff involved with the Open Habitat project commented on the mix of the familiar and the strange, the real and the fantasy, the normal and the abnormal. Learning using Second Life gave opportunities never before experienced: conversing with a dragon, building exotic and improbable constructions, appearing to others with an entirely different identity than that of real life (including, if chosen, a different gender), and much more. While a real sense of presence is unquestionably part of the experience, these mixes not only allow but require an adjustment to how learning takes place, even if, as was the case with the OH philosophy pilot, learners favour adopting a traditional approach in which discussions take place in a seminar format with participants sitting in a circle. Perhaps one of the greatest learning stimuli, turning to literature on experiential learning (Jarvis, 2004; Fenwick, 2001), is the vastly increased occurrences of needing to respond to the unexpected.

Ian Truelove, who ran the art and design pilot at Leeds Met, notes in a blog post: ‘Everything changes all the time, and a learning model that embraces change, and permits students to be active agents of change is something that I have witnessed and strongly believe in.’

The Second Life world is a ‘middle world’ in which the rules, conventions and behaviours typical of real life are regularly flouted, either by intent or accident, yet which bears sufficient similarity to ‘normal’ real life for the environment to make sense. Time, for example, behaves differently, especially in the area of communication. Typing takes time, and competes with other visual activity that needs to be monitored: what is appearing in the chat box, what is appearing in the IM chat area, what other avatars are doing and where they are going, and what one’s own avatar is up to. Participants constantly have to multi-task, although the extent of this can be reduced by establishing a communication etiquette.

This ‘middle world’ is also fantastical, and those who enter it open themselves to the abnormal and sometimes capricious which has to be adjusted to. Some do so very consciously: Marya, a philosophy student, commented in feedback that ‘what I always try to avoid is the RL [real life] limitations that we tend to impose on ourselves here almost automatically - this is a different environment and we absolutely can take advantage of that in very exciting ways’. In another session discussing spirituality, one student experimented with levitating in a meditation spiral. It is this dimension which is both alluring and perilous, involving the imagination while pulling participants into an immersive new existence. Participants have control both over the degree to which they allow this immersive process to take place and over the length of time they spend in-world, yet, as can be the case for human physical addictions, extrication may demand significant willpower.
These characteristics suggest that the use of MUVEs in HE introduces a third alternative to the face-to-face and distance learning dichotomy. A useful analytic tool is that proposed by O’Neill and McMahon (2005) in a study of student-centred and teacher-centred learning. The authors identify three principal considerations: the level of choice available to the students, the degree to which students are active or passive in the learning situation, and whether power resides primarily with students or teachers. They state:

It appears from the literature that some view student-centred learning as the concept of the student’s choice in their education; others see it as being about the student doing more than the lecturer (active versus passive learning); while others have a much broader definition which includes both of these concepts but, in addition, describes the shift in the power relationship between the student and the teacher. (O’Neill and McMahon, 2005: 29)

These considerations apply very clearly to the face-to-face and distance learning continuum and provide a means of developing a better understanding of the dynamics of learning using MUVEs. The diagram below presents an initial analytic framework using two axes. The horizontal axis depicts knowledge construction in a typical real world situation using the face-to-face/distance learning continuum, while the vertical axis acknowledges that all MUVEs involve a degree of fantasy and therefore removal from real life. All three modes of learning share an experience of real life, although this differs in nature from one to another: traditional distance learners construct their experience in their individual social situation; face-to-face learners negotiate their learning within a social group, often in a reality ‘bubble’ of a campus-based residential programme (the monastic model of education); while MUVE learners generally have a restricted real life context (a computer screen) but immerse themselves in a real albeit fantasy world.

This analysis allows the two Open Habitat pilots to be mapped onto the framework. The philosophy students were typical distance learners, living in diverse geographical locations and only coming together for the pre-determined Second Life sessions. They assumed the ‘right’ to decide where to meet, one student buying a castle for meetings where groups met and conversed in a familiar circle, then broke out into seminar rooms. While a blue dragon was one of their number, and they appreciated the tutor’s ‘Aaargh!!!’ being expressed as a cloud of butterflies, the level of fantasy was often controlled and perhaps minimised. For the art and design students, on the other hand, here was an opportunity to practise and express their creativity and make chairs from words, trees from ideas, and wonderful bridges which collapsed as soon as real-world architectural principles were applied. They worked individually and in groups, in a full-time, residential setting in which the tutor was an equal partner, ‘superior’ mainly in his greater degree of familiarity with the environment and how to manipulate it. Reflecting on the experience of the pilot in a blog post he comments: ‘Students need to be welcomed into their course’s community of practice, which is populated by 3 full years of co-learners, plus staff’.

As higher education adapts to allow increasing use of MUVEs in a variety of programmes, it seems that this mode of learning has much to commend it. Some might resist the opportunities afforded on account of the introduction of fantasy. Others, on the other hand, view even fantasy as a tool that has real use in developing skills for learning.

**ALISON LE CORNU**


IF WE CAN’T BUILD BRIDGES, LET’S PLANT TREES:
The Art and Design Tutor’s Perspective

In the world of touch and smell I’m Ian Truelove, a Principal Lecturer based in the School of Contemporary Art & Graphic Design at Leeds Metropolitan University. In the abstracted world of Second Life, I’m an artist, designer and virtual tutor going by the name of Cubist Scarborough. Here, I share something of my experience of the Open Habitat project.

