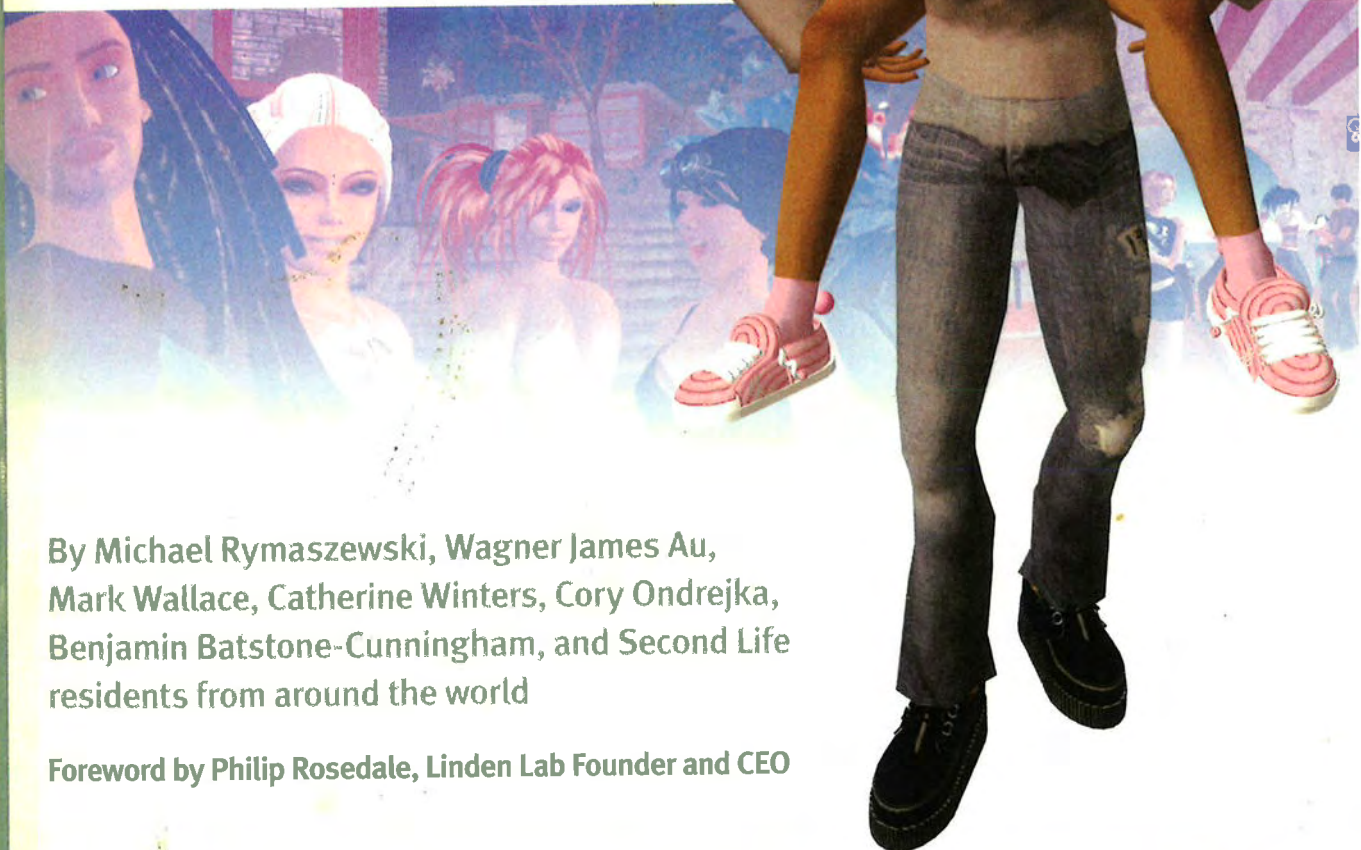


second life[®]

the official guide



By Michael Rymaszewski, Wagner James Au,
Mark Wallace, Catherine Winters, Cory Ondrejka,
Benjamin Batstone-Cunningham, and Second Life
residents from around the world

Foreword by Philip Rosedale, Linden Lab Founder and CEO

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FOREWORD

When *Second Life* launched in 2003, running on just 16 servers with barely 1,000 dedicated users, it was the culmination of a kind of dream for me. One of the things I'd always been interested in, ever since I was a young boy, was how we manipulate the world around us. The world had so much *stuff* in it; there was always something I wanted to change, something I wanted to add, something I wanted to build out of the things I saw around me. That, to me, was magical: seeing the world change shape in response to the ideas in my head. One of the things I wanted to do when we started developing *Second Life* almost a decade ago was to give anyone a chance to work that same magic.

Fast-forward three years and that's exactly what we have. *Second Life* now runs on more than 3,000 servers and has close to a million registered users, but the fundamental idea of the world hasn't changed: it's a place where you can turn the pictures in your head into a kind of pixelated reality. It's a venue for self-expression that's among the richest and most satisfying out there. In *Second Life*, if you see something you want to build or change, the ability to do so is at your fingertips. The world is a place you experience, but more importantly, it's a place you create.

And those million users—you—have created quite a world. You add millions of objects to *Second Life*—in the form of cars, clothes, castles, and every other kind of thing you can imagine—every day. You spend close to \$5 million there every month; and that's money you spend not on the things Linden Lab creates, but on the things that other users have created and added to the world. To me, that's the beauty of *Second Life*: all we've created is a platform, an almost empty world; where we got lucky is in the fact that you came along and breathed life into it. If *Second Life* is a world at all, it's because you've created it.



When Wiley approached us about this book, it seemed like a great opportunity to let even more people be involved in that process of creation. Like *Second Life* itself, the book developed as a collaboration. Michael Rymaszewski and the other authors have been helped by any number of residents who've contributed their thoughts and experiences throughout the text. Here you'll find information, tips, stories, profiles, and even some secrets that should make a great offline resource for everyone, but especially for new residents. If you're looking for a way to get on your feet quickly in *Second Life*, this book is a great choice.

For those brand-new to virtual worlds, you need not fear. *Second Life's* geography, society, culture, and technology are all laid out here in easy-to-understand terms. There's a wealth of information and practical advice about creating and customizing your avatar, building objects, earning money, becoming part of a community, and more. Those who want to peek under the hood will be especially interested by Chapter 8, which was cowritten by Ben Batstone-Cunningham (a programmer at Linden Lab) and Cory Ondrejka (chief technology officer at Linden Lab and the man responsible for the "physics" that underpin the world). In other chapters, profiles of *Second Life* residents give a look at how various people have found their place in the world, be it socially, through business ventures, as game developers, or simply as visitors to the fascinating society that's emerging as a result of their efforts.

The main purpose of this book is to allow you to more easily become part of that society yourself. *Second Life* is growing every day; all it takes to get in on the action is a computer, an Internet connection, and an open mind. There's a lot of stuff in *Second Life*, but there's always room for more. I look forward to seeing what you add to the world you find there.

—Philip Rosedale
CEO and Founder, Linden Lab



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DEDICATION

To Olga, who inspired me to get a second life

—Michael Rymaszewski

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It's not easy to write a guide to a virtual world, a place that exists in cyberspace. There were voices raised that said it's just impossible—and without many extra voices, that might have well been true. Just like *Second Life*, this book has been created thanks to many people contributing to its content.

So, a very big thank-you to Cory Ondrejka, Catherine Winters, Wagner James Au, Ben Batstone-Cunningham, and Mark Wallace, who authored selected chapters. Willem Knibbe at Wiley was the person who actually conceived this book and made sure it became reality. Candace English edited it so that it reads as well as it does, and Patrick Cunningham made it look as good as it does. At Linden Lab, Catherine Smith exhibited a saint-like patience in dealing with numerous requests for help and extra information. Jonhenry Righter contributed greatly to the book's look, John "Pathfinder Linden" Lester provided an excellent appendix for educators, and Torley Linden, Jeff Luan, Jeska Dzwigalski, Kara Jordan, Tom Verre, Eric Call, James Cook, Beth Goza, Michael Blum, Kelly Washington, Richard Nelson, Daniel Smith, Joe Miller, Daniel Huebner, and many other Linden Lab employees reviewed the text and contributed valuable input.

Last but not least, many *SL* residents contributed quotes on selected topics—little pearls of wisdom that will improve the quality of your virtual life.

Thank you, guys. You're the kind of people one hopes to meet when starting another life.

—Michael Rymaszewski

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Michael Rymaszewski is a veteran writer who has authored more than 20 strategy guides. His *Age of Empires III: Sybex Official Strategies and Secrets* was named a Best Computer & Internet Book of 2005 by Amazon.com. Michael's other published work includes reviews, strategy articles, short fiction, coffee table books, and video/TV movie scripts. He is also a video game writer and designer for City Interactive. Michael authored Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10.



Wagner James Au writes New World Notes (<http://nwn.blogs.com>) and covers the culture and business of high technology and gaming for GigaOM.com, Kotaku.com, Salon.com, and Wired. He's also written for the *Los Angeles Times*, *Lingua Franca*, *Smart Business*, and *Game Developer*, among other publications and websites, primarily on game culture and the game industry, along with politics, film, and pop culture. He's also a screenwriter (his script *Future Tense* was optioned by Canal Plus in 2001), and as a

game developer, wrote for Electronics Arts' groundbreaking conspiracy thriller *Majestic*, and was a designer on *America's Army: Soldiers*. His work as the embedded journalist for *Second Life* has been featured in the BBC, the *Washington Post*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, CNN International, MSNBC, *Wired* magazine, News.com, *New Scientist*, *Popular Science*, and the *San Jose Mercury News*, among many other publications. He's also a consultant for businesses and nonprofits developing a presence in *Second Life* and is a part-time coordinator/promoter for Creative Commons' efforts in *Second Life*. He's developing his work in *Second Life* into an upcoming book of his own. You can contact him at wjamesau@well.com. James wrote Chapters 11 and 12.



Mark Wallace is the editor of 3pointD.com, a widely read blog covering virtual worlds and other 3D online technologies. His writing on virtual worlds, video games, and other topics has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Wired*, *GQ*, and many other publications. He has written regularly on online games for *The Escapist* (www.escapistmagazine.com), and since January 2005 has run the *Second Life Herald* (www.secondlifeherald.com), a popular online newspaper covering virtual worlds. With *Herald*



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founder Peter Ludlow, he is coauthor of the forthcoming *Only a Game: A Cyberspace Murder on the Bleeding Edge between Real and Online Worlds*. He played his first video game, the text-based game *Adventure*, in 1978 on a PDP-11. He lives in Brooklyn. Mark wrote Chapters 3 and 13.



Catherine Winters is one of the longest-tenured residents still active within the *Second Life* community. In 2003, she cofounded the LSL Wiki, the collaborative *Second Life* programming site that has grown to become the definitive reference manual for LSL scripting. A prolific scripter and content creator within *Second Life*, Catherine is one of the few *SL* residents to have made *Second Life* her primary source of real-world income. In her first life, Catherine lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. She

enjoys cycling and downhill skiing, as well as curling up with a good book. Her personal web log can be found at www.CatherineOmega.com. Catherine authored Chapter 7.



Cory Ondrejka: Cory Ondrejka is chief technical officer at Linden Lab. He leads the *Second Life* development team in creating and leveraging such technologies as distributed physical simulation, 3D streaming, and real-time, in-world editors. He also spearheaded the decision to allow users to retain IP rights to their creations, helped craft Linden's virtual real-estate policy, and created the Linden Scripting Language. Cory coauthored Chapter 8.



Ben Batstone-Cunningham is a Linden Lab programmer and scripting expert. On a brisk morning in February 2002, while cutting a Quantum Physics class, Ben read in the paper about a virtual world where anything was possible. He signed up for the alpha test of what was then called *LindenWorld* and quickly became addicted. Several months later, having become proficient with the tools, he was invited to work for Linden Lab in creating the freshly renamed *Second Life*. Several years later, he is still happily addicted, and still creating scripts for Linden Lab—including example content for residents to learn from. Ben coauthored Chapter 8.

INTRODUCTION

When you visit a new place—city, country, continent—a good guide comes in really handy. You need a guide that will go beyond advice on which sights are worth seeing and where to stay; a guide that will tell you about the people who inhabit your new destination, the local laws, best places to pick up bargains, and whether it's OK to drink the tap water.

Second Life is a virtual world. A whole world, virtual or not, definitely merits a guide. But how can one give advice and provide guidance about a world that's changing constantly, and much faster than what we call the real world? It's difficult enough when dealing with a land that consists of solid soil and rock; how does one handle a land made out of bytes, a place that consists of pixels on your monitor? In *Second Life*, changes that would take millenia of groaning and straining in the real world can be completed within a few hours. If real life is all about evolution, *Second Life* is evolution squared. How do you write a guide to a place like that?

Well, to begin with, you focus on things that are there to stay. *Second Life* is and always will be a representation of the world as we know it. It has been conceived by and is being created by humans, and people tend to do things in a certain way. It doesn't matter whether the world they're in is virtual or "real." Real is what exists in the mind. We may live in an enlightened age, but emotions and fantasies rule just like they always did (if you disagree, watch the evening news). And while we may be vastly different from each other on the outside, inside we're all the same: blood, guts, and plenty of dreams. Even the dreams are the same: everyone wants love, success, happiness. The people who don't are either dead or ready to die.

All these banal truths become even more true in *Second Life*. It lets you concentrate single-mindedly on the pursuit of your own, private happiness. You don't need to deal with all the mundane stuff that eats up a lot of time on planet Earth, and you're free to do what you want. The few restrictions that do apply in *SL* are nonintrusive, and simply represent common sense applied to a social situation. In fact, the only thing that may obstruct you in your virtual pursuit of real happiness is real life. Well, what do you expect? It's not easy to live two lives in the same timeframe.

We hope this guide will make it easier. Here's what you'll find inside:

Chapter 1 introduces *Second Life*: what it is about, how it came into being, and how it has evolved since its beginning. It discusses basic *SL* concepts and rules, including types of *SL* memberships and their benefits.



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Chapter 2 guides you through the process of getting acquainted with *Second Life*. It discusses the *SL* interface, views, and movement within the virtual world, as well as virtual land ownership. It also covers *SL* resident groups and communities.

Chapter 3 takes you on a tour of the virtual world, just as if you were touring a location in the real world. It lists a number of must-sees for the *SL* tourist; places that represent what might be called the culture of *Second Life*.

Chapter 4 deals with a pretty delicate subject: your appearance in *Second Life*. It discusses the myriad considerations involved in choosing a good *SL* name for yourself, and the complex task of making your *SL* avatar look the way you want it to look.

Chapter 5 reviews the hundreds of gifts you receive when you enter the virtual world for the first time. These are contained in a special folder called the Librarian and they are often overlooked by new *SL* residents.

Chapter 6 advises you on how to manage and tame the *SL* monster known as the Inventory. Your avatar's Inventory is where you keep all your belongings in *Second Life*, including readymade houses, spaceships, and hundreds of cool things to wear. The number of your Inventory items reaches four figures even before you arrive on the *SL* mainland, and getting a good grip on your Inventory is very important—otherwise, you're likely to spend many hours of online time just looking for stuff.

Chapter 7 expertly guides you through the process of creating new objects in the virtual world. It reveals the intricacies of the mysterious prim, explains the *SL* building and object-editing tools, and lets you gain an understanding of the almost-infinite possibilities for creating new stuff in *Second Life*.

Chapter 8 focuses on LSL (the Linden Scripting Language), which is used to write scripts that animate objects in *Second Life*. It explains how LSL works, and what you should know to make it work for you. Together with Chapter 7, it provides all the basic info you need to join in one of the most rewarding activities in *Second Life*: creating new content.

Chapter 9 discusses *SL* persona, career, and lifestyle choices with the aid of concrete examples. It features many contributions by longtime *SL* residents, in which they reveal who they are and how they spend their time in the virtual world. Chapter 9 was co-authored by *SL* residents Angel Fluffy, Baccara Rhodes, Cheri Horton, Desmond Shang, Forseti Svarog, Francis Chung, Iris Ophelia, Tao Takashi, and Taras Balderdash.

Chapter 10 talks about making money in *Second Life*. Yes, it's possible to make real money in a virtual setting, and this chapter tells you what's involved. It reviews *SL*'s most popular paying jobs, discussing the required skills and

comparing earning potential, and it alerts you to the considerations involved in running a virtual business.

Chapter 11 features portraits of interesting *SL* people—residents whose presence in the virtual world has had a lasting impact of one kind or another.

Chapter 12 describes noteworthy events in *SL* history, such as the famous prim tax revolt.

Finally, **Chapter 13** examines the real-life lessons and real-world value of *Second Life's* virtual world. Yes, there's real life in cyberspace, and this concluding chapter talks about the implications.

Four appendices round out this guide. Appendix A, by John "Pathfinder Linden" Lester, is addressed to real-world educators interested in taking advantage of a virtual environment. Appendix B contains a glossary of special terms and slang, and Appendix C directs you to sites that contain valuable *SL* info. Appendix D explains *SL's* pull-down menu functions.

