

Second Life

Second Life is an online virtual world, developed and owned by the San Francisco-based firm Linden Lab and launched on June 23, 2003. It saw rapid growth for some years and in 2013 it had approximately one million regular users;^[1] growth stabilised and by the end of 2017 active user count had declined a little to "between 800,000 and 900,000".^[2] In many ways, *Second Life* is similar to massively multiplayer online role-playing games; nevertheless, Linden Lab is emphatic that their creation is not a game: "There is no manufactured conflict, no set objective".^[3]

The virtual world can be accessed freely via Linden Lab's own client software or via alternative third-party viewers.^{[4][5]} *Second Life* users, also called residents, create virtual representations of themselves, called avatars, and are able to interact with places, objects and other avatars. They can explore the world (known as the grid), meet other residents, socialize, participate in both individual and group activities, build, create, shop, and trade virtual property and services with one another.

The platform principally features 3D-based user-generated content. *Second Life* also has its own virtual currency, the Linden Dollar, which is exchangeable with real world currency.^{[6][7]}

Second Life is intended for people aged 16 and over, with the exception of 13–15-year-old users, who are restricted to the *Second Life* region of a sponsoring institution (e.g., a school).^{[8][9]}

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Developer(s)	Linden Lab
Initial release	June 23, 2003
Stable release	6.3.4.532299 / November 4, 2019
Preview release	6.3.5.532739 / November 15, 2019
Engine	Havok (physics engine)
Platform	Windows <p>macOS</p> <p>Linux (development paused)</p>
License	Open-source
Website	www.secondlife.com/ (http://www.secondlife.com/)

Second Life Server

Developer(s)	Linden Lab
Initial release	June 23, 2003
Stable release	2019-11-08T19:37:19.532553 / November 12, 2019
Platform	Linux
License	Proprietary
Website	www.secondlife.com/ (http://www.se

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History

In 1999, Philip Rosedale formed Linden Lab with the intention of developing computer hardware to allow people to become immersed in a virtual world. In its earliest form, the company struggled to produce a commercial version of the hardware, known as "The Rig", which in prototype form was seen as a clunky steel contraption with computer monitors worn on shoulders.^[10] That vision changed into the software application Linden World, in which people participated in task-based games and socializing in a three-dimensional online environment.^[11] That effort eventually transformed into the better known, user-centered *Second Life*.^[12] Although he was familiar with the metaverse of Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash*, Rosedale has said that his vision of virtual worlds predates that book, and that he

Philip Rosedale, founder of *Second Life*.

conducted early virtual world experiments during his college years at the University of California, San Diego, where he studied physics.^[13]

In 2005 and 2006, *Second Life* began to receive significant media attention, including a cover story in *BusinessWeek* magazine featuring the virtual world and *Second Life* avatar Anshe Chung.^[14] By that time, Anshe Chung had become *Second Life's* poster child and symbol for the economic opportunities that the virtual world offers to its residents. At the same time, the service saw a period of exponential growth of its user base.

On December 11, 2007, Cory Ondrejka, who helped program *Second Life*, was forced to resign as chief technology officer.^[15]

In January 2008, residents spent a total of 28,274,505 hours "inworld" and on average 38,000 residents were logged in at any moment. The maximum concurrency (number of avatars inworld) recorded is 88,200 in the first quarter of 2009.^[16]

On March 14, 2008, Rosedale announced plans to step down from his position as Linden Lab CEO and to become chairman of Linden Lab's board of directors.^[17] Rosedale announced Mark Kingdon as the new CEO effective May 15, 2008.^[18] In 2010, Kingdon was replaced by Rosedale, who took over as Interim CEO. After four months, Rosedale abruptly stepped down from the Interim CEO position. It was announced in October 2010 that Bob Komin, Linden Lab's chief financial officer and chief operating officer, would take over the CEO job for the immediate future.^[19]

In 2008, *Second Life* was honored at the 59th Annual Technology & Engineering Emmy Awards for advancing the development of online sites with user-generated content. Rosedale accepted the award.^[20]

In June 2010, Linden Lab announced layoffs of 30% of its workforce.^[21]

In November 2010, 21.3 million accounts were registered, although the company has not made public any statistics regarding actual long-term consistent usage.^[22] However, Wagner James Au, who blogs and writes about *Second Life*, said in April 2013 that he had it on "good authority" that "*Second Life's* actual active userbase is about 600,000".^[23]

In 2015 alone, *Second Life* users had cashed out approximately \$60,000,000 (60 million US dollars) and *Second Life* had an estimated GDP of \$500,000,000 (500 million US dollars), higher than some small countries.^[24]

In 2020, Linden Lab abandoned their spiritual successor to *Second Life*, a VR experience called *Sansar*, in order to focus their attention fully on *Second Life*. The rights to *Sansar*'s assets were sold to Wookey Search Technologies, who are expected to continue development on the title without Linden Lab.^[25]

Classification

During a 2001 meeting with investors, Rosedale noticed that the participants were particularly responsive to the collaborative, creative potential of *Second Life*. As a result, the initial objective-driven, gaming focus of *Second Life* was shifted to a more user-created, community-driven experience.^[26]

Second Life's status as a virtual world, a computer game, or a talker, is frequently debated. Unlike a traditional computer game, *Second Life* does not have a designated objective, nor traditional game play mechanics or rules. It can also be argued that *Second Life* is a multi-user virtual world, because its virtual world facilitates interaction between multiple users. As it does not have any stipulated goals, it is irrelevant to talk about winning or losing in relation to *Second Life*. Likewise, unlike a traditional talker, *Second Life* contains an extensive world that can be explored and interacted with, and it can be used purely as a creative tool set if the user so chooses. In March 2006, while speaking at Google TechTalks,^[27] Rosedale said: "So, we don't see this as a game. We see it as a platform."

Second Life used to offer two main grids: one for adults (18+) and one for teens. In August 2010, Linden Lab closed the teen grid due to operating costs. Since then, users aged 16 and over can sign up for a free account.^[28] Other limited accounts are available for educators who use *Second Life* with younger students.

