

NOTE TO VIEWERS

This PDF contains:

1. Answers to my original Second Life questions provided by Peter Gray, account executive, Lewis Global Public Relations.
2. Responses to interview questions from Robin Harper, vice president for marketing and community development, Linden Lab.
3. Responses to interview questions from Terry Beaubois, director of the Creative Research Lab in the School of Architecture, Montana State University.

Peter Gray was informed that I would put these documents online because my word count in the *Chronicle* (1800-1900 words, print edition) prevented my including all of the respondents' comments. I also wanted readers to be able to see in what context I used those quotes that appeared in my article. (Please scroll down for each document.)

ORIGINAL QUESTIONS FOR LINDEN LAB

Answers provided via e-mail on Oct. 22, 2007 by Peter Gray, Account Executive, Lewis Global Public Relations.

1. I have visited your Police Blotter. How many incidents have you recorded in the first six months of this year that would constitute harassment? How many of these were sexual in nature? racist? homophobic? How many warnings were issued? suspensions? expulsions? (I believe those are the range of consequences for Second Life users, but do correct me if I am mistaken.)

We do not disclose this data.

2. How many incidents have you recorded in the first six months of this year that would constitute abuse (with scripted objects)? how many of these were sexual in nature? racist? homophobic?

We do not disclose this data.

3. I understand and have read the terms of service. In my article I note section 1.2 and 5.1 which essentially hold Linden Lab harmless from any litigation arising from actions, verbal or otherwise, that happen among and between avatars on Second Life. As I understand it, you have the right but not the obligation to investigate incidents that constitute online sexual harassment and/or assault. As such, am I correct in believing that any litigation arising out of interactions among avatars in Second Life is an issue that must be sorted out among users and/or their organizations and institutions?

As the creator of the Second Life platform, we require Residents to abide by our Terms of Service and Community Standards, which forbid harassment. The vast majority of Residents are happy to abide by these standards. When and where we become aware

of instances of transgression, we act to enforce these agreements up to and including banning Residents from Second Life.

As with any communication technology – including email, instant messaging clients, chatrooms, VoIP or even the telephone or the Internet itself – Second Life could be misused. While we strive to enforce our Community Standards, our goal is to foster a self-governing community.

Disputes between Residents are most appropriately settled between Residents. This is a generally accepted and understood stance for platform providers; for example, a dispute between a blogger and one of his or her readers would be resolved between those parties, rather than between those users and the provider of the blogging platform.

That said, it is important to note that Linden Lab does of course participate in dispute resolution to the extent that is appropriate for a platform provider. In copyright and trademark disputes, for example, we have a notice and take down process consistent with the requirements of the DMCA.

4. How many requests by attorneys have you received since Second Life's inception for information about actual identities of avatars? How many, if any, were from university counsels? How many involved an educator, if any?

As a legal matter, we do not disclose this information.

5. Is it Linden Lab's policy to withhold identity of users, even those involved in litigation? Any exceptions? If so, what are they?

Linden Lab values the privacy of Second Life Residents very highly, and identifying information is held in confidence. However, consistent with our policies and applicable law, we will cooperate with legal process, including subpoenas.

6. Do your terms of service differ for universities that purchase significant tracks of land or islands? or are they the same as the ones online that I as a user must agree to? In other words, suppose a university wanted to make a big land purchase and asked for specific terms of service or amendments thereto. Do you make such arrangements and, if so, what are their kind and nature? To whom have you issued such changes, if any?

Currently, all Residents of Second Life must agree to and abide by the Terms of Service (ToS) agreement, whether they are in-world as individuals or as part of an organization. The ToS do not vary in relation to the size of a virtual land purchase.

7. What guidelines do you believe professors who hold classes in Second Life should provide to their students concerning online harassment, assault or violations of other Second Life community standards? Please be specific as this can go a long way to help academicians understand how to use the service proactively and avoid litigation, adhering to your standards.

