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### Exploring virtual librarianship: Second Life library 2.0

Hedreen, Rebecca C; Johnson, Jennifer L; Lundy, Mack A; Burnette, Peg; Perryman, Carol; Van Den Brekel, Guus; Jacobson, JJ; Gullett, Matt; Czarnecki, Kelly

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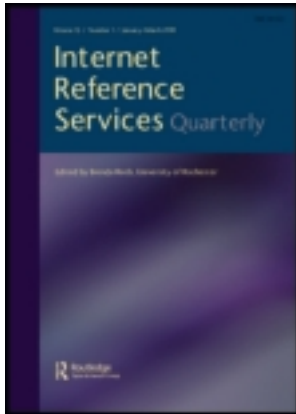
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### Exploring Virtual Librarianship: Second Life Library 2.0

Rebecca C. Hedreen<sup>a</sup>, Jennifer L. Johnson<sup>b</sup>, Mack A. Lundy<sup>c</sup>, Peg Burnette<sup>d</sup>, Carol Perryman<sup>e</sup>, Guus Van Den Brekel<sup>f</sup>, J. J. Jacobson<sup>g</sup>, Matt Gullett<sup>h</sup> & Kelly Czarnecki<sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Buley Library, Southern Connecticut State University, 501 Crescent Street, New Haven, CT, 06515

<sup>b</sup> Dallas, TX

<sup>c</sup> College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

<sup>d</sup> University of Illinois College of Medicine, Peoria, IL

<sup>e</sup> School of Library and Information Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC

<sup>f</sup> University Medical Center of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

<sup>g</sup> Price Gilbert Library and Information Center, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA

<sup>h</sup> ImaginOn, Charlotte, NC

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# Exploring Virtual Librarianship: Second Life Library 2.0

Rebecca C. Hedreen  
Jennifer L. Johnson  
Mack A. Lundy  
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Kelly Czarnecki

**ABSTRACT.** In April 2006, Alliance Library System and Online Programming for All Libraries partnered to start the Second Life Library 2.0 in the online world Second Life and in August 2006 purchased an island on the Teen grid of Teen Second Life. Second Life is a virtual world, a descendant of multiplayer online games. Educational institutions

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Rebecca C. Hedreen is Coordinator for Distance Education, Buley Library, Southern Connecticut State University, 501 Crescent Street, New Haven, CT 06515 (E-mail: [delibrarian@gmail.com](mailto:delibrarian@gmail.com)). Jennifer L. Johnson is Private School Librarian in Dallas, TX. Mack A. Lundy is Systems Librarian, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA. Peg Burnette is Systems and Reference Librarian, University of Illinois College of Medicine, Peoria, IL. Carol Perryman is a Doctoral Fellow, School of Library and Information Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC. Guus Van Den Brekel is Coordinator for Electronic Services, University Medical Center of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands. J. J. Jacobson is Catalog and Metadata Librarian, Price Gilbert Library and Information Center, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA. Matt Gullett is Educational Technology Librarian, ImaginOn, Charlotte, NC. Kelly Czarnecki is Teen Librarian, ImaginOn, Charlotte, NC.

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have recently been drawn into Second Life's robust economy and vibrant cultural life. The Second Life Library 2.0 works with librarians from around the world and with other educational partners such as TechSoup, WorldBridges, and the New Media Consortium. Second Life Library 2.0 provides "traditional" library services such as ready reference, book discussions, and search assistance, but, at heart, it explores what it means to be a virtual library in a virtual world.

**KEYWORDS.** Second Life, Virtual Worlds, Virtual Libraries, Virtual Librarians, Library 2.0, Online Education, Online Collaboration

## INTRODUCTION

Like libraries, virtual worlds are beginning to be spoken of as "third places" (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006). Third places are those places outside home and work/school where we socialize, communicate, network, and learn (Oldenburg 1989). So what do we get when we combine these two third spaces? Second Life Library 2.0 (SLL2).

Second Life is a virtual world, a non-game version of massive multiplayer online games (MMPORGs) such as World of Warcraft and EverQuest. Unlike the games, there is no "point" to Second Life, no prize to win or quest to complete. Within the world you can do whatever you want—explore, build, socialize, shop (Second Life has a booming economy, see Reuters 2006), and learn. Learning opportunities range from a "schizophrenia lab" in which you can experience a schizophrenic episode (University of California–Davis 2006), to historical recreation, to fashion and architecture design studios for college classes (for a review of educational opportunities in Second Life see Conklin 2005). Second Life draws from a worldwide population, so collaboration is limited only by time zones and computer power, not by time and money for travel.

The concept of a library in such a world is both intriguing and controversial. Which library services translate to a completely online world? What information needs do Second Life "residents" have? Given that extensive reading online is not comfortable for most people, why would people want a library in an online world? That is part of what the SLL2 is exploring: What is a library without books? (And, actually, we do have books.)

This article is an exploration of that concept, from the perspective of just a few of the people working in SLL2. There are probably as many reasons

for joining SLL2 as there are people involved, so this article cannot give a complete overview of the project, the plans, or the people. Specific sections are credited to the “avatars” or online personas of those involved. General sections are mostly the work of Spiral Mandelbrot, with input from all the avatars involved. The identities are listed at the end of the article. Note: Second Life is constantly expanding, as is SLL2.0. While all the buildings and services described in this article still exist and are likely to continue to exist, they may not be in the same place or look the same as described here. Tours are regularly given on Info Island and are highly recommended for newcomers. Old hands take them, too, to catch up on changes and new developments.