There are three activity-based classifications, called "Ratings", for sims in *Second Life*:

1. General (formerly "PG"—no extreme violence or nudity)
2. Moderate (formerly "Mature"—some violence, swearing, adult situations, some nudity)
3. Adult (may contain overt sexual activity, nudity, and violence)

Residents and avatars

There is no charge for creating a *Second Life* account or for making use of the world for any period of time. Linden Lab reserves the right to charge for the creation of large numbers of multiple accounts for a single person (5 per household, 2 per 24 hours)^[29] but at present does not do so. A Premium membership (US\$11.99 monthly, US\$32.97 quarterly, or US\$99 annually) extends access to an increased level of technical support, and also pays an automatic stipend of L\$300/week into the member's avatar account, and after 45 days that resident will receive a L\$700 bonus, making it L\$1,000 for that week. This amount has decreased since the original stipend of L\$500, which is still paid to older accounts. Certain accounts created during an earlier period may receive L\$400. This stipend, if changed into USD, means that the actual cost for the benefit of extended tech support for an annual payment of US\$72 is only about US\$14, depending on the currency exchange rates. However, the vast majority of casual users of *Second Life* do not upgrade beyond the free "basic" account.

A human female avatar

Several avatars together

Avatars may take any form users choose (human, animal, vegetable, mineral, or a combination thereof) or residents may choose to resemble themselves as they are in real life.^[30] They may choose even more abstract forms, given that almost every aspect of an avatar is fully customizable. *Second Life Culture* consists of many activities and behaviors that are also present in real life. A single resident account may have only one avatar at a time, although the appearance of this avatar can change between as many different forms as the Resident wishes. Avatar forms, like almost everything else in *Second Life*, can be either created by the user, or bought pre-made. A single person may also have multiple accounts, and thus appear to be multiple Residents (a person's multiple accounts are referred to as *alts*).

Avatars can travel via walking, running, vehicular access, flying, or teleportation. Because *Second Life* is such a vast virtual world, teleportation is used when avatars wish to travel instantly and efficiently. Once they reach their destination, they may travel in more conventional means at various speeds.

Avatars can communicate via local chat, group chat, global instant messaging (known as IM), and voice (public, private and group). Chatting is used for localized public conversations between two or more avatars, and is visible to any avatar within a given distance. IMs are used for private conversations, either between two avatars, or among the members of a group, or even between objects and avatars. Unlike chatting, IM communication does not depend on the participants being within a certain distance of each other. As of version 1.18.1.2 (2007-Aug-02), voice chat, both local and IM, was also available. Instant messages may optionally be sent to a Resident's email when the Resident is logged off, although message length is limited to 4096 bytes.^[31]

Identities in *Second Life* can relate to the users' personality or creating their own character. It is based on their decisions on how to express themselves. Most avatars are human, but they can choose to be vampires or animals. Sometimes, what they choose does not relate to their offline selves.^[32]

In *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*, anthropologist Tom Boellstorff notes that the interface of *Second Life* is designed with the purpose of disconnecting a player's virtual identity from their physical identity in mind.^[33] As of 2015 *Second Life* has made it possible to display one's legal name in the player's profile or as their screen name, but when Boellstorff first published the book in 2008 users were required to select a last name from a pre-determined list of options. Boellstorff describes this mentality as being in direct contrast to the one held by other mainstream social media websites, where anonymity is shunned and users are encouraged to make the link between their online and physical presence clear.

Content

The ability to create content and shape the *Second Life* world is one of the key features that separate this from online games.

Built into the software is a 3D modeling tool based on simple geometric shapes that allows residents to build virtual objects. There is also a procedural scripting language, Linden Scripting Language, which can be used to add interactivity to objects. Sculpted prims ("sculpties"), 3D mesh, textures for clothing or other objects, animations, and gestures can be created using external software and imported. The *Second Life* terms of service provide that users retain copyright for any content they create, and the server and client provide simple digital rights management (DRM) functions.^{[8][34][35]} However, Linden Lab changed their terms of service in August 2013 to be able to use user-generated content for any purpose.^[36] The new terms of service prevent users from using textures from third-party texture services, as some of them pointed out explicitly.^[37]

Economy

Second Life has an internal economy and closed-loop virtual token called the "Linden dollar (L\$)". L\$ can be used to buy, sell, rent or trade land or goods and services with other users. The "Linden Dollar" is a closed-loop virtual token for use only within the *Second Life* platform. Linden Dollars have no monetary value and are not redeemable for monetary value from Linden Lab. A resident with a surplus of Linden Dollars earned via a *Second Life* business or experiential play can request to refund their Linden Dollar surplus to PayPal. Linden Lab reports that the *Second Life* economy generated US\$3,596,674 in economic activity during the month of September 2005,^[38] and in September 2006 *Second Life* was reported to have a GDP of \$64 million.^[39] In 2009, the total size of the *Second Life* economy grew 65% to US\$567 million, about 25% of the entire U.S. virtual goods market. Gross resident earnings are US\$55 million in 2009 – 11% growth over 2008.^[40] In 2013, Linden Labs released an info graphic that showed that over 10 years \$3.2 billion in transactions for virtual goods had exchanged between *Second Life* residents, with an average of 1.2 million daily transactions.^[41]

An avatar in the virtual world *Second Life*

There is a high level of entrepreneurial activity in *Second Life*. Residents of *Second Life* are able to create virtual objects and other content. *Second Life* is unique in that users retain all the rights to their content which means they can use *Second Life* to distribute and sell their creations, with 2.1 million items listed on its online marketplace.^[41] At its height circa 2006, hundreds of thousands of dollars were changing hands daily as residents created and sold a wide variety of virtual commodities. *Second Life* also quickly became profitable due to the selling and renting of virtual real estate. 2006 also saw *Second Life*'s first real-world millionaire; Ailin Graef, better known as Anshe Chung (her avatar), converted an initial investment of US\$9.95 into over one million dollars over the course of two and a half years. She built her fortune primarily by buying, selling, and renting virtual real estate.^[42]

User-generated content in the virtual world *Second Life*

Major tech corporations have tried to use *Second Life* to market products or services to *Second Life*'s tech-savvy audience. IBM, for example, purchased 12 islands within *Second Life* for virtual training and simulations of key business processes, but has since moved on to other platforms due to maintaining costs.^{[43][44]} Others, like musicians, podcasters, and news organizations (including CNET, Reuters, NPR's *The Infinite Mind*, and the BBC) have all had a presence within *Second Life*.^[45]

Virtual goods include buildings, vehicles, devices of all kinds, animations, clothing, skin, hair, jewelry, flora and fauna, and works of art. Services include business management, entertainment, and custom content creation (which can be broken up into the following six categories: building, texturing, scripting, animating, art direction, and the position of producer/project funder). L\$ can be purchased using US dollars and other local currencies on the LindeX exchange provided by Linden Lab. Customer USD wallets obtained from Linden Dollar sales on the LindeX are most commonly used to pay *Second Life*'s own subscription and tier fees; only a relatively small number of users earn enough profit to request a refund to PayPal. According to figures published by Linden Lab, about 64,000 users made a profit in *Second Life* in February 2009, of whom 38,524 made less than US\$10, while 233 made more than US\$5000.^[46] Profits are derived from selling virtual goods, renting land, and a broad range of services.

