Please join the debate!

I have posted two new personal thoughts / opinion snippets at http://healthcybermap.org/sl.htm under 'Thoughts / opinion'. Please read them and **post your comments here**. (Read previous comments.)

April 2008:
Why 3D?
Web conferencing: 2D vs. 3D (or both), or 'Why conduct events and meetings in Second Life?'

Previous snippet–July 2007:
Comparing the 2D Web to 3D multi-user, immersive virtual worlds

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N.B. Non-gaming 3D worlds are not just SL (better drop the 'virtual' between '3D' and 'worlds', as Twinity has done)–the following videos are about **Sun's MPK20** platform (for the first three, right-click > Save Target As…):

Videos
MPK20 Demo

Quicktime, 4:58

Wonderland Phone

Quicktime, 2:16

Interview

MP4, 10:34

Tutorial

Streaming video

This entry was posted on Thursday, April 24th, 2008 at 11:02 pm and is filed under Health Education and Outreach, In-world Seminars, Opinions and Reflections, Second Life. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

11 Responses to "Please join the debate!"

1. *Invistek* Says:
   April 26th, 2008 at 1:44 pm

   I believe SL affords a glimpse into our online future, that of all the Internet. The technology is maturing fast, but the Lindens, IBM, the Open Source community, and other relevant parties still have much hard work to do to realize the full vision. This is very normal. The old web took more than a decade to develop, and it is just a matter of time before we use the new one.

2. *RayJones (Luddites (not) anonymous)* Says:
April 26th, 2008 at 5:01 pm

I am sure that I will get derided as luddite for these views by all you SL and web 2 enthusiast, but while I can see the utility of 3-D methods and avatars in some situations - eg role play in mutliprofessional setting of an operating theatre where different people are 'dressed up' as those occupations, and they take on those roles, I do not see the need for it if I want to have a simple synchronous or asynchronous chat. I think there is a tendency to think that ALL aspects of web 2.0 will be used ALL of the time by ALL of the people. Use of mobile phones shows that individual preference and culture will differentiate users and the UI they use. For example, work by Reid and Reid showed that mobile using adolescents tended to fall into the talkers and texters. Presumambly as more mobiles get video the population will differentiate even further - and we will need to tailor methods to those individual differences. I for sure will be one of those who remain either in 'flat web' or at least want to be in a non-anonymous world for most of my web activities. (If I want web-CBT for depression that's another matter…). For example, I have tried Second Life many times now and I find it tedious and irritating. WHy do I have to walk, fly or transport a stupid avatar just to find some information?. And as yet I ahve found nothing of interest in SL that is not available in flat web. Why are all the avatar's of busty women or handsome men and why are they all (apparently) young people? Why does everyone in SL (apparently) find everything funny (LOL)? Why do I need an avatar at all? And why would I want t talk to an anonymous avatar when the person behind the avatar probably bears no relation to the avatar? Why are we encouraging people to exist in this fantasy world? I suspect that SL is liked by those people who also like computer games. I have never liked nor played computer games - they seem a waste of time when I could be outside in the real world.
Moving everyone 'up' (or maybe better said 'onwards') to 3-D just increases the need for processing capability so making older machines obsolete quicker and helping to keep (and possibly increase) the digital divide. We should be putting more effort into making the web more available to more people by making computers cheaper and simpler. More effort should be put into helping those in the generation above me to get easy, cheap, and robust access to flat Internet. (Still only 20% of the over 65s have accessed the Internet in the UK (Gov Stats from NOS)).

(It is also interesting that an increasing minority of young people are now starting to 'reject' some aspects of the Internet and mobile culture altogether - not participating in messaging or constant mobile use and starting to do some old fashioned things like reading books and playing real football.)

- end of rant (:>)
best wishes Ray Jones (Professor of Health Informatics at University of Plymouth and colleague of Maged Kamel Boulos - such is the UK academic world that we can have diversity of views and still work together (:>)).

3. *Patricia F Anderson* Says:
   April 26th, 2008 at 6:57 pm

   MB asked me to think about this yesterday. I found my thoughts will not fit even into a single blog post! So, here is my first set of thoughts on this topic.

   http://mblog.lib.umich.edu/etechlib/archives/2008/04/metanomics_and.html

   What I hope to do next is talk more specifically about the engaging presentations and activities that keep me coming back for more.