### ***HISTORY OF SECOND LIFE LIBRARY 2.0***

Second Life Library 2.0 was started by the Alliance Library System (<http://www.alliancelibrarysystem.com/>) and Online Programming for All Libraries (OPAL; <http://www.opal-online.org/>) in April 2006, with the idea of taking libraries and librarians to the users of this new and interesting online space. Lori Bell (Lorelei Junot in Second Life) from Alliance took the lead in organizing and managing the new library. Tom Peters (Maxito Ricardo) from OPAL has also been heavily involved from the beginning.

A Google Group was set up for online discussions and presently has almost 500 members from around the world. In Second Life, groups for both librarians and library friends have been set up. Librarians work mostly on public services, such as ready reference, and collections, including “books” that link to Web resources, text-based “note card” books that can be viewed in Second Life, audio books, and more. Nearly 500 Second Life librarians have registered with the group, including public librarians, academic librarians, special librarians, and library and information science students. The Library Friends group provides an easy way to find events and keep up with the news, but the group also does some of the long-term planning, such as the vision and mission statements, established by the Citizens Advisory committee. There are over 1,000 members of the Library Friends group.

The mission of SLL2, as formalized by a business committee that met in Second Life, is as follows.

The mission of the Second Life Library is to:

- Explore the issues of providing library services in a virtual world

- Evaluate services currently offered by real-world libraries in the light of features offered in virtual reality environments and the information needs of VR residents.
- Examine how libraries will remain relevant when more business and education activities take place virtually
- Promote the real library and online library services to residents of Second Life
- Learn what types of library services are desired in virtual space

SLL2.0 also has a blog and website, at <http://www.infoisland.org/> (Figure 1).

In May 2006, an anonymous donor gave SLL2 a private island, which was soon christened Info Island. An amazing pentagon-shaped building opened in June 2006 and houses the Main Library, with rotating exhibits, meeting rooms, computer labs, audio books, search facilities, and, of course, a reference desk. A second building, Parvenu Towers, opened in July 2006 and houses some subject-oriented collections and a theater (Figure 2).

FIGURE 1. The Main Library.





FIGURE 2. Parvenu Towers



## *SERVICES*

### *Reference*

A team of SLL2 librarians provides organized (or at least, semi-organized) reference services at the Library (Figure 3). There are several Reference Desks in the buildings and in the main Landing on Info Island. Luckily, Second Life technology allows librarians to use instant messaging

FIGURE 3. One of the Benefits of a Virtual World is the Ability to Have an Outdoor Reference Desk.



“buzzers,” which are objects that can sit on a desk and send a message when someone clicks on them. The librarian can then answer questions from anywhere in Second Life. Avatars also walk around with labels stating the avatar name and titles from groups. Many SLL2 librarian avatars walk around with “Librarian” displayed prominently and proudly. Conversations and reference interactions start up wherever librarians go.

OCLC gave SLL2 a trial of their QuestionPoint virtual reference service (<http://www.questionpoint.org/>). Kiosks were set up all over Info Island and on the land of partner institutions that linked to the QuestionPoint Web form. Very little use of the chat service was recorded, but some people did use the e-mail service. The SLL2 Reference Group will be analyzing the trial and deciding if an e-mail service or Web chat program might be a suitable substitute. OCLC and EBSCO also provided trials of databases.

### ***Instruction***

Many SLL2 librarians are actively involved in teaching in Second Life. Much of the teaching involved in Second Life is dedicated to the skills

needed to function in Second Life, such as navigation, movement, object creation, and manipulation. But one of the first programs in SLL2 was an information literacy session taught by a real-life college librarian (Mortal 2006).

### *Collections*

SLL2 follows the grand library tradition of selecting materials and providing access. Most of those materials are on the Web, such as the electronic ready-reference materials linked to the “books” pictured in Figure 4. Each book, when clicked, opens up a Web browser window to materials such as online dictionaries, encyclopedias, and almanacs.

Like many libraries, SLL2 has a government documents center. The center has “computers” that link to government websites, “books” that link to electronic versions of reference standards like the Statistical Abstract of the United States (<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>), and “newspapers” that link to government news sites. So far, the government documents are mostly from the United States, but given the international character of the Library and of Second Life, multinational collections are growing swiftly (Figure 5).

Despite the problems of reading long texts online, Second Life librarians could not resist putting a few books on the shelves. Public domain materials, such as Shakespeare’s plays, have been converted to a text format that is viewable in Second Life. Creating books involves creating an object,

FIGURE 4. Linking to Electronic Reference Sources.



FIGURE 5. Electronic U.S. Government Information.



appropriately sized, with the cover, spine, and page edges simulated by graphics files uploaded into the Second Life server. The book can then be linked to a text file (a “note card”) or to a webpage. Note cards can be any length but can also link to other note cards so it is possible to create a Table of Contents that links to individual chapters. Any object in Second Life can have a note card or weblink connected to it, so the Library is not limited to book-like objects. Librarians can create, for example, posters that link to bibliographies, portraits that link to lists of works or biographies, or models that link to educational resources (Figure 6).

Every librarian has a specialty or a personal favorite topic. SLL2 provides the opportunity to display subject resources in a graphical, compelling style. Robin Chamberlain (real-life Robin Brenner of <http://www.noflyingnotights.com/>) has designed a Japanese-themed area devoted to anime and manga within the Main Library. Cover images adorn the walls and shelves, computer terminals link to anime and manga news and blog sites, and life-size models of characters utter stock phrases when clicked (Figure 7). Other specialty areas in the Main Library are smaller but include a genealogy search terminal and Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender resources.