Technology

Second Life comprises the *viewer* (also known as the *client*) executing on the user's personal computer, and several thousand servers operated by Linden Lab.

Client

Linden Lab provides official viewers for Windows, macOS, and most distributions of Linux. The viewer renders 3D graphics using OpenGL technology. The viewer source code was released under the GPL in 2007^{[47][48]} and moved to the LGPL in 2010.^[49]

There are now several mature third party viewer projects that contain features not available in the Linden Lab 'Official' client, target other platforms or cater to specialist & accessibility needs.^[50] The main focus of third party development is exploring new ideas and working with Linden Lab to deliver new functionality.^[51]

An independent project, libopenmetaverse,^[52] offers a function library for interacting with *Second Life* servers. libopenmetaverse has been used to create non-graphic third party viewers.

There are several *Alternate Viewers* published by Linden Lab used for software testing by volunteers for early access to upcoming projects.^[53] Some of these clients only function on the "beta grid" consisting of a limited number of regions running various releases of unstable test server code.

Server

Each full region (an area of 256×256 meters) in the *Second Life* "grid" runs on a single dedicated core of a multi-core server. Homestead regions share 3 regions per core and Openspace Regions share 4 regions per core, running proprietary software on Debian Linux. These servers run scripts in the region, as well as providing communication between avatars and objects present in the region.

Every item in the *Second Life* universe is referred to as an *asset*. This includes the shapes of basic 3D polygon objects formally known as *Primitive Mesh* (commonly known as *primitives* or *prims* for short), the digital images referred to as *textures* that decorate primitives, digitized audio clips, avatar shape and appearance, avatar skin textures, LSL scripts, information written on notecards, and so on. Each asset is referenced with a universally unique identifier or UUID.^[54]

Assets are stored on Isilon Systems storage clusters,^[55] comprising all data that has ever been created by anyone who has been in the *Second Life* world. Infrequently used assets are offloaded to S3 bulk storage.^[56] As of December 2007, the total storage was estimated to consume 100 terabytes of server capacity.^[57] The asset servers function independently of the region simulators, though the region simulators act as a proxy for the client, request object data from the asset servers when a new object loads into the simulator.^[58] Region simulators areas are commonly known as *sims* by residents.

Each server instance runs a physics simulation to manage the collisions and interactions of all objects in that region. Objects can be nonphysical and non-moving, or actively physical and movable. Complex shapes may be linked together in groups of up to 256 separate primitives. Additionally, each player's avatar is treated as a physical object so that it may interact with physical objects in the world. As of 9 July 2014, *Second Life* simulators use the Havok 2011.2 physics engine for all in-world dynamics.^[59] This engine is capable of simulating thousands of physical objects at once.^[60]

Linden Lab pursues the use of open standards technologies, and uses free and open source software such as Apache, MySQL, Squid and Linux.^[61] The plan is to move everything to open standards by standardizing the *Second Life* protocol. Cory Ondrejka, former CTO^[62] of *Second Life*, stated in 2006 that a while after

everything has been standardized, both the client and the server will be released as free and open source software.^[63]

OpenSimulator

In January 2007, OpenSimulator was founded as an open-source simulator project. The aim of this project is to develop a full open-source server software for *Second Life* clients. OpenSIM is BSD Licensed and it is written in C# and can run under Mono environment. From 2008, alternative grids began to emerge and many of these allow cross visits from other grids through the hypergrid protocol.^[64] using OpenSimulator.

Applications

Arts

Second Life residents express themselves creatively through virtual world adaptations of art exhibits, live music,^[65] live theater^[66] and machinima,^[67] as well as other art forms.

Competitive entertainment

A wide variety of recreational activities, both competitive and non-competitive, take place on the *Second Life* Grid, including both traditional sports^[68] and video game-like scenarios.^[69]

Education

Second Life is used as a platform for education by many institutions, such as colleges, universities, libraries and government entities. Since 2008, the University of San Martin de Porres of Peru^[70] has been developing *Second Life* prototypes of Peruvian archeological buildings, and training teachers for this new paradigm of education. The West Virginia University (WVU) Department of Special Education has used *Second Life* widely in education, and it provided teaching certification and certificates of degree in seven different distance education programs.^[71] WVU started a pilot program in the college's computer lab in spring 2011.

Embassies

The Maldives was the first country to open an embassy in *Second Life*.^{[72][73]} The Maldives' embassy is located on *Second Life*'s "Diplomacy Island", where visitors will be able to talk face-to-face with a computer-generated ambassador about visas, trade and other issues. "Diplomacy Island" also hosts Diplomatic Museum and Diplomatic Academy. The Island is established by DiploFoundation as part of the Virtual Diplomacy Project.^[74]

In May 2007,^[75] Sweden became the second country^[75] to open an embassy in *Second Life*. Run by the Swedish Institute, the embassy serves to promote Sweden's image and culture, rather than providing any real or virtual services.^[76] The Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, stated on his blog that he hoped he would get an invitation to the grand opening.^[77]

In September 2007, Publicis Group announced the project of creating a Serbia island as a part of a project Serbia Under Construction. The project is officially supported by Ministry of Diaspora of Serbian Government. It was stated that the island will feature the Nikola Tesla Museum, the Guča Trumpet Festival

and the Exit Festival.^[78] It was also planned on opening a virtual info terminals of Ministry of Diaspora.^[79]

On Tuesday December 4, 2007, Estonia became the third country to open an embassy in *Second Life*.^{[80][81]} In September 2007, Colombia and Serbia opened embassies.^[82] As of 2008, Macedonia and the Philippines have opened embassies in the "Diplomatic Island" of *Second Life*.^[83] In 2008, Albania opened an embassy in the Nova Bay location. SL Israel was inaugurated in January 2008 in an effort to showcase Israel to a global audience, though without any connection to official Israeli diplomatic channels.^[84]

Malta and Djibouti are also planning to open virtual missions in *Second Life*.^[85]

Religion

Religious organizations have also begun to open virtual meeting places within *Second Life*. In early 2007, LifeChurch.tv, a Christian church headquartered in Edmond, Oklahoma, and with eleven campuses in the US, created "Experience Island" and opened its twelfth campus in *Second Life*.^[86] In July 2007, an Anglican cathedral^[87] was established in *Second Life*; Mark Brown, the head of the group that built the cathedral, noted that there is "an interest in what I call depth, and a moving away from light, fluffy Christianity".^[88]

