

# SECOND LIFE: RESEARCH, COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATION IN A VIRTUAL WORLD



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# EVOLUTION OF VIRTUAL WORLDS

## 1. World Wide Web (Web 1.0)

- static, one-way presentation of information

## 2. Web 2.0

- dynamic collaboration of users
- leverages the global audience of the web

Web 1.0 was about reading, Web 2.0 is about writing

Web 1.0 was about companies, Web 2.0 is about communities

Web 1.0 was about home pages, Web 2.0 is about blogs

# EVOLUTION OF VIRTUAL WORLDS

## 3D Worlds – the next step in immersion of users

1. Games - MUDs to MMORPGs
  - Hero's journey – goal-oriented behavior
  - centralized control and ownership of content
2. Open Worlds

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  - lack of pre-defined behavior – the user determines their experience
  - populated by user-created content

# CHARACTERISTICS OF VIRTUAL WORLDS

1. Persistent
  2. Shared/Immersive
  3. Social Interactivity
  4. Simultaneous Behavior and Communication
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# WHAT IS SECOND LIFE?

Second Life is a virtual world populated and designed by its “Residents”

Takes the concepts of Web 2.0 to the next level by providing a blank slate on which Residents define their own experience

- customize their personal appearance via the avatar
- design and create buildings, environments, and objects
- communicate and build communities around shared interests

# WHAT IS SECOND LIFE?

Key elements to Second Life's appeal:

1. Large user base
2. Communication
  - voice or text chat; simulations
3. Commercialization
  - ownership of IP
  - Linden-based economy
- 4 . Strong support for external organizations

# WHAT DOES SECOND LIFE HAVE TO OFFER?

1. Multi-pronged communication environments
  2. Unique research opportunities
  3. Innovative teaching methods
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# SECOND LIFE AS A COMMUNICATIONS TOOL

Supported communication methods:

1. Text
2. Voice
3. Visual

In Second Life, all three may be used simultaneously in ways superior to modern videoconferencing and similar technologies.

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# SECOND LIFE AS A COMMUNICATIONS TOOL



Photo screencapped from Creative Commons video by Dean Jansen, <http://the-court-of-public-opinion.com>

# SECOND LIFE AS A RESEARCH TOOL

Current research uses:

1. Comparative – Virtual vs. Real World
  2. Simulation
  3. Behavioral and Social Interaction Studies
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# FIZZY IN SECOND LIFE