One of the biggest promises for education in Second Life is the ability to produce 3-dimensional models for viewing and manipulation. The Science area in Parvenu Towers has an example, a model Euglena, complete with

FIGURE 6. Public Domain Materials.



a long, whip-like tail. The parts of the model (nucleus, etc.) are labeled, and the model itself rotates so that the viewer can see the entire model easily. The “i” icon near the tail in Figure 8 is linked to a note card identifying the model and the creator (Pathfinder Linden, one of the creators of Second Life). This note card could easily give more information about the species, instructions for an assignment, or links to informational or course websites. Other educational efforts in Second Life have involved students creating models themselves. University of Texas at Austin and University of California at Berkeley have both used Second Life for architecture classes, requiring students to create buildings and then report on the experience of “living” in the buildings they create (Foster 2006). One of the future plans discussed at SLL2 has been becoming an archive for such projects.

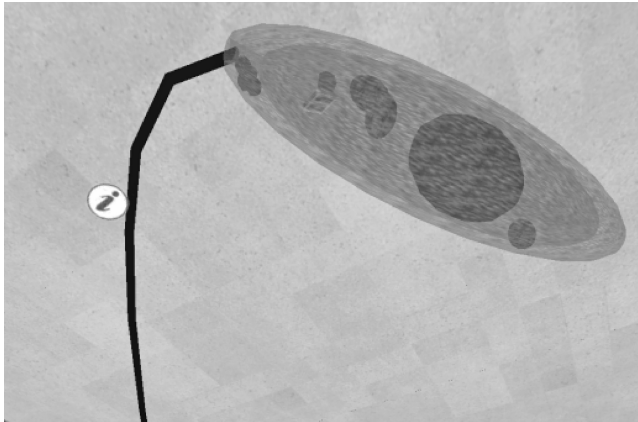
### ***Selected Divisions***

Info Island has over 15 “islands” attached to it, including areas devoted to colleges and universities, health information, Renaissance history, children’s literature, and library vendors. Here are just a few of the “branches” on the archipelago.

FIGURE 7. Specialty Collections: Anime and Manga.



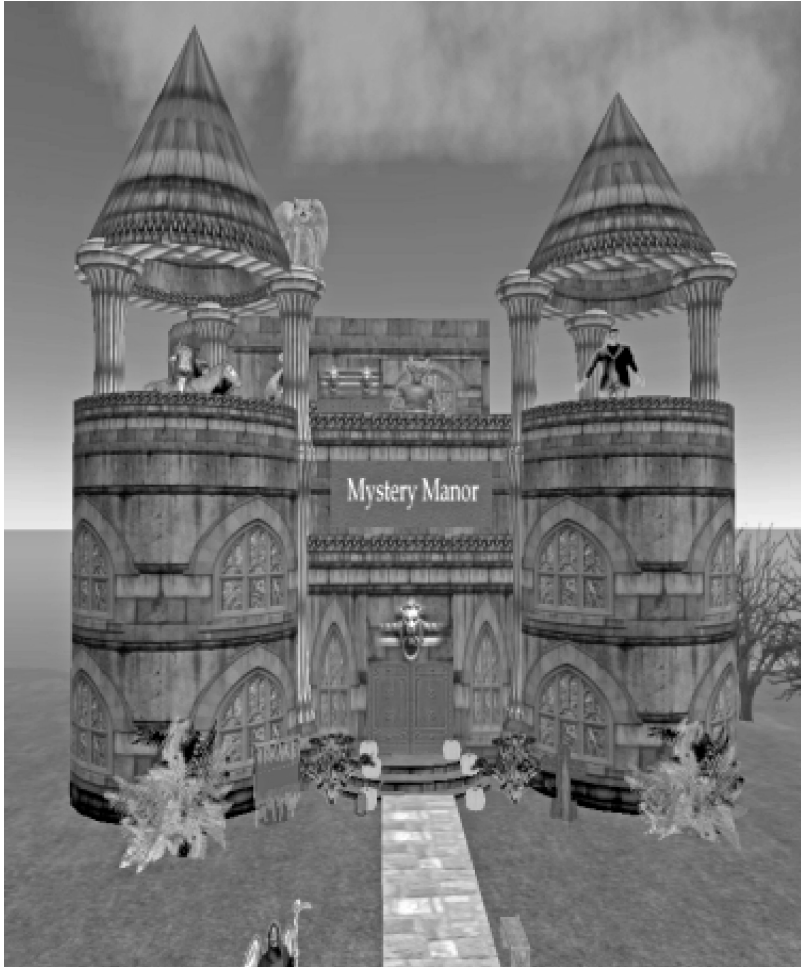
FIGURE 8. Models and Artifacts: Euglena Module by Pathfinder Linden.



*Mystery Manor* —Jenna Darrow, Max Batra

Jenna Darrow and Max Batra are co-partners in the creation of *Mystery Manor*, as a tribute to mystery and horror genres and as a complement to the research and reference activities taking place on the library islands (Figure 9). The three-story Gothic castle houses an eclectic mixture of

FIGURE 9. Mystery Manor.



objects and sounds chosen to create an environment that takes you into the darker corners of the imagination. An avatar may drink a cup of bubbling witches brew while reading about Elizabeth Bathory, the Blood Countess, whose portrait hangs above the front door. It is also within the realm of possibilities to see a head rolling from the guillotine or to rest-in-peace inside the third-floor coffin. Most of the objects within the castle will be

linked to either a note card describing the item or a URL pointing to a specific recommended work of fiction.