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Second Life was established in 2006. Services have been held regularly, making the FUUCSL Congregation one of the longest-running active congregations in *Second Life*.^[89]

The Egyptian-owned news website Islam Online has purchased land in *Second Life* to allow Muslims and non-Muslims alike to perform the ritual of Hajj in virtual reality form, obtaining experience before actually making the pilgrimage to Mecca in person.^[90]

Second Life also offers several groups that cater to the needs and interests of humanists, atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers. One of the most active groups is SL Humanism which has been holding weekly discussion meetings inside *Second Life* every Sunday since 2006.^[91]

Relationships

Romantic relationships are common in *Second Life*, including some couples who have married online.^[92] The social engagement offered by the online environment helps those who might be socially isolated. In addition, sex is often encountered.^[93] However, to access the adult sections requires age verification.^[94] There is also a large BDSM community.^[95]

Second Life relationships have been taken from virtual online relationships into personal, real-world relationships. Booperkit Moseley and Shukran Fahid were possibly the first couple to meet in *Second Life* and then marry in real life. Booperkit travelled to the United States to meet Shukran and he returned to England with her after one week. They married in 2006, had twin boys in 2009, and are still married. Some couples meet online, form friendships, and eventually move to finding one another in the real world.^[96] Some even have their weddings on *Second Life*, as well as in a real-world setting.^[97]

Relationships in virtual worlds have an added dimension compared to other social media, because avatars give a feeling of proximity making the voyeur experience more intense than simply a textual encounter. The complexities of those encounters depend on the engagement levels of the people behind the avatars, whether they are engaging disassociatively (entertainment only), Immersively (as if the avatar was them), or augmentatively (meaning they engage for a real-life purpose).^[98]

Science

Second Life is used for scientific research, collaboration, and data visualization.^[99] Examples include SciLands, American Chemical Society's ACS Island, Genome, Virginia Tech's SLATE, and Nature Publishing Group's Elucian Islands Village.

Social network

Second Life can be a real-time, immersive social space for people including those with physical or mental disabilities that impair their first lives, who often find comfort and security interacting through anonymous avatars. (Indeed, some academics believe using *Second Life* might even help improve motor ability for people with Parkinson's disease).^[100] An example of how *Second Life* has been used by disabled people is Wheelies, the widely publicised disability themed nightclub founded by Simon Stevens.

Music streams

ShoutCast and Icecast Internet radio stations can be streamed into a land parcel in *Second Life*. Streaming codecs are currently MP3 as AAC and OGG are not currently supported. There are internet radio providers (<https://casthost.net>) that offer these services or select from a list (http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Music_streams#Second_Life_Musicians) compiled by Lindal Kidd and is updated whenever by whoever as there's no officiant for it. At the time of this writing, media on a prim(MOAP) is not a reliable enough way of displaying media and such, sites listed work best with Parcel Media or Parcel Audio.

Work solutions

Second Life gives companies the option to create virtual workplaces to allow employees to virtually meet, hold events, practice any kind of corporate communications, conduct training sessions in 3D immersive virtual learning environment, simulate business processes, and prototype new products.

In 2020, CEO of *Second Life* Ebbe Altberg announced a microsite for *Second Life* to serve as a space for digital meetings to take place amidst global social distancing, self-isolation, and quarantine orders during the COVID-19 pandemic.^[101] *Second Life Remote Work and Event Solutions* describes itself as a "safe, fun solution for virtual meetups, classes & conferences."^[102]

Criticism and controversy

Second Life has seen a number of controversies, as well. Issues range from the technical (budgeting of server resources), to moral (pornography), to legal (legal position of the Linden Dollar, Bragg v. Linden Lab). Security issues have also been a concern.

Regulation

In the past, large portions of the *Second Life* economy consisted of businesses that are regulated or banned. Changes to *Second Life*'s Terms of Service in this regard have largely had the purpose of bringing activity within *Second Life* into compliance with various international laws, even though the person running the business may be in full compliance with the law in their own country.

On July 26, 2007, Linden Lab announced a ban on in-world gambling due to federal and state regulations on Internet gambling that could affect Linden Lab if it was permitted to continue. The ban was immediately met with in-world protests.^[103]

In August 2007, a \$750,000 in-world Linden Dollar bank or Ponzi scheme called Ginko Financial collapsed due to a bank run triggered by Linden Lab's ban on gambling.^[104] The aftershocks of this collapse caused severe liquidity problems for other virtual "Linden Dollar banks", which critics had long asserted were scams. On Tuesday, January 8, 2008 Linden Lab announced the upcoming prohibition of payment of fixed interest on cash deposits in unregulated banking activities in-world.^[105] All banks without real-world charters closed or converted to virtual joint stock companies by January 22, 2008.^[106] After the ban, a few companies continue to offer non-interest bearing deposit accounts to residents, such as the e-commerce site XStreet, which had already adopted a zero-interest policy 3 months before the Linden Lab interest ban.

Technical issues

Second Life has suffered from difficulties related to system instability. These include increased system latency, and intermittent client crashes. However, some faults are caused by the system's use of an "asset server" cluster, on which the actual data governing objects is stored separately from the areas of the world and the avatars that use those objects. The communication between the main servers and the asset cluster appears to constitute a bottleneck which frequently causes problems.^{[107][108][109]} Typically, when asset server downtime is announced, users are advised not to build, manipulate objects, or engage in business, leaving them with little to do but chat and generally reducing confidence in all businesses on the grid.

Another problem is inventory loss,^{[110][111][112]} in which items in a user's inventory, including those which have been paid for, can disappear without warning or permanently enter a state where they will fail to appear in-world when requested (giving an "object missing from database" error). Linden Lab offers no compensation for items that are lost in this way, although a policy change instituted in 2008 allows accounts to file support tickets when inventory loss occurs. Many in-world businesses will attempt to compensate for this or restore items, although they are under no obligation to do so and not all are able to do so. A recent change in how the company handles items which have "lost their parent directory" means that inventory loss is much less of a problem and resolves faster than in recent years. "Loss to recovery times" have gone from months (or never) to hours or a day or two for the majority of users, but inventory loss does still exist.

Second Life functions by streaming all data to the user live over the Internet with minimal local caching of frequently used data. The user is expected to have a minimum of 300kbit/s of Internet bandwidth for basic functionality. Due to the proprietary communications protocols, it is not possible to use a network proxy service to reduce network load when many people are all using the same location, such as when used for group activities in a school or business.