I’d sensed for quite some time that MUVEs such as Second Life had the potential to revolutionise the way in which teaching and learning takes place in HE, especially in subject disciplines which readily benefit from the opportunity to simulate a real-world task without the accompanying hazards and risks. The Open Habitat project offered me a welcome opportunity to explore in a structured and reflective way the potential I sensed, building on my prior experience and allowing me to experiment in dialogue with others. I had three main goals when joining the project:

To legitimise the use of Second Life as a tool for learning and teaching within my subject discipline of art and design and beyond.

To promote an approach to learning and teaching which I feel Second Life is particularly suited to and which I have experienced as effective across my teaching.

To meet and critically engage with other people in the field so that my practice could be enhanced and I could gain a sense of audience.

I had been an early adopter of Second Life in my teaching practice, and was eager to share my experience as well as to benefit from that of others. In particular, I was keen to explore the idea that virtual worlds might provide a suitable studio environment in which students could produce artwork. Art and design students spend long hours in a studio. Traditionally this has been where they have experimented and created, broken and recrafted, imitated and pioneered, and developed their own individuality and uniqueness. It has also been a place where learners have assumed the role of apprentices, studying under masters who have passed down their knowledge and expertise that they had themselves gained from those before them.

It is a tried and tested model, although one that has been challenged with the advent of new technologies.

My work with Second Life has opened many doors and offered new alternatives, not least in providing an additional environment which can function as a studio yet with fewer restrictions. Materials don’t break, ‘mistakes’ can be rectified, prims (building blocks in Second Life) can be made to behave in entirely abnormal ways, all offering new possibilities for the development of creativity. At a deeper level, the rich supply of resources available to students in Second Life together with the levelling effect the environment has on those in-world—the common difference in status between teacher and learner can be all but eradicated—allows, or maybe even requires a new pedagogic modus operandi to come into play. It is one which I very much welcomed and which I have reflected on throughout the project in blog posts. One post reads:

The Atelier is a studio where an artist works with a small number of students to progressively train them to become professional realist painters … This system places great emphasis on an instructivist approach, and has much in common with approaches such as intelligent tutoring systems. It is a bottom up approach, with students completing progressively complex tasks in order to master their technique. However, where it rings true with me is in the way that the master painter/tutor tailors the programme of study to each individual student. This seems to link with the constructivist goal of maintaining the zone of proximal development. I also like the fact that the independence of the painter/tutor from any institution or central governing body, means that he or she has complete autonomy in their teaching methods, unrestricted by the requirements of external validation.
Second Life provided my students with a virtual studio in which learning could take place differently. I saw it as a counterbalance to higher education’s restrictive obsession with modularisation, and an approach which focused on both the ongoing development of pertinent skills and the acquisition of new knowledge. This, together with a developing understanding of ways in which social learning takes place online, using the threefold framework of communication, cooperation and collaboration (Misanchuk and Anderson, 2001) guided my learning design.

Examples of this were the building exercises I set my students. The first, in which they had to build a bridge in teams, revealed, somewhat to my surprise, how difficult it was for students to collaborate in this way. Reflection after the event indicated that I had asked them to jump before they could walk, to work in collaboration before they were able to communicate effectively. The second and third were activities in which they had to build a seat from a word association exercise, and build a tree. The word association task was more successful principally because it levelled the communication skills of the newly inducted students: even the most nervous participants were able to type the first thing that came into their head, supporting subsequent cooperation on the seat building part of the task. The tree-building day succeeded because it most closely replicated the essence of the art school studio. Both students and tutors shared the same goal of building one of a range of specified trees, and worked alongside each other in a communal workspace. Through constructive dialogue, participants cooperated to support individual creative endeavour.

In a short project such as Open Habitat it is not surprising that students did not gain the skills of collaboration as outlined in the figure below. To a point, this might also be on account of the fact that they are art and design students at an early stage of their education, and tend to favour personal creativity over social creativity (Mayer, 1999). Interdependence and social negotiation to consensus compromises their creativity, their unique contribution to the work of art that is forming in their hands. As they progress through the course, they learn to embrace the power of collaboration, but at the point in their studies that we engaged with them, their ability to work directly with others was limited. This suggest an opportunity to explore another dimension of learning using MUVEs.

The project has been a very positive one for all involved. I am enthusiastic about moving forward with using Second Life in my teaching and have been able to embed it successfully in my programmes. Its value lies not only in the opportunities it opens for students, but also in providing us as teachers with a reflective mirror. In addition to the opportunities the virtual world has provided, Second Life has allowed me to look at real life in a different way and question and critique our practice in a social and educational environment.

IAN TRUELOVE


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>COOPERATION</th>
<th>COLLABORATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING</td>
<td>Information transmission</td>
<td>Knowledge transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INQUIRY</td>
<td>Individual inquiry</td>
<td>Delegation of tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECISION-MAKING</td>
<td>Agree to disagree</td>
<td>Vote (majority rules)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOALS/AGENDAS</td>
<td>Multiple goals/ multiple agendas</td>
<td>One goal/ multiple agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td>Individual accountability</td>
<td>Individual accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING RELATIONSHIP</td>
<td>Complete independence</td>
<td>Partial interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three levels of interaction in an online learning environment (Misanchuk and Anderson, 2001)
LEARNING RECIPE 1:
MUVEs Table d’Hôte

This meal was first served to art and design students, but it should taste good whatever your clientèle.

YOU WILL NEED:
A computer lab with 20 computers.
Lots of students.

PREPARATION TIME:
Half a day.