Several tools exist to deliver original content in Second Life. An interesting opportunity for reader's advisory opened up when the company Jnana announced an adaptation of their software that can be used within Second Life. This software allows non-programmers to develop customized advice and guidance systems. While mainly used in the medical and legal fields, Jenna and Max plan to use Jnana to develop interactive guides to the horror and mystery genres. Another tool called a THiNC Press allows images and text to be combined into a virtual book. Current THiNC Press works in progress include vampire fiction and hardboiled detective fiction. Other collection plans involve a del.icio.us account and tagging to link to online resources. For resources within Second Life, Jenna and Max plan to create a directory of other spooky Second Life locales and literature-based sims.

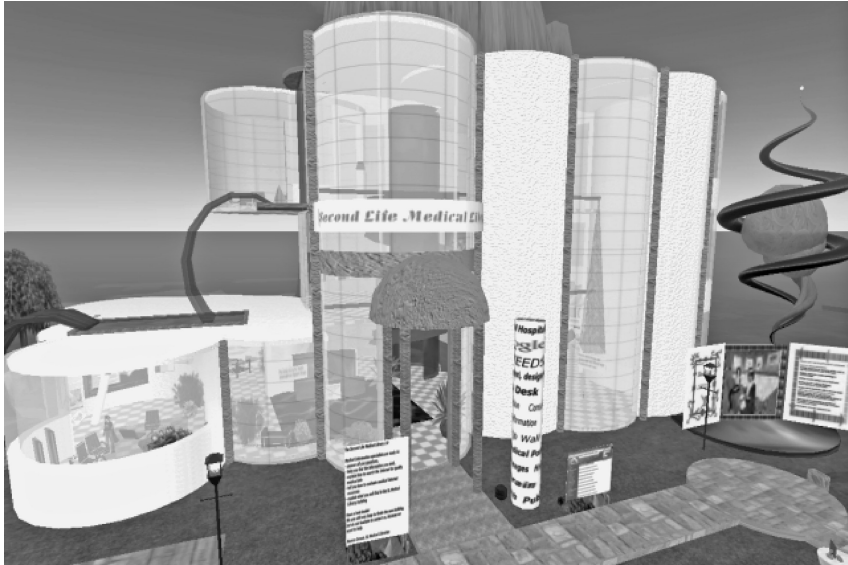
Mystery Manor programs will include book discussions, readings by Second Life authors, and crossover events with other SSL2 groups such as the Talis SciFi & Fantasy Portal. Second Life residents who role-play or otherwise portray characters from one of the Mystery Manor genres will be invited to discuss their Second Life lifestyles. The importance of story in a variety of formats will continue as library collections and services evolve. Stories engage the imagination of the reader and provide the opportunity to experience and "try out" other lives. Second Life is the perfect environment in which to explore the genre literature and can be used as a springboard for reader discovery as well as an instigator in discussions of ethics, morality, and society. A virtual space dedicated to the appreciation and enjoyment of specific types of literature is an exciting vehicle for promoting recreational reading, literacy, and creative writing.

*The Second Life Medical Library—Librabelle Pyle, Carolina Keats, Namro Orman*

In April 2006, when Guus Van Den Brekel first read about the Second Life Library in Jenny Levine's Shifted Librarian blog he was skeptical and curious about why librarians would think users might come to a virtual library when they don't visit the library in the real world. Still, he was willing to consider the possibilities. It didn't take long for Namro Orman, Guus's Second Life avatar to become acclimated to life as a Second Life resident mover and shaker. Namro soon met librarians Eiseldora and Rain, who offered him a floor of the Second Life Library for medical and health information, and the Medical Library was conceived (Figure 10).



FIGURE 10. The Medical Library.



The mission of the Medical Library mirrors that of the Second Life Library. The potential of the medical library to provide instruction, reference, and outreach services is limited only by the imaginations and energies of the librarians involved. Innovation and creativity are the driving forces behind the medical library, where patrons are encouraged to listen to music, watch TV, use cell phones, eat, drink, and dance. Content will extend beyond text to mostly visual and audio formats. Second Life medical librarians are eager to explore innovative new ways of interacting with users and other libraries within virtual worlds. Second Life technology offers totally new avenues for disseminating information.

From its beginnings as a floor of the Second Life Library, the Medical Library is now housed in a beautiful new space designed by Logann Lombardi. The new medical library has a decidedly non-traditional look that features transparent, multiple layers that are flexible, open and light. In the future there will be special topic areas such as Diseases, Drugs, and Clinical Trials. One of the goals of the Medical Library is to inventory medical and allied health education and research within Second Life and other virtual communities. Second Life medical librarians hope to collaborate with these and other groups as the opportunity arises. Already, a group of physicians are developing continuing medical education programs for physicians in

Second Life. Play2Train (<http://irhbt.typepad.com/play2train>), the Idaho bioterrorism Awareness and Preparedness Program's virtual training space in Second Life, offers another avenue for collaboration. This virtual environment includes a town and a hospital for interactive role-playing that will serve as the foundation for their emergency preparedness education program.