Quality assurance

Criticism of quality assurance of Second Life states that Linden Lab focuses too much on bringing new features to the production environment instead of fixing long-standing bugs that, in the worst case, cause financial loss for the users. On April 30, 2007, an open letter signed by over 3,000^[113] users was sent to Linden Lab to protest the quality assurance process of the company.^[114] Linden Lab has responded to the open letter.^[115]

Frame rate

Computer hardware and Internet connections capable of smoothly rendering high quality content in other MMOGs may perform poorly in *Second Life*, resulting in low frame rates and unresponsive controls on even minimal graphical configurations. The problem is especially prevalent when large numbers of avatars congregate in one area. The problem is largely due to the fact that the world is entirely user created, and the majority of content created by users is made without any sort of basic graphical optimization. As a result, objects with both unnecessarily high polygon counts, and unnecessarily high resolution textures are prevalent. It is not uncommon for users to have to download and use, upwards of dozens of times, the amount of resources than would actually be required for the equivalent visual result. Certain areas have guidelines for script usage, which helps reduce lag by reducing resources used server-side, but does nothing to alleviate the primary issue above.

Congestion

A single region (65536 m² of land hosted on a single CPU) is set to accommodate a limited number of Residents (40 on 'mainland' regions, up to 100 on private islands),^[116] causing some popular locations such as teleportation points to become inaccessible at times. It is possible for an area of land a Resident has paid for to become inaccessible because another area in the same region has exhausted the avatar limit.

Interface

The control scheme for *Second Life* combines controls useful for 3D editing with those useful for game play, which can be highly unintuitive for many. This requires various combinations of alt, ctrl, and the mouse for basic manipulation of the camera and in-world objects. Also, everything in the player's possession—textures, animations, objects, clothing, sounds, videos—shares a common directory tree, and can quickly become cluttered if not carefully managed.

Alternative accounts

The ability for a single real individual to create an unlimited number of accounts for free could have the effect of highly exaggerating the "residence" figures. Blogs and forum posts regularly allege exaggerated membership and performance claims.^{[117][118]}

Customer security

On September 8, 2006, Linden Lab released a news bulletin that revealed their *Second Life* database had been compromised and customer information, including encrypted passwords and users' real names, had likely been accessed.^{[119][120]} However, it was later revealed that the hacker had in fact been focused on trying to cheat the in-world money system^[121] and their access to personal information was believed incidental, although a full alert was still raised for safety's sake.

Fraud and intellectual property protection

Although *Second Life*'s client and server incorporate digital rights management technology, the visual data of an object must ultimately be sent to the client in order for it to be drawn; thus unofficial third-party clients can bypass them. One such program, CopyBot, was developed in 2006 as a debugging tool to enable objects to be backed up, but was immediately hijacked for use in copying objects; additionally, programs that generally attack client-side processing of data, such as GLIntercept, can copy certain pieces of data. Such use is prohibited under the *Second Life* TOS^[122] and could be prosecuted under the DMCA.

Linden Lab may ban a user who is observed using CopyBot or a similar client, but it will not ban a user simply for uploading or even selling copied content; in this case, Linden Lab's enforcement of intellectual property law is limited to that required by the "safe harbor" provisions of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which requires filing a real-life lawsuit. Although a few high-profile businesses in *Second Life* have filed such lawsuits,^{[123][124][125][126][127]} none of the cases filed to date have gone to trial, and most have been dismissed pursuant to a settlement agreement reached between the parties.^{[128][129][130]} Overall, the majority of businesses in *Second Life* do not make enough money for a lawsuit to be worthwhile, or due to real-life work commitments, they cannot devote enough time to complete one. As a result, many *Second Life* businesses and their intellectual property remains effectively unprotected. Another case where settlement and dismissal was gained may be found in the matter of Eros, LLC v. Linden Research, Inc. As of October 7, 2010, the case was transferred to private mediation and the plaintiffs filed for dismissal of charges on March 15, 2011.^[131]

There have also been issues with the use of false DMCA takedown notices.^[132] Once a DMCA takedown notice is served, reversing it requires an individual to expose his personal information to the filer (filing a notice does not require this); for the penalty of perjury to be enacted, a lawsuit is required (anything less, the false DMCA claimer can just claim it from a different account every week causing legitimate business unlimited losses). In addition, the technical process of removal and re-instatement of content on *Second Life* is subject to failure which can result in content becoming unusable to its owner. This does not effectively prevent content theft; a thief who is subject to a DMCA takedown notice will not challenge it, but will simply create a new account and re-upload the content, often releasing it with all permissions available to maximize propagation out of spite.

Most users in the world as paying, private individuals are, likewise, effectively unprotected. Common forms of fraud taking place in-world include bogus investment and pyramid schemes, fake or hacked vendors, and failure to honor land rental agreements. A group of virtual landowners online have filed a class action lawsuit against the company, claiming the company broke the law when it rescinded their ownership rights. The plaintiffs say a change in the terms of service forced them to either accept new terms that rescinded their virtual property ownership rights, or else be locked out of the site.^[133]

The Emerald client and in-world logging scripts

The Emerald client was developed by a group of users based on Snowglobe, an open source fork of the Second Life client. Several groups alleged that the Emerald viewer contained Trojan code which tracked user details and demographics in a way that the developers could later recover. One of these groups was banned from *Second Life* by Linden Lab after publishing their discovery.^[134] Shortly afterward, a member of the Emerald team was accused of a DDOS attack against another website. In response, Linden Lab revoked Emerald's third-party viewer approval and permanently banned several of Emerald's developers.^[135] Due to what happened with Emerald, Linden Lab instituted a new third-party viewer policy^{[136][137]} The support staff and one of the developers of the Emerald project, who was not banned, left to work on a new viewer project, Phoenix (using some of the Emerald codebase, but without Off-the-Record Messaging nor any potentially malicious code).^[138] The Phoenix team are now the developers behind Firestorm Viewer, a fork of Second Life's "viewer 2.0" open source client.^[139]

Ban of Woodbury University

Linden Lab has twice, in 2007 and 2010, banned a California educational institution, Woodbury University, from having a representation within *Second Life*. On April 20, 2010, four simulators belonging to the university were deleted and the accounts of several students and professors terminated, according to The Chronicle of Higher Education. Edward Clift, dean of the School of Media, Culture and Design at

Woodbury University, told *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that their campus "was a living, breathing campus in *Second Life*", including educational spaces designed mostly by students, such as a mock representation of the former Soviet Union and a replica of the Berlin Wall. According to Clift, the virtual campus did not "conform to what Linden Lab wanted a campus to be."^{[140][141][142]}