COOKING TIME:
At least three weeks, but you can leave it cooking for most of that, and get on with other things.

APPETISER
Ask an adult to install and test OpenSim standalone on all of the computers in the lab.
Divide the students up into groups of 20.
Log into OpenSim standalone on all the computers.
On the hour, every hour, until the day has ended, invite 20 students in and sit them in front of the prepared computers.
Get them to walk, fly and move their cameras.
Get them to move their cameras again. And again. Emphasise the importance of moving the camera. Then emphasise it again. And again.
Get them to create a cube.
Get them to mess about with the settings on the ‘properties’ floating window to make new and exciting shapes.
Get them to upload an image and drag it from their inventor to the shape.
Let them have fun messing with these things, and see what they come up with.
Wander round and assist as appropriate.
After half an hour, hand out a sheet with instructions about how to sign up to Second Life, and how to IM your Avatar. Add further orientation tips to taste.
Send them out, take a deep breath, and prepare for the next 20.
SOUP
Make friends with everyone who has instant-messaged you.
Give them some money.
Invite them to join your group.
Send them a landmark to your island.
Give them a notecard with landmarks to exciting attractions on the mainland.
Give them a notecard of ‘The Manual’.
Set a date to meet up on your island.

SALAD
Meet up with all of your new friends and say hello.
Ask where the coolest place to visit on the mainland is.
Go there for a field trip.
Take snapshots and share them on the web.
Teleport home.
Go off in pairs to the mainland. Take snapshots.
Teleport home.
Introduce ‘The Manual’.
Do the word association/seat building exercise from the manual.
Get each student to pick a task from The Manual. Arrange a date to meet up.

MAIN COURSE
Meet up and discuss the progress on the tasks.
Discuss strategies for developing/improving/starting the chosen task, or negotiate a different task from The Manual.
Set a new date for discussions.

SIDE DISH
Identify common issues with the group, and select a task from The Manual to set for all students to work on simultaneously.
Do a one day project with this task as the focus.
Get all students to work on the task on the same island, either individually, or as a team if appropriate to the task and the group.
Work alongside the students on the same task yourself, to lead by example and to appreciate the challenge of the task.
Spend time wandering round the group and discussing the progress of the task.
Serve more portions of the main course and side dishes until full.

COFFEE
Do a ‘crit’ to finish off the meal.
Get students to show everything they have created.
Discuss their achievements and learning.
Mark if appropriate.

IAN TRUELOVE
In this Manual you will find a wide variety of activities that can be conducted within Second Life. They will both familiarise you with the environment and help you to develop skills so that you can operate effectively within it, and contribute to your study by encouraging creativity, experimentation within a safe environment, and innovation. The activities are ungraded and non-hierarchical; you are not expected to start at the beginning and work through them. Instead, read through the list and choose one (or several) that appeal and get stuck in.

1. Fill in your profile.
2. Sit on the ground in a circle and play word association with some friends. (e.g. Say a word in response to the word just spoken by the avatar on your right.) When you get bored, look back through the chat window and copy your favourite two words. Build a chair or chairs based on these words. Use for meetings.
3. Go on an outing. Hit the mainland with friends and pretend to be tourists. Find a beach and relax. Buy some souvenirs, take some snapshots and put them on your mantle-piece. If you haven’t got a mantle-piece, build one. And a fire-place.
4. Gather at 8pm this Thursday night. Dress up in suitable attire. Share any drunken animations that you have in your inventory. Search for a disco event and hit the town.
5. Find some gesture animations and practise using them somewhere on your own. Work out a physical comedy routine and perform it to your friends.
6. Find a freebie stall on the mainland. Grab 12 small objects that have something in common. Arrange all of your objects into a sequence.
7. Build one or more of the following:
   - The beginning of the world
   - The end of the world
   - A self-portrait that includes your full body
   - Something that happened at breakfast
   - An image from a recent dream
   - Something that has yet to happen to you
9. Take 10 close-up ‘crops’ of your friends and make into a mini-exhibition.
11. Bake a virtual cake. Have a tea party.
12. Ask ten questions of everyone you meet.
15. Invent the Second Life equivalent of Mornington Crescent.
16. Build one or more of the following types of tree:
   realistic tree
   surrealistic tree
   typographic tree
   tree of life
   family tree
   naughty tree
   musical tree
   people tree
   tree for sale
   fruit of knowledge tree
   tree into toe won’t go
   tree of oblivion
   tree from hell
   symbol tree
   science fiction tree
   love tree
   snakes and ladders tree
   monkey puzzle tree
   idolatree
17. Think of a word. Google it.
   Click on the most intriguing link.
   Copy the most intriguing word on that page. Google it.
   Click on the most intriguing link.
   Copy the most intriguing word on that page. Google it.
   Click on the most intriguing link.
   Copy the most intriguing word on that page. Google it.
   Click on the most intriguing link.
   Copy the most intriguing word on that page. Google it.
   Click on the most intriguing link.
   Copy the most intriguing word on that page. Google it.
   Click on the most intriguing link.
   Copy the most intriguing word on that page.
   Typeset all 6 words and apply them to each side of a movable, physical cube.
   Repeat the above exercise so that you have 2 dice.
   Invite some friends over and throw the dice. Have a conversation based on the two words that face up.
18. Make a time-lapse film of a busy sim.
19. Start a political movement, or join an existing one.
20. Ask a friend to describe their earliest memory. Build something which illustrates this memory and show it to your friend. Ask them to rate it on a scale from 1 to 10.
21. Open any book and randomly point to a word. Start building something in response to that word. Make sure each object in your sculpture has full copy & modify permissions enabled. Select all of the objects and take a copy. Open the profile of one of your friends. Drag your object from your inventory onto your friend’s drop box. Send them an instant message asking them to modify and add to your sculpture and send it back to you. Modify it and send it back to them. Repeat until you feel the object is finished. If you do not know how to do any of these things, then find out.
22. Create a 6 object sequence relating to the word ‘Red’.
23. Meet up at dawn.
24. Make a 10 second film entitled ‘Panic’ using snapshots taken in-world, and some video editing software. If you need actors, use your friends. Publish it on YouTube.
25. Using freebies found on the mainland, create an assemblage to illustrate the title ‘Home’.
26. Interview and take snapshots of a strange avatar. Get their permission to copy the chat-log and use their image. Create a square portrait using one of your snapshots and a square typographic piece using the chat-log text. Apply to either side of a square, flat prim. Drop a copy to your subject.