In the medical library visitors will find a do-it-yourself ready-reference room, a large workshop/demonstration space, recreational areas, and ongoing exhibitions of historical medical images. Visitors who want to tour the library on their own can take advantage of a Heads-Up Display (HUD) unit that provides a self-guided tour. Visitors can retrieve a copy of this tour guide tool from their inventory and select WEAR to get things started. During their walk through the library, the HUD provides introductory information at a pace selected by the visitor. Individual sessions, including reference transactions, can be requested via instant messaging. New tools for communication and information access are being tried daily. The newest is a platform scripted by Jnana, offering free use of its software by Student Life educators, that enables interactive drill-down through a decision tree structure with results that can include videos, Flash tutorials, Web links, "note cards" (brief texts), and other options.

### *The Consumer Health Information Library*

The Consumer Health Information Library sharing Health Info Island is far more about function than place, although the visual representation of warmth and comfort is an important cue in establishing a welcoming and nonjudgmental environment for consumer queries. The primary goal of this library will be to explore the provision of information to support groups at Second Life. An outreach grant from the Greater Midwest Region of the National Library Association has been instrumental in furthering the development of consumer health information outreach. Project coordinator Caroline Keats (in reality, an experienced medical and consumer health librarian currently working toward a doctorate in Library Science at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill) is leading efforts to provide information to support groups that already have an established presence in Second Life.

Second Life residents are already taking advantage of reference services offered at the new library. Recently, Carolina had a query from Spain for information on new, experimental therapies for migraines. Although the individual spoke English, it was a challenge to understand the specific

information need and to assess the patron's health literacy level. In this instance, the individual had conducted PubMed searches at a basic level, but admitted that the literature was difficult to understand. Still, this person wanted to be able to track new developments and to share newly found information with the healthcare provider. Carolina provided an initial set of citations via e-mail and set up a current awareness search. The patron intends to return for some additional PubMed instruction as well.

Because Second Life hosts residents from all over the world, language can be an issue. Reference librarians must also deal with multiple learning curves such as language, information literacy, and even basic competence in and about Second Life. Librarians cannot sit face-to-face in front of a computer to walk patrons through a PubMed search, so creativity and innovation are a must. Additionally, a Second Life consumer health librarian is limited to resources that are freely available. Alternatively, he or she can provide guidance such as subject heading suggestions and tips that the patrons can use in their own local libraries. While Second Life residents are more than willing to suspend disbelief for many aspects of this role-playing world, health is not one of those aspects: trust and confidentiality are key. To this end, Carolina often provides her real name and e-mail address to patrons during the course of reference transactions.

Approximately 20 support groups have been identified so far as part of a process that will generate a directory available to all Second Life residents, and also provides a starting point for outreach efforts. Groups such as the Second Life Medical Association, the Sugar Medical Clinic, Positive Mental Health, Dream Travelers (a group of stroke survivors), Diabetics, the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Group can benefit from the expertise of medical librarians in locating quality health information resources. The medical and consumer health libraries will help to publicize activities such as support group meetings and educational, clinical, and research activities that relate to medicine and health care. RSS feeds are available through Google Health News Consumer Health, Reuters Health News, and as predefined PubMed searches on consumer health and breast cancer. Because of the technological flexibility available "in world," RSS feeds and resource packets can be created as introductory packets for SL support communities as a way to generate discussions about services.

*Future Plans..* Health Info Island will have spaces for small and large gatherings so that the consumer health library, the medical library, and the health and wellness center, which will share the island, can participate in events and offer spaces that can be used by support groups we intend to serve. The vision of services will be informed by the needs of users.

Health and allied health professionals express a keen interest in helping to demystify medical institutions and procedures.

However, the island is more than an ongoing health fair: the most striking feature will be the large gardens, which will include a medicinal herb garden whose plants are themselves information objects that will link to quality information (Figure 11). We see a space for peer-to-peer support in a beautiful and peaceful environment with information and education available when it is needed, where people are. As more residents create a presence in Second Life, business and education will also continue to grow.

The Second Life Medical Library will grow as well, continuing to support medical education, research, and medical information literacy and to provide quality consumer health information and support to all Second Life residents. The Second Life Library offers librarians an opportunity to examine existing practices while exploring potential new paradigms beyond the restrictions and limitations that inform libraries in the real world.

FIGURE 11. The Herb Garden at the Medical Library.



### *The Caledon Branch Library—JJ Drinkwater*

SLL2's first branch library is located in a growing region/micro-nation called Caledon (Figure 12). Caledon is one of many "themed" places in Second Life. It was developed by its builder to have a 19th century look and feel, but is far more than simply another aesthetically harmonious, planned community. Caledon's theme includes a "back-story." When you visit Caledon you are, by consensus, in "a small, aristocratic, very independent 19th century Nation State with the bulk of political power in the hands of a chiefly aristocratic landed gentry." (Mingling this back-story with the business of running a cohesive social [area] in Second Life, a group of residents known as the Commonwealth of Caledon serve as Stewards and attend to the technological and social business of the region, such a restarting Caledon's constituent "sims" and ejecting troublemakers.) In this character, Caledon prides itself on being the most civil of civil societies, home to all of what the 18th and 19th centuries knew as the "polite accomplishments," as well as a lively interest in the arts and sciences.

FIGURE 12. The Caledon Library.