4. *admin* Says:
   April 26th, 2008 at 7:00 pm

   When it comes to IM/chatting and many live, interactive **video** events / discussions (beyond typical 'webcasts'), this admin personally uses http://www.paltalk.com/ (free edition)
   This paper describes a very old version of Paltalk:
   http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16250823 — today's Paltalk is far more capable and superior, but still doesn't offer any application or desktop sharing. (With the free ManyCam http://www.manycam.com/demo/, you can easily switch between your webcam stream and showing your desktop, but this is not true application sharing, and the resolution is not usually very good, unless you select 'Partial Desktop' in ManyCam.)

5. *Centromimir.it » Blog Archive » A Debate at Sexual Health SIM in Second Life* Says:
   April 26th, 2008 at 9:16 pm

   [...] A Sexual Health SIM in Second Life® (University of Plymouth) [...]

6. *John Norris* Says:
   April 27th, 2008 at 12:01 am

   If I find myself having to walk to another page of information, I'm going back the web.

   However, if I need to share an experience with a geographically dispersed group of people, using a virtual world is one of the tools on the top of my list.

   If I am collaborating on a document, I would use groupware. If I need to talk to people, I'd probably use the phone. However, if I need to set a certain mood, encourage more intimacy, or work on a 3-dimensional project, I might just use a virtual world. A virtual world is a communications tool that includes visual, spatial, temporal, and auditory clues that are lacking in many other mediums.

I think we are exploring what is the appropriate use of virtual worlds. At the same time, we are still developing what virtual worlds are.

At this point, for some, it may be a good time to jump in early and learn. And just as it took time to figure out how to use a mouse, or what a double-click means, so too does one need to learn how to TP, fly, or stop dancing.

7. *admin* Says:
   April 27th, 2008 at 8:26 am

   When some are saying the 3D Web will be used by ALL people ALL of the time, they are saying so in the sense of better, seamless and value-added **integration** of the different modalities (flat and 3D), not in the sense of one modality replacing existing modalities. As you can see in the MPK20 videos, they didn't stop using presentation software like PowerPoint, but they expanded and enriched it by integrating it with the 3D online world in a very natural/usable way. Integration also makes users use a single 'hub' interface, which, if properly designed, can feel like a single rich application, and can perform ways better than using, switching between, and manually linking, multiple applications for multiple tasks. See also how office applications are today better integrated with the flat Web; many of us, for example, no longer use dedicated desktop e-mail clients (like the good old Eudora and Outlook) and prefer, even fully rely on, the flat Web AJAX interfaces to their mail servers.
   One cannot objectively judge the whole motion picture industry and technology by reporting on a few bad productions (or by the silent film era :)! Same for 3D online worlds.
   See also this admin's related comments at http://sl-sexualhealth.org.uk/?p=17 and at
   http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2007.00733.x

8. *Invistek* Says:
   April 27th, 2008 at 9:04 am

   "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home." — Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp. (DEC), maker of big business mainframe computers, arguing against the PC in 1977.

   "We will never make a 32 bit operating system." — Bill Gates

   "Television won't last. It's a flash in the pan." — Mary Somerville, pioneer of radio educational broadcasts, 1948.

   "There is practically no chance communications space satellites will be used to provide better telephone, telegraph, television, or radio service inside the United States." — T. Craven, FCC Commissioner, in 1961 (the first commercial communications satellite went into service in 1965). (Read more

failed predictions: http://listverse.com/history/top-30-failed-technology-predictions/)

1967 Future Prediction - PC
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpq5ZmANp0k

2008 Inside the house of the future
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7348940.stm

9. *admin* Says:
April 27th, 2008 at 10:55 am

Many thanks, Invistek! And from the same lovely site you shared with us I am quoting the following:

"The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys." — Sir William Preece, Chief Engineer, British Post Office, 1878.

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." — A memo at Western Union, 1878 (or 1876).

"The world potential market for copying machines is 5000 at most." — IBM, to the eventual founders of Xerox, saying the photocopier had no market large enough to justify production, 1959.

"X-rays will prove to be a hoax." — Lord Kelvin, President of the Royal Society, 1883.

"Fooling around with alternating current is just a waste of time. Nobody will use it, ever." — Thomas Edison, American inventor, 1889 (Edison often ridiculed the arguments of competitor George Westinghouse for AC power).

"[Television] won't be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night." — Darryl Zanuck, movie producer, 20th Century Fox, 1946.

"When the Paris Exhibition [of 1878] closes, electric light will close with it and no more will be heard of it." - Oxford professor Erasmus Wilson

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to no one in particular?" — Associates of David Sarnoff responding to the latter's call for investment in the radio in 1921.