In addition, this guide is accompanied by a CD that includes special animations, character templates, and textures created by Linden Lab exclusively for this book, as well as the best of *SL*-resident-created *machinima*, or computer-generated movies. The disc also guides new users through the installation process and includes a code that grants a special object the first time you enter the metaverse.

We hope you'll find this book as enjoyable as it is useful. See you in *Second Life*.

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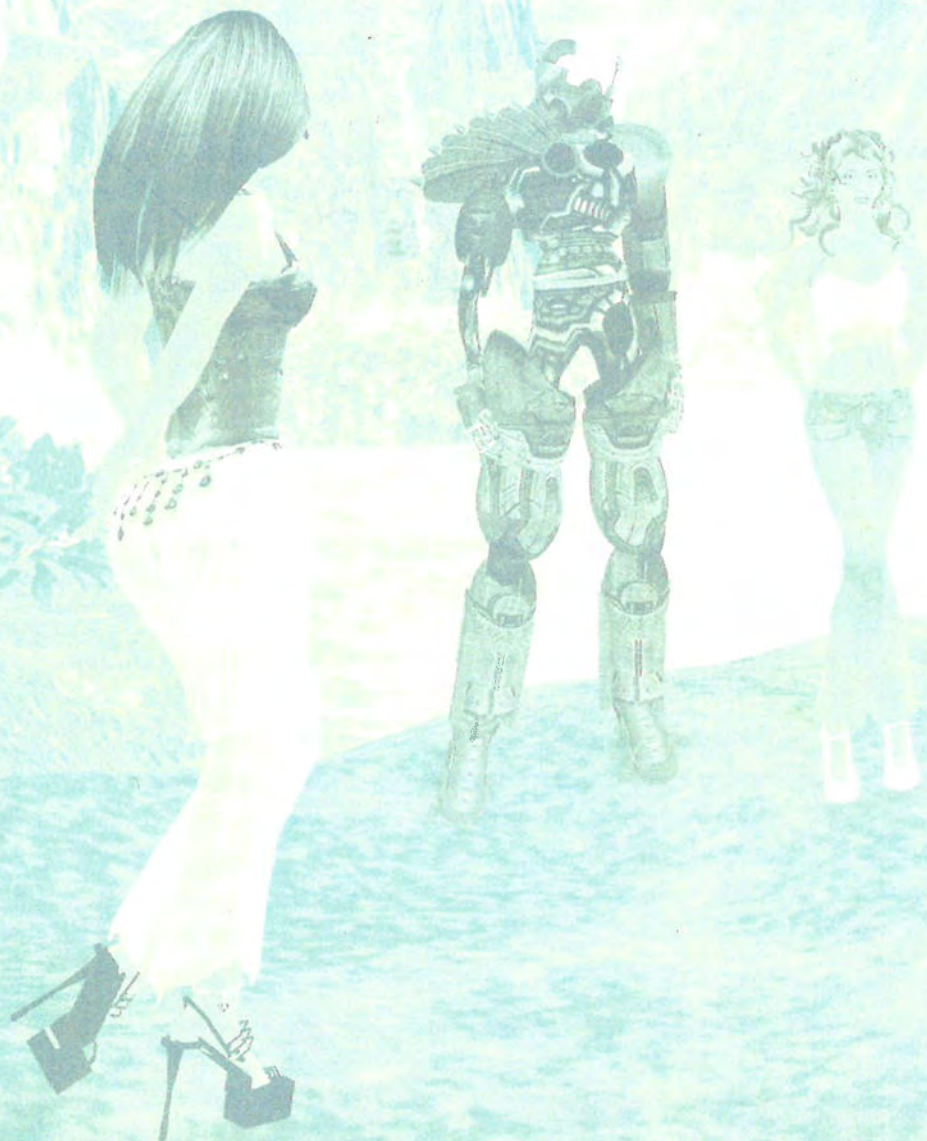
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PART I

GETTING A SECOND LIFE





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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS SECOND LIFE?

Second Life is a virtual world. No, *Second Life* is a 3D online digital world imagined, created, and owned by its residents. But hang on, there's more: critical authorities have defined *Second Life* as a *metaverse*—dig that? Everyone on the same page? All the statements above are true. *Second Life* is basically anything you want it to be. It's your virtual life, after all, and what you do with it is up to you.

Second Life is a virtual environment in which almost all of the content is created by users—people like you. You are the one who determines what *Second Life* means to you. Do you enjoy meeting people online, talking to them and doing things together in real time? Welcome to *Second Life*. Do you enjoy creating stuff and making it come alive? Welcome to *Second Life*. Do you enjoy running a business and making money—real money? Welcome to *Second Life*. The list of possible *Second Life* activities is as long as you can imagine.

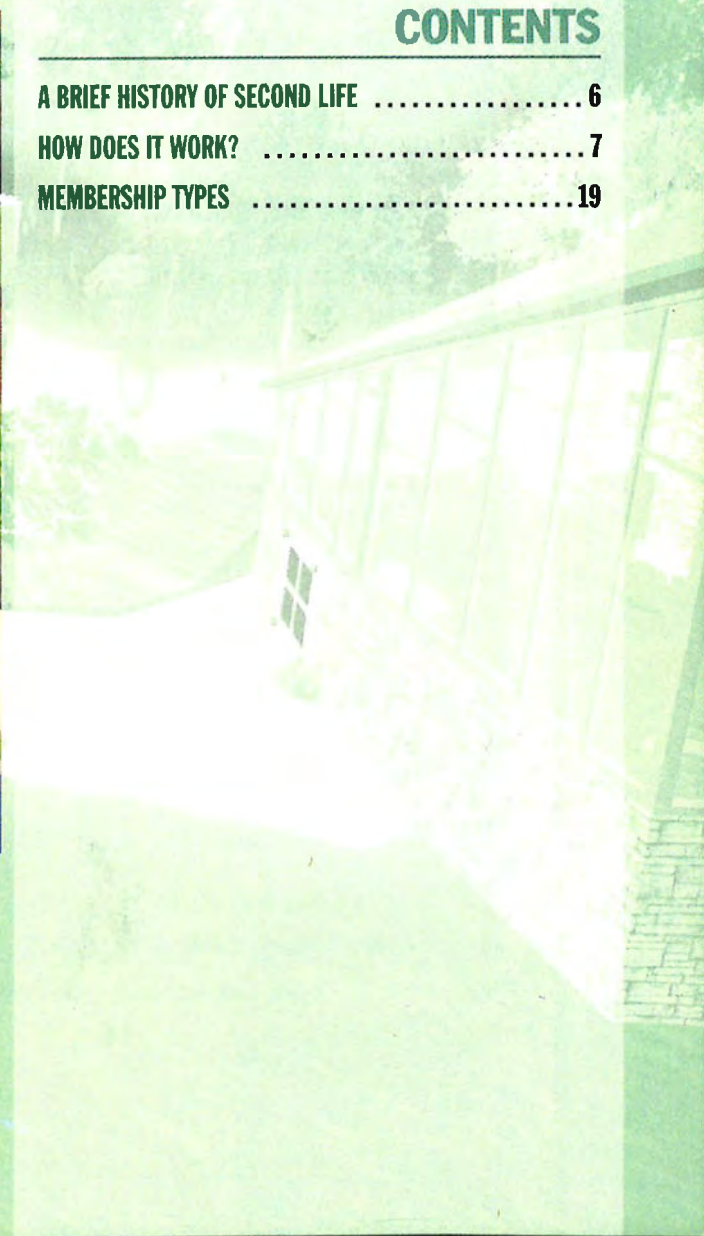
This chapter discusses basic *Second Life* concepts, rules, and activities. Some of these—for example, benefits linked to given type of *SL* memberships—are subject to frequent changes. However, certain basic principles remain constant and are covered here.





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A BRIEF HISTORY OF SECOND LIFE

Second Life was conceived by Philip Rosedale. Like all artists, he'd always wanted to create a masterpiece that represents the world in a microcosm. Instead of paint, words, marble, or clay, he used bytes. Philip Rosedale started working on the concept that would become *Second Life* (initially, it was called *Linden World*) in 1991. Beta testing began in November 2002, and it was opened to the public just six months later. The beta version included a teleporting fee, as well as a tax on prims (short for "primitives") on top of land-maintenance costs; fees were charged for rezzing and maintaining all resident-created objects in the virtual world. On the surface, this step seemed very sensible, as every extra prim places a tiny extra burden on the hardware that runs *Second Life's* virtual world. However, taxing residents' creations wasn't a wise move in a political sense, and it led to big consequences down the line.

On June 23rd, 2003, *Second Life* went live. In October of that year, a major update introduced a host of new features: improved search functions and world map, new land-management options, a new copyright/permission system for resident creations, and many groundbreaking graphic improvements. However, the update also included tools to minimize tax evasion. It sought to counterbalance this by introducing a new stipend called *dwel*, which essentially rewarded people for socializing. Creative *SL* residents were appalled that thoughtless socialites were being rewarded, while creators of new *SL* content were still penalized through prim tax.

The crackdown on prim-tax evaders brought drama and dissent; some *SL* resident groups fell apart, and themed communities were hit particularly hard: making an area reflect a certain theme requires plenty of new prims. The stage was set for a very real-life development; a grass-roots social movement began to form in the virtual world. Within a few weeks, a revolution was underway. In December 2003, the revolutionaries won: an entirely new tax system based on land ownership *sans* the prim tax was introduced in a subsequent update. That update also introduced the concept of *SL* time (same as Pacific Standard Time) and a number of new scripting and interface features.

More updates and improvements followed, and landmark updates introduced custom animations and gestures (June 2004), the LindeX currency exchange (October 2005), and an end to stipends for Basic membership plans (May 2006).



MORE SL HISTORY

If you're interested in SL history, refer to *Chapter 11* and visit the *Second Life Historical Museum*. You'll find the museum's landmark in the SL Guidebook that you can obtain on Help Island; if for some reasons you didn't, use the SL Search function. The museum exhibits are updated as Second Life evolves and include many resident creations as well as illustrated presentations of memorable events in SL history. You'll also find extra info in Second Life's History Wiki at http://history.secondserver.net/index.php/Main_Page. Like the museum exhibits, the History Wiki is updated constantly with fresh entries and articles as Second Life continues to grow and evolve.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

From your point of view, *SL* works as if you were a god in real life. Not an almighty god, perhaps—more like one of those mythological minor gods, who tended to specialize in certain areas, get drunk, have sex, fight, and (most important) cast spells left, right, and center. Regardless of who you are in *Second Life*, you're able to "cast spells" too (Figure 1.1). And just like a mythological god, you're able to fly, and teleport wherever you like in an instant.

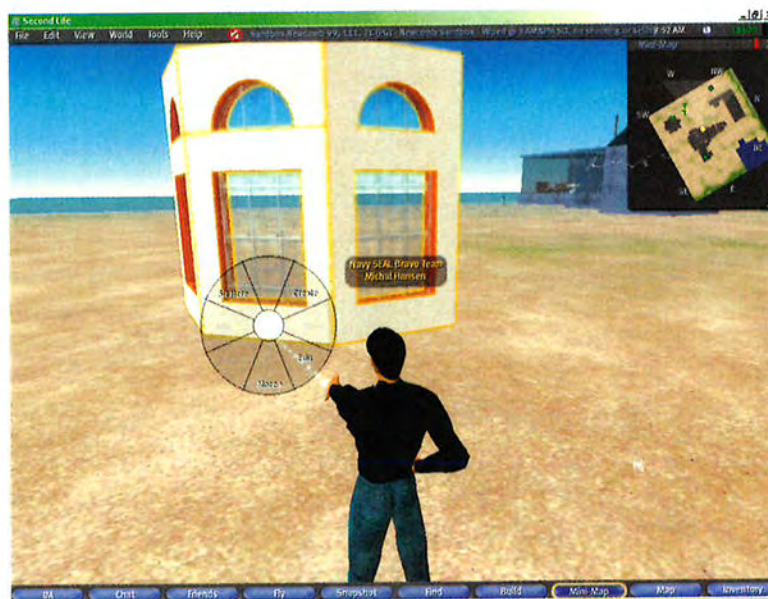


Figure 1.1: Abracadabra, one, two, three—pow!



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You can also change your appearance whenever you want to, and to whatever you like. In case you've ever dreamed of pulling a Zeus number and wooing someone as a swan, *Second Life* offers you the opportunity.

The *SL* virtual world imitates the real world that you know, and hopefully like. It consists of interlinked regions that contain land, water, and sky (*SL* lets you build castles in the sky). Each region has an area of 65,536 *Second Life* square meters.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

REGIONS AS SIMS

SL residents often refer to regions as sims—short for simulators. This is because originally, one server or simulator held one entire region. Now there are two regions per server, but the old name has stuck.

SL regions are both geographical and administrative units: they are governed by rules and regulations that may change from region to region. The entire *Second Life* world is divided into areas that can include any number of regions governed by a given set of rules. For example, a separate area called Teen grid is reserved for *SL* members between the ages of 13 and 17. Members in that age group are not allowed into the main adult area, and vice versa. You'll find more info on *SL* mores, customs, and social etiquette later in this chapter, and in Chapter 2.

Second Life is populated by avatars: virtual representations of *SL* members. The *SL* world also contains a great variety of objects. Ranging from palaces to pebbles, almost all the objects in *Second Life* have been created by *SL* citizens. Creating new objects—clothes, guns, spaceships—is one of the most popular *SL* activities, and the driving force behind *SL* commerce. *Second Life* keeps track of everything that's happening in its virtual world by assigning unique identifiers not only to in-world objects and avatars, but also to anything that has significance (see the "How *Second Life* Keeps Track of Things" sidebar)

SIDEBAR



FROM LINDEN LAB:

HOW SECOND LIFE KEEPS TRACK OF THINGS

A UUID (Universally Unique Identifier) is a 16-byte string that looks like this: 987fc1b0-bd3b-47fb-8506-2b1ffbec8984—it's 8 characters, 4 characters, 4 characters, 4 characters, 12 characters, all separated with hyphens.



← Across the Second Life platform, we use UUIDs in a variety of places where we want to represent a complex bundle of data with a smaller, simpler reference—a UUID is only 16 bytes long. Some of the data that have a UUID “name” include the following:

- ✦ Avatar agents.
- ✦ Land parcels. As you create, subdivide, merge, or otherwise modify parcels, they get a new UUID every time.
- ✦ Groups. Every group that is made gets a UUID.
- ✦ Regions. They not only have a unique name, but they also have unique UUIDs.
- ✦ Simulator states, which are snapshots of a region. These are periodically saved and given a UUID.
- ✦ Money transactions and inventory transactions.
- ✦ Your login sessions.
- ✦ Folders in your inventory.
- ✦ Any snapshot you take.
- ✦ Every event or classified ad you create.
- ✦ Assets, which are sharable resources including textures, objects, landmarks, clothing, and almost anything that goes in your inventory.

What does this mean? Well, any of the data above is guaranteed to be unique across space and time—that is to say, if you have a texture and you know its UUID, you can be confident that no other texture had, has, or will have the same UUID.

Many LSL functions take a UUID and operate on the texture/sound/inventory item with that UUID. For example, you must give `llSetTexture()` the UUID of the texture you want to set your object to.

—Jeff Luan, Linden Lab



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THE MAGIC PRIM

Almost all the objects you see in *Second Life* are created or built from solids (3D geometric shapes) called prims. Each region can support 15,000 prims (plus a reserve of around 10 percent to let it handle moving objects).

Prims can assume any shape you want, and they come in a variety of shapes to make transformations easier. And you can make prims look any way you want by applying selected textures to their surfaces (Figure 1.2). They can be given certain qualities and features (such as transparency or the ability to flex/bend with the wind), they can be linked together, and they can be made to *do* things by a script written in LSL—*Second Life's*

scripting language. For example, in *Second Life* a dog that moves and barks is an animated object made of linked prims, scripted to move in a certain way and play custom sound effects. You'll find a detailed discussion of prim- and scripting-related issues in Chapters 7 and 8.

You don't have to be a building and scripting guru to acquire and enjoy all the objects you'd like to have in *Second Life*. Like in real life, you can buy them, using real-world money or Linden dollars. But unlike in real life, you can also count on being given tons of cool freebies the moment your avatar enters the *SL* world. The Library folder in your avatar's Inventory is packed with stuff—follow the advice in Chapter 5 of this guide, and check it out. Many new *SL* citizens don't, and some of them subsequently spend a lot of Linden dollars to buy items they already have in their Libraries from a smiling con man (or con woman). Yes, those exist in *Second Life*, too.