27. Go to your bookshelf and pick up a novel – any one – don’t think about, just reach and grab. Open to the first page and the first line. Read it and then go into Second Life and take a snapshot to illustrate it.

28. Over the course of two weeks, collect all of the packaging from the food you have eaten. Photograph or scan this packaging and apply each texture to flexi-prims. Litter the land with them.

29. Take head and shoulders ‘straight on’ portraits of your friends. Using PhotoShop, swap their facial features around to create five new characters. Invent a name for each new character. Add the name to the picture and apply to a prim.

30. Collect all of the menus that come through your door, and all of the flyers that you get handed over the course of a week. Photograph or scan and apply to prims. Build a door with a letterbox. Arrange them on the floor next to the door.

31. Build a sculpture which demonstrates the connections between you and all of the people you know. This may represent hierarchy, age, relationships, commonality, geography or something else. Include your Second Life friends.

32. Build something that represents one or more of the following words: Ouch | Clang | Sizzle | Squeal | Bump | Thwack | Smash | Oof | Screech | Bang | Crunch | Splat

33. Go somewhere on the mainland and draw what you see (with a real pencil on a real piece of paper). Apply to a prim and display it in public.

34. Volunteer to help an in-world charity. No need for any output. Just feel good about it.

35. Build the story of Jack and Jill.

36. Take an album cover and reconstruct it using objects. Take a snapshot of the final outcome and format it as a 12 inch album sleeve. Display it next to your objects.

37. Invent a game that can be played by avatars. Display the rules next to this game. Play the game with your friends.

38. The tangram game: build a tangram animal out of prims.

39. Find out the first jobs of your friends. Create the outfits that they might have worn. Change into a different outfit each time you log in.

40. Decide on roles and titles for each of your friends. Some suggestions: Leader | cleaner | handyman | builder | spokesperson | clown | baby | alpha male | alpha female | whiner | Dad | wino | Mum | cook | etc. Make outfits that suit the role and wear them.

41. Make a gallery. Display your ‘real’ work, whatever that might be.

42. Google ‘How to make a t-shirt in Second Life’. Make a t-shirt. Give a copy to all of your friends.

43. Find a virtual train on the mainland and take a ride. Take snapshots of whatever catches your eye.

44. Build a house. Rent out rooms to friends who can’t or won’t build their own house.

45. Find the oldest object you can, and take a photograph of who made it. Walk across the old mainland, taking a photograph of each sim you cross as you do.
46. Go to the mainland and find someone. Ask them to suggest somewhere better to go than where you are. Teleport there. Take a snapshot. Find someone else. Ask them to suggest somewhere better to go than where you are. Teleport there. Take a snapshot. Find someone else. Ask them to suggest somewhere better to go than where you are. Teleport there. Take a snapshot. Find someone else. Ask them to suggest somewhere better to go than where you are. Teleport there. Take a snapshot. Find someone else. Ask them to suggest somewhere better to go than where you are. Teleport there. Take a snapshot. Find someone else. Ask them if this is the best place in Second Life.

47. Make a hexagon with only two prims.

48. Make a sphere smaller than 0.01m³.

49. Who can fly the highest? What is a ‘Flight Feather’?

50. Use every single attachment point.

51. Find somewhere in Second Life that you know in real life. Take two identical photographs.

52. Take a photograph of another avatar from the other side of a sim.

53. Go and find the Crooked House.

54. Attend a musical event. Attend a talk. Attend a fashion show. Go to a toga party. Attend a ‘101’ class.

55. Find a piece of work by two of the following artists: Seifert Surface | Robbie Dingo | Starax Statosky | AngryBeth Shortbread

56. Take a panoramic photograph.

57. Take exactly the same photograph every day for a week.

58. Find the oldest person you can. Interview them as if for one of the following: Heat; Maxim; The Guardian.

59. Recreate a movie poster.

60. Get a Linden Bear.


62. Get a pet. Make a home for your pet.

63. Why doesn’t it rain?

64. Make a typeface using as few prims as possible. Typeset the first line from a novel with it.

65. Recreate an Escher print.

66. Get your photo taken with 100 other residents.

67. Convince someone else to sign up to Second Life.

68. Make a poster advertising an event.

69. Make as accurate as copy of your bedroom as you can. Spend all day in it.

70. Build and set off a domino run. Film it in progress.

71. Make a digital clock (that works).

72. Take a building and make an accurate copy. Demolish it.

73. Create 4 cube prims and use them to illustrate the following words: order | playful | tension | congested | increase | bold. Take a snapshot of each configuration.

