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From time to time we highlight interesting projects in Second Life that showcase a new approach to creating content, the use of Second Life in a particular field, or work by companies listed in the Developer Directory.

We hope these Success Stories will give you ideas of how you can create a successful business in Second Life.

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Full Story:**Ohio University, Evolving Educational Environments**

by Stephen Rotaru
Ohio University
Education & Training

**Introduction**

Ohio University is expanding educational environments into Second Life. In August 2006, the first land was purchased and active development has been performed by faculty and students on the OU campus in Athens, Ohio. The Ohio University Virtual Immersive Technologies and Arts for Learning (VITAL) Laboratory, a multidisciplinary research and development unit, is a collaboration of the Russ College of Engineering and Technology, the College of Education, the College of Fine Arts, Outreach and Regional Campuses. The mission of the VITAL Lab is to create appealing immersive virtual environments and synthetic worlds to enhance teaching, learning, and training activities. Ohio University is on the cutting edge of technology. Merging the first world with the second, we are entering possibilities for learning that never existed before.

Success with Second Life

Ohio University is a prestigious higher education facility that attracts people from all over the world. Expansion of learning facilities into Second Life allows the sharing of ideas and expanding of knowledge in a virtual environment suitable to anyone anywhere. Many activities being developed by OU, with the cooperation of other educational facilities and financial support, are helping to educate the community about real world challenges through virtual world activities hosted by Second Life. One building on the virtual campus, Old Stocker Center, was modeled after the real Stocker Center on the OU campus in Athens, Ohio, but the limitations and advantages of Second Life required modifications to the interior of virtual Old Stocker Center. To be more effective, the rooms had to be enlarged and redesigned. Solid walls were replaced with glass walls in strategic positions to give the feeling of a larger space, to make navigation easier for new residents, and to provide a professional working environment. The staircases made perfect sense for real life, but were unsuitable for virtual Old Stocker Center. Replacing them with telepads addressed the problems of staircases blocking an avatar's view, disrupting the avatar's camera as the avatar climbed the stairs, and being hard to find and use. Not only did the telepads remove these disadvantages, but why walk when you can teleport? In addition, telehubs were added to provide a map to assist an avatar's navigation and allow the avatar to instantaneously and easily be transported to key locations without needing to know about the surrounding area. Doors were enlarged, outside walls were made phantom, and more attention was paid to line of sight to make navigation easier. Decorations were added to the whole building to make it more inviting and appealing to new residents. With more furniture, automatic fans, controllable lights, posters, food trays, plants, "trash" and other additions, virtual Old Stocker Center was transformed from a sterile and uninviting environment to a visage of a lively building. Before the decorations were added, the building only appeared half finished and did not greet the visitor with the expected feeling of comfort when entering a thriving building. The changes created a more attractive meeting place for the community to gather, share ideas, and convey their messages. Ohio University's Virtual Campus is evolving educational environments to help teach in a new manner.

Advice

It is important to remember the differences between Second Life and the real world. Although it may seem obvious to add stairs for moving to the second floor, it may not be the best solution in Second Life. The virtual world makes many things possible. When designing and building inside Second Life keep these differences in mind and focus on what will please your visitors. Be willing to explore new educational opportunities and work with current students to create learning activities that will appeal to other current and future students. Have fun with exploration in Second Life. Take advantage of the unique offerings of Second Life and do not be afraid to experiment. Educational environments must continuously change with the ever evolving world. Second Life opens up many new venues and possibilities for educational activities and also appeals to new generations. In your project, gather input from people who will be using your environment. Ohio University has created teams of students and faculty who work together to build in Second Life. Weekly team meetings, phone conferences, email, even working in the same office inspires rapport and leads to exciting, new ideas. Collaboration between students and faculty will lead to a professional, fun, and educational environment that will appeal to many different people with many different backgrounds. If you would like to know more about the changes to Virtual Old Stocker Center and the thoughts behind those changes or other Ohio University Second Life projects, please see the videos at <http://www.youtube.com/user/VITALLab>.

Ohio University, Evolving Educational Environments's Second Life Location

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