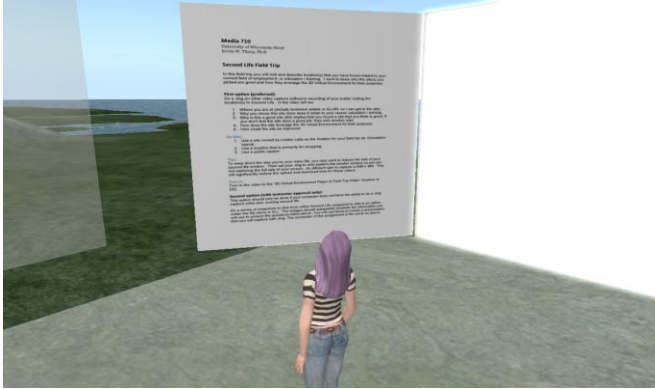




Flying



Field Trip Assignment



A Closer look 1



A closer look 2



Building Prims



Opening a box



Appearance 1



Appearance 2



Changing Clothes

## Second Life Assignment

Media 710

Claire Couillard

Part 1:

Above you can see the various screen shots that I took in Second Life. I did read and learn about safety in Second Life and I talk about that a little more in part III of the assignment. I did learn how to set up voice chat and used it a few times. You can see from the pictures above that I was able to open a box, get a closer look, build basic prims and change my clothes and appearance. I did struggle with documenting some of these things. While selecting "take screen snapshot" was easy, I could only get snapshots of my avatar in certain settings. I was never able to see any of the pop-up windows (for example the note card on safety) after I saved the screen snapshot. I tried different preferences and settings but that didn't help. I did my best to complete the assignment and I feel I learned a lot in Second Life.

Part 2: Visit my Screenr video for the field trip assignment!

<http://screenr.com/TqN>

Part 3: Begins on next page!

*Second Life Assignment Part III*  
*Media 710*  
*Claire Couillard*

In this essay, I am going to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Second Life by looking at the issues and opportunities it provides to students and educators. I will also discuss the prospects of using Second Life for training in the workplace.

### **Introduction**

I will admit, when I first started using Second Life, I was a bit skeptical. Since I am not a gamer and I haven't really played many online computer games, getting acclimated to this new world was quite challenging. It took me a while to figure out how to fly, teleport, change my clothes, find the UW-Stout world and add friends. Slowly, by asking other people and reading "note cards." I was able to pick up a fair amount of information. I found the search tool to be very helpful; I enjoyed teleporting to many different locations and exploring around them. I met many new people, some who didn't speak English and I thought that was a very interesting aspect of Second Life. As I learn more and am able to explore more freely, I am beginning to see many of the benefits of using Second Life. However, with any application, it does have downfalls.

### **Strengths**

Second life has many strengths in the way it is set up. It is a very extensive site and for that purpose, it is easy for anyone to create their own island or private world. In addition, if you have money, there are countless opportunities. Creating a business in Second Life or Educational Environments is easy and can be used by many. Educators can easily create an online world for students, allowing them to interact with other students, watch presentations, and take quizzes. In training and development, the use of prototyping and simulation could be carried out in Second Life. It is very beneficial for companies to be able to test a product or create a prototype in Second Life before it is release in real-life.

Another strength of Second Life is its global availability. This allows users in different countries who many not speak the same language to communicate with each other. By using translator tools, two people speaking different languages can carry on a somewhat normal conversation. This adds to Second

Life's usability and marketability. Second life is a great way to network and meet people; this is another strength that I see. Not only is it great for people who want to advertise their business (real life or Second Life) but it works for people to have another outlet online. One can meet people that they may have never met in real life. Business meetings could be held in Second Life and users can meet in the virtual environment because meeting in real-time may have many constrictions.

Second Life is a good educational tool. Building a 3D virtual world and having students navigate within it can strengthen so many skills. Problem solving, inquisitiveness, analytical skills, software and production skills are just a few of the many talents that students can build or enhance in Second Life. In addition, educators can set up their own lecture halls with information for students to learn. Avatars can meet in Second Life even when real-life face-to-face meetings are not possible. This is a great tool for distance learning. Virtual world settings have so many more possibilities than the real world. Professors could set up classrooms in the sky, underwater and any other place imaginable. This creates new possibilities and makes learning more attractive to students. I see this as a teaching tool for the next generation.