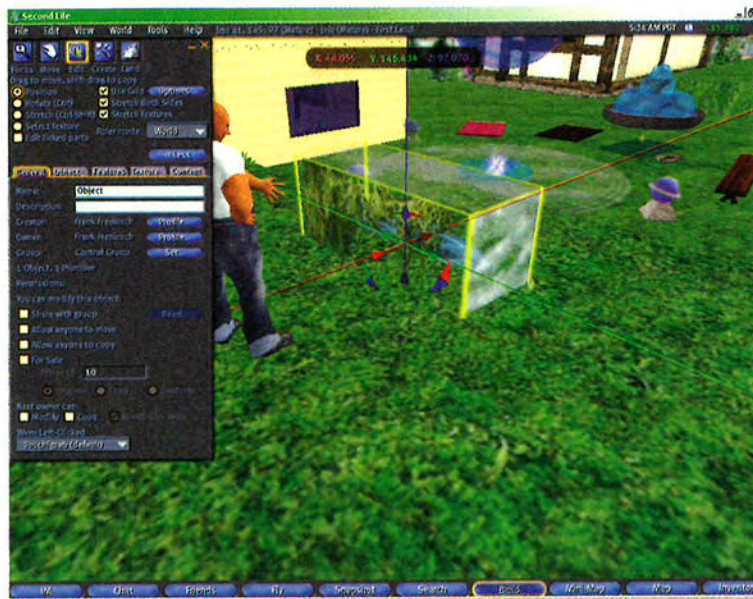


Figure 1.2: Your ability to create and manipulate prims is probably the most godlike feature of *Second Life*.



Linden plants from the Library are special objects with unique properties. Although they appear to be much more complex than prims, each plant counts as a single prim—something to keep in mind when you become a proud landowner and want to do some landscaping.

SL MONEY

As you know by now, *Second Life* has its own currency: the Linden dollar. Linden dollars are exchangeable for real-life dollars. The exchange rate fluctuates; predictably, it's determined by money supply (which is influenced by ongoing tweaks to *SL* stipends and bonuses, as well as the ratio between new Premium and Basic accounts started by fresh *SL* residents—the differences between these two account types are discussed in the section at the end of this chapter).

At the time of writing, US\$1 is worth nearly 275 Linden dollars. Historical highs had the exchange rate hovering in the low two hundreds, while a relatively recent low saw an exchange rate of well over L\$300 to US\$1. Inside *Second Life*, a Linden dollar has much more purchasing power than real-life money, of course.

You can obtain Linden dollars in a variety of ways (which are described in Chapter 10). Very roughly, *SL* income sources correspond to the income sources in real life. You may opt to take a virtual job—the *SL* Classifieds always feature many job ads—or you may want to try turning a profit by running your own business. If you're lucky and skilful, you can make money gambling; if you're talented, you can design and create saleable items; if you're none of the above, you can sit in a "camping chair" and make something like L\$3 every 15 minutes. L\$3 is roughly worth one US cent, but it can buy you a lot of nice items in *Second Life*! You can also buy Linden dollars at a number of third-party currency exchanges, paying in US dollars or euros. This is often the wisest course, letting you spend your *SL* time on activities other than making money.

Depending on the membership plan you choose, you may also receive Linden dollars when you begin your *SL* membership. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.



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ADDITIONAL INFO:

THE BEST THINGS IN SECOND LIFE ARE FREE

Just like in real life, you don't have to have money to enjoy the best Second Life has to offer. Making new friends is free of charge, and so is having a fun time doing something you like with people you like. Yes, owning a few things that bring private joy is nice, but you'll find out that in Second Life you can get lots of very nice stuff for free. Check the SL Classifieds for offers by SL merchants, and do not forget to visit SL Boutique at <http://www.slboutique.com>. Its catalog always features plenty of special offers that let you get great stuff for free, or for the symbolic price of L\$1. And as explained in Chapter 10, in SL you can make a bunch of Linden dollars by sitting in a chair for 15 minutes.

YOU AND YOUR AVATAR

In *Second Life's* virtual world, your avatar represents you. You can change your avatar's appearance as often as you like. *SL* tools include a powerful avatar-appearance editor, and on top of that every avatar comes with a Library full of goodies, including a number of complete alternate avatars. Very broadly, an avatar consists of shape (the body) and outfit (what's worn on the body, plus any body attachments). You'll find a discussion of avatar-appearance editing options in Chapter 4, and more details about the Library in Chapter 5.

The vast majority of *SL* citizens opt to stay human in *Second Life*. But some choose avatars based on fictional characters from real-life movies, comic strips, or books. There are more vampires in *Second Life* than in all of Transylvania (they are very friendly vampires, for the most part). The Furies—*SL* people who choose to be represented by furry animal avatars—are another large group. Interestingly, some groups have grown so big and have become so highly organized that they're referred to as *micronations*.

Your avatar choices say a lot about who you are; to the people you encounter in the *SL* world, your avatar *is* who you are. It's true, too—your avatar choices reflect your personality and mentality. It's good to keep that in mind (Figure 1.3).

Avatar choices do not affect your access to *Second Life* options and privileges except when they breach community standards. So you may want to think twice

before you attach a striking appendage to your avatar prior to a stroll through the streets of *Second Life*. Of course, you are free to be just about as radical as you want on land that you own, or on any privately or group-owned land whose owners allow anything and everything. This and other aspects of land ownership are discussed in Chapter 2.



Figure 1.3: *I wonder if that's really me...*

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR NEW LIFE

As you know by now, *Second Life* gives you the freedom to pursue your dreams and interests. For some residents, this means having as much virtual sex as possible; for others, it means shooting at other people, possibly while piloting a spaceship. You'll find examples of various *SL* lifestyles in Chapters 9 and 11.

Virtual hedonism is fun, but do not let it blind you to other possible *SL* activities. For many residents, *Second Life* primarily represents a great opportunity to develop their talents as creators and artists. In addition to building and scripting, *Second Life* lets you take photographs and make movies. If you feel talented in one of these areas, you could gain more than just applause: the top prize at a *Second Life* movie festival may be as high as L\$100,000 (roughly US\$400). Chapter 3 discusses these activities in more detail.

For a lot of *SL* citizens, the virtual world is simply a great place to meet other people (Figure 1.4). It is also a great place to play with others: as explained earlier, *Second Life* allows all kinds of virtual social interaction. Whatever takes place in *Second Life* takes place by mutual consent: anyone who does not like what's going on can leave the world with a single mouse click.



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The right thing to do, of course, is not to leave the world, but simply find something that you *do* like. There's no shortage of choices—shopping, visiting art galleries, skydiving, bowling, and attending live shows and concerts are just some of the options available. Note also that not all the people you meet in *SL* are there just to have fun. Increasingly, the virtual world of *Second Life* is the venue for real-world study and research programs—a place where scientists, teachers, and students can meet even though they're thousands of miles apart in the real world.

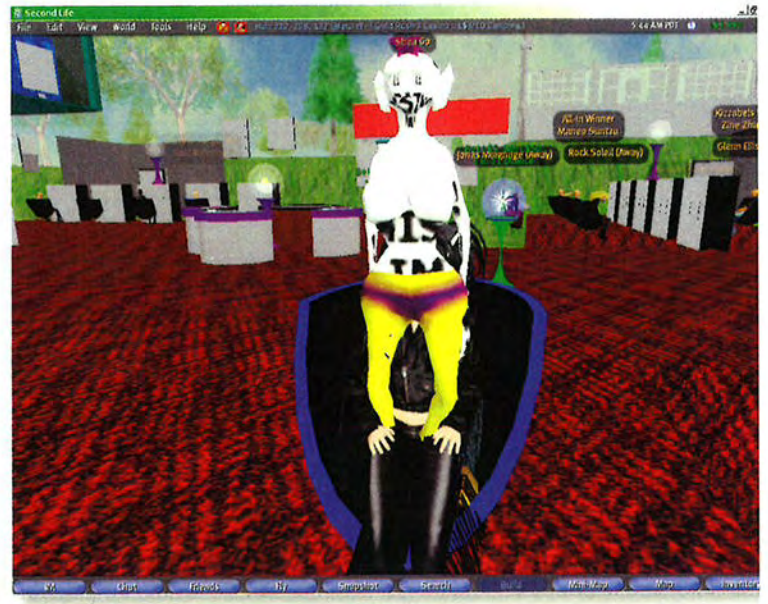


Figure 1.4: You'll see plenty of interesting new faces in *Second Life*.

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ADDITIONAL INFO:

SECOND LIFE EVENTS

Second Life is rich in events of all kinds—from movie festivals and shows by major real-life artists to local events organized by individual residents. Locations of current and upcoming events are marked by a pink or purple star on the world map, and advertised both in the *SL Classifieds* and at <http://secondlife.com/events/>. For a full list of *SL* events, click the *Search* button and select the *Events* tab on the *Search* panel.

Second Life does contain rules and regulations that limit resident activities: different areas allow different types of activity. Areas listed as Mature allow activities euphemistically known as adult behavior, while PG areas impose stricter rules. Many areas are dedicated to pursuing a specific kind of activity within a specific environment.

However, a general principle applies to all activities: no matter what they are, there is a place for them somewhere in *Second Life*. If you're exceptionally hard to satisfy, then you'll want to acquire private land and set your own rules. Many *SL* residents form groups to purchase land and set their own rules to pursue shared interests. However, land ownership is permitted only with Premium *SL* membership; see the relevant section further on in this chapter for more details.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

ROLE PLAYING

Role playing is very popular among SL residents, and areas are specially themed to enhance the role-playing experience. If you've always dreamed of living in the Victorian era or in the Wild West, you can—see Chapters 2 and 3 for more info. Interestingly, one of the most popular forms of individual role play in Second Life is real-life males appearing as virtual females—in one online poll, 18.6% of male members confessed to living their second life as the opposite sex.

SL RULES AND ETIQUETTE

Second Life's community standards are listed on a notecard in your Library (Notecards folder). There are six cardinal sins (called "the Big Six"):

- ✦ **Intolerance.** Just like in real life, being derogatory or demeaning with regard to another person's race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation is a big no-no.
- ✦ **Harassment.** Harassment can take very many forms in a virtual world, but the forms have a common denominator: someone gets upset. If you see your actions or words are upsetting someone, stop.
- ✦ **Assault.** This includes pushing, shooting, and shoving another *SL* resident in an area marked as Safe (Safe status is displayed as an icon on the top info bar). Making fellow residents miserable by targeting them with scripted objects is forbidden, too.
- ✦ **Disclosure.** Information about another resident can be freely shared only if it is displayed in the resident's profile, or if you have the affected resident's consent



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to share extra information. This includes residents' real life data as well as the conversations—posting or otherwise sharing conversation logs requires prior consent of the people affected.

💡 **Indecency.** It's simple: if what you want to do can be offensive to other people, do it on private land in Mature areas.

💡 **Disturbing the peace.** Briefly, don't be a pest. Every resident is entitled to an enjoyable, peaceful second life.

As you can see, *SL* community standards are pretty reasonable and straightforward, and they amount to this: don't interfere with other people's enjoyment of their virtual experience. If what you want to do constitutes a threat to other people's enjoyment, do it at home—that means on land owned by yourself or by a group of *SL* citizens who share your special interests. Otherwise, just employ the same common sense you use in real life to decide what

sort of behavior is acceptable. This will leave you with a comfortable safety margin—*Second Life* is a more relaxed social environment than the real world, and the people inhabiting its world are markedly friendlier than you're used to in real life (Figure 1.5) It's interesting to note *Second Life* is particularly appreciated by women; see the "Being a Woman in *Second Life*" sidebar.



Figure 1.5: You may find a new friend among the dragons, vampires, and gangstas of *Second Life*.



BEING A WOMAN IN SECOND LIFE

"SL is a world where women have equality to a much greater extent than in RL. The primary advantage men have over women in RL, which influences many things, is physical strength. Here I am just as strong as any man. I don't need him to move or lift something. I can truly do anything men can do. So I have an equal opportunity to do anything I want to try."

"Also, the good-old-boy networks do not exist. Men aren't given advantages just because they are men."

"I don't have to split my time between a man, children, and doing what I want to do. I don't have to feel guilty if I chose work over children. If a woman wants to devote full time to making money, she can easily do so and not feel guilty."

"The second advantage is harder to explain. It has to do with a sense of security. Here, I can get all the attention and positive affirmation without the downside. I don't have to worry about unwanted attention. I do not have to fear the male's greater physical strength"

"The last thing that comes to mind is that the little girl inside can be as beautiful as she likes. All the wishes 'if only I...' can come true. We can be as glamorous, sexy, trampish, or whatever as we wish. We are not judged by men on looks we can't do anything about."

—Jennifer McLuhan

"Personally, I enjoy SL for a lot of reasons... this world has opportunities for everybody; where you go and how well you do is based on your imagination and your talent, not your connections or your gender or any other thing that influences RL opportunities."

"I enjoy it because I love being able to do so many things that aren't possible in the real world... and because I love having the tools to turn anything from my imagination into reality. I love being able to meet so many people who I'd never have a chance to meet in RL."



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"And yes, I enjoy SL because I love being able to look as good as I want, being able to change my look in an instant, being able to look completely different from my RL self."

"And I totally understand the security thing... it's great to have control here, to not have to worry about my personal safety. That's equally true for anyone here, male or female, but it's particularly significant for women, I think."

—Ilianexsi Sojourner

"I wanted to see what it would be like to play a male, so here's how it went:

"Went shopping. Limited choices! Men have limited choices in Second Life and real life. I guess it would be difficult making male lingerie or something sexy for men. The clothes were as pricey as female, but there wasn't much to buy. No wonder why there are so many female avatars."

"Went to a few clubs and found that men get catty like women, especially over other women. A guy wanted to kick my ass just for talking to his virtual girlfriend."

"I told people that I am a scripter and no questions were asked, but when I was a female avatar questions were asked, including 'Are you a male in RL?'"

"I thought it would be easier to be a male, but not really. Women have more choices of clothing, hair, shoes, etc."

—Damien Ferris

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:
COMMUNITY RULES

Make sure you read the Community Standards notecard! Taking out an SL membership means you automatically agree to respect SL rules. Penalties include suspension and banishment from Second Life.



MEMBERSHIP TYPES

As *Second Life* marches on, it evolves. Accordingly, membership plans can and do change. However, it's a safe bet that future variations will include the two membership types that are available at the time of writing. These are Basic membership and Premium membership, and both let you have lots of fun (see the "Membership Type Choices" sidebar).



RESIDENTS SPEAK:

MEMBERSHIP TYPE CHOICES

"Well, I am a free [Basic] member and can honestly say I'm having a ball here. Sure, if you want to own land you have to pay for a Premium account, but if your goal is simply to meet people and have fun at events you can easily do that for free. If you want extra L\$ to buy clothes or whatever, you could use the camping chairs or dance pads. You can also attend games like trivia contests and bingo and maybe win some L\$. I won L\$100 last night at an '80s trivia event.

"There are so many cool things to see at SL that I never get bored just looking around. If you want a home you can always rent land and get a free house at a yard sale (I'm doing this right now).

Have fun, because that is the best part of SL!"

—Hedgie Till

"I have been playing (minus an absence last fall/winter) for a year and a half. Up until last month still wore freebie jeans. I have a Premium account and spent very few L\$, yet I still manage to have fun and create and feel that I am getting all of the game.

"It all depends on your perception of 'all of the game.' Do you want to spend money on all sorts of gadgets, or do you want to create, explore, and try all sorts of different things?

"I don't see why a free account member cannot have the same



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← experience that a Premium account member does, aside from owning land. Do you really need a house? Are you actually going to sleep in SL?

"Get out, explore the world, experiment with building and scripting; most of all, enjoy yourself!!! Welcome to Second Life."

—Artemis Cain

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

A DUAL-ACCOUNT LIFE

For current information about Second Life membership plans, visit <http://secondlife.com/whatis/plans.php>. Consider establishing a free Basic membership right away to get a taste of what Second Life is like, and subsequently open a second, Premium account that lets you own land. It is always worth your while to have two Second Life accounts, as it lets you easily back up your Inventory.

BASIC MEMBERSHIP

A Basic membership plan entitles you to enter *Second Life* completely free of charge. It lets you enjoy all of *Second Life*'s activities and privileges except for one: you cannot own land in the *SL* world. (The consequences of this are explained later in this chapter.)

You may open additional Basic membership accounts; at the time of writing, each extra Basic account costs US\$9.95. In spite of the cost, this might be a wise step if you have many Inventory items that you'd hate to lose. Creating a second account lets you create an alternate avatar, and having an alternate avatar lets you back up your Inventory. This might not sound like a big deal if you've just started out as an *SL* resident. But after you've spent some time in *Second Life*, your Inventory is likely to contain many thousands of items, and at least a few one-off specimens that cannot be copied. The process of backing up your Inventory is described in Chapter 6.

PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP

Premium membership lets you own land. It can be argued that this feature has less and less significance as *SL* develops—renting space is increasingly popular among residents. The advantages and disadvantages of land ownership are discussed in Chapters 2 and 10; however, be aware that having space of your own in *Second Life* is important. It lets you store items outside an avatar's Inventory (see Chapter 6 for details).

Premium membership costs vary depending on how you choose to pay. At the time of writing, the base rate of \$9.95 per month shrinks to \$6 when paid in an annual lump sum. Regardless of payment plan, you receive the coveted land-ownership rights plus a L\$1,000 signup bonus and a weekly stipend of L\$400. Note that all the quoted numbers are subject to change; please visit <http://secondlife.com/whatis/plans.php> for updated info.

There is no limit on how much land you can own in *Second Life*. However, the cost of owning land increases with the size of your real-estate holdings. This and other practical issues are discussed in the next chapter.