Caledon is very much a “third place” for its residents as well as a place that mingles work and play. Residents adopt their roles with varying degrees of seriousness, but there are numerous shared interests among Caledonians that dovetail with these characters—the people they choose to be in this “third place.” These interests include 19th century life and culture (especially fashion and the decorative arts, as is typical of much social and recreational life in *Second Life*). They also include the history of technology, with a particular focus on the development of machine power; there are numerous locations and institutions in Caledon dedicated to the various ramifications of the pre-industrial and industrial revolutions (Caledon has its own Tesla Society, for example, to which the library has made resources available for publishing). A related and very important influence on the zeitgeist of Caledon is a sub-sub genre of Science Fiction called Steampunk. Steampunk involves an alternate history of technology in which steam-era technology embraces accomplishments of the modern era, such as computing and powered flight.

In library terms, the Caledon Branch is an exercise in Special Collections. What is meant by this is not rare or exceptionally valuable materials but rather “groups of library materials that are shelved apart from the general collection because of specialized subject matter.” There’s nothing out of the ordinary about the idea of Special Collections, libraries have a long history of assembling collections of resources with a specific focus. However, there seem to be certain types of topic or subject or “aboutness” that are customary for Special Collections work.

A special collection is often about a person or entity or a locale. If it is not, it is typically defined around some culturally vetted or traditionally accepted academic discipline or area of study. That is to say, the intellectual profile of the collection—the rationale for its existence—is often defined (directly or indirectly) by an institutionalized conception of disciplines and areas of study; the focus is apt to be dictated by a fairly traditional intellectual agenda. Caledon, however, like many other initiatives in *Second Life*, is no respecter of traditional intellectual agendas.

One of the most interesting things that is happening right now in academe, and in intellectual life generally, is that the traditional system of disciplines is being found inadequate, and more and more interest is being focused on interdisciplinary studies—studies that draw on assorted established disciplines and are focused around a particular topic. Gender Studies is a good example of this, or Food Studies. Both draw on numerous

disciplines and address their subjects via history, cultural geography, literary criticism, etc.

*Caledon as a "Carnival of the Humanities."* It is useful to think about the Caledon branch library as analogous to a collection for one of these interdisciplines: if there were such a thing as Caledon Studies, what disciplines would it draw on? It would have to include history: history of empire and society, history of everyday life both public and private, and certainly history of technology and its impact on social structures. But it also would have to include all the things that fill out social structures: manners, ideas, patterns of consumption, and so on. These are the subjects in which history shades over into other areas of the social sciences, such as cultural anthropology and sociology. And, because Caledon is also partly defined by a literary genre (Steampunk is crucial to Caledon and so are its parent genres, CyberPunk, and Alternate History), Caledon Studies would also have to draw largely on literature.

The collecting policies of the Caledon Library have two main foci: the 19th century and Caledon's defining literary genres. Within these areas, they collect, first of all, primary source material: 19th century novels, periodicals, etc., and materials from earlier ages considered important in the 19th century as well as defining works in Steampunk and its parent genres. Research materials are also collected concerning the world of the 19th century and its imagination and secondary materials useful for studying Caledon's important genres. A special project will be a "Local Authors" collection for books, stories, and miscellaneous writings by residents of Caledon. In a related effort, they hope to become the home of the Caledon Archives. This is a slightly unusual mix. It is common enough for the study of an era to include its literature, and works of historical speculation but not the literature of historical speculation!

This is a kind of scholarship, and such a collection serves a kind of scholar (whether recreational or professional) whose interests may not be as well served by traditional librarianship as either the librarian or the patron would like. So one thing the Caledon Branch is doing is experimenting with serving this kind of mixture of interests. Such a mixture may merely reflect an eclecticism of interests on the part of a patron population or it may be more unified; in either case it is worth serving. For a special collection, however, it may be more: it may be a chance to support a very exciting kind of groundbreaking, path-forging, richly syncretic scholarship.

The Caledon Branch is also experimenting with serving a virtual community, a community that came together in and is iteratively defining

itself by means of a virtual world. Communities of interest are certainly not new, but because this community is creating itself by means of a virtual world in which such things are uniquely possible, it is possible to think that some new and different thing is going on.

The impact of this has been greater than anticipated—it has been a great surprise to see the way that the presence of the library is helping Caledon create itself. This is partly a function of library-as-collection: access to a set of materials tailored to Caledon’s interests supports thinking about the connections between the Caledon-relevant topics and areas of study. But it is also a function of library-as-institution, and library-as-place. Caledon has responded warmly and enthusiastically to having a library, there are an increasing number of volunteers from Caledon who do everything from helping build collections to designing a steam-powered card catalog. The library is also treated as something that adorns the social unit that is Caledon, and the concept of “a place with a library” is feeding Caledon’s iteratively emerging identity.

So what do people come into the Caledon branch looking for? They come in because they’ve heard of Caledon as a Steampunk region, and want to know what Steampunk is so a list of Steampunk literature is being compiled. They come in looking for information on Caledon itself—there was one long and memorable reference interview at 2 a.m. with an Android who wanted an official place in Caledon and needed information about its governing structure (she is now something like a fire chief for Caledon). They come in, surprisingly enough, looking for books, and a place to read them. They also drop in to pass the time of day with the librarians or with one another. It is probably safe to say that the future of the Caledon Branch holds more of the same and much more that can’t yet be anticipated (Figure 13).

*Teen Grid—Ray Lightworker/Fidel Noe and BlueWings Hayek/Saryn Fanwood*

In October 2006, a partnership with the Alliance Library System and the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) was announced to provide services to teens on the Teen Grid of Second Life on Eye4You Alliance Island (PLCMC 2006).