Children who have grown up with the internet and computers may find it easier to learn that way and Second Life provides a great option.

### **Weaknesses**

While Second Life does have its strengths, it also has its weaknesses. Safety is a major issue and problem in Second Life. Because it is open to so many users, just like it real life, there are those will to prey on unsuspecting people. If you are not careful, you can find yourself in a situation that you would rather not be in. While Second Life does set up the ability to block users from finding you and protects your identity, it is not hacker-proof. Reminding students and developers that dangerous people do exist and helping them stay safe will need to be an integral part of any Second Life training.

There is also a lot of R rated content in Second Life. I accidentally stumbled upon some once and was quite surprised. For students who are over 18, that might not be that big of a deal. However, if a teacher is trying to incorporate Second Life into his/her high school or middle school curriculum, this may be a big deterrent.

Other weaknesses include how long it can take to get used to Second Life. A teacher may have to work with students for about a month before they have mastered the basics. Some students might have a hard time learning how to get around in Second Life and they may miss out on teaching opportunities.

Like any technology, there will be times when the computer freezes while running the software or slows down immensely depending on how many people are in a certain area. I see this as a weakness; it slows down the ease of use and makes even simple tasks tedious. It can be hard to install updates and if you have an older computer and it can be hard to navigate through second life because of the slowness of the computer.

### **Issues**

Just like in real-life, people always want everything faster, better and more entertaining. Places and Islands within Second Life will have to continually update and keep things fresh in order to keep people coming back. People can get bored easily so if they don't see new exciting opportunities, they may lose interest in Second Life.

While Second Life is free, there is a limit to what you can do if you don't have any Linden Dollars. Changing your appearance, building, and networking is limited by how much money one has. If you are only in Second Life for an educational purpose, purchasing things may not be necessary. But even for the casual Second Life user, having money opens many new doors.

Communication is limited in Second Life. Avatars only have a limited base of facial expressions and gestures so the bulk of communication has to be done through text or voice chat. While this may not be a limitation, it doesn't provide the same level of face-to-face communication as the real-world even if your avatar is standing right by a person you are chatting with.

### **Opportunities**

I do see many opportunities for Second Life in training, education, marketing and advertising. For training purposes, Second Life can be used to mimic the real world. I do not fully understand all of its capabilities but it seems that if you wanted to train an employee on working with virtual worlds, Second Life would be a great place to start. Many individuals have their own businesses in Second Life and creating one would be good practice for real life. Prototyping and practicing running an e-business and using e-commerce are some great opportunities present in Second Life.

In education, there are many different options. By visiting Stout's campus in Second Life I was able to acquire information about safety, learn about our field trip assignment and get clothes for myself. Those were just simple tasks. Educators could set up a video or PowerPoint presentation for students to watch in second life. Hospitality and Tourism students could learn how to greet visitors, who entered a

location, set up venues and learn what makes them “hotspots.” Business students could create their own business in Second Life and be in charge of running it. Marketing and Advertising students could learn how to market a venue or advertise a real life business or opportunity in Second Life. Second Life also provides some opportunities for students studying a foreign language. By talking with people in other languages, they can get real time practice translating and work on their grammar/verb usage.

Advertisers and Marketers can advertise within Second Life, increasing their product or business visibility on the web. Businesses can set up online versions of their company in Second Life to promote their business. Promotion and Publicity is an important part of any business and Second Life can help businesses target a new market.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, although Second Life does have its weaknesses and there are issues that need to be addressed, I think the benefits outweigh the problems. The sky’s the limit in Second Life (literally!) and it has great potential for e-learning, e-business, and e-commerce. The Second Life user base is growing daily and with that, Second Life continues to have increasing potential. Educators and Business executives need to be aware of some of the issues in Second Life before they decided to immerse their students or employees in the virtual environment. Second Life can provide a vast amount of opportunities so it will be interesting to watch it grow, change and become a stronger force in learning and business.