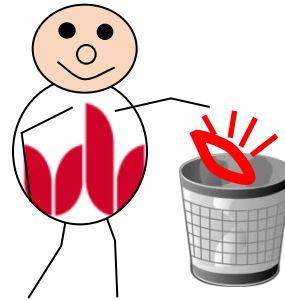




Leaving the Lindens



Teaching in Virtual Worlds of Other Providers



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Outline of the Talk

1. Outline (this slide)
2. History (why?)
3. Solutions (what?)
4. Framework (how?)
5. Evaluation (was it good?)
6. Conclusion & Discussion (so what?)



History

- September 2010: it became clear that our SL University Island would not be available for the forthcoming Academic Year.
- Three classes were meant to use it:
 - Project Management, Undergraduate
 - start October 2010.
 - Linden Scripting Language
 - start November 2010.
 - Project Management, Postgraduate
 - start February 2011.



Solution 1

“getting on without it”

- Project Management, Undergraduate
 - “The artefacts will be presented and accessible within a showcase (that you have to develop) in the multi user virtual environment Second Life using the shared media feature of the Second Life viewer 2.0.”
 - *Changed to:*
 - “The artefacts will be presented and accessible within suitable Web 2.0 applications.”



Solution 2

“OSgrid”

- For the LSL class an *OpenSim* island has been rented for three months from Dreamland Metaverse.
- *The task:* “Demonstrate an understanding of events and states. You have to build one or more objects in the ‘Open Bedfordia’ island on the OSgrid containing scripts that use LSL events. [...]”
- This island is part of the *OSgrid*.



Solution 3

“Dedicated Provider”

- For the Project Management, Postgraduate class, *Reaction Grid* has been used as an alternative to SL.
- *The task:* “An educational showcase about the technology in a virtual world. Land will be provided at the ‘New Bedfordia’ island at ReactionGrid.”



Solution 4

“Sim on a stick”

- Provides a whole virtual world on a USB stick. Was considered for the LSL class.
- Not implemented. Possibly too complicated for students.



Solution 5

“Institutional VW host”

- Host a virtual world on a university server (with OpenSim technology).
- Not implemented. Possibly too complicated for staff.



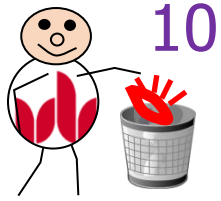
Our Solution Space

(for assignments in Virtual Worlds)



- (SL) Second Life
- (DP) Dedicated Provider, not Second Life
- (OG) OSgrid Island via Provider
- (IH) Institutional Host
- (SH) Student Hosts (Sim-on-a-Stick)
- (WI) Getting on **W**ithout **I**t

Question: which one is **best**?

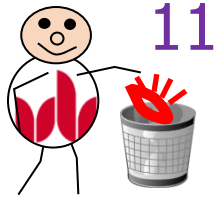


Answer

(to the question: which one is best?)

- That's a stupid question

- Problem:
 - What *exactly* means 'best'?
 - 'Best' in which way?
 - Define 'best'!



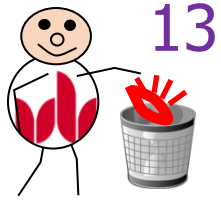
Develop Framework (for Evaluation of Virtual Worlds)

- Evaluate Virtual Worlds in a systematic way.
- Consider the two pairs of antipodes:
 - **World vs. Individual**
 - perspective
 - **Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic**
 - to the virtual world



These antipodes define four dimensions...

	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Individual	Immersion	Cost
World	Context	Persistence



Strategy

- Evaluate the six solutions (SL, DP, OG, IH, SH, WI) against the four dimensions
 - Cost (extrinsic, individual)
 - Persistence (extrinsic, world)
 - Context (intrinsic, world)
 - Immersion (intrinsic, individual)



Persistence (extrinsic, world)

How long will it last?

- SL: “the end is near” (since 2009)
 - But not really. Maybe too big to fail.
- DP, OG, IH: Possibility for backups with .oar files. Therefore contents not necessarily dependent provider(?).
- OG: Can remain within Grid with different provider.
- SH: Persistence is problem of students and falls into ‘lost work’ context.
- WI: Problem still persists! Group project needs common repository / backup.



Cost (extrinsic, individual) How much does it cost me?

- SL: high monetary cost (setup fee, monthly fee).
- DP, OG: much cheaper! Providers offer consultancy. DP: monopoly for building stuff?!
- IH, SH: no procurement costs but time to be invested within institution. Might become costly?
- WI: as an institution it might be good to have a stake in Virtual World's to be attractive to students.



Context (intrinsic, world)

What's going on in the (virtual) world?