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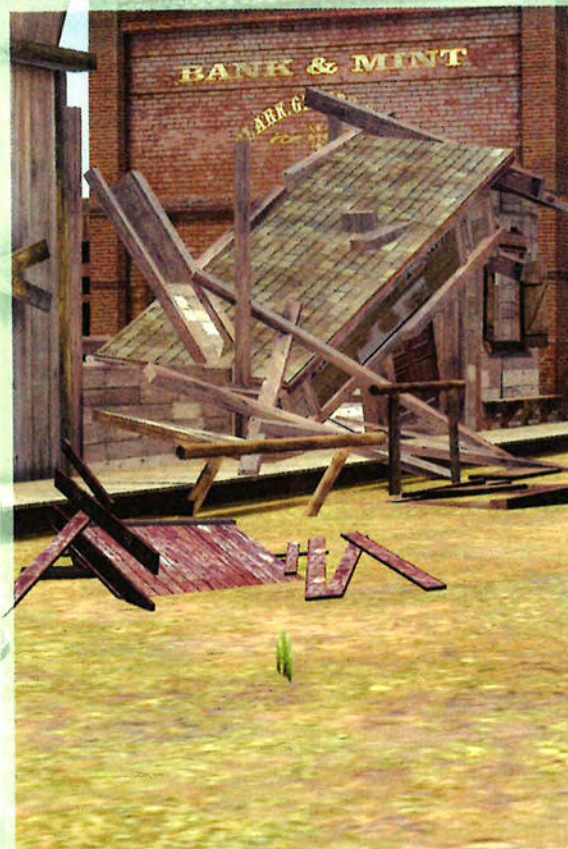
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GETTING STARTED

Living a life means making choices, and you'll be making plenty from the moment you log onto *Second Life* for the first time.

There is a third-person view and a first-person view. There are pull-down menus at the top of the screen and a button menu at the bottom. Should you stay on Help Island for a while, or dive into the action on the mainland right away? And once you've arrived on the mainland, what should you do next?

This chapter will help you sort out those and other issues that appear the moment you begin your virtual existence. It is intended mainly for new *SL* denizens, but it can also be very helpful to anyone who has been impatient and dived headfirst into *Second Life*. If you've ever wished you could return to Help Island, if only to grab some of the new freebies that have become available there, this chapter's for you, too.





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TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR SECOND LIFE

Being familiar with the *Second Life* interface enriches your virtual experience: almost every button, menu, and options panel is a doorway to new possibilities. The sections that follow synthesize all the interface info for your convenience. You'll find some extra information in the guides, and how-to instructions in the *Second Life* Knowledge Base (<http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase>).



ADDITIONAL INFO:

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

To obtain a list of SL keyboard shortcuts, visit <http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/article.php?id=075>. It's a good idea to print the list and keep it handy until you've memorized the shortcuts you use. The camera-control shortcuts are particularly helpful.

FIRST STEPS

If you intend to become a new *SL* resident, begin by checking whether your system allows you to have a second life. At the time of writing, the system requirements are as follows. (Please note that this book is written with the assumption that you're using a PC as the portal to your second life. If you're using a Mac, please refer to <http://secondlife.com/corporate/sysreqs.php>.)

-  **High-speed Internet connection**
-  **Operating system:** Windows XP (Service Pack 2) **OR** Windows 2000 (Service Pack 4)
-  **Computer Processor:** 800MHz Pentium III or better
-  **Memory:** 256MB or better
-  **Video/graphics card:** NVIDIA GeForce 2, GeForce 4mx, or better **or** ATI Radeon 8500, 9250, or better

To view the latest system requirements, please visit <http://secondlife.com/corporate/sysreqs.php>. If you're running a firewall, note that *Second Life* needs to connect to ports 443/TCP, 12035/UDP, 12036/UDP, and 13000-13050/UDP. You should configure your firewall to allow outbound traffic on those ports, and related inbound traffic.

Upon logging into *Second Life*, you're presented with a login screen that contains an important button: Preferences (Figure 2.1). Many new *SL* citizens are so eager to enter the virtual world that they never check it out. If you've been one of them, click it the next time you log in. It opens the Preferences panel, which contains 10 tabs:

- **General.** This tab offers basic *SL* options such as avatar name and title display, notifications of friends online and of money spent or received, etc.
- **Input and Camera.** This lets you adjust mouse sensitivity in mouselook (first-person view) and a quality called camera springiness. If you're after precision, use the sliders to reduce mouse sensitivity and camera springiness to 0.
- **Network.** You need to configure settings here if you're logging onto *Second Life* from inside a LAN. You can also lower maximum bandwidth if you have a slow connection (the default of 500 kbps is comfortably in excess of actual available bandwidth).
- **Graphics.** This tab presents basic graphic settings such as screen resolution and draw distance. Draw distance determines how far you can see in the virtual world. Lowering draw distance and screen resolution can improve performance if you have a relatively slow system or an old video card.



Figure 2.1: Adjusting the settings on the Preferences panel can optimize *SL* performance on your computer.



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- 🔧 **Graphics Detail.** This lets you adjust the amount of detail visible in the virtual world. Lower settings improve performance on slow systems/old video cards. Note that some options, such as Enable Ripple Water, may be disabled if your system or video card is not up to par.
- 🔧 **Adv. Graphics.** More graphic-detail choices await here; their effects are explained in the submenu. Generally, lowering the displayed default values improves performance.
- 🔧 **Audio and Video.** You'll definitely want to review the default choices on this submenu. They include audio muting, playing streaming music and videos, SFX volume, etc.
- 🔧 **Chat.** This lets you switch chat bubbles on and off, change the color and size of displayed text, and adjust miscellaneous chat settings.
- 🔧 **IM.** This tab opens a small submenu with instant-messaging options.
- 🔧 **Popups.** Here you can choose which messages you want to see displayed in the world.

Take the time to review the default settings in the Preferences panel, and adjust them as appropriate for your system and Internet connection. If you'd like more info on what individual options can do for you, visit <http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/article.php?id=087> to read more about them.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

THE STATISTIC BAR

*To get detailed info on how well Second Life is running on your computer, activate the **Statistic Bar** by pressing **CTRL + Shift + 1**. Visit <http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/article.php?id=091> to find out more.*

WHAT'S ON THE MENU

Second Life's main screen features a top bar and a bottom bar. Both are packed fairly tightly with features. Many of these, though not all, are discussed in the *SL*

Knowledge Base at <http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/category.php?id=19>. The following sections review what is what.

The top bar includes a set of Windows-style pull-down menus (Figure 2.2). Some of the commands available through the pull-down menus are *not* accessible through any other menu or shortcut. You'll find a full list of pull-down menu commands and an explanation of what each command means in Appendix D.



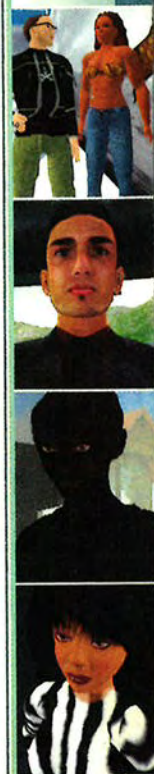
Figure 2.2: The pull-down menus contain commands and helpful shortcuts, such as the one to the LSL scripting guide.

To the right of the pull-down menus, you'll see icons showing whether any activities are disallowed in your avatar's present location. If you are unsure what an icon means, hover your mouse cursor over it to bring up a tooltip. Your avatar's location—name of region, map coordinates, area rating, etc. —is shown right next to the icons.

Moving farther right, you'll see a clock displaying Pacific Standard Time. Residents call it "SL time." Money comes next: the little round Linden-dollar icon lets you buy *SL* currency through the LindeX (Basic members should note this requires credit card info). Your current L\$ balance is next: it's updated instantly following every financial transaction. Finally, at the extreme left of the top bar, you'll see packet-loss and bandwidth indicators. Pay attention to these; high packet loss and low bandwidth may mean it's wise to cancel that planned visit to a busy nightclub.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The bottom bar features a row of buttons. From left to right, here's what is what:



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- **IM** opens the Instant Message panel. If you have unread IMs from other *SL* residents, you'll see their names on tabs along the bottom of the panel. Click on a tab to read the IM from the named resident.
- **Chat** opens the Chat box for typing text, but pressing the Enter key is much simpler and has the same effect.
- **Friends** opens a panel listing all the *SL* people who've agreed to be your friend and tells you which are currently online. It acts as a small administrative center for common *SL* actions such as sending IMs, offering teleports to your current location, etc.
- **Fly** toggles the Fly mode and is quite useful despite the convenient keyboard shortcuts (Page Up/Page Down is the default). Clicking it to stop flying will let you watch an entertaining animation as your avatar descends for a semihard landing (depending on how high you've been soaring around).
- **Snapshot** opens the Snapshot Preview panel for taking snaps of the virtual world. Set all the options, such as snapshot size, resolution, image quality, etc. here.
- **Build** opens the Build panel, and it's active only if the land you're on allows building (a sandbox area, your own land).
- **Mini-Map** opens a mini-map in the upper-right corner of the screen. It can be useful when trying to find your way somewhere, or in busy, crowded areas such as commercial malls and entertainment complexes.
- **Map** is, hands down, the most powerful button of them all. It opens a resizeable, rescaleable map of the *SL* world that's much more than a map. It includes Search functions and is also an interface for instant travel: double-clicking on any spot teleports your avatar to that location. In the virtual world, activities such as walking or driving a vehicle are entertainment choices, not necessities. Now you know why most of the roads and streets in *Second Life* are empty.
- **Inventory** opens the Inventory panel (CTRL + I is the shortcut).

Note that the button menu may be inaccessible if you've set your Windows taskbar to stay on top of other application windows; in that case, right-click the Windows taskbar and select Properties to make the necessary changes.



Right-clicking on almost anything in the virtual world brings up a pie menu. The menu's options are context-sensitive and depend on the properties of what you clicked on. To find out more about SL pie menus, visit <http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/article.php?id=133>.

VIEWS AND MOVEMENT

The standard *SL* view is the "follow" mode, with the camera behind and slightly above your avatar. However, some people find the mouselook or first-person view to be far more convenient when moving around. If walking down a street and keeping to the pavement proves a comically difficult exercise using the standard view, switch to mouselook. Mouselook is also great for flying: you'll fly in the direction indicated by your mouse cursor. Thus, you can turn, ascend, and descend by moving your mouse—it feels as if you were flying a plane.

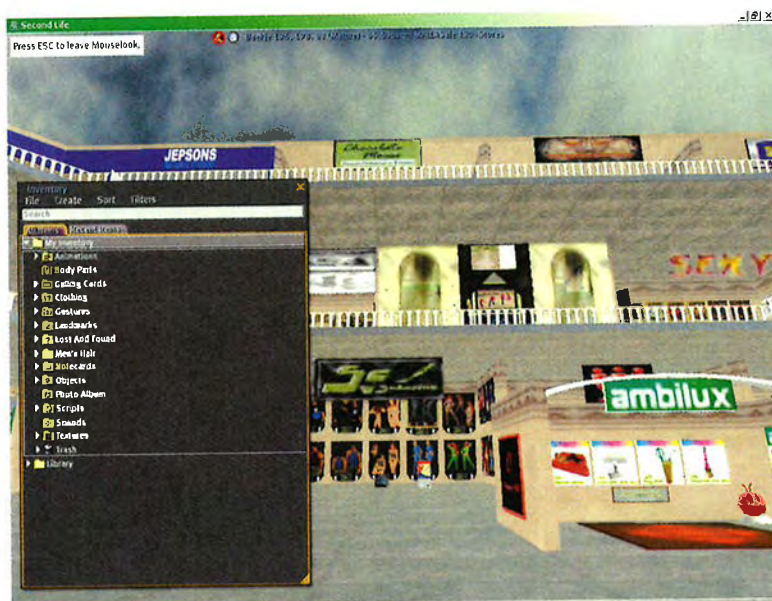


Figure 2.3: Use keyboard shortcuts for menu functions in mouselook.

You cannot access the onscreen menus in mouselook, which is quite a drawback. However, you can still use shortcut keys to execute commands: for example, open your Inventory by pressing CTRL + I (Figure 2.3). Keeping the ALT key depressed lets you move the mouse cursor without changing the view; once the cursor is over a panel, you can let go of the key and proceed to do what you wanted to do (for



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example, rearrange Inventory items). The ALT key also lets you move the camera around and zoom in and out while in the standard "follow" view.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

FLIGHT PACKS

The SL marketplace features all types of aircraft as well as many models of "flight packs." These can be very sophisticated and very affordable—see the "Flying High in Second Life" sidebar for a few examples of aircraft for sale. Chapter 3 discusses Abbott's Aerodrome, a popular place to purchase aircraft.

SIDEBAR



ADDITIONAL INFO:

FLYING HIGH IN SECOND LIFE**DEFCON 1 AEROSPACE VEHICLES (FREE DEMO FLIGHTS)**

Sponsored by Marlin Engineering. Some of the best flying vehicles in Second Life, smooth and responsive flight model...sleek stylish looks, low prim for low lag. Nice features and reasonable price, one- and two-person fighters L\$500, five-person shuttle L\$600.

INTELLIGENT FLIGHT ASSIST / JETPACK @ AODHAN'S FORGE

It's no ordinary jetpack. The Scarab was designed with your convenience in mind. Making a flight pack go fast is easy, but what really matters is making a flight pack do what you want it to do...automatically. The Scarab almost completely takes away the fumbling with typed commands while giving you the flight assist you need, when you need it. Details at SL.AodhansForge.com.

DREAMTECH AERONAUTICS

Specializing in airships of various kinds, historic, futuristic, and fantastic. Visit us for a test flight today!

Zeppelins, airships, flying ships, aircraft, blimps, sailboats, sailing, yachts, teleporters, teleportation system.



CRYSTALTECH *VEHICLES*

Home of the unbeaten most realistic vehicle models in SL!

Vehicles store. Get spaceships, choppers/helicopters, and jetfighters. All featuring physical smooth flight.

As mentioned earlier, "ordinary" movement—walking, flying, driving a vehicle, or taking the streetcar—is a source of entertainment and an opportunity to socialize; it's not a necessity. The introduction of instant teleporting, free of charge, any time and anywhere, has made all other modes of movement unnecessary except when inside small, confined spaces. But a drive in a virtual car, a stroll around a shopping mall, or a visit to a nightclub can be entertaining. Walking and flying are definitely the preferred movement modes when you're sightseeing. The *SL* world contains more interesting places to visit than most tourist hotspots in the real world; you'll find more details in Chapter 3.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

SETTING LANDMARKS

Set landmarks on the SL map to move quickly between your favorite places, or to arrive in specific spots, such as a venue for an event you want to attend. Visit <http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/category.php?id=22> for detailed info on navigation and movement in Second Life.

CHAPTER 2



LEARNING ABOUT SECOND LIFE

Second Life offers you almost as many choices as real life does. Visit the *Second Life* Knowledge Base right at the start of your new existence, if only to review all the topics covered—it will help you get an idea of what's possible. The Knowledge Base is updated constantly as new features become available, so it's a good idea to revisit it on a regular basis. The guides and how-to articles featured there are a great way to find out more about how things work in the virtual world. The Knowledge Base is complemented by the *Second Life* Wiki. These two sources contain invaluable



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information, regardless of whether your interest is in running a virtual business, making movies, or socializing and role playing.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

SEARCHING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Puzzled about something? Enter the appropriate keyword into the SL Knowledge Base search box. Chances are you'll find a whole series of articles, guides, and tutorials related to your chosen subject.

If you need a little personal guidance, acquire a mentor. Mentors are volunteers who are longtime *SL* residents. Most often, they specialize in a particular skill or knowledge area—for example, creating new virtual objects with prims. You'll encounter some mentors on Help Island. And if you don't come across a mentor in the arrival area on the *SL* mainland, use the search function: enter "mentor" and pick the All tab on the Search panel. You can refine your search further to find a mentor who is knowledgeable about a topic you're interested in.

ORIENTATION ISLAND AND HELP ISLAND

Your virtual existence begins on Orientation Island. The short tutorial offered there will teach you a few basics, but not more than that. Your next stop will be Help Island (Figure 2.4), and this is where you should stay awhile. In addition to snapping up the freebies from the Freebie Shop, you should definitely visit the tutorials and demo areas. If you don't understand something clearly, ask the mentors on duty in the Help Island arrival area.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

RETURNING TO YOUR ROOTS

Your avatar cannot return to Orientation or Help Island once it has arrived on the mainland, but you can. You can start a new basic account at no charge and revisit the two islands. Creating a second or alternate avatar is a wise step, since it lets you back up your Inventory (see Chapter 6).

Make sure you collect and keep all the notecards from Help Island; you'll be seeing and experiencing too many new things to remember everything. In particular, the Explorer Guidebook (which tells you where to go on the mainland if you want to repeat Orientation Island tutorials) and Real Life Education Places notecards are worth keeping when you're doing your first big Inventory cleanup prior to departing for the mainland.



Figure 2.4: Make sure you explore all of Help Island.

Once you've arrived on the mainland, use the Search function to find out where you can learn more about various aspects of *Second Life*. Choices range from attending classes and courses at one of the many schools and universities to learning how to be a good servant to an *SL* master. The classes and courses available aren't limited to *Second Life* subjects; you may pick up valuable real-life skills!