The article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* concluded with: "Meanwhile, many people in *Second Life* expressed on blogs that they were glad to see the virtual campus go, arguing that it had been a haven for troublemakers in the virtual world."^[141]

The controversial campus of Woodbury University's School of Media, Culture and Design, which was deleted in 2010 by Linden Lab

The Alphaville Herald

In 2004, the newspaper *The Alphaville Herald*, founded and edited by the philosopher Peter Ludlow, migrated to *Second Life*, and in the following years the newspaper played a prominent role in reporting on *Second Life* and in the public discussion of the game.^[143] The newspaper, which was known as *The Second Life Herald* from 2004 to 2009, was later edited by the Internet pioneer Mark P. McCahill. According to scholars Constantinescu and Decu, *The Alphaville Herald* was the first "virtual free press," pioneering mass communication in virtual worlds.^[144]

Internal regulation

Linden Lab have made it a strong policy that they will not act to investigate or enforce any contracts or agreements made purely between users of *Second Life*, although they will co-operate with real-life courts or law enforcement in doing so. This has led to occurrences of low-level fraud within *Second Life*, in which users swindle other users out of money (via Linden dollars which are later traded for real money). Linden Lab will not act on such fraud, and the amounts of money involved are usually small enough (less than US\$100) that it is unlikely the victim will wish to spend the money and effort involved in real-life legal proceedings.

False DMCA takedown notices

There have been issues with the use of false DMCA takedown notices.^[145] Once a DMCA takedown notice is served, reversing it requires an individual to expose his personal information to the filer (filing a notice does not require this); for the penalty of perjury to be enacted, a lawsuit is required (anything less, the false DMCA claimer can just claim it from a different account every week causing legitimate business unlimited losses). In addition, the technical process of removal and re-instatement of content on *Second Life* is subject to failure which can result in content becoming unusable to its owner. This does not effectively prevent content theft; a thief who is subject to a DMCA takedown notice will not challenge it, but will simply create a new account and re-upload the content, often releasing it with all permissions available to maximize propagation out of spite.

A group of virtual landowners online have filed a class action lawsuit against the company, claiming the company broke the law when it rescinded their ownership rights. The plaintiffs say a change in the terms of service forced them to either accept new terms that rescinded their virtual property ownership rights, or else be locked out of the site.^[146]

Terms of Service changes

Linden Lab typically offer no compensation when a change to the platform or Terms of Service is made, even when it has a serious negative effect on users. For example, when gambling was banned on *Second Life* in July 2007, users who had invested money and time in casinos lost their investment.

"Virtual Riot"

In January 2007, a "virtual riot" erupted between members of the French National Front (FN) who had established a virtual HQ on *Second Life*, and anti-racism activists, including Second Life Left Unity, a socialist and anti-capitalist user-group.^{[147][148][149][150]} Since then, several small Internet-based organizations have claimed some responsibility for instigating the riots.^[151]

OpenSpaces

Linden Lab, for a long period, offered *OpenSpace* regions to users: regions which were purchased in packs of four, with all four running on a single CPU core, intended to be placed next to an existing region to create the effect of larger size. The fee for 4 OpenSpaces was identical to that for a single private region. However, in March 2008, this rule was modified to permit OpenSpaces to be bought individually and placed elsewhere, as well as increasing the prim load each one could handle. OpenSpaces were made available for a US\$415 downpayment plus a US\$75 monthly fee.

In October 2008, Linden Lab announced that the OpenSpaces being used for this purpose were being misused; there was in fact no technical throttle limiting their usage. Linden Lab raised the monthly fee per OpenSpace to US\$125, the same cost as half a region; added an avatar limit of 20; and renamed it to Homestead.

A week after the initial announcement Linden Lab stated its intention to add technical limits. A revised Openspace product, with far fewer prims, a no-residency rule, and costing the same monthly amount, was announced.

In May 2009, Linden Lab announced they were "grandfathering" OpenSpace sims (now rebranded as "Homesteads"), after a protracted protest movement^[152] caused a major amount of negative publicity and funded potential litigation.^{[153][154][155]}

Marketing

Linden Lab has been accused of manipulation of user count statistics to make the world seem more popular than it is. This includes counting multiple avatars created by the same real person as separate accounts, never removing accounts from the database no matter how long they have been idle, counting accounts which are created for free and which never pay any money into the game equally with those that do, and implementing in-world systems which encourage the creation of bogus extra accounts (for example, "traffic bots" which simply remain stationary in a store, causing the system to rank the store as popular because there are people there).^{[156][157]}

Separate grids

Previously, there were two age-differentiated grids (one for teens 13–17, one for adults 18 or over). When a teen turned 18, he/she was transferred from the Teen Grid to the Main Grid. Linden Lab had received controversy for the lack of integration between teens and adults. The teen grid and the adult grid actually were technically parts of one grid called Agni, due to *Second Life*'s tradition of naming grids after Hindu gods. However, teen residents could not access the adult regions, and adult residents could not access the teen regions. Underage users, who were under 18 in real life, were not allowed onto the main grid, and being an underage user there was an offense that could be abuse reported.

On 19 January 2009, Linden Lab, Philip Linden related (in an interview with Metanomics) an intent to merge the two grids into one. This immediately attracted uproar on SL's private forums, largely from residents who feared they would be required to use the unpopular age verification system, and would be permanently under threat of a false sex-related allegation or lawsuit by a teenager or his/her parents.

The Main and Teen Grids were merged, with the Teen Grid being partially split up by age. Residents aged 13–17 are allowed to access General Rated areas only.^[41] The Teen Grid continues to exist in its original location on the Agni, but is now accessible by all residents.^[158]

Content

Sex

In *Second Life*, users can do almost anything that they can do in their physical lives. There are some who do things that they would normally do, like talk to people, while others do things that normally would be more rare for them to do in the physical world.