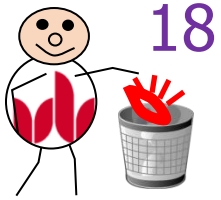
- SL: Lots of context. Still.
- DP: Some context but it doesn't play a significant role.
- OG: More and more context. Some of it is 'adult'.
- IH: no context (but could be created)
- SH: no a priori context (could be provided)
- WI: need to use 'real world' context. Is that any more useful?



Immersion (intrinsic, individual)

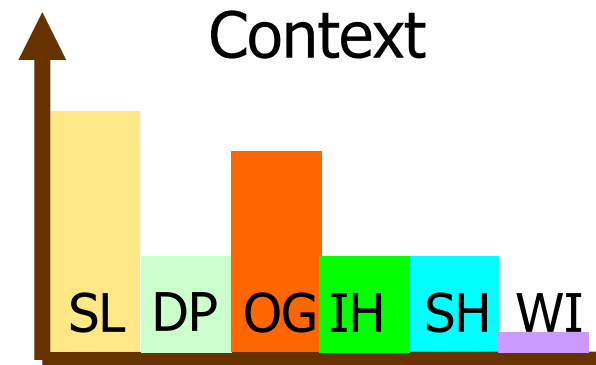
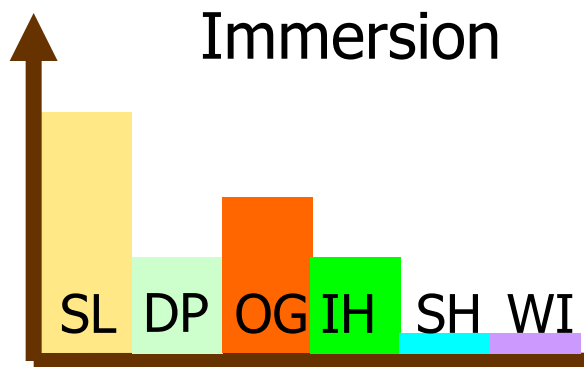
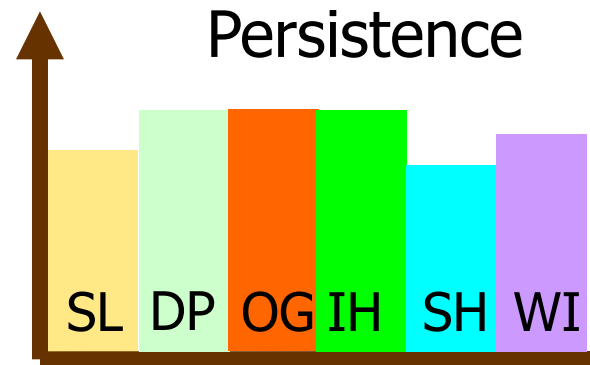
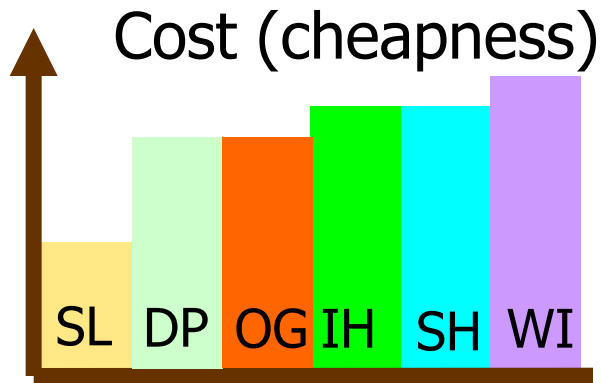
How much am I part of this world?

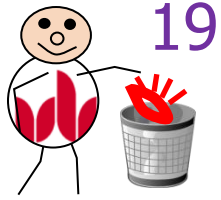
- SL: oh yes!
- DP: oh no...
- OG: Maybe...
- IH: as part of student experience?
- SH: Certainly not (unless...)
- WI: how much immersion do we actually need?



Summary

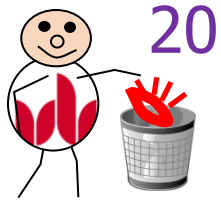
pseudo-quantitative representation of previous slides.





Discussion: How much Immersion and Context do we actually need?

- Depends on the context of the task.
- LSL class – possibly not much immersion necessary. But consider teaching ‘embedded software’ using LSL. The embedded code drives ‘objects’ that are somewhat more ‘real’ than the LSL code.
- Project Management: How much immersion do we need to believe this is a ‘real’ project we are doing. Is it a real project nevertheless?
- What about *your* student task??? What do you expect from your virtual world to deliver?



Conclusion

- From the intrinsic perspective (immersion, context) SL is still 'best'.
- From the extrinsic perspective there are very good alternatives.
- Apply to *your* 'virtual world' project:
 - How much 'world' do you actually need? Or is 'virtual' good enough?