

A Virtual Mary Livermore Library, Help with Research in a New Dimension!

by Melanie E. Wood

UNCP has a new campus -- in Second Life (SL), an online virtual world developed by Linden Lab. The SL software, needed for entering this environment, is available for free at www.Secondlife.com. The website describes SL this way: "Second Life is a free 3D virtual world where users can socialize, connect and create using free voice and text chat." The software is free, but it does take a fairly sophisticated computer to run the software: a machine with a very good graphics card and processor, similar to what is needed for computer gaming.

The Mary Livermore Library recently received an LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant to purchase several computers capable of operating Second Life. The grant was prepared by **Karen Fritts**, Government Documents/Development Librarian, and was awarded through the State Library of North Carolina. Two computers will be available in the Electronic Resource Center (ERC) for faculty, staff, students, and the community: one laptop will be used by library staff for SL activities; and a final computer will be used at the instructor station in the electronic classroom. These should all be ready and available for use by the end of August. Since the launch of SL in 2003, many educators have utilized its online environment in the classroom as a teaching and learning tool for themselves and their students. Second Life provides a collaborative workspace/learning environment, an exercise in learning a new technology, and a meeting space for conferences for people who are geographically separated.

The next step for the Mary Livermore Library in the implementation of this sophisticated learning tool is to collaborate with faculty, staff, and students to fully utilize services and activities on the UNCP SL campus and beyond. Some library activities planned for SL include instructional videos, virtual tours, access to electronic resources, the catalog, and special collections.

The UNCP Second Life Library is open for business right now. Currently, the Library is offering office hours on Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Also a librarian is available to receive a reference chat IM, even when offline from Second Life.

During the development of its SL resources, the Library plans to maintain close, collaborative relationships with instructional faculty, particularly **Dr. Tony Curtis**, who built and maintains the UNCP Second Life campus, and **Dr. Maryanne Maisano**, an assistant professor in the School of Education, who is already using SL in her classroom. Hopefully, the collaborative relationships with faculty will be enhanced and expanded during the fulfillment of the LSTA grant activities.

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Screen shot of the Mary Livermore Library in Second Life. Visit the SL Library at:

Circ Desk - <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Dotoorak/226/181/401/>
Ref Desk - <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Dotoorak/225/195/406/>
Video Room - <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Dotoorak/225/198/401/>
Classroom - <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Dotoorak/220/207/401/>

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This year, the UNC Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) summer conference was held entirely in Second Life. The conference was hosted by the UNCP virtual campus, and library faculty and staff participated via the Library's electronic classroom.

The virtual TLT conference, held on July 14, 2010, was a success. The presenters gave a great overview of many hot topics in teaching and teaching with Second Life. Programs were led by educators from across the United States and included "Educational Roleplaying in a Renaissance-Era Village" by **Lorraine Stanton**, "Digital Storytelling" by Dr. T. Curtis, and "Creating Machinima in Second Life" by **Randy Olsen**.

Be on the lookout for more faculty and staff training to come. The Library plans to provide workshops and support for using SL in the classroom, starting in fall 2010.