Some media attention has been given to sexual activity involving avatars with a childlike appearance.^[159] The United Kingdom^{[160][161][162][163]} and Germany^[164] are among the countries investigating new laws to combat simulated child pornography. The USA has attempted to pass several laws forbidding simulated child pornography, however, each one has been struck down by the US Supreme Court as an infringement on the First Amendment right to free speech.^[165]

As of May 2007, two such countries, Germany and Belgium, have launched a police investigation into Age of Consent-related offenses in *Second Life* (including both trading of non-virtual photography and involuntary virtual sexual activity with childlike avatars by means of virtual identity theft).^{[166][167]} Linden Lab responded by issuing a statement that any "depiction of sexual or lewd acts involving minors" was a bannable offence.^[168]

In France, a conservative family union, Familles de France, sued Linden Lab in June 2007, alleging that *Second Life* gave access to minors to sexual content, including bondage, zoophilia and scatophilia, as well as gambling, and advertisements for alcohol, drugs or tobacco.^[169] Linden Lab pointed out that the virtual world is not meant for children (people under the age of 18) because of the mature content and what happens within *Second Life*. However, minors aged between 13–17 can access *Second Life*, but they will be restricted to what they can see or do based on age.^[170] The *Second Life* world is split into sections/worlds and each one is given a maturity rating similar to films: General, Moderate and Adult. Minors aged 13–17 can access areas with a General Rating only.^[171]

Second Life Main Grid regions are rated either "General", "Moderate", or "Adult" (previously "PG", "Mature", or "Adult").^[172] Builds, textures, actions, animations, chat, or businesses that are of an adult nature are regulated by the *Second Life* Terms of Service^[173] to only occur in simulators with a Moderate or Adult rating. General rated sims exist as an alternative for residents who do not wish to reside in areas where adult-oriented activities and businesses are permitted.

Linden Lab has created an Adult rated "mainland" continent named Zindra in response to its other "mainland" continents being mostly General.^[172]

However, currently (June 2018) an effective age verification system is not implemented. To differentiate between minors and adults, the software relies solely on the information given by the users upon registration.

Griefing and denial of service attacks

Second Life has been attacked several times by groups of Residents abusing the creation tools to create objects that harass other users or damage the system. This included Grey Goo objects which infinitely reproduce, eventually overwhelming the servers,^[174] orbiters which throw an avatar so far upwards they cannot get back down in a reasonable timeframe without teleporting; cages which surround avatars, preventing them from moving, and similar tools. Although combat between users is sanctioned in certain areas of the world, these objects have been used to cause disruption in all areas. Attacks on the grid itself, such as Grey Goo, are strictly forbidden anywhere on the grid. It was possible to perpetrate DoS (Denial of Service) attacks on other users simply by scripting objects that spew screen filling characters from anywhere on the grid to another avatar's location, thereby disabling a clear view to the virtual world. Such attacks were quickly blocked with the use of the "mute" tool. Bugs in the client and server software were also exploited by griefers to kick users, crash servers, and revert content; however, such exploits were promptly fixed by Linden Lab.^[175]

Unauthorized copying of content

Second Life features a built-in digital rights management system that controls the movement of textures, sounds, scripts, and models with the *Second Life* servers at Linden Lab. At some point, though, this data must be sent to a user's computer to be displayed or played—an issue fundamental to any system attempting to apply restrictions to digital information.

In November 2006 controversy arose over a tool called CopyBot, developed as part of libsecondlife and was intended to allow users to legitimately back up their *Second Life* data. For a brief period, an unmodified CopyBot allowed any user to replicate SL items or avatars (although not scripts, which run only on the servers at Linden Lab). Later changes to the SecondLife protocols prevented unmodified copies of CopyBot from working. Nevertheless, the basic issue of users being able to duplicate content that is sent to them remains.

Residents who copy content belonging to other users face being banned from *Second Life*, but Linden Lab has so far never sued any of these users for copyright infringement; since the resident creators (and not Linden Lab) retain ownership of the rights, it is not clear whether Linden Lab would legally be able to do so. Linden Lab does, however, comply with DMCA takedown notices served to them against resident content; serving a DMCA Takedown Notice is the normal procedure recommended by Linden Lab for having copyrighted content illegally resold on *Second Life*.

Any user who uploads, publishes or submits any content keeps the intellectual property rights of that content, however both Linden Lab and other users gain their own rights from your content. Linden Lab receives a content license from anything a user uploads to the server. Section 7.3 of the *Second Life* Terms of Service states; "you hereby automatically grant Linden Lab a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free, sub-license able, and transferable licence to use, reproduce, distribute, prepare derivative works of, display, and perform the content solely for the purpose of providing and promoting the service". A user who uploads their content to a public area also gives a content licence to other users as well, which allows other users to replicate and record for use in Machinima (as outlined in section 7.4, Snapshot and Machinima Policy).^[176]

Regardless of what rights and licences are given, Linden Lab takes no responsibility for the outcome of any dispute between users or the server regarding content. Section 10.2 states; "you release Linden Lab (and its officers, directors, shareholders, agents, subsidiaries, and employees) from claims, demands, losses, liabilities and damages (actual and consequential) of every kind nature, known and unknown, arising out of or in any way connected with any dispute you have or claim to have with one or more users, including whether or not Linden Lab becomes involved in any resolution or attempted resolution of the dispute". Section 10.3 repeats a similar passage but regarding the responsibility of Linden Lab during any data or technical fault.^[176]

International issues

Legality

Second Life users are expected to obey the laws of their own local countries with regard to their actions in the virtual world; however, a problem can arise in countries which have tough laws regarding material downloaded from the Internet, such as pornography. It is possible, for example, for a US user - even in a non-adult area - to approach German users and create an object displaying an obscene uploaded image which is illegal under German law but legal under US law. Although the US user has broken the *Second Life* terms of services as a result, and faces suspension or banning from *Second Life*, the German user has broken a real-life sex offense law by downloading the image and faces a far worse penalty. Even if the user is eventually deemed to not be responsible for this download because it was unsolicited, they will still have been investigated for a sex offense. However, no actual prosecutions have resulted from actions of this type so far.

Taxation

In late 2006, Linden Lab announced that, in accordance to sales tax regulations of the European Union (EU), they are required to charge *value added tax* (VAT) to EU residents on all money transactions involving the company. However, Linden Lab waives VAT to users who have a VAT registration ID.^[177] The introduction of VAT caused controversy with EU users, mostly among content creators who protested that the addition of VAT caused a disadvantage in comparison to competitors living outside the EU.