Second Life is divided into two grids, the adult or main grid in which the SLL 2.0 is as well as anyone 18 years and older, and the teen grid, which is a separate secure environment for 13–17 year olds. It is set up



FIGURE 13. Caledon Library's Halloween Display of "Works of Horror and Related Genres" from Their Collection of 19th Century Works.



this way because Linden Labs is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for teens. Thus, library, informational, and cultural services for teens are being developed on the Eye4YouAlliance Island where teens can come and know that only approved adults will be there interacting with them. Adults working with teens in Second Life must obtain at their own cost a background check, which includes a social security number trace, criminal records check, and a nationwide sex offenders search. Once the background check is obtained, the approved adult must create a new avatar that will only exist on the teen grid. After creating the new avatar, Linden Labs moves it over to the teen grid, which is the reason there are two avatars noted above.

*What is Currently Going On in the Teen Grid?* Because we are unable to travel to travel beyond our island in working with teens, we rely on other teens who visit our island, other youth serving organizations (many

of whom have a presence on the main grid or on websites and blogs), and Second Opinion, the online newsletter for friends and residents of Second Life in which the Lindens and teens themselves report on teen grid activities. The Teen Metaverse Messenger newspaper and Second Life wiki also have information on people working with teens in Second Life. Global Kids (<http://www.holymeatballs.org/>), a real-life organization in New York, is probably one of the most dynamic organizations working with teens on Second Life. They raise awareness on social issues such as sex trafficking and the Darfur genocide through having the teens create an interactive maze or raising Linden \$, which translates into raising U.S. money for causes. Teens themselves can own land, and some of the most popular places are the Scripts Library, Club Revolution (a club and mall), and Downtown Hyperion, which has emphasizes education (Teen Metaverse Messenger 2006).

*Why is the Library Here and What Are Our Goals with Library Services for Teens?* One of the reasons why there is a library in Second Life to work with teens is because we want to be where they are. There are over 43,000 teens participating in Second Life and 19 million youth live in homes with Internet connections according to a 2005 Pew Internet report (Lenhart 2005).

We have a window of opportunity to influence a generation . . . not putting libraries and library services in the path and spaces frequented by Millennials is foolhardy. (Abrams 2006)

We believe that by immersing ourselves in their world and being where they are, we maintain our relevance to their needs and development as creative and interactive learners.

Just as “the library should be part of every discussion that has to do with community collaboration” in real life, according to the Americans for Libraries Council report (2006), Long Overdue, A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About Libraries in the 21st Century, we also do not believe that libraries can afford to ignore a presence in the teen Second Life community. Currently, there are over 100 colleges and universities, rock star concerts such as Duran Duran and U2, and corporations such as Sony BMG Music Entertainment. Multi-user virtual environments are on the increase, especially in educational circles, and society will be lost to this online presence if the library is not a part of the interaction.

*Where Are We in the Process and What Are Our Future Plans?* Currently, we are networking with individual adults and organizations

to explain our project and to invite them to join us. We are also assisting interested volunteers through the application process. A teen advisory board is also in the works. We are also working toward offering Second Life programs in real life, at our library, *ImaginOn* (<http://www.imagion.org/>), and eventually to the branch library's in our system. As we develop these library, real-world programs we will encourage and offer assistance to other libraries outside the system that strive to serve their teens in this way.

Anticipated library services on the island include partnerships with youth-serving organizations, displays and exhibits on issues such as Teen Tech Week or intellectual freedom, peer mentoring, book release parties, concerts, making movies/machinima, homework help, building/scripting/clothes design classes taught by adults and teens, and more. The direction of the project is to be teen-driven, so many of the services will depend on the desires of the teens involved, while giving them a framework of ideas from which to build. Future plans, events, and news can be found at the Teen Library Blog (<http://eye4youalliance.youthtech.info/>).

## ***PARTNERS***

SLL2 partners with several non-profit educational groups (Figure 14). TechSoup (<http://www.techsoup.org/>) maintains a building and event center on Info Island. They host many events and help other nonprofits take advantage of Second Life's opportunities. They are a great resource for Second Life educational technology and teaching strategies. Worldbridges (<http://worldbridges.net/>), the webcasting network, also has a new building on Info Island, with webcasting facilities that stream video into Second Life. The ICT Library exists only with Second Life and works with Second Life educators. SLL2 also has relationships with museums and educational institutions in other parts of Second Life, such as the International Spaceflight Museum: Spaceport Alpha. The Museum has life-sized replicas of spacecraft that Second Life avatars can walk (or fly) around. The New Media Consortium is a non-profit group of about 200 colleges and universities dedicated to exploring new media and technologies in the educational realm. NMC has a large campus in Second Life where they host events and training sessions for educators. There will be more room for new partners of SLL2 on Info Island II.

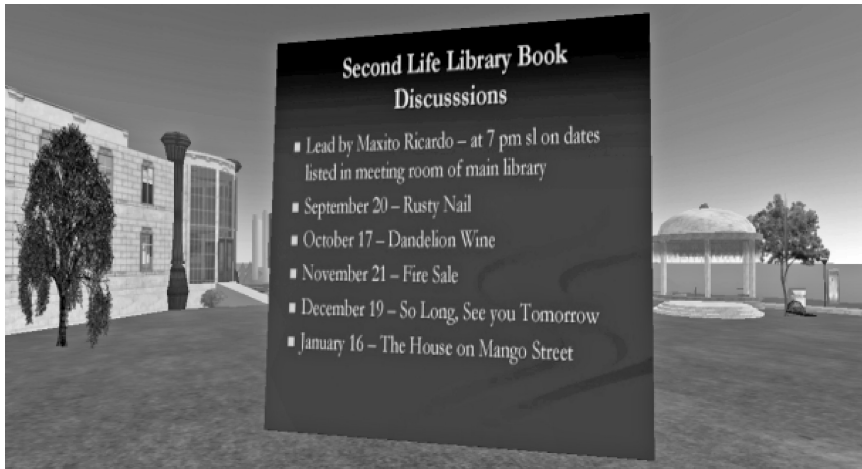
FIGURE 14. TechSoup is One Partner on Info Island.