First, it is important to note that educators can create private campuses in Second Life. As a landowner, a university can control who is able to visit its in-world presence. Just like in the real world, educators generally don't hold classes in public regions in Second Life, but rather on private campuses where only invited students and faculty can attend. Universities are able to match avatar names with their students' real names when allowing entry, eliminating the element of anonymity and increasing trust. As in the real world, classes composed of known students encourage appropriate and responsible behavior. However, unlike in the real world, in Second Life, Residents can choose to 'mute' any individuals who choose to be disruptive, silencing any distraction.

Also, the Second Life viewer software has an easy-to-use, built-in abuse-reporting tool. If an abuse of the Community Standards occurs, Residents can use this tool to report the abuse to Linden Lab; we then deal with these complaints on a case-by-case basis.

As educational institutions often provide guidelines for students' use of other technology in their classes, such as email or online chatrooms, they may choose to provide guidelines for students' use of Second Life.

While we strive to provide the best support for educators on the Second Life Grid, we will defer to the numerous educators who are currently using the platform successfully in their classes, as they would likely be the best source of advice in this area.

8. Do you believe that centers of teaching excellence, human resources departments, university counsels and technology institutes on campus have an obligation to advise constituents about online sexual harassment and assault and the litigation that may arise therefrom in virtual environments? If so, why? If not, why?

As this would be an issue between these organizations and their constituents, it would be best considered by these organizations themselves. Some organizations may issue an advisory, as many do whenever new technologies – such as instant messaging services or smartphones – are used for official purposes.

There are tools in place to create an environment that is conducive to education in Second Life, and we urge educators to make use of these in their endeavors.

9. What other advice, recommendations or guidelines can you provide that will help university users of Second Life be more accountable to constituents and other avatars using your service?

We urge educators to take advantage of the support structure provided by [the Second Life Grid](#) and the community of educators in Second Life. The [Second Life Education \(SLED\)](#) mailing list enables educators to share best practices for successfully using the platform in their pursuits.

Second Life holds tremendous potential for educators. However, just as an institution would be ill-advised to build a website or purchase a new computer system without planning how it would be best served by doing so, entering Second Life without planning will be of very limited value. We encourage educators to engage their institution and the greater community to help plan their use of the virtual world.

We recommend that any organization spend time thoroughly planning and considering their use of Second Life before 'jumping in.' Discuss your plans, objectives and concerns with members of the SLED list and the Second Life education community.

Linden Lab is thrilled to see the large number of educators that are using the Second Life Grid in meaningful ways. Linden Lab offers educational organizations (and nonprofits) a discount on island purchases, and our [Campus: Second Life](#) program makes it easier for educators to try out the platform by providing semester-long land grants.

INTERVIEW WITH ROBIN HARPER

Questions provided in advance via e-mail on Oct. 8, 2007. Answers delivered via e-mail from Lewis Global Public Relations on Oct. 22, 2007

The Linden Lab Web site states that Robin Harper, vice president for Marketing and Community Development, "led the emergence of the Second Life brand, including naming, positioning and the other marketing efforts" associated with this virtual world. Before joining Linden Lab in 2002 she worked at Maxis, a division of Electronic Arts, where she "established SimCity as one of the most recognized brand names in entertainment software, and was named one of the marketing 100 by Advertising Age/Newsweek."

First, some basic questions:

1. There have been varying reports about the number of avatars that Second Life claims are active on the site. Your data shows close to 10 million with only about 1 million logging on in the last month. A Boston research group calculates that users spend about 12 minutes per month on the site. What are your figures for:

We report a wealth of very granular data about Second Life usership. This is publicly available [here](http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php). [http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php]

- A. The number of people with avatars (as opposed to the number of avatars)?

As of the end of September 2007 there were 6,736,832 unique registrations.

- B. The average amount of time per user spent in-world per month? (Or, do you disagree with the 12-minute figure and why, why not?)

It should be noted that Yankee Group's initial calculations have been

corrected, and the firm now estimates an average of 3.8 hours per month. This figure was presumably found by dividing the total hours spent in Second Life by the total number of unique registrations.