MAINLAND CHOICES

Once you're on the mainland, your priorities are shaped by the kind of virtual life you want to live. But regardless of your interests, you'll make two choices early on: whether to have a place of your own in the virtual world, and whether to remain a lone wolf or become part of a specific community.

FORMING AND JOINING GROUPS

Any two *SL* residents, regardless of membership plan type, can form a group (right-click on your avatar and choose Groups from the pie menu). The resident who



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initiated this process becomes the group's founder and enjoys special privileges. It is interesting to note that group rules in general have evolved from a democratic, open model toward a more authoritarian one with SL updates. It seems that the young age of virtual society made formally organized communities too immature for democracy, resulting in the breakup of many ambitious enterprises. At the time of writing, group rules are slightly reminiscent of a monarchy, with the founder designating successors to carry on the work: you'll find details at <http://secondlife.com/app/help/new/groups.php>. The new authoritarian group structure promises to be helpful to the long-term survival of many organized SL communities.

Organized communities greatly enrich the virtual world (Figure 2.5). There are no restrictions on community size or the degree of their organizational development, and some even resemble micronations. However, many communities—and estate owners—have goals other than expansion (see the “Groups and Communities” sidebar). If you look around, you're sure to find many groups whose goals or activities appeal to you. You can belong to as many as 25 different groups, including those that you started yourself.

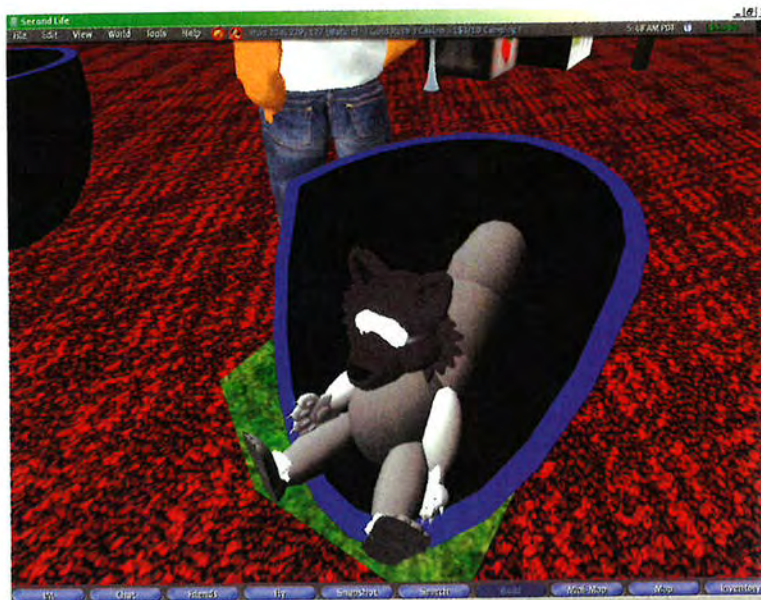


Figure 2.5: There is a place for everyone and everything in the virtual world.

SIDEBAR



ADDITIONAL INFO:

GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

"The Neualtenburg Projekt is a private land cooperative formed in 2004 now occupying one entire simulator or "sim" of 64 virtual acres in Second Life acquired directly from Linden Lab in May 2005. It attempts to



← simulate the look and feel of a functioning Bavarian city with residential, commercial and public spaces. The cooperative has a democratic republican government with three branches and a constitution. The simulated city is open to the public, but participation in the government requires the acquisition of virtual land in the city. Acquisition of land constitutes agreement to abide by various specific standards of building and activity in the city.

Title to the entire sim is actually "owned" (licensed from Linden Lab) by an avatar as "Estate Owner." This status allows the treasurer to deed land to ownership groups and to reclaim land from those groups. For its convenience, Neualtenburg has chosen to appoint the "alt" of its treasurer to accept title to the land as estate owner on behalf of the municipality.

In return for a one-time payment, resident's ownership groups receive grant deeds to particular parcels, allowing them rights to use specific parcels of virtual land as long as they conform to the city's land use regulations and payment of monthly land use fees in the nature of property tax. Residents' rights may be terminated and their virtual property reclaimed by the city for breach of the various covenants and agreements. Residents in good standing may sell their virtual land rights to third parties approved by the city."

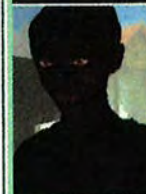
—from "The Neualtenburg Projekt Summary" by Frank Lardner

Earlier today I have formed the Second Life chapter of the Socialist Party. In doing this, I hope to provide an alternative way for individuals to commune, interact, and produce. I also hope to utilize Party membership to launch some in-world political activism. Our goal isn't to overthrow the free market of Second Life or anything like that, as most people seem to enjoy virtual capitalism, we just want there to be options. If anybody is interested in helping out with SPSL, then instant message Lenin Camus.

Also, for members in need, I'm offering some free rent homes."

—Lenin Camus

"Caledon is a small, windswept forested country at a temperate latitude. Wild creatures, country estate life, sights and sounds that were common well over 100 years ago are the hallmark of the land. →



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Technology is approximately that of the 19th century, though some astonishing breakthroughs have provided for incredible wonders. Ground vehicles, airships, and even a device known as a Telehub are made possible through the power of exotic material properties and the wonders of steam technology. (The Steampunk community has a strong presence in Caledon, including The Manor, headquarters of the Steampunks group.)

The government is an expansionist monarchy, supported by a strong aristocracy (i.e., residents). Caledon offers the opportunity for residents to take their turn at "Stewardship," a post which can involve answering questions, restarting sims, banning obvious griefers, etc."

—from SL History Wiki: The Independent State of Caledon

COMMUNITY LAND

A group is an association of two or more residents sharing common aims and/or interests. However, groups may and frequently do own land that is purchased from Linden Lab by the estate owner, or donated by individual group members.

NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO:

THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY LAND

The land-ownership structure in SL rewards residents who form organized communities: member land-tier donations to group estates receive a 10% bonus. Thus, donating 512 square meters of tier results in the group being able to hold 563 square meters.

Land ownership in *Second Life* does not require a Premium membership plan when the land in question is purchased from an estate owner. The intricacies involved are explained in detail in the *Second Life* Knowledge Base: just keep in mind that becoming an estate owner—purchasing land from Linden Lab—does require Premium membership and can carry significant extra costs.

OWNING VIRTUAL LAND

Owning land in *Second Life* carries land-use costs. Your Premium membership includes land-use costs for up to 512 square meters of real estate. If you want to own more, the costs increase. Table 2.1 displays land area/associated land-use costs at the time of writing.

Table 2.1: Land-Use Costs

ADDITIONAL LAND (OVER 512 SQ METERS)	MAXIMUM AREA (IN SQUARE METERS)	MONTHLY LAND-USE FEE
1/128 Region	512 sq. meters	US\$5
1/64 Region	1,024 sq. meters	US\$8
1/32 Region	2,048 sq. meters	US\$15
1/16 Region	4,096 sq. meters	US\$25
1/8 Region	8,192 sq. meters	US\$40
1/4 Region	16,384 sq. meters	US\$75
1/2 Region	32,768 sq. meters	US\$125
Entire Region	65,536 sq. meters	US\$195

Land Use Fees are always charged monthly and are determined by peak land ownership within the period for which they apply. If you're a real-estate speculator beginning and ending the month with 512 square meters but hitting a peak 10,000 square meters midway through the month, you'll pay Land Use Fees for 1/4 Region (US\$75). Note that donating land to a group does not absolve you of carrying its Land Use Fees. However, a Basic membership plan holder who buys land from an estate owner does not have to pay land-upkeep fees *unless* this is specified in the land covenant. However, owners of land in organized communities often make periodical payments such as land "taxes" that defray Land Use Fees to the estate owner or administrator.

If you look at the table data carefully, you should notice a pattern: the more land you own, the less it costs per square meter. This is unlikely to change even if the fees do. This can have important implications on trading for profit in the land market. Chapter 10 discusses more ways to make money in *Second Life*.



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NOTE



ADDITIONAL INFO: REAL-ESTATE RICHES

At the time of writing, the richest SL resident is Anshe Chung—a real-estate tycoon whose virtual holdings, as reported by the real-world magazine Business Week, are rumored to be worth around a quarter million real-life US dollars.

There is no limit on your virtual land holdings. If you like, you can order and purchase your very own made-to-order island from Linden Lab. *Second Life* islands cannot be smaller than a single region (65,536 square meters). At the time of writing, the two island sizes on offer are one and four regions. Note that regardless of the island's starting size, extra land in the form of additional island may be added to the island at a later date, if there is room around the island on the map.

Owning a little personal empire is not cheap. At the time of writing, island-setup fees are US\$1,250 for a one-region island and \$5,000 for the four-region model. In addition, island owners pay standard Land Use Fees. Visit <http://secondlife.com/community/land-islands.php> for up-to-date island-ownership info, and <http://secondlife.com/whatis/landpricing.php> to check on current Land Use Fees.



Figure 2.6: You rule your land through the About Land panel.

Before you commit to joining any groups or buying real estate, it's wise to get an idea of the lay of the land and have a comprehensive picture of what goes on where. Accordingly, the next chapter takes you on a tour of the *SL* mainland.

**THE ABOUT LAND PANEL**

Right-click on land you own and select About Land to open a panel with many land-management options (Figure 2.6). These include restricting access, issuing permission to run scripts, playing music, banning specific residents, etc. Note that when you buy land from an estate owner, land-management options may be modified in accordance with the land covenant.



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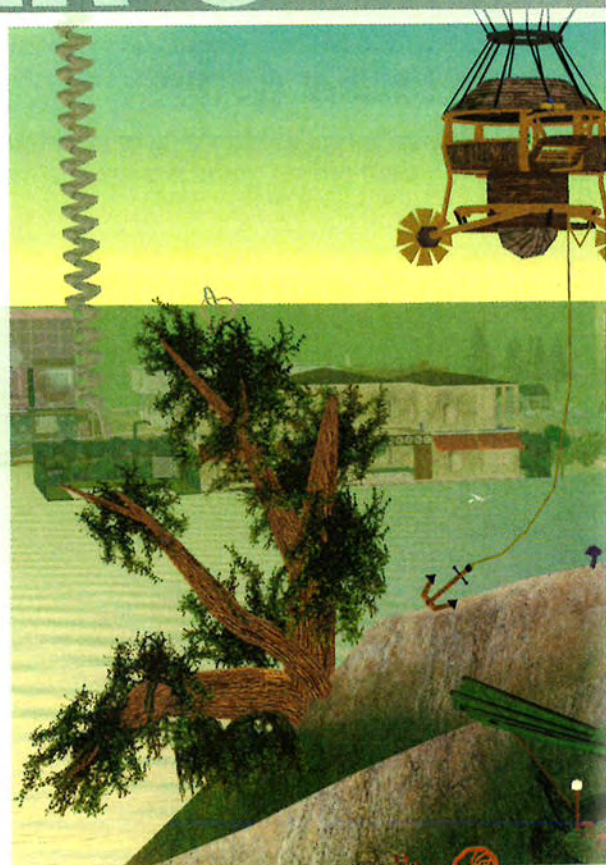
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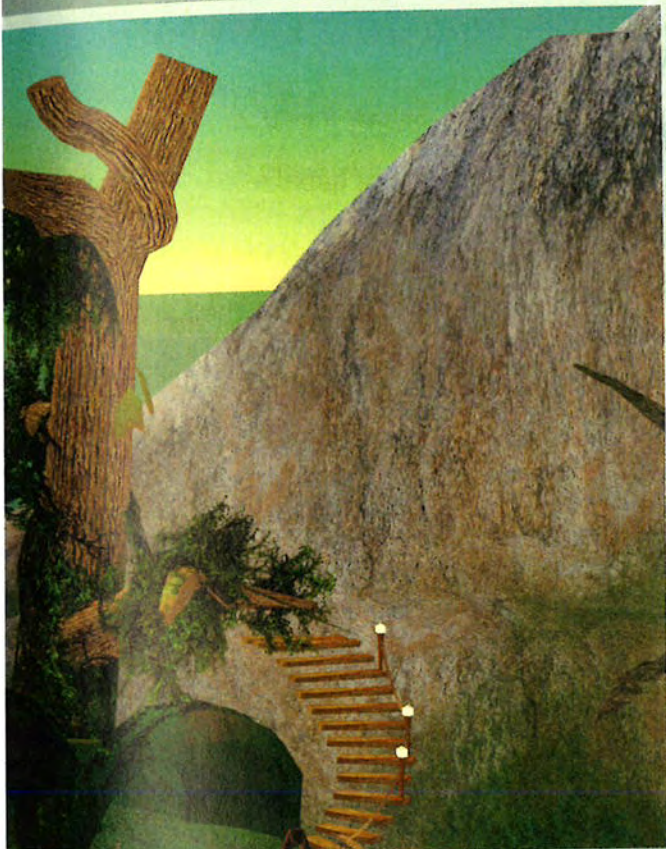
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CHAPTER 3

THE GRAND TOUR

A hundred years ago, young men of position were sent on a "grand tour" of Europe to round out their cultural education. A hundred years from now, young men and women may make a similar tour of virtual worlds. Now's your chance to get a head start. If you visit all the spots in this chapter, you'll not only have a good grounding in *Second Life's* cultural history, but you'll also get a look at a few of the most robust communities on the grid, and you'll have peeked at a few places most people won't know about. The only question is, what are you going to do with your education?





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WHERE TO BEGIN?

Spend enough time with Philip Rosedale, founder and CEO of Linden Lab, and you'll eventually hear him talk about "the event horizon of content creation." There was a time, Philip wistfully recalls, when a body could take in all the new content that was added to the *Second Life* grid every day—every house, every car, every new dress or hairdo that the residents had created. But that point was passed more than a year ago, according to Rosedale. These days, you're lucky to be able to visit a fraction of what's added to the virtual world every 24 hours.

How do you figure out what's worth seeing then? One way is to check out what other people are checking out. *Second Life*'s "search" interface includes a list of the most popular places on the grid. These are the places that have climbed to the top of the list over many months; it features old standbys with good staying power, but the latest hot nightclub might not have made it onto the list yet. You can also look on the Picks tab of other residents' profiles, where people list their favorite places in the world. To get to them, just click the Teleport button or Show on Map to see where you're going. Each location in this chapter is indicated by the name of a region followed by three numbers: the X, Y, and Z coordinates within the region (indicating east-west location, north-south location, and height, respectively). Taken together, these coordinates describe any location on the grid.

Of course, the best way to figure out the latest trends is just to keep your eyes open and your ear to the ground. But trends come and go—perhaps surprisingly, *Second Life* features a great deal of content that's stuck around longer than most people expected it would. Builds like Eddie Escher's Seacliff towers have been around for two years or more. Other establishments have been around even longer.

Choosing the ones that are both stable additions and must-see spots isn't easy. There's no doubt that the list below is biased toward a few of the places I find most interesting on the grid. However, it also includes places I rarely visit but that stick out as institutions in *Second Life* (The Edge nightclub, for instance). I've tried to include oldies but goodies, a few of the spots that have drawn the most attention from a wider audience (the Svarga "living sim," for instance), and a few lesser-known but still-important hangouts that might not make it onto everyone's list.



DESTINATIONS FOR NEWCOMERS

Many *Second Life* locations are designed expressly for those new to the world. From Linden-run welcome areas and sandboxes to resident-run nightclubs and outreach organizations, there's always a helping hand available to those who've just set foot in this strange new world.

AHERN WELCOME AREA—AHERN (12, 12, 40)

The intersection of the Ahern, Bonifacio, Dore, and Morris sims marks the main welcome area at which new residents enter *Second Life*. Pick up freebies, practice building, or get pointers on the latest must-see sites. *SL* veterans often hang out here, lending a helping hand to those just learning how to find their way. Drop in if you have a question, or if you feel like being of service; just remember: no shooting or selling allowed.

NEW CITIZENS PLAZA—KUULA (54, 175, 29)

New to *Second Life* and unsure where to begin? Lots of great information can be had at New Citizens Plaza, an open resource for newbies that's stocked with plenty of free stuff, pointers to interesting places and more free stuff, guides to getting around, and helpful staffers willing to lend a hand. The most heartening thing about the place? It's run entirely by residents, so you can be sure you're getting the inside scoop.

THE SHELTER—ISABEL (44, 244, 79)

The Shelter is one of the rare *SL* social spaces that's both welcoming to new residents and completely free of sexual content. Travis Lambert describes his newbie-friendly nightclub as more of a rec center than a disco. The Shelter bills itself as "the friendliest spot in *SL*," and its staff takes pains to help out newbies, showering them with free gifts and showing them the ropes. Dance parties feature pop tunes from the 1980s and '90s, and free game shows, lotteries, and contests help give new residents a financial leg up. If dancing's not your bag, hang by the pool on the patio out back. For Lambert, it's important that the Shelter feel as comfortable as a living



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room. "I think it's turned into a place people feel good about and consider their first home when they come to *SL*," he says.

