

1. Applicant Information

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2. Overview

Descriptive Title

Educational Development in Second Life: The Seeds of a New World for EDC

Intended Outcomes

Full funding will support:

- The rental of dedicated EDC learning space in the virtual environment "Second Life" (SL) (June 2007).
- The building of learning spaces and porting of EDC resources to the virtual environment (June 2007 to January 2008).
- A preliminary investigation into the effectiveness of SL for community-building for Educational Developers Caucus and its sister organizations outside Canada (January 2008 to June 2008)

Rationale

Second Life (SL) is a virtual 3D "world." SL is created by residents for residents; divided into islands on a grid, where each "island" or space on the grid can be private or public, PG or mature, and built on or above. It combines social interaction with online learning tools and is currently a space where teachers, librarians, and learners co-exist with businesses and role-playing gamers. Many academic librarians and other pioneering educators are experimenting with SL and studying the results; a few educational developers from POD and EDC are now "in world" and we are experiencing it as a rich learning environment that shares some of the features identified as important to EDC members, such as peer mentoring and capacity building in a community of practice.

As EDC grows, the physical distance between tertiary education institutions becomes a more palpable barrier for the community orientation of our original and new members. We promise a community of practice and we deliver one – once or twice per year in person, and approximately once per month online through our listserv. Second Life is, if used appropriately, a powerful tool to supplement the already successful efforts of our Communications Vice-Chair and recently formed subcommittee. While it would not speak to all, a considerable number of academic librarians and

educational developers along with faculty and trainers are exploring the many uses of Second Life to affect just such a community of practice. For those who are new to Caucus, or who simply wish to carry on the synergies begun at our two major conferences each year (EDC and STLHE), Second Life offers a media-rich, socially interactive collaborative environment in which mentoring and a sharing culture (hallmarks of STLHE/EDC's approach) are key. The added benefit is that as an internet-based world, EDC members could lead the way in networking with our neighbours around the globe through the ICED network. We could invite member networks to our EDC Island in order to meet, plan physical exchanges, share experiences, and even contribute to international conferences when they cannot be there in person.

In this way, we are accomplishing the following 5 of the 6 goals for the EDC Grants program:

- Encourage new directions in educational development;
- Facilitate critical reflection about ongoing practice;
- Enhance communication between development professionals;
- Expand impact of successful practices beyond local environments;
- Build collaborative structures between institutions.

Specific portions of the Professional Development Plan are also addressed in planning, building, hosting and assessing this project. Namely,

- Orientation and recruitment to the ED Career (Mentors from anywhere in the world can meet easily with new developers in SL).
- Online knowledge resources and discussions (the buzz groups in SL are a good model).
- Signature pedagogies and understanding disciplinary cultures (SL has a variety of simulations and learning contexts that are built based on disciplinary content needs and learning processes).
- Adapting models of research to scholarship of teaching and learning in SL.
- Cross-cultural communication (this is absolutely key in SL as an immersive and international environment).
- Development perspective (one of the aspects that is most helpful in SL is the ability to combine social interaction with learning tasks. After an hour buzz group, for example, educators will go and dance in the sky together. This strikes the proposers as a perfect fit with ED Caucus and its valuing of hard work balanced with fun and relaxation/reflection).

Scholarship

While educational research is currently being conducted in Second Life in a nascent way using typical social science modalities, the exciting aspect for us is the bringing-together of traditionally separate face-to-face and online contexts. Possibilities for teaching and learning in Second Life are summarized in Antonacci and Modares, Bixler, and Levine. For EDC purposes, the model of learning that best fits what the proposed project will be doing is cognitive apprenticeship/community of practice as found in Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1999), Cranton (2003), Mezirow (1990). This project will use the concepts and application of practitioner-based collaborative action inquiry, which is described by Yorks (2005) as "a process directed toward creating social space for generative learning: learning that is necessary for transformational changes in practice (Nevis, DiBella, & Gould, 1995). Producing generative learning involves what Argyris and Schon (1974) call double-loop learning -questioning the assumptions or "governing variables" that guide our actions and inform how we frame or interpret a situation—and is distinct from the adaptive or corrective single-loop learning that takes place within these existing meaning structures."

Dissemination

Participants in the Project will be invited to become co-investigators in a reflective study. Immersed in the environment, they will not be objects of study but will themselves be co-researchers. By keeping journals and meeting monthly to discuss reflections, self-selected participants will collaborate on a dissemination of their self-study through conference presentations at both EDC and STLHE (and perhaps beyond, at ICED for example). Pending ethics approval at our respective

institutions and from Linden Labs, owners of SL, we will distribute surveys at various points in the process for all willing participants including the co-investigators. All normal protocols for conducting human subjects research can be followed in Second Life, and indeed must be since most of the research is funded by U.S. grants that require approval similar to that mandated by Canada's Tri-council agreement. Our surveys will provide data about multiple aspects of peer development in Second Life, and can be a model for some other hypothetical (as yet unforeseen) project, perhaps one that explores faculty development and student development in Second Life.

References

- Cranton, P. and King, K. (2003). "Transformative learning as a professional development goal." In K. King and P. Lawler (eds.) *New perspectives on designing and implementing professional development of teachers of adults*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (no. 98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Mezirow, J. and Associates (1990) *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wenger, E. (1999) *Communities of Practice. Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yorks, L. (2005) Adult Learning and the Generation of New Knowledge and Meaning: Creating Liberating Spaces for Fostering Adult Learning Through Practitioner-Based Collaborative Action Inquiry. *Teachers College Record* Volume 107 Number 6, 2005, p. 1217-1244.

Second Life Resources

- Antonacci, David M. and Modares, Nellie. Second Life: The Educational Possibilities of a Massively Multiplayer Virtual World (MMVW)
<http://www2.kumc.edu/tlt/SLEDUCAUSESW2005/SLPresentationOutline.htm>
Accessed April 12, 2007
- Bixler, Brett. Second Life Educational Possibilities and Considerations
http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/virtualworlds/?page_id=67
Accessed April 12, 2007
- Levine, Alan. Symposium Sessions Oct 18.
<http://sl.nmc.org/2006/10/18/symposium-oct18/>
Accessed April 12, 2007

3. Budget

Item (including any applicable taxes)	Cost
Salaries including all benefits: (Staff time 10% of salary/benefits for 12 months= \$800 x 2)	\$16,000.00
One undergraduate or graduate Work Study student (Fall/Winter Semesters)	\$1,800.00
Rental fees in SL*	\$600.00
Materials, Resources and Supplies: (phone charges / supplies)	\$100.00
Total Costs	\$18,500.00
Less: Matching funding obtained from other sources (e.g. Department/Dean) We will be seeking funding for related work in September or January, if available from Provost's Learning Enhancement Fund to support the construction of tools and buildings in SL.	
Less: In-kind contributions (Staff time; not fundable by grant so contributed in-kind)	\$16,000.00
Total amount requested from the EDC Grant Program	\$2,500.00

*see <http://virtualworlds.nmc.org/2007/04/01/leases/>