





Second Life as a Teaching Tool

Dave Parsons



Massey University

Introduction

-  Second Life (SL) is a multi-user virtual environment (muve)
-  SL is an internet-based 3D virtual world entirely created by its Residents (users), which was first launched in 2003 by Linden Research, Inc (Linden Lab).
-  Residents interact with each other through “Avatars”.
-  SL’s virtual currency is Linden Dollars (Linden or L\$) which can be exchangeable for real world currency (US\$).



Statistics for Second Life –

-  Rosedale Launched SL in 2003
 -  1.5 million registered users in 2006.
 -  now more than 8 million users
 -  2 million have signed on in the past 2 months alone.
-  By 2011, four out of five people who use the Internet will participate in SL
 -  (Gartner Research)

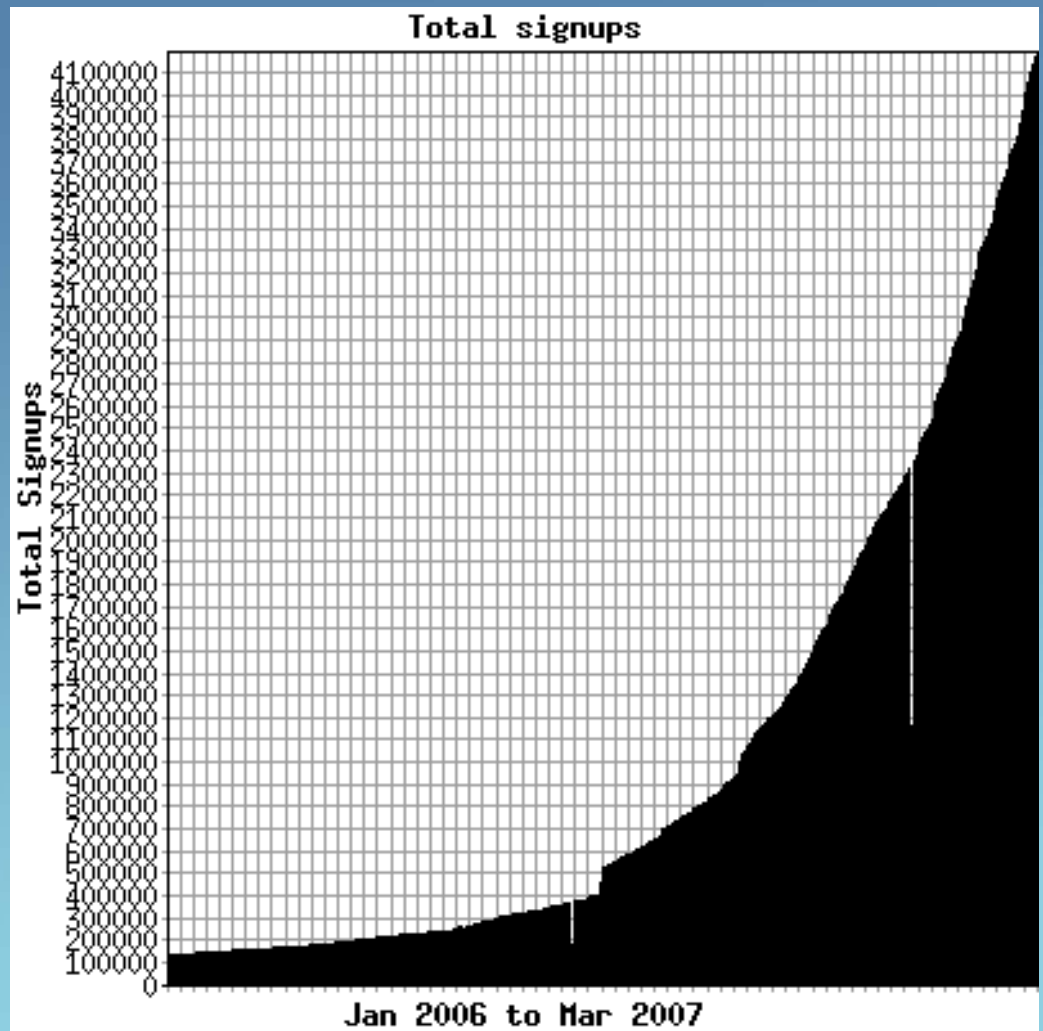







Second Life: Population growth from Jan 2006 to March 2007



Massey University






Use of Second Life in Education

-  Distance and Flexible Education
 -  Second Life provides an excellent platform for flexible delivery and online education.
 -  Students and educators can come together in the virtual world to share information and resources via slides, audio and video, engaging in discussions, presentations, group projects as well as explorations.