THE SANDBOXES

The sandboxes provide a place for *SL*'s landless residents to get their build on, though you can often find accomplished builders stretching out in them as well. Public sandboxes have all builds wiped every 12 hours, so be sure to save a copy. Private sandboxes vary. Both are great places to get building tips and meet new friends—and occasionally to feel the push of a griever's gun. Here's a list of public sandboxes, ordered from busiest to loneliest:

Sandbox Island (Figures 3.1 and 3.2)

Goguen Sandbox

Cordova Sandbox

Newcomb Sandbox

Morris Sandbox



Figure 3.1: Sandbox Island at the height of newbie building...



Figure 3.2. ...and right after a wipe

YADNI'S JUNKYARD—LEDA (210, 28, 54)

The blue-skinned YadNi Monde is one of *Second Life*'s most accomplished builders. An imposing presence in person, YadNi maintains one of the best resources for newbies at his junkyard in the Leda sim, where any number of textures, clothing, vehicles, toys, and other objects are available at bargain-basement prices of L\$1 for a box full of junk. But it's useful junk, to be sure. The junkyard is an invaluable stop, and a good place to revisit for new additions.

IVORY TOWER LIBRARY OF PRIMITIVES—NATOMA (210, 164, 27)

A self-guided, self-paced, comprehensive building tutorial, the Ivory Tower has launched any number of successful *Second Life* building careers. Even 30 minutes spent here will prove valuable if you plan on doing any building at all. The explanations are clear and concise, and sample objects are provided to illustrate the concepts being taught.

CHAPTER 3



STUFF TO SEE

Second Life has no shortage of locations that are interesting in and of themselves. Many of the places listed in the Stuff to See category also have activities associated with them—like shopping in the anime sim of Nakama—but these are also simply some of the most striking areas of the virtual world.

ARMORD COMPLEX—MIRAMARE (192, 38, 33)

One of the oldest neighborhoods in *SL*, the skyscraping towers of the ARMORD complex in Miramare (Figure 3.3) feature jetpacks, sci-fi mech-bot armor suits, *Tron*-style lightcycles, and the FURMORD line of furry mech helmets—all for sale at reasonable *SL* prices. Check out the observation deck at the space needle (a reproduction of the Seattle tower), the explorers' maps, and the science experiments—including a working toaster!



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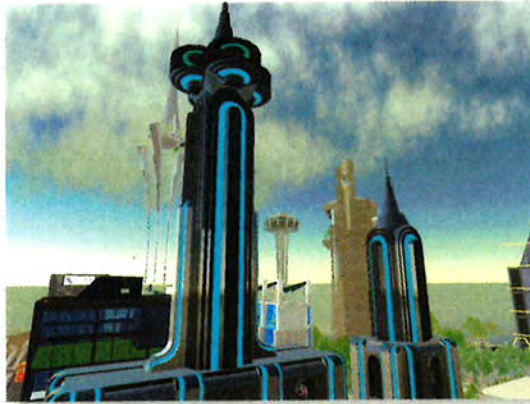


Figure 3.3: The towers of ARMORD



Figure 3.4: The virtual ecosystem at work

SVARGA (7, 123, 22)

SL resident Laukosargas Svarog spent a year creating Svarga (Figure 3.4), a functioning ecosystem in which the sun and the wind, the birds and the bees are all crucial to the continued growth of the plants and animals. Drop in to feed the birds and watch the grass grow.

RAMBLER COUNTY, TEXAS—GLUPHISIA (240, 62, 93)

Check out Nash Rambler's detailed re-creation of a rural Texas town, complete with general store, water tower, church, farm, and rutting deer. Catch Nash at home to enjoy his southern hospitality.

SCI-FI GEEKS MUSEUM AND THEATER—INDIGO (74, 212, 22)

Take the helm of a Klingon Bird of Prey or the USS *Defiant* from *Star Trek* at the Sci-Fi Geeks Museum. Both ships feature intricately re-created interiors (best navigated in mouselook). The museum also sports a functioning holodeck and a theater that shows a rotation of sci-fi-movie trailers. If you're lucky, you may even meet your Lieutenant Uhura here, so wear your dress uniform (Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5: Prepare to be boarded.



Figure 3.6: Spaceport Alpha

INTERNATIONAL SPACEFLIGHT MUSEUM—SPACEPORT ALPHA (47, 77, 24)

Impressive scale models of rockets from throughout the history of space flight adorn this outdoor museum (Figure 3.6), which also includes a clockwork solar-system model; an amphitheater where lectures and music events take place; and a gift shop featuring art, apparel, and working Archer rockets, complete with smoke and fire trail. Look out for passersby before you light one off.

ANIME PARADISE—NAKAMA (128, 127, 21)

For fans of the Japanese cartoon style known as anime, Nakama is the place to be. Four *ku*, or neighborhoods, are devoted to anime styles from seedy to cute to slice-of-life to stories set in feudal-era Japan. Although there's a slight shortage of the art itself, there's no lack of outfits and other accessories that can make your second life more colorfully Japanese-style.

BLACKLIBRARY—HYPERBOREA (92, 58, 23)

Wandering Yaffle's extensive collection of game-related writing draws a vibrant, intellectual crowd to his *_blacklibrary*, named for the <http://alwaysblack.com> site



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it links to. Visit the art gallery or just hang out in the _blackbored, the underground bar named for the site's discussion forums.

THE PORT (251, 79, 26)

Billed as "an arena and an archive for projects that create new links between first and *Second Life*," the Port presents a vast, futuristic facade crisscrossed with network links and data representations in the style of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (in which "cyberspace" was coined). A challenging place to make sense of, the Port will at least spark your thinking as to how your online life relates to your offline one.

THE FUTURE (133, 211, 65)

An entire sim packed with unique visions of—what else?—the future; from architecture to landscapes to art, The Future is an ever-changing wonderland of futuristic builds, vehicles, and hangouts, and one of the most visually delightful places in *SL*.

SEACLIFF (168, 200, 24)

Filled with the stunning structures of Eddie Escher, Fallingwater Cellardoor, and Reitsuki Kojima, Seaciff boasts some of the most satisfyingly fanciful architecture in *Second Life*. A lovely place for a virtual picnic.

SIDEBAR



RESIDENTS SPEAK:

SEASIDE VILLAGE BY THE FOREST OF KAHRUVEL

"One of my absolute favorite places in Second Life is the Seaside Village (Figure 3.7) near the Forest of Kahruvel—Cowell (152, 79, 26). It's peaceful and charming and convenient to the forest, which is in and of itself a fantastic place for exploring, games of hide-and-go-seek, picnics, or pretty much any outdoor activity you can think of. The village, though, is my favorite because it looks and, more importantly, it feels like a real place I know and haven't been to for a very long



time. It makes me nostalgic for sitting on a patio drinking wine and eating olives and cheese with friends I also haven't seen for a very long time."

—Chance Takashi



Figure 3.7: The Seaside Village: you might as well be in Greece.

NOVA ALBION "CITY" SIMS

SL architect Lordfly Digeridoo has been a resident of a place called Nova Albion since January 2004. Consisting of the four "city" sims of Grignano, Miramare, Sistiana, and Barcola (where twice as many objects can be built as elsewhere), Nova Albion was designed with a pre-arranged layout of roads, sidewalks, and trolleys before residents were allowed to move in. "The idea was to get a city feel going," says Digeridoo. "Dozens moved in, toyed with the city idea, then left. Now there's only a handful of residents there, but they've collectively kept the theme going informally, as well as coming up with distinct neighborhoods: Miramare is best known for shiny, techno-future builds; Grignano is known for brick-and-mortar brownstones and artistic havens." Barcola and Sistiana are the slums, often being graced with factories, warehouses, and the like.

Barcola

Grignano

Miramare

Sistiana



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Figure 3.8: Hobo village or welcome area?

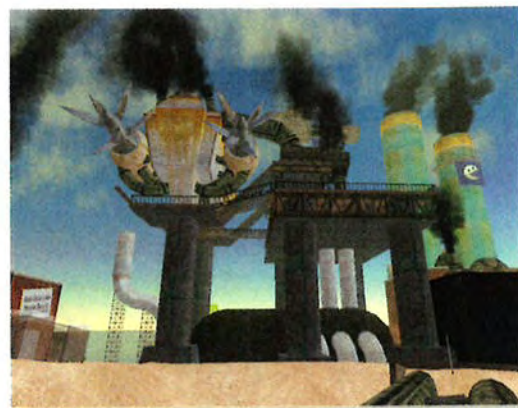


Figure 3.9: Churning out absurdity

HOBO VILLAGE—CALLETA (151, 201, 31)

Masquerading as a broken-down trainyard, this impressively detailed build (Figure 3.8) is really a Linden-run area with information for new residents, and a real hobo village complete with cardboard boxes and outdoor bathtub for “homeless” *SL* residents.

SOMETHING AWFUL—BAKU (128, 128, 33)

Known in *Second Life* as the W-Hats, this community of refugees from the forums at <http://www.somethingawful.com> specializes in creating the most outrageously offensive builds in *SL*—though also some of the most impressive. Their home in the Baku sim (Figure 3.9) is a constantly shifting melange of polluted factories, natural disasters, lovingly re-created assassination scenes, and some of the murkiest irony anywhere on the Internet.

OIL RIG—ANWR (105, 170, 40)

With almost everything on the grid built by residents, the few Linden constructions are worth noting on any grand tour. One of the most impressive is the oil rig in the ANWR sim (Figure 3.10) along the corridor that connects the mainland with the northern continent. Besides being highly detailed, the oil rig has also been the site of informal chats between residents and *SL* head honcho Philip Linden. Be sure to explore the interior, and find out just where all those prims come from in the first place.



Figure 3.10: The heart of prim production on the grid



Figure 3.11: Magellan Linden's wrecked exploration craft

MAGELLAN LINDEN CRASH SITE—COLUMBIA (170, 110, 29)

A crashed airship still lies at the site (Figure 3.11), where the explorer Magellan Linden "discovered" *SL*'s northern continent. Little has been heard from Magellan since he stumbled on the remains of a strange moth-worshipping civilization that briefly provided the fictional excuse for *SL*'s northward expansion.

MOTH TEMPLE—IRIS (202, 138, 30)

Among the ruins left by the moth-worshippers is this grand temple to an unknown moth god (Figure 3.12). It's well worth a midnight visit, and it's said that the moth god still visits on occasion, though the apparition has never been documented. The nearby roller coaster at Phantom Island—Istar (90, 204, 21)—is worth a spin as well.



Figure 3.12: Though the moth gods are gone, their temple still stands.



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INTERLUDES



STUFF TO DO

From shootouts to NASCAR heats, full-sail regattas or free-love grottos, *Second Life* provides no shortage of things to do and places to explore for those who like to lead an active virtual existence.

JESSIE COMBAT SIM (127, 128, 40)

The Jessie sim (Figure 3.13) is one of the few places in *SL* where an avatar can take damage and even “die” (i.e., be teleported to one’s home location). Come heavily armed, and prepare for an exchange of fire.



Figure 3.13: The dangerous environs of Jessie

SILVER MOTORSPORTS COMPLEX—SILVER ISLAND (131, 121, 22)

Race stock cars, funny cars, and more at Gremlin Glitterbuck’s motorsport complex, the first place in *SL* where you could make left turns all day. Customize your ride and get in on the competitive action at the twice-weekly races too.



FROM LINDEN LAB:

TOP PLACES TO BE SEEN IN RED PRIM SHOES



Sailing the high seas on a Flying Tako sailboat at Starboards Yacht Club—in my SF Designs loafers (Hollywood, 96, 149, 25)



- ◀  *Diving deep to explore the beautiful underwater caves, gardens, and fish at Cave Rua—in Jumpda Shark's free scuba flippers (Rua, 167, 44, 7)*
-  *Dancing and groovin' to the live music of Cylindrian Rutabaga at the Blarney Stone Irish Pub—in Silfie Minogue Cascade Stilettos (Dublin, 81, 81, 25)*
-  *Making people guess what I'm building out of tortured primes during a Prim Challenge edugame at Teazer University—in Shiny Things Sleek Boots (Beyond the Prim, 106, 253, 241)*
-  *Fishin' on the dock of the bay and hopin' for a big fish at Neo-Realms Fishing Camp—in Boing Fromage Ankle Wrap Flats (Hearts Enchanted, 203, 192, 24)*

—Red Linden

NEO-REALMS FISHING CAMP—HEARTS ENCHANTED (203, 192, 24)

When Sweegy Manilow created the Neo-Realms fishing camp (Figure 3.14), he had no idea it would become one of SL's most popular sporting destinations. Residents flock from all over the grid to cast in fishing tournaments, practice their catch-and-release technique, test new rods, or just socialize with the anglers who are almost always in attendance. Join up in-world and check standings at <http://fish.neorealms.com/>.

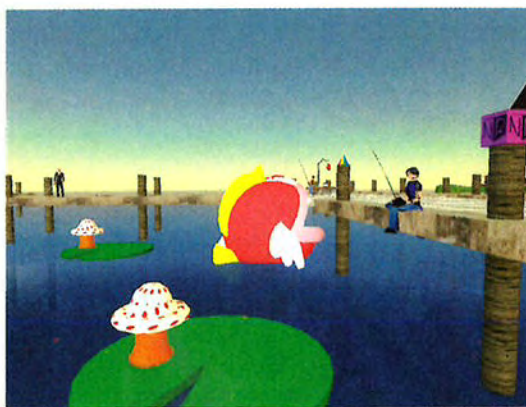


Figure 3.14: See what you can hook at Neo-Realms.



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HOLLYWOOD SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX— HOLLYWOOD (141, 53, 25)

Featuring a yachting harbor, a nine-hole golf course, and a virtual Grauman's Chinese Theater and Hollywood Bowl, the Hollywood sim has enough to entertain a visitor for hours. Both sailing and golf take *SL*'s embedded wind data into account, making for a surprisingly realistic sporting experience. Just don't forget to tip the caddies.

XTASIA—SRI SYADASTI (88, 161, 30)

Located near the Xcite "private parts" emporium at Eventide (126, 130, 26), the Xtasia "isle of temptation" provides *SL* residents with a place to try out their new purchases in privacy—or in public, if that's how you roll. The Club Med of cybersex, its "lush gardens" are clothing-optional and come with a warning that all who enter must be at least 18 years old.

STARLIGHT ROOM—STARLIGHT ISLE (149, 209, 37)

The most heavily visited spot in all of *Second Life* in mid 2006, the Starlight Room and High Rollers Casino features not only 1940s-styled gambling tables, but camping chairs where avatars desperate for funds can earn pennies for doing nothing but sitting around. It's also not a bad place to gamble, and it's definitely worth a visit if only to drink in the weird absentee culture of camping chairs.

FAIRCHANG ISLAND (178, 173, 38)

Go sailing, explore underwater tunnels, visit a coral garden, and take part in other aquatic diversions on Garth and Pituca FairChang's water sim. Head next door to the peaceful FairChang Resort to explore waterfront living possibilities.



RESIDENTS SPEAK:

SAILING THE SOUTHEAST SEAS

"My favorite place is the best area for sailing in SL. It's the island archipelago on the north side of the southeastern continent. The Lindens did a wonderful job creating an interesting and natural-looking landscape here, with a lot of protected water and a couple protected islands. I usually start sailing from Sanchon sim, then head through Jinsil, Haengbok, Joseon, Toedamgol, Cheongdam, Sandeulbaram, Banpo, and Jilseo. Both the casual sailors and serious yacht-racers frequent this region. There are also occasional pirate battles."

—Pixeleen Mistral



COMMUNITIES

One of the strengths of *Second Life* is what it makes possible in terms of community-building. All over the grid, groups of like-minded people have come together to make "real" their fantasies of what life could or should be. While some communities are less formal, with only simple rules of etiquette to keep the peace, others, like the Gorean sims, work on a social structure so complex that they have their own libraries and classes in proper behavior. Whether you're interested in joining one or simply in seeing the kinds of minisocieties that are emerging in these unique corners of cyberspace, a number of *SL* communities are well worth checking out.

INDEPENDENT STATE OF CALEDON (190, 190, 23)

Not many fictional cultures can support seven sims' worth of peacefully coexisting avatars, but in *Second Life* the Independent State of Caledon has found a stable foundation in "steampunk," a kind of mechanical version of science fiction set among Victorian surroundings. The steampunk sims feature all manner of fantastic clanking and puffing contraptions—as well as occasionally anachronistic speech patterns. If you're into the steampunk aesthetic or just curious to see how the legacies of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Mervyn Peake, and K.W. Jeter have evolved, don a hoop skirt and drop in.



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LUSKWOOD—LUSK (195, 112, 52)

Despite what you may have heard, not all the furies of *Second Life* are in it for the mature content. To pick up a starter furry avatar and meet the like-minded or just curious, head to the leafy enclave of Luskwood, heart of the mainland furry community.

LUXOR PYRAMID—FURNATION PRIME (129, 185, 34)

For a more adult version of furry fandom, look to the FurNation sims (Figure 3.15), starting at the Luxor Pyramid in FurNation Prime, where anything goes. If you're feeling adventurous, dive into the Ark nearby.