We feel that a more accurate measurement of the average time members of the community spend in-world per month is calculated using the number of active Residents (defined as having spent at least 1 hour in-world within the given month), as this number does not include those who may be unsuccessful going in-world. The average time an active Resident spends in-world per month is currently around 46.5 hours.

- C. Have you broken up groups into marketing clusters with distinct profiles such as “avid users,” “occasional users,” business users,” “education users”? If so, what are the breakdowns and brief profiles and how, if at all, do education users differ from the rest?

While we don't divide Residents into these groups, we do report active Residents by country, age, and gender. Unfortunately, there's currently no reliable way to measure the numbers of Residents involved in particular uses of the Second Life Grid. However, the number of Residents earning a profit in-world is available [here](http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php) [http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php] and a list of the real-world educational institutions in Second Life is available [here](http://simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_in_SL). [http://simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_in_SL]

- D. How many avatars register or are active in-world because of education initiatives, including islands maintained by colleges and universities?

Unfortunately, this is not a figure we are currently able to track. However, there are currently more than 100 educational organizations on the Second Life Grid.

- E. What plans do you have to expand or enhance educational offerings in Second Life?

We value the educational community on the Second Life Grid very highly and plan to continue to support this important group as much as possible. To make it easier for educators to use the platform, we will continue to offer the 50% discount on the purchase of estates (private islands) and monthly maintenance fees, and we plan to continue the Campus: Second Life program of semester-long land grants. Additionally, we look forward to continuing to work closely with the educational community on the SLED list to further develop best practices for using the platform.

2. In May 2007, Second Life issued a list of violations of community standards, including “[r]eal-life images, avatar portrayals, and other depiction of sexual or lewd acts involving or appearing to involve children or minors; real-life images,

avatar portrayals, and other depictions of sexual violence including rape, real-life images, avatar portrayals, and other depictions of extreme or graphic violence, and other broadly offensive content are never allowed or tolerated within Second Life.”

Here are questions concerning those violations:

- A. One of my concerns about Second Life in academe has been the specter of online harassment and assault in an environment that bestows anonymity. What has been done and/or what is being planned to eliminate or curtail some or all of these violations?

Unfortunately, harassment and assault are problems that can exist in the virtual world just as they can in the real world. In the real world, social standards and community policies (e.g. laws) aim to prevent this behavior, while punitive measures are in place to provide recourse. In the virtual world, the same is true.

However, of course, virtual harassment and assault differ significantly from instances in real life. For example, virtual assault cannot cause physical harm, and an avatar cannot be forced to do anything against its controller’s will, Residents can easily ‘mute’ any object or individual that is bothering them, and, ultimately, any incident can be ended by teleporting elsewhere or leaving Second Life temporarily. In the virtual world, it is easier to end instances of these problems; it is also easier to report them, as there is an abuse-reporting tool built in to the Second Life viewer.

Many educational organizations in Second Life choose to create private campuses, accessible only by registered students and faculty. As such, anonymity is generally not an issue for educators in-world. Additionally, we are currently implementing an Identity Verification (IDV) solution, which will enable Second Life Residents to have certain aspects of their real-life identity (e.g. name, age) verified by a third party.

More on IDV can be found [here](#).

[<http://blog.secondlife.com/2007/08/29/identity-verification-comes-to-second-life/>]

- B. Has Linden Lab dealt with any such concerns that involved educators or students and, if so, how was this handled?

As a matter of privacy, we do not disclose this information.

- C. Certain types of grieving—“sexual or lewd acts involving or appearing to involve children or minors ... depictions of sexual violence including rape, real-life images ... and other depictions of extreme or graphic violence”—can have a substantial emotional impact on certain users. Some users downplay

this, saying those experiencing such community violations should just hit “quit.” What are your thoughts on the emotional impact some of these behaviors can have and the recommendation to just quit, cutting off the connection?