## EVENTS

Since most librarians have a passion for books, it should come as no surprise that book discussion exists in SLL2. Maxito Ricardo (Tom Peters in real life) runs most of the book discussions for SLL2 (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15. Book Discussion Billboard.



Other events on Info Island recently have included meetings of art librarians, archivists, academic librarians, catalogers, and Canadians; classes on making Second Life movies (machinanima) and on dealing with Second Life grieving (harassment); tours that include the Info Islands, Second Life shopping, and sight seeing; and parties in which we get to relax on the beach and dance all night. While no one has to worry about parking, the Second Life equivalent is “lag,” or computer processing delays. When many people get together in one place, sometimes the server processing slows down and everything runs slower than normal. Connection problems also cause lag for individuals, creating the impression that the avatar is lost in thought. Actually they are just waiting for their computer to catch up with the rest of the group.

### ***WHAT IS A VIRTUAL LIBRARY? OR WHY ARE WE HERE?—SPIRAL MANDELBROT***

Libraries have always been about locating and accessing information. When dealing with a strictly physical library, locating the desired information takes precedence: our card catalogs, indexes, and the memories of librarians all lead to finding the right information for the job, which was then retrieved from the stacks or other shelving. Even networking our libraries in the form of consortial and national catalogs and interlibrary

loan didn't change the fundamental library theory that locating the needed information, usually in a book or journal, was our reason for existence. It just took a little longer to retrieve things.

This has been challenged by the Internet. As the world became awash with information (quantity, not quality), libraries fought back by attempting to catalog the Internet. It was still a matter of locating the appropriate information, not retrieving it. Librarians created thousands of subject guides on every imaginable topic. As search engines evolved, however, locating information (of good quality or otherwise) has become easier. The problem is, of course, that the Internet, and especially the Web, is a huge mishmash of good, bad, and completely unknown quality information. So those librarian-created subject guides became arbiters of quality information as well, evolving into such useful tools as the Librarian's Internet Index (<http://lii.org/>), the Internet Public Library (<http://www.ipl.org/>), and the Internet Scout Project (<http://scout.wisc.edu/>).

Unfortunately, it didn't seem to matter. People seemed satisfied with the "good enough" information available via the Web, although they may appreciate the good quality information available at libraries if they find it. Searching (or browsing) is generally a behavior for "satisficing" information needs rather than for optimizing them (Buczynski 2005). Only when quality is a paramount concern (for example, in corporate or higher-level academic work) does quality really become important to most people. "If it's not online, it doesn't matter" became the watchword. Libraries are facing a crisis of identity in a world where quality information is not seen as crucial, and universal access is the promise of Google, not the public library.

Through Second Life we can begin to explore the meaning of a "virtual library," one that does not have a physical equivalent, and, to some extent, the meaning of "library" in general. Are we really about access, in which case a library with no more access than the Web becomes redundant? Are we still all about locating and searching, in direct competition with search engines? Or is there some combination, plus the personal interaction, which makes a virtual world so fascinating, that really makes up a virtual librarian in a virtual library.

## ***FUTURE***

As this article is being written, SLL2 nears its first birthday. The Business Plan created at the Library's inception needs to be updated with all the new

endeavors started by SLL2 participants, while the first year is examined for lessons learned. Like many real world libraries, SLL2 needs to work on collections, communication, and outreach to the community, as well as finding sources for funding for future projects. Info Island is expanding into an archipelago of educational and informational islands, including public libraries, universities, library schools, and special libraries. Some of the newest islands include Rachelville, a garden filled with children's literature, dedicated to the memory of a little girl who recently died of leukemia (Figure 16), and Renaissance Island, dedicated to historical research and recreation from the Renaissance period in Europe. The future of the Second Life Library 2.0 looks bright and exciting, even if we don't really know what it looks like, and the Library and the librarians invite the readers of this article to visit Info Island.

### AVATARS

Spiral Mandelbrot is Rebecca Hedreen, Coordinator for Distance Learning at Hilton C. Buley Library, Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, CT.

FIGURE 16. Rachelville.



JJ Drinkwater is J. J. Jacobson, Catalog and Metadata Librarian at the Price Gilbert Library and Information Center, Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, GA.

Jenna Darrow is Jennifer L. Johnson, a private school librarian in Dallas, TX.

Max Batra is Mack A. Lundy, Systems Librarian at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA.

Librabelle Pyle is Peg Burnette, Systems and Reference Librarian at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Peoria, IL.

Carolina Keats is Carol Perryman, Doctoral Fellow at the School of Library and Information Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC.

Namro Orman is Guus Van Den Brekel, Coordinator for Electronic Services, University Medical Center of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands.

Ray Lightworker and Fidel Noe is Matt Gullett, Educational Technology Librarian at ImaginOn in Charlotte, NC.

BlueWings Hayek and Saryn Fanwood is Kelly Czarnecki, Teen Librarian at ImaginOn in Charlotte, NC.

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