Figure 3.15: The furry paradise of Luxor Pyramid

GOREAN SIMS—PORT COS (11, 118, 27)

Fans of John (Lange) Norman's sci-fi novels, in which women are sexual chattel, have re-created the regimented milieu of the planet Gor in impressive detail. If you're not interested in being "collared," you can tour the Gorean sims as an observer, starting in Port Cos. Don't forget to read the elaborate bylaws and city laws, and check into the Scribary for more information. Despite its adult content, the Gorean sims are among the most richly realized communities in *Second Life*.

SIDEBAR



FROM LINDEN LAB:

COOL THINGS IN TEEN SECOND LIFE



The Meiji Monster. A gigantic, Asian-styled serpent beautifully textured in orange-and-white koi scales, created by master prim





crafter Kurenai Meiji, rises from the depths and threaten visitors to the nearby info hub. A sign warns, "Don't Feed the Meiji Monster—Por Favor, No Alimento Los Meiji Monstruos."



Behemoth. *The region named after the Teen Grid's first resident has been maintained as a full 16 acres of lush woodlands with three giant cedar trees. Lover of nature Malarthi Behemoth threatens to take a chunk out of any developer, Linden or otherwise, who threatens this pristine natural environment.*



Global Kids Islands. *Global Kids is an 18-year-old, NYC-based educational program that realized Teen Second Life was an ideal environment for translating their global youth-development programs online—whether through engaging residents in interactive world issues like global inequality or the genocide in Darfur, or using the environment as a platform for their after-school youth leaders to create socially conscious games, animated movies (machinima), or social actions.*



Crystal Garden. *Sumptuous event space and everything you need for birthdays, weddings, or sweet-16 parties, from dresses to cakes. From the chapel (complete with staging rooms) to the banquet hall, it's a slice of real life in Second Life.*



The Inverse Skate Park. *Huge skate park equipped with music running 24/7 and complete with skate shop, goths, furrries, and goth furrries often seen grinding the rails and loitering in one of the grid's most interactive environments.*

—Blue Linden

BETTER WORLD ISLAND (149, 147, 25)

Devoted to helping create a better world, Better World Island, sponsored in part by Omidyar.net, the socially responsible investing group of eBay founder Pierre Omidyar (a major investor in Linden Lab), contains consciousness-raising exhibits on life in a refugee camp in Darfur, Somalia, and the plight of Iraqi schoolchildren, as well as the Serendipity Retreat Center and a center for performing arts. Drop in and see how you can make a difference.



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A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY—DANTOOINE (128, 128, 41)

If *Star Wars* is your thing, visit the Dantooine sim. Named for a planet that housed a rebel base in the original *Star Wars* movie, Dantooine is home to a thriving community of *Star Wars* role-players, including Sith, Jedi, clones, and various other kinds of spacefarers and bounty hunters. Visit the Jedi Temple to pay your respects.

NEXUS PRIME, CYBERPUNK CITY OF THE FUTURE— GIBSON (186, 236, 106)

The vaguely dystopian city of Nexus Prime towers above the Gibson and Bonifacio sims. An elaborate role-playing experiment in cyberpunk living, Nexus Prime offers the full range of products and services found in any other *SL* community—plus a colorful historical narrative, cyberpunk slums, and an underground sewer you may find yourself trapped in if you're not careful.

ELVEN SIMS

The elves provide a rare peaceful refuge from the riotous clang of the wider world. With their flowing robes, the rich colors of their surroundings, and the pointed ears that are their hallmarks, the elves have established lands that provide an unmistakable role-playing opportunity, or just a nice diversion from the virtual rat race:

Elf Haven

Elf Harbour

ElvenGlen

ElvenMoor

ElvenMyst

ElvenVale

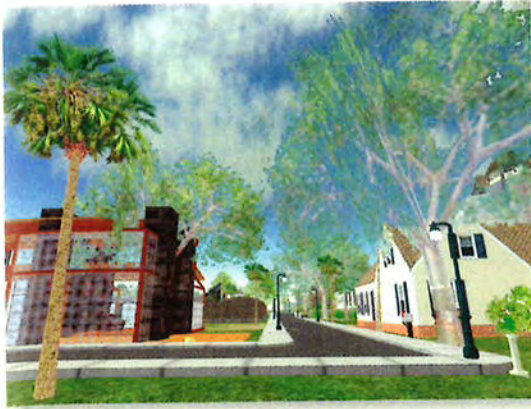


Figure 3.16: Life in the virtual suburbs

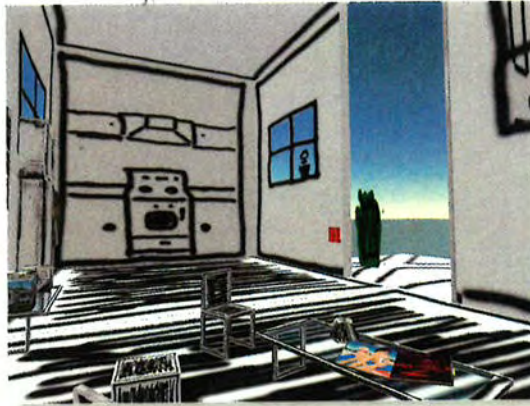


Figure 3.17: Get your Doodle pad at Patch Lamington's Doodle House.

"ZONED" SIMS

While Linden Lab lets residents build what they please, they also provide a few sims zoned as suburban enclaves, including Boardman (Figure 3.16), Blumfield, and Brown. They're worth a visit to see how the company's vision of a welcoming environment contrasts with what residents actually build. Just as in the real world, the suburbs can be a bit soulless, but creative residents have managed to add their own touches here and there to liven things up. Don't miss Patch Lamington's Doodle House (Figure 3.17): teleport there from Blumfield.

Boardman (128, 128, 22)

Blumfield (142, 74, 26)

Brown (130, 128, 22)

CHAPTER 3



NIGHTSPOTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

With a population of residents from all over the real world, many of *Second Life's* nightspots stay open round the clock. Although a number of clubs come and go like the alts some residents don to check out the seamier side of the nightlife behind a screen of anonymity, some have become better established over the years. Whether it's dancing and music, cybersex, vampires, or just good conversation, there's something for everyone.



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FROM LINDEN LAB:

THE CREEPIEST PLACES IN SL

-  **Sanctum Sanctorum (225, 126, 62).** *A beautiful combination of classic architecture and eerie landscaping make this island a must-visit. There is plenty to do, with a shopping area and nightclub. But when the sun sets and you find yourself alone, this can be quite a creepy place.*
-  **Crimson Falls Insane Asylum—Crimson Falls (149, 129, 20).** *The entire region has a weathered, abandoned feel that gives it an eerie air, but the insane asylum perched atop the hill puts this town over the top. It's evident from the stained textures inside of the condemned building that bad things happened here. You can almost smell the metallic stink of unwashed lunatics.*
-  **Spook House Amusement Ride—Noyo (77, 154, 33).** *A classic-style amusement ride is a perfect way to get started on the creepy side of SL. Brilliantly condensed into a few meters of space, this is horror concentrate!*
-  **Taco (128, 128, 10).** *Nothing is more unsettling than Taco. Everything seems cheerful and happy on the surface. But beneath the expertly crafted builds and textures, there has to lurk some sort of hidden creepy force of doom or despair.*
-  **Transylvania (177, 90, 30).** *Living up to its namesake, Transylvania is a vampire hotspot. Graffiti of the resident bloodsuckers' names covers a wall in front of one of the island's many gothic horror-inspired buildings. Boasting a cemetery, castle, museum, mall, and other builds, this location is 16 square acres of creepy.*

—Bub Linden

VAMPIRE EMPIRE—TRANSYLVANIA (177, 90, 30)

The Vampire Empire nightclub is at the heart of a sprawling two-sim goth entertainment complex filled with all things pale-skinned and bloody. Pentagrams decorate stone courtyards near fanged avatars dancing to the latest death metal.

Beyond a swimming pool filled with blood stands a vampire cathedral that plays host to elaborate goth weddings, an intricately imagined castle, and a small Gothique Mall in case you left your eyeliner at home. Head to the Sweet Oblivion lounge for a drink and steer clear of the bodies impaled on spikes in the garden out back.

THE EDGE—EDGE (126, 126, 101)

One of the most popular nightclubs in *SL*, The Edge features dancing and DJs at all hours of the day or night, as well as prizes and various kinds of “best avatar” contests—your punk-rock duds, your swimsuit, or just that sexy body shape you’ve been keeping in your inventory could win you hundreds of Linden dollars. Though its crowds aren’t exactly a cross-section of *SL*, The Edge can be a good place to meet residents who are out for a good time—whatever that might mean to them or you.

SUTHERLAND DAM CLUB—SUTHERLAND (199, 8, 24)

Prokofy Neva’s “discussion club” occupies the inner structure of the imposing Sutherland dam, an enormous Linden-built structure that keeps the virtual waters low in the Sutherland sim. Drop by Friday evenings for some vital debate with one of *Second Life*’s most outspoken residents in one of the coolest interiors in all the virtual land.

SIDEBAR



FROM LINDEN LAB:

GAMING IN SECOND LIFE

You’ve probably heard of Tringo, the game created by Kermitt Quirk that went on to become a Game Boy game. Here are my favorite Second Life games:

- 👉 **Dark Life—Navora (59, 46, 23).** Multiplayer fantasy RPG created by Mark Busch, Crash Prefect, and Pirate Cotton.
- 👉 **Castle Wars—Montmartre (61, 197, 151).** Multiplayer destruction by RacerX Gullwing.



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Patterns—Pi (103, 59, 24). Two-person board game from Lasivian Leandros and Racer Plisskin.



The Pot Healer Adventure—Numbakulla (214, 17, 22). Mystery game made by Moopf Murray.

—Ivy Linden

PLAYERS SHACK—SEMANG (185, 160, 26)

No Playboy mansion, the Players Shack—home to Marilyn Murphy, publisher of *Players*, SL's original girlie mag—features a regular coterie of scantily clad female avatars (Figure 3.18). Pick up the latest issue for pictorials, interviews, and more.



Figure 3.18: A rare glimpse inside the Players Shack

SIDEBAR



RESIDENTS SPEAK:

THE ELBOW ROOM—MARE (104, 44, 57)

"In a time of big splashy corporate events spanning multiple sims with elaborate builds and strategic publicity, the Elbow Room has never sat on more than 512 square meters of land. [That] is the smallest parcel size in Second Life and is commonly considered too small of a plot to 'live on.' But using the minimal prims allotted to [that parcel size], proprietor Elex Dusk has managed to maximize his small space to host dancing, social events, games, and some of the best parties in Second Life. The Elbow Room has been around for more than two years, and regulars will tell you that the consistency and quality of the events keeps them coming back."

—Johnny Ming



STUFF TO BUY

There's no more-popular activity in *Second Life* than shopping, which could easily fill a whole chapter itself. Here's a highly selective list including a few old favorites and a few places you may never have heard of. Just don't spend all your Linden dollars in one place.

TABLEAU BOARDWALK—TABLEAU (244, 183, 24)

Founded by a group of émigrés from *The Sims Online*, the shops at the boardwalk in the Tableau sim feature inexpensive hipster fashions by designers Nylon Pinkney and Toast Bard, classy shoes and handbags by Ingrid Ingersoll, and that rarest of *Second Life* fashion commodities, tasteful men's clothing, by Barnesworth Anubis.

NYTE'N'DAY—COUTURE ISLE (7, 128, 49)

Nyte Caligari and Elikapeka Tiramisu's spacious Nyte'N'Day shops on Couture Isle are refreshing in their simplicity: visit The Salon for hair, The Boutique for clothing and shoes, and The Body Shop for skins. Plus wings, bling, and more.

REZOLUTION SUPERSTORE—LINDA (19, 245, 21)

A towering Ikea of the mind, the REZOLUTION Superstore features a huge range of textures, gadgets, structures, furniture, and outfits in four distinct styles. Color-coded and laid out in a skyscraper complete with showrooms, chances are REZOLUTION has whatever you need to furnish your second life in style. Mix and match for best results.

ABBOTT'S AERODROME—ABBOTTS (116, 170, 64)

In operation since February 2004, Abbott's is *SL*'s oldest and best-known airfield, featuring aircraft and more from revered vehicle-maker Cubey Terra and friends. Jet



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planes, gliders, helicopters, dirigibles, jetpacks, parachutes, test flights, experimental craft, and more. If it flies, chances are you can get it at Abbott's.

MIDNIGHT CITY (114, 141, 26)

It's always midnight in Midnight City. One of *Second Life*'s oldest continuously operating shopping malls, Midnight City features high-profile designers like Torrid and Mistress Midnight, Launa Fauna, Barnesworth Anubis, proprietor Aimee Weber, and prefab architect Lordfly Digeridoo. In addition to the clothes, accessories, and architecture, Midnight City features a social scene all its own.

SIDEBAR



ADDITIONAL INFO:

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

If you did nothing but shop in Second Life, you'd still never run out of new places to see and new things to drop your hard-earned L\$ on. In the interest of keeping you busy a while longer, here are some additional places to check out once you've bought out the stock at the other shops discussed in this chapter:

-  ***Carduccis* Guns & Weapons—Yongchon (219, 113, 30).** *Just what it sounds like, including quick-draw scripts, shields, and other gadgets of war. A must-stop before a visit to Jessie.*
-  **The Darkness—Purden (141, 108, 129).** *A vast emporium of goth paraphernalia, featuring everything from fangs to wings, pale white skins, bondage equipment, leather outfits, and more.*
-  **Panache Island Home Store—Panache (126, 127, 38).** *Popular hair and skins from designers Zyrre and HoseQueen Maclean.*
-  **Lukas Designs—Jin Ho (128, 120, 69).** *It's the rare shop that sells good hair, skins, clothing, and accessories specifically designed for men.*
-  **PixelDolls—Chartreuse (215, 94, 23).** *Fashion designer Nephilaine Protagonist rocketed to fame with her PixelDolls*





line and is now the subject of a documentary film thanks to her business.

✦ **X2: Exotica—Hamlin (148, 27, 139).** Great skins for men and women, plus more good clothing.

✦ **RICX's Fine Jewelry—Nepessing (58, 98, 125).** Highly detailed jewelry for men and women, featuring animations and the sparkling particle effects known as "bling."

DOMINUS MOTOR COMPANY—CHARTREUSE (68, 26, 30)

Francis Chung is probably *Second Life's* most accomplished vehicle builder. Drive off with one of her Dominus Shadows here.



PLACES TO LIVE

Basic account holders may not own land, but that doesn't mean they can't have a place to call their own. Many residents set up shop as landlords, renting space to those who don't care to buy their own real estate. This section discusses some of the more-colorful places to take out a week-to-week lease.

SLEEZYWOOD TRAILER PARK—SLEEZYWOOD (113, 185, 22)

Down on your luck? Need a place to park your Airstream for a month or two? For just L\$225 a week, you can get a small plot of land at the SLeezyWood Trailer Park (Figure 3.19). Set out your lawn chair, grab a beer, and make like virtual white trash—at least until the sheriff shows up with your eviction notice.



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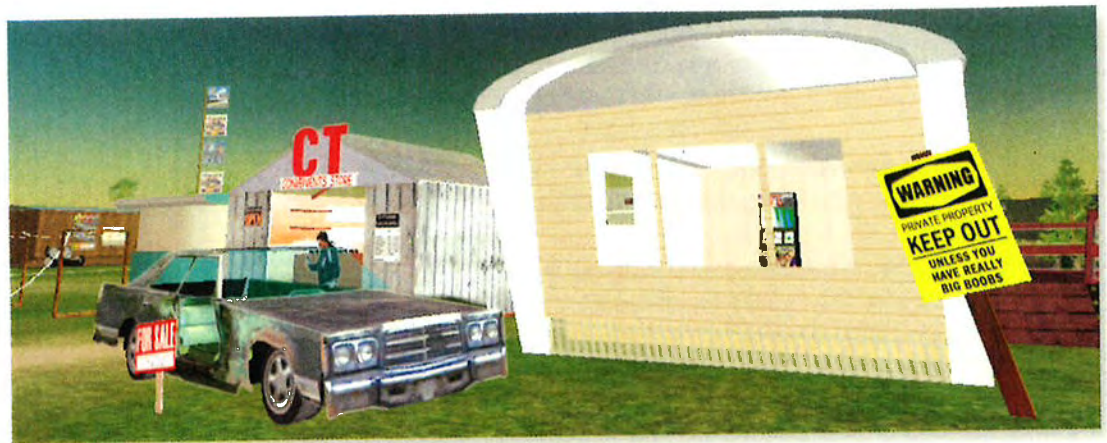


Figure 3.19: Life with the virtual white trash

DREAMLAND (128, 128, 22)

Land baron Anshe Chung maintains her own minicontinent consisting of several dozen sims off the northwest coast of Linden Lab's own northern land mass. Large enough to feature zoned regions for Japanese speakers, gay and lesbian communities, commercial ventures, and a variety of landscapes, Dreamland is the paragon of user-created commerce and worth a visit either to see how deep Anshe's impact has been or to find a dream home of your own.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SIMS

To see how the upper crust lives, visit the three Southern California sims:

Beverly Hills

Venice Beach

Los Angeles

It's more like a re-creation of the world of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* than of the real world. The shopping is geared toward wedding dresses and formalwear, the houses are built on McMansion scale, and downtown is deserted at night. And in case LA isn't rich enough for you, there's even an incongruous replica of Dubai's mega-expensive Burj Al Arab hotel to tour.