First, it should be noted that the behavior you describe is expressly banned from Second Life, as is all broadly offensive content. We provide Residents with the tools to help keep the community safe for all users. For example, it is not possible for another Resident to make you do something against your will in Second Life, and Residents can easily ‘mute’ objects or individuals that they wish to ignore. Within the context of a properly maintained and controlled educational environment, extreme incidents, such as those above, are no more likely in Second Life than in real life.

- D. In general, academe generally has zero tolerance for these and other types of harassment, especially those related to racism and homophobia. After the appearance of my Second Life article in *The Chronicle*, several bloggers noted that there are tools and fixes to eliminate these issues. And yet, during that same week, there were reports that Second Life was hit with self-replicating cubes—a type of virtual world spam—with racial epithets, including the “n” word and “f” word. See: http://slrecord.typepad.com/the_second_life_record/2007/09/grid-under-glob.html How can Second Life partner with academe to resolve issues like this that may be beyond the purview of instructor, student, even institution or even Linden Lab?

Again, there are a number of tools in place to prevent, discourage, and provide recourse for violations of standards. Unfortunately, there will always be those who seek to use technology for offensive mischief – one need only consider the number of websites that have been hacked for evidence of this. Our developers work extremely hard to foresee and prevent potential exploits, and new exploits are shut down as soon as they have been identified.

3. Are you aware that public universities must honor open meetings and open records laws that either demand disclosure or forbid public entities from doing business with non-government bodies? Iowa Code states:

A government body shall not prevent the examination or copying of a public record by contracting with a nongovernment body to perform any of its duties or functions. 22.2(2) of the Iowa Code

Kathleen Richardson, executive secretary of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, believes “that that our current open meetings and records laws are broad enough to cover virtual environments. Chapter 22 has a broad definition of what constitutes a public record, coupled with the provision that was passed several years ago to try to head off government trying to hide records by contracting with outside entities. Chapter 21 specifically covers electronic

meetings, as well as face-to-face meetings. Both have been flexible enough to accommodate changing technologies over the years.”

Question: Understanding our concerns about due process and disclosure, I have a few questions for you:

- A. Do you believe that Second Life service terms, as well as the anonymity of avatars, are in conflict with Iowa code on open meetings and records? If so, why? If not, why?

We are not in a position to offer legal advice on Iowa Code.

- B. If a public institution solicits from Linden Lab the name of a person using an avatar in the investigation of a violation of the student and/or faculty handbook, would Linden Lab provide that information?

We would not provide this information without a subpoena. However, an institution can require students and faculty to register with the institution as a prerequisite for access to its presence on the Second Life Grid, and so the names of the people using allowed avatars would likely already be on record at the institution.

- C. Do you see any clash of cultures whatsoever between those of Second Life and academe?

Second Life is a growing community of great diversity, and, as with any diverse group, to sum up its culture would be reductive at best. Just like in the real world, there is a rich tapestry of beliefs, lifestyles and politics within Second Life, and we are committed to making it as open an experience as possible. In Second Life, the range of pursuits is as varied as in the real world – from education to socializing, from arts and entertainment to business and more. Academe is already an important part of Second Life, just as it is in the real world, and Second Life has no more inherent ‘clash of cultures’ with academe than does real life.

- D. Do you feel that these questions are beneficial or unhelpful in addressing concerns that administrators might have about virtual worlds with respect to anonymity, code violations and due process?

We sincerely hope that this discussion may be helpful for educators and administrators concerned with these issues. We very much encourage educators to discuss their concerns and considerations with the community of educators on the SLED list, as well as with the appropriate people in the administration of their organization. The Second Life Grid holds great potential for educators and is a powerful technology to leverage in academic pursuits; we’re thrilled to see the ways that many are successfully using the platform and look forward to the community of educators in-world continuing to grow.

- E. Do you think that Linden Lab might work with educators who share such concerns so that they are addressed legally and ethically?

We are already working to strengthen the tools that educators have at their disposal to safely and effectively use the Second Life Grid. Additionally, we have a dedicated education staff at Linden Lab that is actively working with the community of Second Life educators to develop best practices in this space.