110 First year Property Law students

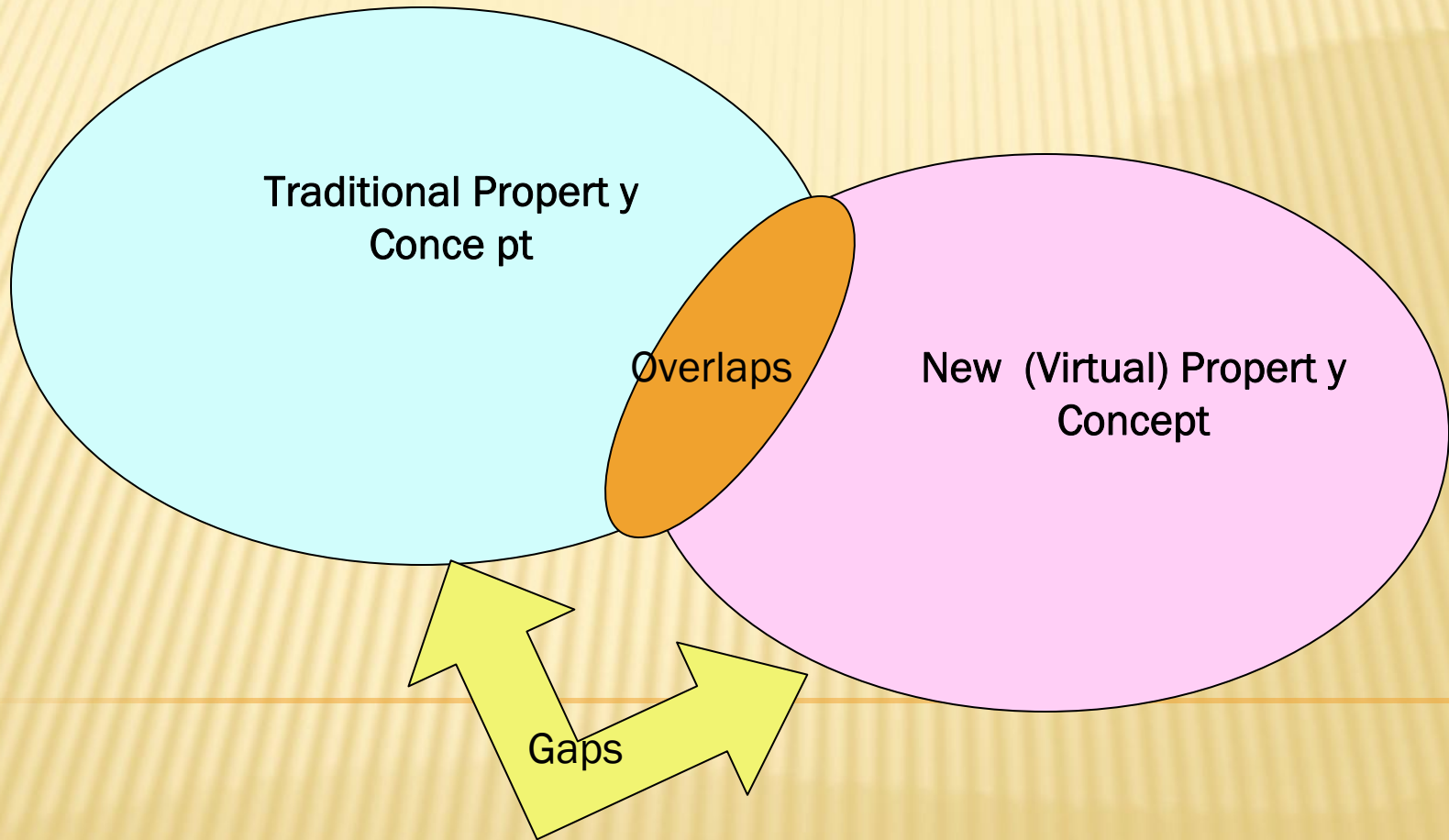
One avatar – Fizzy Soderberg

13 research topics

Ex.

- Gifts and Finders
- Adverse possession
- Eminent Domain and Regulatory Takings

# FIZZY IN SECOND LIFE



# SECOND LIFE AS A RESEARCH TOOL

Other research initiatives:

User Acceptance of Second Life

<http://www.fetscherin.com/UserAcceptanceVirtualWorlds.htm>

Teamwork Training Simulation

“ Teamwork Tester” available on Education Island

Bradley University: Field Research in Second Life

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# SECOND LIFE AS A RESEARCH TOOL

## Second Life's potential

### Pros:

- large and willing user base
- innovative methodologies

### Cons

- honesty and integrity of subjects
  - sustainability of Second Life model
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# SECOND LIFE AS A EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Innovative educators are leveraging the immersive and flexible Second Life environment to experiment with learning tools.

Distance Education

Language

Culture

Libraries

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# SECOND LIFE AS A EDUCATIONAL TOOL

## Distance Education

Harvard Law School – CyberOne: Law in the Court of Public Opinion

- use of emerging technologies to advance arguments
- extension course offered through Second Life

Ohio University

- fully constructed campus
  - student organizations
  - self-paced learning via “learning kiosks”
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# SECOND LIFE AS A EDUCATIONAL TOOL

## Language

Many language learning institutions are utilizing the immersive environment of Second Life to enhance the user's experience

- need-based language usage
  - instanced environments simulate ordering food from a restaurant, asking for directions, etc.
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# SECOND LIFE AS A EDUCATIONAL TOOL

## Culture

Designing environments portraying different countries, time periods, and seminal events

Ex.

- 18<sup>th</sup> Century Colonial Philadelphia by Drexel University
- Swedish Embassy
- Japanese Dojos



# SECOND LIFE AS A EDUCATIONAL TOOL

## Libraries

Libraries from around the world have a tremendous presence in Second Life.

Key uses:

1. recreate the library's structure for users to explore
  2. link to online resources
  3. hold events featuring speakers, exhibitors, etc
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# SECOND LIFE AS A EDUCATIONAL TOOL

## Libraries

### Alliance Library System

- introduction to Second Life in 200 6
- first island May 200 6
  - hosting public domain books, audio books, exhibits
  - Mystery Manor, spaceship hosting science fiction materials, government documents, humanities and social sciences
- partnership with over 4 0 other libraries = Info Island Archipelago
  - language groups
  - Imagination Island – myths, legends and fairy tales, including a full scale Secret Garden
  - Renaissance Island – Elizabethan era
  - HealthInfo Island – medical library, consumer health library

# BEYOND SECOND LIFE

Second Life presents a number of opportunities to the adventurous institution. However, there are a few issues which likely makes it unsustainable:

1. Scalability
2. Regulation
3. User Interest



# BEYOND SECOND LIFE

The Second Life model, however, is a significant step forward, technologically and socially. Many of the projects started in Second Life will find similar applicability in the future. A few lessons to take away:

1. Virtual worlds present unique opportunities for research and education
2. Users will seek out opportunities to collaborate and educate themselves
3. Virtual worlds are more than meets the eye – creative organizations can use them for communication, public distribution and networking

# RESOURCES

Getting Started in Second Life: Linden Lab's Official Resource for Educators in Second Life

<http://www.simteach.com/wiki>

Information for Non-Profit Organizations

<http://secondlifegrid.net/programs/education#SLwiki>

Alliance Library System

<http://www.infoisland.org>

New Media Consortium

<http://nmc.org>

Ongoing Research in Second Life

<http://secondliferesearch.blogspot.com>