"The cinema is little more than a fad. It's canned drama. What audiences really want to see is flesh and blood on the stage." -– Charlie Chaplin, actor, producer, director, and studio founder, 1916.

"The horse is here to stay but the automobile is only a novelty - a fad." — The president of the Michigan Savings Bank advising Henry Ford's lawyer, Horace Rackham, not to invest in the Ford Motor Co., 1903.

10. *[RayJones (Luddites (not) anonymous)](#)* Says:

1. 'Invistek' and Maged Boulos both cite some of the many technology forecasts that have been proved wrong. Using failed forecasts of the future to try to argue the benefits of any particular new technology, in my view, is not a good argument. There are lots of new technologies around at any time which may or may not become widespread. While it is fun to see how people did not think we would have telephones, or TVs or mobile phones, or whatever technology it does not follow that any one technology that we may propose at this time will come to fruition. (Perhaps for example, engineers from Betamax, Phillips CD-I, or those who said we would be flying around with rocket packs on our backs, tried the same approach to justify their inventions?)

2. Patricia Anderson described the benefits of working and meeting in Virtual Worlds as being able to work from home, to multitask, not having to travel etc. Clearly these are some of the benefits of the web - I work from home most of the time, I multitask, I avoid having to go to conferences by contacting people through email, by reading their materials on the web, by possibly chatting to them in a chat room or on the phone. I am trying to encourage similar reduction in travel and international collaboration in my University through the use of webinars. My argument is that I do not see the need to have an avatar and to walk around in a virtual world to be able to do that. I can do it in 'flat web'.

3. Has anyone yet done any comparative studies where ordinary web users (ie non enthusiasts) have been recruited and randomly allocated to a 3-D or 2-D environment to carry out their routine tasks?

4. Maged Boulos (admin) argues that the 3-D web is about integration. Of course I agree that the more different functionalities can be integrated so that we can seamlessly go from reading articles, to maybe chatting to the author, to conducting an online seminar with students etc etc. I just do not think I need to be in 3-D with buildings and scenery moving an avatar to do it.

5. I think John Norris has it right when he says "I think we are exploring what is the appropriate use of virtual worlds. At the same time, we are still developing what virtual worlds are." I agree that virtual worlds will offer some useful things, for example, as I had said role playing to learn about particular group situations. But most of what seems to go on in Second Life at the moment (dancing? adults dressing and re-dressing their animated dolls? why?!!) is something which I hope that I never have to do! Individual preferences are likely to lead to an increasing variety of interfaces and ways of doing things. While I am sure that 3-D worlds will be one of those ways I do not want to bother learning a new interface to carry out tasks I can do with the current one. Second Life has something of the Emperor's new clothes about it.

5. There is obviously scope for R&D along a broad front. However, I think that more priority should be given to trying to making technology easier to use for ALL. There are many people (particularly older people) who struggle with

the existing technologies and others who can not afford them. The gap between those racing off into virtual worlds while many can not even find out basic information from the web is growing and we should give greater priority to reduce that inequity. 'Invistek' gave a link to a typical BBC programme on 'house of the future'. Here is a link to 'house of the present' http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb/Campaigns/WinterDeaths/WhatWeWant/default.htm

best wishes
Ray Jones

11. *admin* Says:
April 27th, 2008 at 1:09 pm

Again, I invite everyone to carefully watch the MPK20 videos (find links above in main article). Knoh Oh (John Norris) and I agree on the following (quoting my earlier reflection at http://sl-sexualhealth.org.uk/?p=17):

> "We need to especially identify and focus/capitalise on what 3D online worlds are best at–those (useful) things/scenarios that can only be effectively carried out in virtual worlds and not via any other 'e' medium (as effectively), and also determine the optimal formulae for blended approaches that combine 2D and 3D media."

Based on the above, I find it useless to compare the flat Web to 3D online worlds; it is like comparing the eye with the ear (*cf.* I Corinthians 12:21). I wrote and published a lot about this issue — see, for example, our forthcoming paper: Huang S, Kamel Boulos MN, Dellavalle R. **Scientific Discourse 2.0: Will Your Next Poster Session Be in Second Life?** *EMBO Reports*. 2008; in press, and other pointers at http://healthcybermap.org/sl.htm

Integration is not about redoing or simply adding things together, but is about 'added value' and additional gains; not the mere sum of two or more things combined together.

