Do I Need a SECOND Life?
The Opportunities and Challenges of Virtual Worlds
Poster session at the Educause Learning Initiative 2008 Annual Meeting

Presenter: Chris Clark <chris.clark@nd.edu> (574) 631-7434
Assistant Director, Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Notre Dame
353 DeBartolo Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556

At the University of Notre Dame in academic year 2007-2008, a faculty learning community is exploring virtual worlds. Online worlds like "Second Life" mimic features of the real world, and in them multiple people interact using characters called "avatars." Our group is exploring the potential of these environments to enhance teaching and learning; our main goals are to build demonstration projects and produce a white paper.

The demonstrations will be small "proof of concept" projects that are not intended for use in real courses. We're building them on Sophia, an island we purchased in Second Life, and the possible subject areas include foreign language, physics, peace building, psychology, theology, and business.

The white paper will examine the opportunities and challenges presented by virtual worlds. The faculty and support personnel in our group are using a wiki to collaborate on the first stages and, although we specifically work in Second Life, the paper will aim to consider the technology as a whole.

Virtual world technology is changing rapidly and right now it is probably not ready for widespread use in courses. We hope our projects and white paper will help educators over the next few years consider where places like Second Life fit most effectively in the ever-growing toolbox of educational strategies.

ELI session page – http://tinyurl.com/2aq9me

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