4. After my Second Life article appeared, there were suggestions on the Second Life Educators list serve that Linden Lab consider an educator/ professional grid that would have different service terms and disclosure rules. What are your thoughts?

The tools to create safe and private educational spaces on the Second Life Grid are already available. Many organizations are currently leveraging the estate tools and support structure already in place to effectively use the platform for education. Linden Lab plans to continue to support this important community with the Campus: Second Life program, ongoing education and nonprofit discounts, the SLED mailing list and community, and our dedicated education-focused staff. We look forward to this community's continued growth and success in Second Life.

INTERVIEW WITH TERRY BEAUBOIS

Questions provided in advance via e-mail on Oct. 8, 2007. Answers delivered via e-mail from Lewis Global Public Relations on Oct. 22, 2007

Terry Beaubois, director of the Creative Research Lab in the School of Architecture, was one of the first university educators to incorporate Second Life into his curriculum. He is a professor of architecture at Montana State University.

First of all I want to state that I am answering on my own behalf, based on my own experience. I am not representing Linden Lab, or the University as a spokesperson, and I am not an attorney who can speak about legal issues.

I also want to mention that I think the questions that you have raised are extremely important. As the academic world deals with these issues in both Real Life and Second Life, we can all learn and benefit from discussion of these important issues.

My experience includes being in Second Life since June 2005 and using SL as a teaching/learning environment since Fall Semester 2005. I have taught classes in "Digital Collaboration for Architecture students", "Digital Collaboration for Art, Music, Film, and Architecture students", and we are currently teaching two classes in the

CRLab – one for architecture students and one for Graphic Design, writing, and CS students – and use SL, among other technologies in our classes.

1. Can you share with me best practices for educators in Second Life, with attention paid to the subject of griefers, in particular online harassment, assault, racism, homophobia, etc.?

1A: I chose, in 2005, to teach my class on a private island because I felt that, for the same reasons we do not teach classes in downtown Bozeman on the street corner, the students and I needed an educational environment that was conducive to teaching and learning, and was not subject to interruptions and uninvited guest, as can occur in public spaces (both in SL and RL).

I based this on two months of being in SL, taking classes, wandering around learning about the strengths and weakness of the technology and after being offered free educational land by LL to teach my first class in SL as part of the then Campus SL program. While I admire SL teachers who can gracefully teach a class while a squirrel crashes its spaceship into our projects, a 6 foot fox harasses the teacher with questions not about the class topics, and someone starts practicing their incendiary scripts nearby, I found that my own limited talents required an environment free from such disruptions while teaching class.

There are also some racier SL educational urban legends that keep me from allowing my educational career to depend on the “chance” that some less than discrete SL individual will not approach a University administrator that I might have finally convinced to take a look at SL.

I have spoken with numerous educators who do not choose to teach on a private island, either because of the cost or the “idea” of private versus public, so I know this is not the only or the most popular choice, but in 2.5 years of teaching, I have not had “griefers, harassment, assault, racism, homophobia, etc.” on my educational islands, to my knowledge. My students are free to explore other areas of SL in their non-class time, just as they are free to explore Bozeman in their non-class time.

2. Please share with us your thoughts about the learning potential of Second Life in education. If possible, because I will be pressed for space (2000 words), you might bullet some highpoints.

2A: Because much of my application of SL’s Virtual Environment technology includes architecture, I think our program benefits directly from the very nature of SL’s ability to build, view, and walk around environments. As we expand to include Landscape, Business, Science, in our collaborative scope, we find that the visual/spatial qualities continue to lead many of our efforts. We try to approach it from the standpoint of “how can SL help us accomplish what needs to be accomplished” rather than “what can we do in SL that is cool and fun”....well, our stuff is cool and fun too, but it’s about the

technology supporting the educational need, not the technology tail wagging the education dog.