74. Play primtinary – the prim version of Pictionary.

75. Make a newspaper about what you did in a week. Make it as high-brow or as low-brow as you like.

76. Change your skin, change your gender, change your species. Buy a skin and a shape of the opposite gender or a try something more left-field – a furry, a cartoon character? Dress yourself well. Pick five words to describe how it feels.

77. Buy a pose – a posture – something you would not normally adopt in RL. Now go out and drop into conversation with another avatar. Adopt the pose. Did you get a reaction?

78. Take a snapshot of you and your friends using 5 modes of transport in Second Life.

79. Find or create a series of poses for the following words: grovel | fight | caress | migraine | hallelujah. Go out and start a conversation. Drop each word subtly into the chat and use the poses.

80. 24hr scavenger hunt. Find as many of the following items as you can: a fish | a beachball | a megaprim of any kind | some bubblegum | scissors | an elephant | a shiny skull | a buddha | a gun | a working cog array | an EU flag | a number of ducks | a sheep | a rocking chair | seven dwarves | a violin | Constantinople | a trampoline | a clown | the pyramids | a human brain | a book you can read | ten pins and a bowling ball | a chess set you can play | identical twins | a cup of tea | a map of Swansea | George W. Bush | a 17th century wig | a Pina Colada | a folding chair | an interactive whiteboard | a girl called Linden | Second Life | bookshelves | a key | Batman | i a die that you can actually use | a working clock | an apple | Tuesday | a small dog | a shop mannequin | a wheelbarrow | an abacus | an escalator | an aeroplane | a cloud | headphones. If you can’t find them, build them.

81. Subvert your profile.

IAN TRUELOVE
AAARGH! WHY ARE WE ALL HERE?
The Philosophy Tutor’s Perspective

I am not a techie. Boy, am I not a techie! Nevertheless I was intrigued by what I read about Second Life in the newspapers. So when I saw that our elearning unit was asking for volunteers to pilot a trial use of Second Life I jumped at the opportunity. I teach philosophy in the Department for Continuing Education at Oxford University, and I could immediately see the possibilities of Second Life as a pedagogic tool, especially for my part-time distance learning students. Over the years it has become clear that the success of any online course depends on the extent to which the students, guided by the tutor, can become a thriving online community, which itself depends on the tutor’s ability to come across as a person in the VLE. My specific thought, then, was that Second Life would be a wonderful supplement to the ‘common room’ that is such an important part of our online courses in philosophy.

When I teach in this environment, I go to the common room where I can ask students’ advice about my sweet peas, tell them about the play I saw last night, or just let rip about the ghastly day I had. This encourages them to respond in kind, and pretty soon everyone feels as if they know each other as friends. This is an important dimension of their learning, since it builds trust and encourages peer support. As things worked out it was undoubtedly the case that Second Life enhanced the social interaction between participants. It was very helpful to be able to chat about clothes (‘Wow Maria, that dress!’, ‘You’ve left your helmet behind!’), about the environment (‘Is there any tea in that pot?’, ‘Where is the Plant Room?’ ‘Would anyone like a martini?’), and about our activities (most notably the hour we spent riding sharks, but also exploring, and enjoying the campfire!). Most avatars were people (all suspiciously young and attractive), but we also had a spaceman and, rather endearingly, a small blue dragon. Our shared incompetence at managing our avatars was a popular talking point. In the two pilots I ran this sense of camaraderie spilt into the discussion forums and enhanced the philosophical discussions that took place there. People were not so self-conscious, they were more likely to take a risk in saying what they thought, and they were more likely to exercise the principle of charity in their responses to others’ postings.
Second Life proved an excellent environment in which to discuss key philosophical topics. In our first session we looked at the issue of identity and the extent to which our avatars could be identified with us. I was very impressed with this discussion. The very fact that in Second Life you see your avatar from behind makes it very difficult to think that your avatar is you. This got the discussion off to a satisfying start philosophically. But it soon became clear that managing a discussion was difficult: either everyone was ‘talking’ at once’ or they were all typing. The students broke into two groups and I spent time with each. Then we came back together to continue our discussion. Together we evolved ways of managing some of these communication challenges. We all found the jumble of text chat confusing and difficult to follow, and students began to make suggestions about how to improve matters by putting basic ground rules into place: always use people’s Second Life names, and use these (even in an abbreviated form) at the beginning of every chat message so that the flow of discussion becomes more easily identifiable; control contributions and manage time effectively by asking everyone to compose a response to a question at the same time but only post it when invited by the tutor; develop and use visual codes such as the ellipsis to indicate ‘I’m thinking’ by a Rodin-like pose, or ‘I disagree’ with a vigorous headshake and so on. This went some way towards overcoming the problem of non-verbal cues, but more often than not students were too focused on the discussion to initiate an appropriate animation to convey their mood. He also noted the ‘Aaargh!’ with which I greet outrageously unphilosophical remarks (or outrageously bad philosophy), and ensured that instead of my having to type it out, I only had to press F4 and the ‘Aaaargh!’ would appear accompanied by a cloud of blue butterflies. Very satisfying!

Second Life clearly has enormous potential for teaching and learning and I should love to use it as a tool in our online courses. I continue to think that it will be most used as a social tool, but I can see that as we work out how to deal with the challenges we’ll be able to get some really useful philosophical work done.

And it will be fun!

