

6TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE IN E-GUIDANCE: *WIDENING ACCESS TO LIFELONG GUIDANCE*

ABSTRACT

TITLE OF THE SPEECH

Widening Access with the Virtual World of Second Life.

CONTACT DETAILS OF THE AUTHOR(S)

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SHORT AUTHOR(S) PROFILE



Dave Taylor is Programme Lead for the Medical Media and Design Laboratory (MMDL) in the Department of Biosurgery and Surgical Technology at Imperial College London with a focus on virtual worlds for clinical education, public engagement, collaboration and service innovations. Dave is a founder of the SciLands, a Second Life continent for Science and Technology. In 2006 he led the UK National Physical Laboratory into Second Life. He spoke at the 2008 UK-OECD Workshop on Innovation and Policy for Virtual Worlds on STEM applications and engaging young people on science subjects inside virtual worlds. Dave has a BSc in Mathematics and an MSc in Experimental Psychology.[]

ABSTRACT

The virtual world of Second Life takes online communities to a new level. It combines the permanence and reach of the web, with a sense of place (through 3D landscapes, homes and workplaces such as hospitals) and co-presence (through the use of avatars). The author first explored the potential of Second Life in 2006 as a new means of knowledge transfer and collaboration and as an alternative to video and web conferencing.

Later that year he helped to create the SciLands, a specialised area of Second Life dedicated to science and technology where organisations have docked their islands together to create an interdisciplinary continent and communities. SciLands now consists of over 65 virtual islands and contains the well-regarded International Spaceflight Museum, Government Agencies such as the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), NASA, NOAA, the UK's Technology Strategy Board and the Department for Business, Universities and Skills as well as several US Universities and the UK's Imperial College London.

SciLands and Second Life in general provides a unique international, interdisciplinary and multi-level community for individuals to explore and to develop their own knowledge and collaborations.

Every day meetings on an enormous variety of topics are held and a single meeting is often attended by engineers, designers, researchers, educators, students, operational staff and by ordinary members of the public. In their avatar form

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they can interact and learn from one another without the social, organisational and age barriers that serve to separate their communities from one another in the real world.

Several organisations have recreated their work environments in the virtual world and hold meetings and education events there. For example, Imperial College London have built entire hospitals including operating theatres and wards for staff to train in the care of virtual patients. Nurses and Physicians can practice, train and be assessed in simulated clinical environments, where they are able to use all of their communication and cognitive skills to solve the problems they may face in the real world.



A Hospital Ward

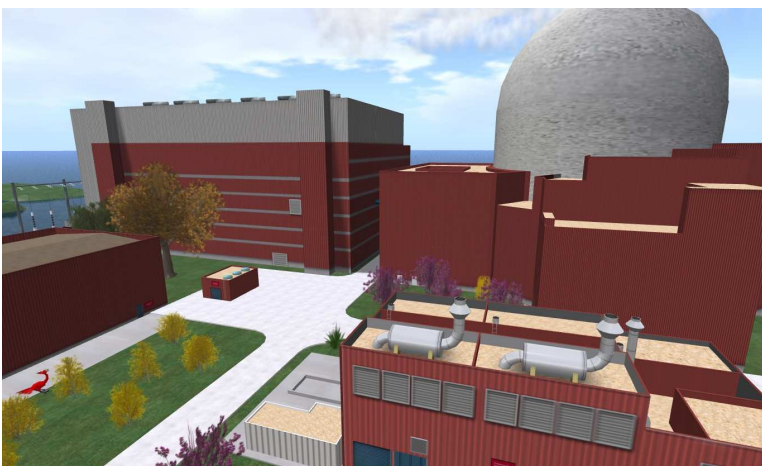


An Operating Theatre

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Field Trip to a Community Health Centre



A Nuclear Power Station

Findings from educational studies suggest that the virtual environment provides a compelling and robust environment for teaching interdisciplinary teams and for practicing and refining emergency preparedness plans.

The author argues that these simulated workplaces can be used at all stages of an individual's career. For example instead of workplace visits that are difficult and costly to arrange, the virtual workplace can be used to give young people access to an office environment or even to the most restricted areas of a hospital, a laboratory, to space facilities or to a chemical or nuclear power plant – and enables them to interact with real personnel in their work environment. Real world constraints such as health and safety regulations, travel time and cost, access for disabled visitors etc. can be circumvented and it is possible to teleport instantly from one International location to another – so many institutions could be visited on the same day. The International dimension and potential for reducing environmental impact of travel is enormous.

The author will give several examples, speaking from a hospital environment within Second Life, and will discuss the potential for widening lifetime access to careers guidance expertise. Advanced role play can be used to give individuals the experience of being in a new job role and to experience some of the issues that might arise in a typical project or workday. Other communities that can benefit include constrained communities such as people in detention facilities, people who are house-bound or disabled and those who are considering a work placement in another Country. The



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Education and Culture DG
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author will also explore the practical issues involved in the use of virtual worlds such as Second Life and show how they might be overcome in time by setting up a European Careers Guidance Centre to identify and signpost suitable existing facilities in Second Life, to encourage and train e-guidance professionals in their use, to create a learning community of practice and to provide them with the other resources they need to exploit this new medium.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFO

Projects: <http://medmedia.wordpress.com>

Blog: <http://www.nanodave.com>

Linkedin: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/nanodave>