Those who opposed the telephone or TV, opposed a modality; not the same as those who lobbied with or against a format for a given modality like Betamax or HD DVD vs. Blu Ray. Some may say MPK20 is better than Second Life; this is not an argument about the 3D online worlds modality, but about specific implementations/formats within it. The (flat) World Wide Web, created in 1989, faced similar fierce scepticism in its early days, hence the use of the above arguments (by Invistek and admin).

Perplexity Peccable (Patricia) and Knoh Oh, both emphasise the social, mood, intimacy and other humane dimensions not found in conventional Webinars. (These qualities are also among the main reasons many older people and people with various serious disabilities find 3D online worlds very helpful; see for example, http://virtualability.org/.) For more on this, please see our reflection at http://healthcybermap.org/Boulos_Live_meetings_in_3D.pdf

(Live meetings in 3-D virtual worlds vs. conventional interactive webcasting / Web videoconferencing). Perhaps this is the one aspect where one can conduct a study to compare WebEx-style Webinars (with cutting-edge application sharing, e.g., to teach a practical ArcGIS lesson) to those run in more social/sociable media (like Sun MPK20, which also allows application sharing), but the very fast advances/changes in the technology powering the latter might make such a study rapidly obsolete or deficient (also see Kaplan (2001) about the limitations of RCTs in the evaluation of informatics application).

And again, let's not judge the whole motion picture industry and technology (or 3D online worlds in our case) by reporting on a few bad productions (or by the silent film era :)! The 'youth culture' you have seen in Second Life is part of today's society. Whether we like it or not/feel at home with it or not is another story, but Second Life is not limited to, or all about, this culture. (For a fresh change, please visit http://slurl.com/secondlife/Odessa%20Captivating/74/163/22.)

As for the link to the story about the poor old people, that's sadly true, but these people won't benefit from the flat Web either (in solving their poverty– at least directly). *We will always have the poor among us* (John 12:8); this shouldn't prevent or stop innovation and research from taking their course. We should always do both: conduct research to improve the human condition and quality of life on the long term, and help the poor among us (equitable society). *We should practice the latter without leaving the former undone* (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42).
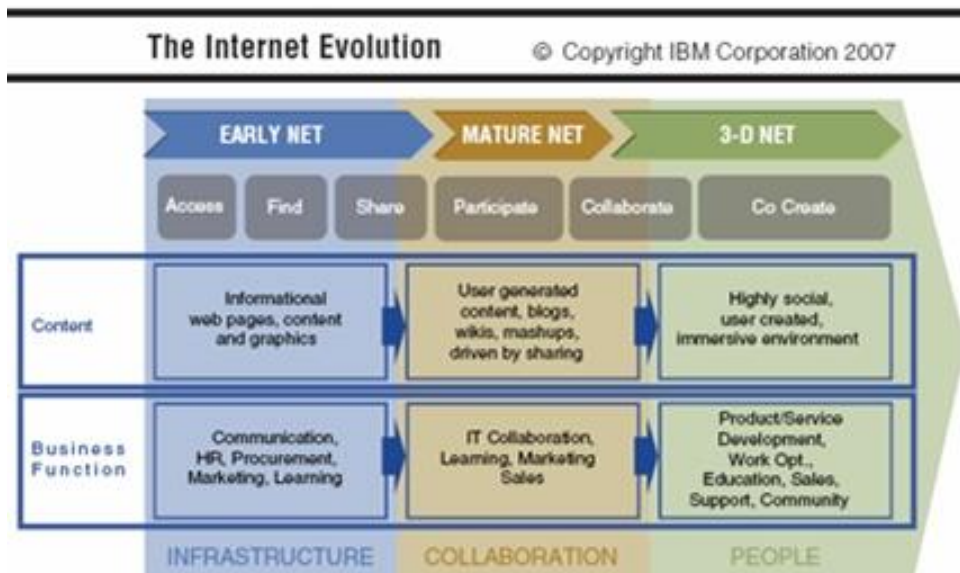
IBM's vision – click diagram to read.

Inside A Virtual World: A Look At "Second Life" (25 April 2008) - http://www.wcpo.com/news/local/story.aspx?content_id=e83cde7b-5a78-4614-85e3-36107cd05943

12. *admin* Says:

The 20% statistic in post #2 above is not at all bad. While overall Internet penetration in the UK was 60% (of the total population) in 2006, Greece, another EU country, only had a 33.5% penetration figure for the same year, according to one source (links given below).

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http://internetworldstats.com/eu/gr.htm
http://internetworldstats.com/eu/uk.htm