MARIANNE TALBOT
LEARNING RECIPE 2:
MUVEs à la nouvelle cuisine

This menu originates from philosophy discussions held in Second Life and can be modified to suit a variety of occasions including one-off banquets or as part of a larger festival.

INGREDIENTS
1 VLE with forums
1 meeting point within a multi-user virtual Environment
5–12 Distance Students
1 tutor
1 MUVE support expert
1 topic for discussion

PREPARATION TIME
Tutor: 2–5 hours
Students: 1 hour of orientation in MUVE if n00bs
Cooking time
Pre MUVE activity in VLE: 3 days
2 x 1.5 hours session in MUVE
2 x Post MUVE activity in VLE: 2 days – max 1 week
STARTER
Marinade students and tutor in MUVE orientation session covering the following:
Walking around
Text chat
Sitting down
Teleporting
Relevant text short-hands including the use of ellipsis the use of avatar names and any other appropriate shorthand such as lol and np. (wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS_language)
Experiment according to taste.

FIRST COURSE
Dice a discussion theme into bite-size chunks, including:
Topic
Guidance
Key terms
Timeline
Mix these chunks with students in a VLE forum. Use tutor to facilitate discussion and frame ideas until breadcrumb thread emerges. Allow 2–3 days for mix to prove for comprehension. At this point your mixture should be twice its original volume.

Before proceeding onto the main course use a tutor summary of the discussion so far to aid digestion and describe the main course.

MAIN COURSE
Blend students and tutor in the MUVE allowing time for social aperitif (15 mins)
Shape mixture into a discussion of appropriate size and shape using the following utensils:
Breakout groups of 3–4 students
Robust tutor involvement
Ideas tenderiser
Allow 15 minutes’ social digestion time and to anticipate dessert.

DESSERT
Select finest morsels of main course discussion and knead into an initial forum post to encourage students’ appetite for reflection. Simmer discussion for 2–5 days.

CHEESE PLATTER
Optional course to complete the meal which traditionally consists of a form of assessment.

COFFEE AND MINTS
Evaluate meal and make notes on this recipe card to improve dining experience for future occasions.

DAVE WHITE AND ALISON LE CORNU
Is the relationship between you and your avatar one of identity? Remember ‘identity’ here means numerical not qualitative identity.

Please respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and give at least one reason for your response.
DISCOURSE:

Fairly soon into the philosophy pilot three students took the initiative to begin a ‘Second Philosophy’ discussion group in Second Life. Each had taken to the environment enthusiastically and felt it offered opportunities to enhance their learning that they were keen to exploit. The group has now met for over 30 weeks. It is open to everyone in Second Life, not just members of the Open Habitat pilot(s). It isn’t formally tutored, nor is there a resident ‘expert’ to whom members can defer. Those participating build or buy a different Second Life venue in which to hold each weekly meeting which reflects in some way the content of the discussion. So far, discussions have included the following topics:
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Free Will = Illusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Discussing Personal Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Facing up to Alienism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Moral Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Humanity &amp; Technology Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Humanity &amp; Technology Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Fame: A Dangerous Obsession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Enlightenment Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Wittgenstein’s Beetle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Artificial Intelligence/Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Authenticity: Part I: Are you Authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Authenticity: Part II: Everydayness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Heidegger: Question Concerning Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Theseus’ Paradox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>What if Everyone Did as I am Doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Consciousness: Is it what we think it is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>How Valid is Spirituality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>How Valid is Science?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Can there be a Just War?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Virtue Pills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Natural Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Human Rights: Rational or Sentimental?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Are Memes Real?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Designer Babies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Evolutionary Perspectives: Guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Scientific Pantheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Is Death Harmful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Love or Loyalty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Substance Dualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Freedom/Property Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OSWY GOTHLY AND MARYA BLAISDALE
Rickards (1976).

I. Extend adjunct question research exploring higher level pre and post-
questions.

II. Question Position (pre vs. post)
Question Level (verbatim, conceptual)
Time of Testing (immediate, delayed)

III. Scores on two tests (free recall and completion) on each of these measures:

1. intentional concepts
2. mediating statements
3. mediating concepts
4. incidental statements
5. incidental statements
Technologies, whether microelectronic or as primitive as counting sticks, act as delivery systems for knowledge, since knowledge can only be expressed or demonstrated through technological capacity of some form. And both are accorded meaning only within the parameters of cultural context: through discourse and literate practice. (Stewart, 2002)

In the wake of the initial wave of enthusiasm that accompanied the introduction of MUVEs into the education sphere, Open Habitat was an opportunity to take a grounded look at their possibilities and advantages. The project started with practical, pragmatic plans, clear pedagogical directives, and measurable outcomes. However, every tool chosen for a project shapes its outcome, and Open Habitat was significantly impacted by its focus on MUVEs. The collaborative power of the MUVE, its ability to offer a sense of ‘eventedness’, and even the very instability of the platform affected the project and its approach to learning. The project began to reflect its platform, eventually adopting a rhizomatic pedagogy wherein the knowledge generated and explored sprouted from a multitude of sources and formats. (The metaphor of the rhizome as it applies to education and knowledge suggests that, in a field where what counts as knowledge is a moving target, a given community of learners can construct knowledge through the connections and checks and balances that are the centre of the meaning of community. In the Open Habitat project both students and tutors were engaged in this community of learning and the ‘curriculum’ studied from and the knowledge produced can best be seen through an examination of the connections and interactions littered through the project and collected in the website and magazine.)