THE PROFESSIONALS

Not surprisingly, there's a lot in *Second Life* that just isn't easily classified. This section covers the companies that have sprung up lately, as well as some of their projects and an odd corner of the grid that may be worth checking out to satisfy your curiosity about what the real geeks are up to in *SL*.



RESIDENTS SPEAK:

THE PI DEVELOPER'S SIM—PI (128, 131, 76)

"One of my favorite places in Second Life is the island of Pi. Pi is a sim inhabited by talented software and content developers. It was created to provide these developers with an affordable place that has plenty of room to build and is not bogged down by lag nor constantly running out of prims. Why does that make it one of my favorite places? Because it is always changing and there is always a new project going on. It also means most all of it is very clever and smartly done. As a developer myself, I find there are always other developers willing to lend a hand, give a demonstration, and even some give you some free stuff if you are nice enough."

—Jeremy Flagstaff

THE INFINITE MIND (209, 76, 46)

The first national radio show to go virtual, *The Infinite Mind* does a regular broadcast from within *Second Life*. *The Infinite Mind* sim features the show's broadcast studio, the offices of virtual-world services company Infinite Visions Media, a museum, a lecture hall, and more.

ALOFT HOTEL—ALOFT ISLAND (68, 70, 27)

In one of the most interesting real-world projects in *Second Life*, Starwood Hotels has prototyped its new Aloft hotel line on an island in *SL* and chronicled the development



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of the project on a blog at <http://www.virtualaloft.com/>. Stroll around the grounds and let Starwood know if the new low-frills luxury package is the way to go. Would you rent a room in this virtual world?

NEW GLOBE THEATRE—MILLIONS OF US (128, 127, 23)

Produced by virtual-world services company Millions of Us (run by ex-Linden Lab employee Reuben Steiger), this scale model of the new Globe Theatre designed by the architectural firm of Sir Norman Foster has hosted plays, performances, and speeches.

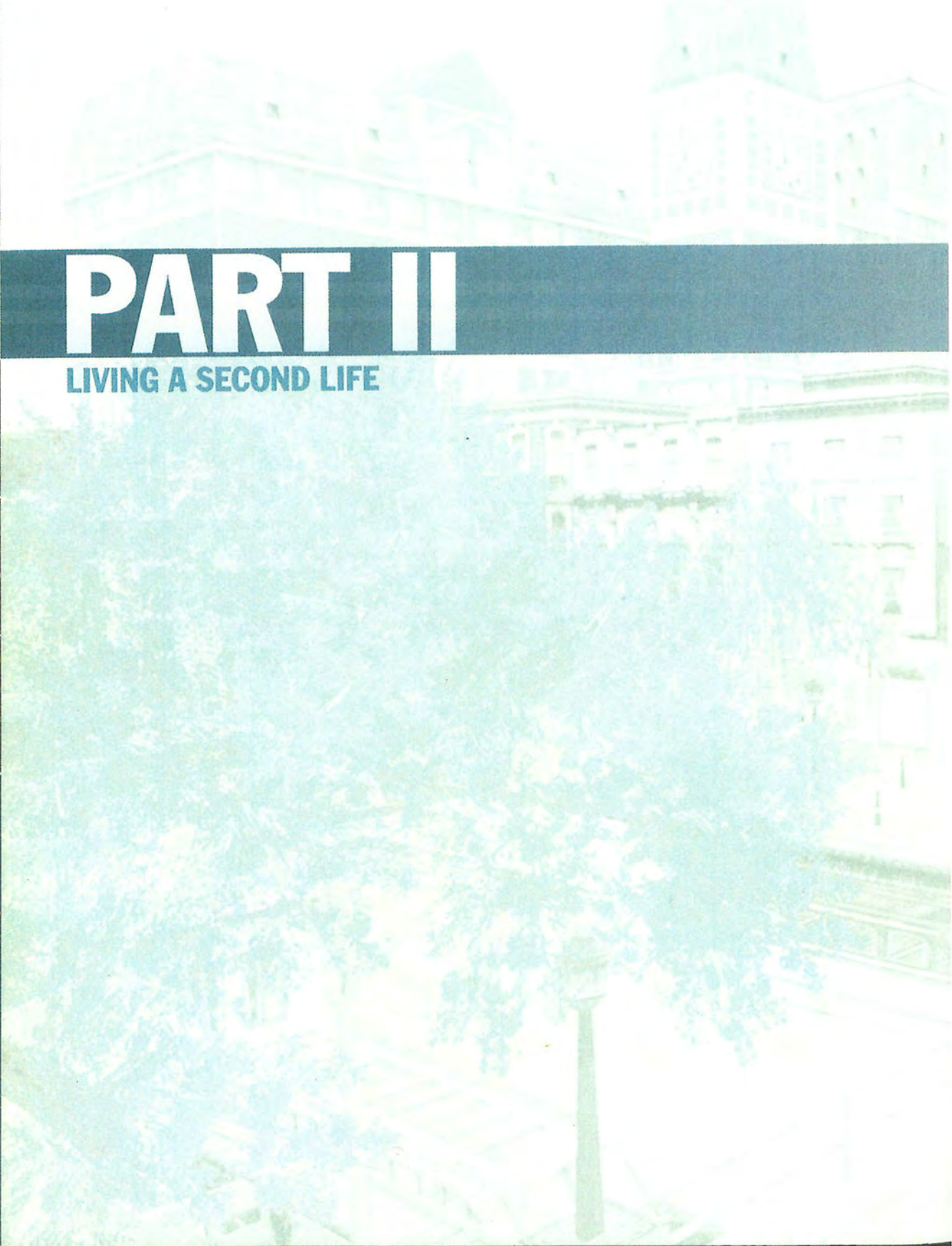
ADIDAS (104, 183, 55)

Branding agency Rivers Run Red—located at Avalon (193, 158, 39)—brought Adidas to *Second Life*, complete with the bounce-happy Adidas a3 Microrides available in-world.

PNC PARK—BASEBALL (196, 117, 26)

This re-creation of a real-life baseball stadium by the Electric Sheep Company—whose offices you can visit at The Infinite Mind (49, 207, 601)—has been used to host simulcasts of Major League Baseball's Home Run Derby and other events.





PART II

LIVING A SECOND LIFE



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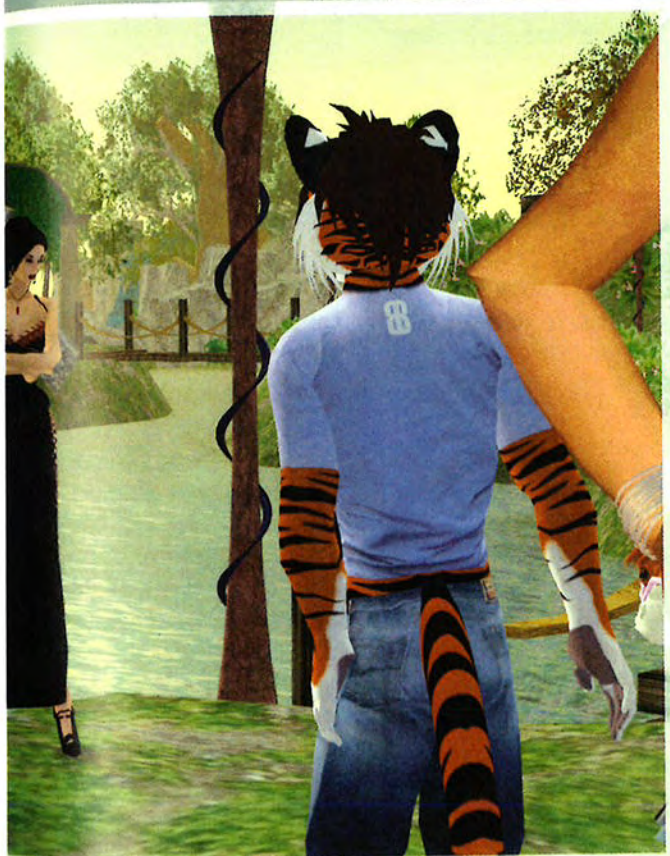
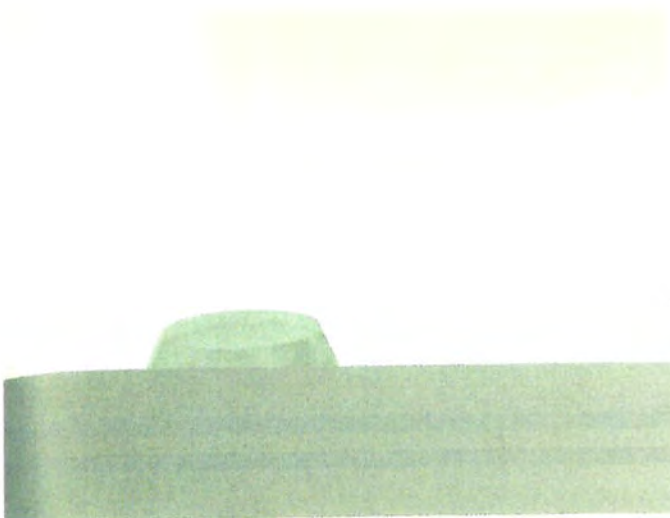
CHAPTER 4

CHANGING YOUR APPEARANCE

As you know from Chapter 1, *Second Life* offers you the opportunity to be reborn in many ways. This is especially true of your avatar's appearance. You can change your avatar's appearance as often as you like, and you can be as crazy as you like. You can enter the world as a fire-breathing dragon, turn into a vampire halfway through your online session, and eventually log out as a middle-aged, bald, beer-bellied male construction worker with a long, furry tail.

The importance of avatar appearance becomes obvious the moment you enter *Second Life*: the arrival lot on Orientation Island is often packed with freshly born avatars whose appearance is being edited by their owners. Every resident begins *Second Life* as an attractive young male or female in jeans and T-shirt, and almost every resident immediately begins working to make their avatar their own. This chapter discusses this process, explains the options available, and offers practical hints and notes. All this advice is only advice: feel free to choose your own path through *Second Life*. But whatever you do, remember that your presence in the virtual world is defined by your appearance.





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FIRST CHOICES

Your first big “avatar appearance” choice is made even before you enter *Second Life*. You make it when you choose your *SL* name (Figure 4.1). Your avatar’s name is displayed for all to see, and it always has a major impact on how others perceive you. A seven-foot-tall hunk called Daisy Pony is definitely perceived differently than a seven-foot-tall hunk called Rocky Balboa! As this demonstrates, avatar appearance is a sum of many parts. Generally speaking, these are as follows:

-  **Avatar name.** Your avatar’s name is very important: you get to choose it only once (it cannot be changed). Choose a name that fits your image, and make sure you can live with it for a long, long time. It’s not easy, especially for first-time users, who choose a name with very little advance knowledge of what avatars can look like. A safe way out is to pick a name you’d be comfortable with in real life—however, at the same time you want an avatar name that’s attractive and memorable.
-  **Avatar shape.** This goes beyond silhouette: basically, avatar shape includes all body parts and body features (body thickness, height, shape of head, eyes, nose, etc.).
-  **Avatar skin.** Avatar skin is what you see covering avatar shape in the absence of any clothing. Its appearance may be changed with *SL* tools. However, to get realistic-looking human skin, you’ll have to acquire a custom skin. Skins which are created using an external application such as Adobe Photoshop, then imported/uploaded into *Second Life* at a nominal fee. Luckily, you don’t have to make one to own one; there are lots of very sharp custom skins for sale, and you can also get a good freebie skin if you look around.
-  **Avatar hair and eyes.** Avatar hair and eyes constitute a separate category because although they’re body features, they can also be worn as attachments (prim hair, eyes worn as attachments that cover the default eyes). You’ll find more hair and eye details later in this chapter.
-  **Avatar attachments.** This, predictably, includes clothes and any other objects that can be attached to an avatar’s shape (a hat, a gun, hair).
-  **Avatar animations.** Each avatar comes with a set of animations that grow with almost every *SL* update. However, longtime *SL* citizens view the standard

animations with disdain. You can buy custom animations that will make your avatar move with extra grace. Creating custom animations involves using an external application (many *SL* citizens use Poser) and writing an override script in LSL (*Second Life's* scripting language) so that custom animations are played instead of the defaults. You can acquire freebie animations too if you look around. As you might have guessed, if you're interested in virtual sex, custom animations (and attachments too) are a must.

CHOOSING YOUR NAME

At the time of writing, the options here aren't unlimited—you have to choose a last name from those available at the time. However, the list (which changes periodically) always features plenty of choices, and of course you can give yourself any first name you like—as long as someone else isn't already using the same first-name/last-name combination. If you encounter this problem, a small tweak can put things right: popular solutions include changing the spelling of the first name to get a unique combination—for example, “Oskar Peterson” instead of “Oscar Peterson.” Other widely used solutions are to make the first letter of your first name lowercase, (as in “sandy” instead of “Sandy”) or to add a letter (for example, your middle initial: “John A. Smith” becomes “JohnA Smith”).

Remember that the name you've chosen won't appear in isolation; it will be viewed in combination with your avatar. Therefore, you should consider how it will fit the appearance of the avatar(s) you intend to use in *Second Life*. Are you going to switch between sexes? If so, you might want to consider an “unisex” name: for

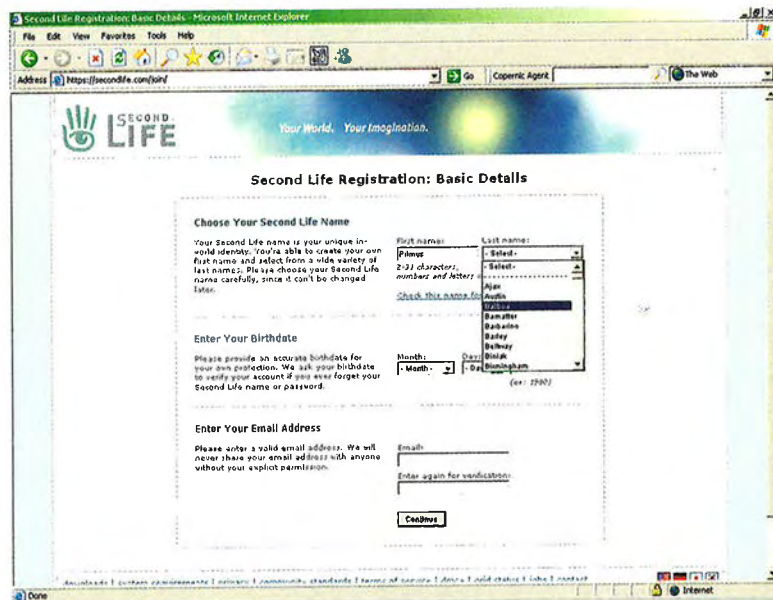


Figure 4.1: Your avatar is officially born the moment you give it a name.



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example, Sandy Sprocket or RobertA Hansen. Is your avatar's appearance going to be outrageous, beautiful, dangerous, friendly—or maybe all four at once? It *is* possible with the right combination of name, avatar appearance, and animation/gesture set.

NOTE



FROM LINDEN LAB:

YOUR NAME SET IN STONE

While you can change your avatar's appearance as many times as you like, you cannot change your avatar's name. The name you choose to set up an account is the account, and the only way to reappear in SL under a new name is to open a new account.

CHOOSING YOUR SEX

First of all, remember this: in *Second Life*, you can change your sex every 10 minutes if you so desire. It doesn't involve any painful operations—just a few mouse clicks. You can be male, you can be female, you can be neither (by creating or choosing an avatar that's gender-neutral, such as the ready-made White Wolf from your Library). It's interesting to note that given all this freedom, most *SL* denizens choose to stay true to their real-life gender. Here are some numbers from an *SL* forum poll:

Male playing male—41.95%

Female playing female—40.05%

Male playing female—14.45%

Female playing male—3.55%

These numbers are very telling even when you assume the poll isn't very accurate. They show clearly that the majority of *SL* denizens make a conservative choice and stick to their real-life gender. At the same time, many *SL* people state that they treat their *SL* existence as the perfect opportunity for role play, that they switch sexes at the drop of a hat, and that everyone is free to choose whichever sex they fancy at any given moment (see the sidebar "Gender Bending"). So, where's the truth?

The truth, as always, lies in the middle. No one will mind if your avatar's of a different gender than *you* really are as long as they do not have a close personal relationship with you. As a certain disappointed female avatar said, "I wouldn't have minded if he told me he's really a guy within the first few weeks. But when he told me after six months, wow, it just blew me away. I just find him impossible to trust after that."

NOTE

ADDITIONAL INFO:

GENDER-BENDING

The default gender choice for your primary avatar is your real-life gender. If you go the other route, be prepared for unexpected twists and turns in your virtual friendships. The rules that apply there are the same as the rules in real life: friends don't like to be deceived.

Do not let this stop you from switching gender when you feel like it. But if you want to form a virtual friendship with someone, it's important that they know who you *really* are. The best way to handle this is simply to include some info about the real-life you in your *SL* Profile (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Let people know what you want them to know about the real-life you.



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