Litigation

Bragg v. Linden Lab

In 2006, attorney Marc Bragg sued Linden Lab, claiming that it had illegally deprived him of access to his account^[178] after he discovered a loophole in the online land auction system which allowed regions to be purchased at prices below reserve. Although most users and commentators believed that Bragg would have no chance of winning, a number of legal developments occurred as a result of the case, including a court ruling that parts of the *Second Life* Terms of Service were unenforceable, due to being an unconscionable contract of adhesion.^[179] The case eventually ended with Bragg's virtual land and account being restored to him in a confidential out-of-court settlement.^[180] As such, a settlement created no precedent and thus left users with confusion as to what legal rights they truly had with respect to their virtual land, items, and account. Many of Bragg's legal arguments rested on the claim—advertised on Linden Lab web site—that virtual land within *Second Life* could be "owned" by the purchasing user, which was removed shortly after the settlement,^[181] leading to speculation that this was part of the reason for the settlement.^[182]

Eros, LLC and Grei v. Linden Lab

Eros, LLC and Shannon Grei brought forth a class action suit in US District Court in Northern California against Linden Research, Inc on September 15, 2009 (Case4:09-cv-04269-PJH). Court papers allege the defendants knowingly and profitably turned a blind's eye to copyright and trademark violations within the Second Life service.^{[183][184]}

Evans et al. v. Linden Lab

In 2010, a group of banned SL users filed suit against Linden Lab and CEO Philip Rosedale, in the same Pennsylvania Federal District Court that the Bragg case was adjudicated in, with the same judge, to deal with further land seizures and account suspensions by the Lab against various customers.^[185] Due to the Terms of Service agreement changes since the Bragg case, defendants attorneys successfully argued to move the suit to federal court in California, where the case lingered for several years. The judge did rule that there was a basis to turn the litigation into a class action, and that there were two classes under which claimants could file claims. The primary class was those who suffered economic damages to their livelihoods, through loss of their business revenues in SL. The secondary class was those who suffered property losses from loss of land, money on hand, and virtual goods in avatar inventories.^[186] In May 2013, attorney for defendants negotiated a settlement agreement with one of the lead attorneys that, in plain language, agreed to refund region setup fees for private island owners, pay land owners 2 Linden Dollars per square meter of virtual land, refund all L\$ and USD amounts in the plaintiffs' accounts at the time of suspension, and allow the plaintiffs the option of either receiving \$15US as compensation for loss of accounts and inventory virtual goods OR restoration of their accounts in order to sell their goods on the SL Marketplace.^[187] The settlement agreement went to final hearing in March 2014, with an objection from claimant Mike Lorrey as to the vagueness of certain terms in the settlement as to which fees exactly would be refunded. With the resolution of that objection,^[188] claimants who had filed claims prior to March 28, 2014 began to receive settlement money a few months later.

In popular culture

Since its debut in 2003, *Second Life* has been referred to by various popular culture mediums, including literature, television, film and music. In addition, various personalities in such mediums have themselves used or employed *Second Life* for both their own works and for private purposes.

In September 2006, former Governor of Virginia Mark Warner became the first politician to appear in a MMO when he gave a speech in *Second Life*.^[189] Musicians followed suit, with Redzone being credited by *Wired* and Reuters as the first band to tour in *Second Life* in February 2007. Then, in June 2008, author Charles Stross held a conference in *Second Life* to promote an upcoming novel.^[190] *Second Life* was also featured prominently, and used as a tool to locate a suspect, in the television show CSI: NY in 2007.^[191] In the American sitcom The Office, Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) is known to play the game, most notably in the episode "Local Ad".

Research

Much of the published research conducted in *Second Life* is associated with education and learning. Unlike computer games, *Second Life* does not have a pre-defined purpose and allows for highly realistic enactment of real life activities online.^[192] One such study tested the usefulness of *SL* as an action learning environment in a senior course for management information systems students.^[192] Another presented a case

study in which university students were tasked with building an interactive learning experience using *SL* as a platform. Both problem-based learning and constructionism acted as framing pedagogies for the task, with students working in teams to design and build a learning experience which could be possible in real life.^[193]

Situated learning has also been examined in *SL*, in order to determine how the design and social dynamics of the virtual world support as well as constrain various types of learning.^[194] The paper, "The future for (second) life and learning", published in the *British Journal of Educational Technology*, examines the potential of *Second Life* to further innovative learning techniques.^[195] It notes trends within the *SL* innovation to date, including the provision of realistic settings, the exploitation of pleasant simulated environments for groups, and the links with other learning technologies. It also considers the creativity sparked by *SL*'s potential to offer the illusion of 3-D 'spaces' and buildings, and points to infinite imaginative educational possibilities.^[195]

HealthInfo Island offers Second Life residents tips on how to stay healthy.

Second Life has also offered educational research potential within the medical and healthcare fields. Examples include in-world research facilities such as the Second Life Medical and Consumer Health Libraries (HealthInfo Island—funded by a grant from the US National Library of Medicine), and VNEC (Virtual Neurological Education Centre—developed at the University of Plymouth, UK).^[196]

HealthInfo Island provides tips on staying healthy to Second Life residents.

There have also been healthcare related studies done of *SL* residents.^[197] Studies show that behaviors from virtual worlds can translate to the real world. One survey suggests that users are engaged in a range of health-related activities in *SL* which are potentially impacting real-life behaviors.^[197]

Another focus of *SL* research has included the relationship of avatars or virtual personas to the 'real' or actual person. These studies have included research into social behavior and reported two main implications.^[198] The first is that *SL* virtual selves shape users' offline attitudes and behavior. The research indicated that virtual lives and physical lives are not independent, and our appearances and actions have both online and offline consequences.^[198] The second deals with experimental research and supports the idea that virtual environments, such as *SL*, can enable research programs in that people behave in a relatively natural spread of behavioral patterns.^[198]

The *SL* avatar-self relationship was also studied via resident interviews, and various enactments of the avatar-self relationship were identified. The study concluded that *SL* residents enacted multiple avatar-self relationships and cycled through them in quick succession, suggesting that these avatar-self relationships might be shaped and activated strategically in order to achieve the desired educational, commercial, or therapeutic outcomes.^[199]

Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff describes the anthropological applications of studying *Second Life* and its userbase in *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*.^[200] Boellstorff explores the relationship between anonymity and community when everyone in a community belongs to varying degrees of anonymity, and how this feeds into the idea of digital collectivity. He also comments on the phenomenon of data becoming "part of social context" that has been observed both inside and outside of *Second Life* as surveillance becomes more integrated into everyday life. He stresses the difference between the concepts of anonymity and pseudonymity, identifying *Second Life* users as belonging to the latter group of people - though their avatars are not directly linked to their real identities and reputations, they have forged new ones in this online space, a unique effect of creating an online persona in the digital age.

See also

- [Active Worlds](#)
- [Anteworld](#)
- [blaxxun](#)
- [Cyberformance](#)
- [Libraries in virtual worlds](#)
- [PlayStation Home](#)
- [Simulated reality](#)
- [Smeet](#)
- [Social simulation game](#)
- [The Sims Online](#)
- [Virtual reality](#)
- [Worlds.com](#)

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- [Official website \(http://secondlife.com/\)](http://secondlife.com/)
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