Our inherited systems of education, and our uses of technology in education, are still in many ways built along the lines of the linear, pre-digital system of a generation ago. Planning and attention to detail are the hallmarks of this system, where one must be vigilant in order to ensure that a pre-described goal is achieved through the correct step-by-step process. When the journey that the students on the courses at Leeds Metropolitan and Oxford universities embarked upon is compared to a standard or traditional learning curve we see more than the simple transition of one technology to another; we see an entirely different set of literacies and we see different literacies moving to the foreground. The change in technology, in effect, changes what it means to learn.

In a recent online presentation, Dr Rick Shweir from the University of Saskatchewan demonstrated a tagging system entitled Unisort that he used while doing his PhD in the 1970s. The system consisted of a series of large cue cards with a series of punched holes along the outside of each card, each related to a different ‘tag’, each painstakingly handwritten and then categorised. Each card held a single quote. When a particular quote related to a particular tag, the outside edge of paper on the outside of the hole punch was severed. To find quotes related to a particular tag, the cards would be lined up and a straightened coat hanger inserted along the hole punch associated with a particular tag, then the whole apparatus was shaken. The cards that had the edge of paper removed along the tag would fall out, and the related quotes would present themselves. Simple. It was a breathtakingly elegant idea, and one that the microchip has forever antiquated.
Dr Shweir’s system was built to last and, incidentally, still worked perfectly in his 2009 presentation. It was built for a world where what was current or cutting-edge lasted for long enough to warrant this kind of methodical approach, and warranted this degree of effort. The tagging lexicon for his cards had to be fully prepared before the process of research could take place. This, of course, required that the researcher had a definite end goal for his work one, two, or perhaps four years before the culmination of the research. The set of literacies implicit in this practice and the kind of learning that they would have engendered reflect the method itself. Dr Shweir had to be considered and patient, and would have needed to rely on the guidance of professors to plan out those first forays into work that would only see the light of day years on into the future.

The students who explored Second Life in Open Habitat, on the other hand, built houses, ran scavenger hunts, and had impromptu discussions around the topics that formed the knowledge base of the course, all while continually re-evaluating their end goals in the context of the MUVE. The main themes of their learning were similar to the philosophy courses that Dr Shweir might have studied thirty years before. The literacies that they employed during the process, however, were the antithesis of those that presaged success in the 1970s. The Open Habitat students were rewarded for taking risks, for following new plans, and taking unforeseen difficulties in their stride. There was no need for a methodical, linear approach to building and preparing their objectives since any place could be a starting point, and goals could be cobbled together from any direction. Learning to learn, then, was in the Open Habitat context a matter of dealing with the unexpected, and synthesising from multiple perspectives when engaging in co-creation of knowledge with fellow students in the virtual space. So the philosophy tutor commented when asked what she felt she had learnt during the pilot:

[I have learnt] that Second Life could be a very useful addition to our pedagogic toolkit. I especially think it would be good for a sort of common room, because it can generate a real feeling of intimacy. I also found that the second life experience generated a lot of philosophical questions itself such as is my avatar me?

Similarly, the art and design tutor during an in-world feedback session with students made the point that learning from peers is of equal, if not greater, importance than learning from tutors.

Cubist Scarborough: Anything else that you think has been significant for you in this project?

[2:45] Axy Magic: having people around you don’t know that well to ask for help
[2:45] Axy Magic: every1 has been dead nice :) 
[2:46] Cubist Scarborough: That’s good to hear
[2:46] Cubist Scarborough: Peer support is crucial on the course
[2:46] Cubist Scarborough: often, tutors are busy or hard to find
[2:46] Cubist Scarborough: you need to make use of each other to learn
[2:47] Cubist Scarborough: You should learn more from each other than you do from us.

One of the other interesting side effects of this approach is the changing relationship between student and teacher. It allows for the instructor to learn alongside the student, to discover new ways to use the environment to work together to co-create knowledge. Teaching becomes a reactive, guiding experience, where the instructor uses their experience and knowledge, in time, to help bridge the gaps in the learning experience. The MUVE, like many technologies, can make manifest the things that are already present inside our classrooms. The tool is a result of the changes that are happening maybe, more than the catalyst that is causing them.

DAVE CORMIER


The effect of this rhizomatic approach to acquiring knowledge on the future of that knowledge is something that remains to be seen. The fact that the technology itself has helped facilitate this change is another of the outcomes from this project.

There is a place, I think, for both of these models. We still need rigour, and planning and forethought. Approaches like the one used during Open Habitat, however, may lead to more success in some disciplines where there is no agreed-upon canon of knowledge, where what is seen as knowledge is a moving target. As the new technologies that fuel the dissemination of information and knowledge in our culture continues to increase we are going to have to reassess what we mean by learning and indeed knowledge in many of our courses (Cormier, 2008), and the MUVE adds another tool to this toolkit.
PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:

These Principles of Good Practice for using MUVEs in an HE context are those which have emerged from the project and are based on the collective experience of the two pilot studies. They have been offered for discussion in different presentations about the Open Habitat project particularly as it drew to a close, and appear also to reflect other MUVE users’ experience and practice. A number of the Principles clearly do not relate exclusively to MUVEs but apply to teaching and learning in general. Some are a matter of common sense in any educational environment. They are therefore good examples of a genuine intersection between real-world and in-world teaching. At the same time we hope that by articulating and presenting them in this form, teaching practitioners wanting to put their toe in the MUVE waters will be able to do so with greater confidence and experience more pleasing results than might otherwise have been the case.