Also, I run a Research Lab, and one of our primary tasks is to be experimenting with the application of technologies to education. Many educators are in SL because they have a personal interest in SL. Their institutions may not. Their job is to teach classes. They are taking on an additional challenge to figure out how to teach in SL, and if their subject area is one that doesn't lend itself to being taught in a Virtual Environment, then we have to be brutally frank about what is "appropriate technology" and what isn't. In my opinion, Virtual Environment technology can benefit any educational area, if applied correctly.

My recommendations for setting the agenda of Education in Second Life would include:

- Set realistic expectations for what can and cannot be accomplished in SL.
 - Create a strategy for *your* particular institution regarding the use of SL.
 - Look at long-term benefits, rather than just the "hype" and short term.
 - Get your best teachers interested in SL or team them with people with SL experience. (While SL allows you to do things you cannot do in real life...like skydive, fly a helicopter, etc. it does not "make a good teacher out of a poor one". Just being in SL is not enough.)
 - Begin to apply the educational tools of assessment, pedagogy, etc. as you would to any program.
3. As a member of the academy, you know about due process and disclosure with respect to violations of the student and faculty handbooks. Do you see any conflict between Second Life's service terms, which bestow anonymity and disavow liability, and the academic process? If not, why? If so, how can they be resolved?

3A: "Due process, disclosure, violations, liability" all involve legal issues beyond my expertise and a judgment regarding a "Conflict in service terms" should be carefully studied by members of the academic community along with legal council. I would be willing to participate in such a multidisciplinary, collaborative committee if you also believe one should be started. My experience shows that these are all issues in real life education, just as are grieving, safety, harassment, assault, and racism. The current headlines about the incident Columbia reminds us that Real Life is fraught with some of the same issues that SL is, or could be, and that continuous understanding and working these issues out, both in RL and SL is extremely important to us all.

I appreciate the articles you have written and I have even read to my class, your recommended statement about not "requiring students" to use SL in the class, but having it be an option that they exercise. None of us can be remiss in our responsibilities to create as positive educational experience as we can.

Regarding resolving things with Linden Lab, my experience has been that, when faced with reasonable, well developed and supported ideas, Linden Lab / SL has adjusted

their policies to allow for a good working relationship with their users groups. It seems that LL is very busy maintaining and moving the technology ahead and holding things together and that they are less interested in micro-managing the education activity in SL or having a policy that is out of synch with the entire educational field. But I do not speak for them - they certainly can do so for themselves. I have seen LL modify, change or drop research requirements in the past and I assume that they would consider all well presented data regarding the Education area. They certainly have been very supportive of the Education area, in my experience.

4. Montana State is, of course, a public institution, and as such, is governed by the state's Code and Constitution, specifically Section 9, "right to know," which reads:

No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or to observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions, except in cases in which the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.

How, if at all, do interactions and/or service terms in Second Life adhere to or conflict with this provision? Should syllabi contain such a clause as notice to all participating in-world?

4A: Again this seems like an issue to be discussed with both academic members and their legal advisors participating. This is a good example of something for which legal council should be sought, in my opinion. I'm not avoiding the question – as I mentioned, I would be willing to participate in such a discussion. My experience and expertise encourages me to seek legal expertise when seeking a legal opinion on whether someone's "service terms adhere to, or conflicts with, a legal provision in a state constitution".

5. I asked this question to Robin as well: After my Second Life article appeared Sept. 14, 2007, there were suggestions on the SL Educators list serve that Linden Lab consider an educator/ professional grid that would have different service terms and disclosure rules. What are your thoughts?

5A: That may be a wonderful idea and I believe it should be fully explored. This may even coincide with LL's ability to provide that technically, if you consider the LL/SL "Long Path" plan for evolving the technology. I have found the individuals at LL to be really focused on the technology and try to be as helpful as possible to each specialty use area, but I would love to have an Educational Grid – even one for those specifically in Building Industry-related career paths. Some issues are unique to Education and maybe a separate Grid would be the way to go. I'd be happy to work with you to explore how this could come about. Thanks again for your contribution to this area and raising issues important to all of us in Education.