

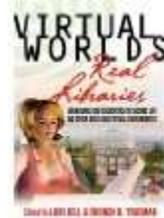
Review of *Virtual Worlds, Real Libraries*

Virtual Worlds, Real Libraries: Librarians and Educators in Second Life and other Multi-User Virtual Environments

Edited by Lori Bell & Rhonda B. Trueman

Reviewed by Peter Haxton, State Data Coordinator

Wouldn't it be great if you could peruse the State Library of Kansas, the National Library of Canada, drop by the ALA offices, then catch a show at the Globe Theater, all within a few minutes? Oh, and of course you would want to fly or teleport between them, too. In multi-user virtual environments (MUVES) such as Second Life, you can do these things and much more.



Virtual Worlds, Real Libraries: Librarians and Educators in Second Life and other Multi-User Virtual Environments explores MUVES and the potential these environments have for library and educational programs. Editors Lori Bell, Director of Innovation at the Alliance Library System in Illinois and Project Manager of the Alliance Virtual Library in Second Life, and Rhonda Trueman, reference librarian at Johnson and Wales University in North Carolina and Director of Library Resources and Service at Alliance Virtual Library, have considerable experience developing library resources and capacity in a virtual environment.

The essays compiled in *Virtual Worlds* are written by various authors with experience working in MUVES. Most of the chapters are specific to Second Life, and many of those chapters are centered on the Alliance Virtual Library project. The editors assume little foreknowledge of MUVES on the part of the reader. The essays take the reader from the absolute basics of what MUVES are and comparisons of different MUVES through specific examples of uses of Second Life by librarians and educators, including areas specific to genre fiction, teens and historical periods. Chapters of note include the second chapter by Marty Grover which presents a solid overview and comparison of several MUVES, Bill Sowers' account of his transformation from Second Life newbie to accomplished veteran, and chapter 18 by Skip Burhans, J.B. Hill and Todd Spires that explores the potential, and limitations, for instruction in Second Life.

The writing style, although somewhat uneven, is generally a casual first-person narrative describing the author's experiences in what is essentially a frontier of library science. A few of the writers unnecessarily attempt an academic tone, which sounds as if they are trying to rationalize discussing MUVES. Given the format of a collection of essays, there is often repetition between the chapters, which can get tedious, and encourages the reader to skim.

Overall, *Virtual Worlds, Real Libraries* provides a sound overview of MUVES and presents concrete examples of ways these resources can be used by librarians.