1. Identify why and how the use of a MUVE should enhance student learning. Consider questions such as:
   a. The acquisition or development of transferable skills;
   b. The opportunity for students to experience and/or practise something otherwise not accessible (a real-world metaphor might be that of a field trip), and whether an in-world simulation of a real-world situation can overcome traditional obstacles such as expense and lack of resources;
   c. Whether the use of the MUVE is integral to the intended learning outcomes and whether or not these can only be achieved through its use, or whether another form of delivery might be more effective;
   d. Whether the MUVE needs to be supplemented by other media such as a VLE, face-to-face dialogue, or individual tutorials.

2. Build in time for students to acquire the necessary skills to use the MUVE effectively.
   a. Organise orientation sessions that target specific skills and link these to motivational dimensions such as enjoyment of game-playing.

3. Provide a safe training space, such as OpenSim, in which students can play and gain confidence before moving on to the focused learning activity. Introduce students to aspects of in-world behaviour that will facilitate their task and enhance their enjoyment, such as:
   a. Learning to build;
   b. Learning to do basic manoeuvres such as sitting down, teleporting, using IM and chat, as well as fill in their profile and know how to work with the in-world economy;
   c. Familiarising them with the cultural side of the MUVE relatively slowly.
4. Think carefully about the degree and type of collaboration that is required for completion of the in-world task. Consider issues such as:
   a. What sort of collaboration is hoped for and why? Collaboration in building requires quite different skills to collaboration in exchanging ideas. Separate one from the other to avoid confusion. Remember that ideas can be exchanged between collaborators more easily than objects can.
   b. How to differentiate between individual pursuits and group collaboration. It can often be more effective to allow students to operate as individuals in-world while at the same time contributing to a bigger collaborative theme.

5. Provide/develop ground rules for communication and use of channels. In-world communication functions very differently from that in the real world. Guidelines need to focus on issues such as:
   a. Making sure everyone is in chat range. Realise that just as in the real world, one person’s in-world experience differs from another’s. Just because you can ‘hear’ (see chat text from) someone doesn’t mean that others can too.
   b. Referring to people in-world by their avatar name, or having a clear policy on how people are to refer to each other in-world.
   c. Agreeing appropriate conventions, for example, don’t mix real-world voice chat with text chat during an in-world session.
   d. Introducing strategies for effective participation in a synchronous session. These include argumentation codes (use of short sentences); textual codes (use of textual indicators like the ellipsis (…)) to let others know that the discourse continues; interaction codes (organisation of interaction, questions); ‘text speak’ (lol, afk); and emoticons (:).
   e. Introducing strategies to control and organise the potentially chaotic flow of discussions. These could include people naming the avatar whose comment they are responding to; or individuals preparing a response ‘in the background’ but only posting it when invited by the tutor/moderator.

6. Establish appropriate in-world etiquette. MUVEs can be a playful escapist setting but be aware that real-world student expectations and values are likely to travel in-world with their avatars.
   a. Think carefully before teaching in the nude! Be aware that MUVEs are a ‘good enough’ representation of reality for people to have real-world expectations.
   b. Establish ways in which mood, difficult-to-convey body language and other important real-world visual and sensory clues can be communicated.
   c. Build in opportunity to discuss acceptable in-world etiquette.
   d. Be aware of the ongoing debate about what can be considered ‘legitimate’ activity in-world that focuses on the range between the highly fantastical to the largely conventional. The jury is still out.

7. Individualise learning paths.
   a. Create a common starting point but allow for flexibility in final goals. Skills are attained at different rates, requiring students to self-pace and tutors to offer appropriate assistance.

8. Adapt the teaching/learning relationship to the environment. The experience of those involved with the project suggests the metaphor of a more experienced guide accompanying less experienced explorers fits more appropriately than the master–apprentice model, both in terms of in-world manipulation and constructing knowledge of the subject. Consider:
   a. Providing a mentor to help scaffold student activities. Live demonstrations and mentoring are useful ways to help students succeed in the tasks set for them. Make sure someone is (almost) always on hand to help.
   b. Understanding the teaching/learning task within a constructivist framework in which both ‘teacher’ and ‘learner(s)’ work towards the construction of new knowledge.

9. Avoid real-world and in-world confusion. While there may well be times when the learning experience can be enhanced by face-to-face encounters, participation in an in-world session when all involved are together in the same real-world room invites confusion and chaos.
   a. Consider the fact that when using a MUVE the most effective mode of education might be distance learning. This calls for careful planning in order to make any face-to-face sessions quite distinct.

10. Embrace and take advantage of the social side of MUVEs. Build the social in and don’t try to force it out. This is a significant dimension of learners’ experience and one which can heighten motivation, add an important ‘fun’ aspect, and offer opportunity for learning well beyond the specific subject discipline. This also helps to build trust before effective collaboration can take place.
   a. Include games and competitions as well as other socially based learning activities such as role play and simulation.
   b. Organise fun social events such as awards ceremonies, fashion shows, and other activities which will encourage learners to participate as fully as possible in the environment and interact with and learn from each other.

STEVEN WARBURTON AND MARGARITA PÉREZ-GARCÍA
MARIANNE:
You should start the discussion: are you clear on what you are supposed to be doing?
CADE:
Yes.
SHAK:
Nope.
WICHARD:
I believe so.
YOU:
Thanks. Any other thoughts?

MARKAY:
Yeah. I like your hat.
OPENHABITAT