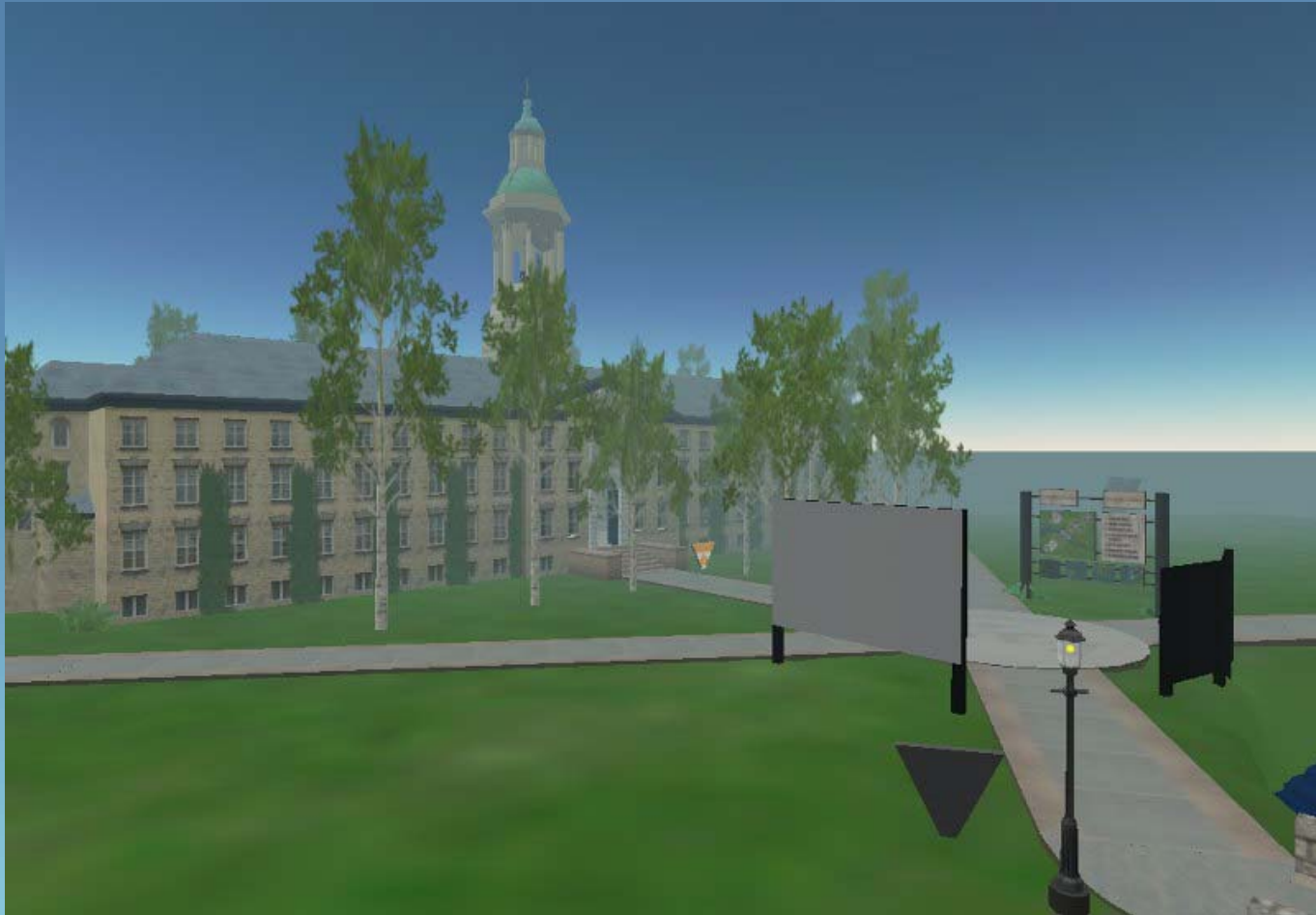


Second Life Campus

-  Second Life Campus provides virtual educational spaces
-  More than 250 universities using SL including Harvard, MIT, etc.
-  Linden Lab has sold more than 100 islands for educational purposes, at about \$1,000 each plus \$150 monthly maintenance.



Princeton University virtual campus



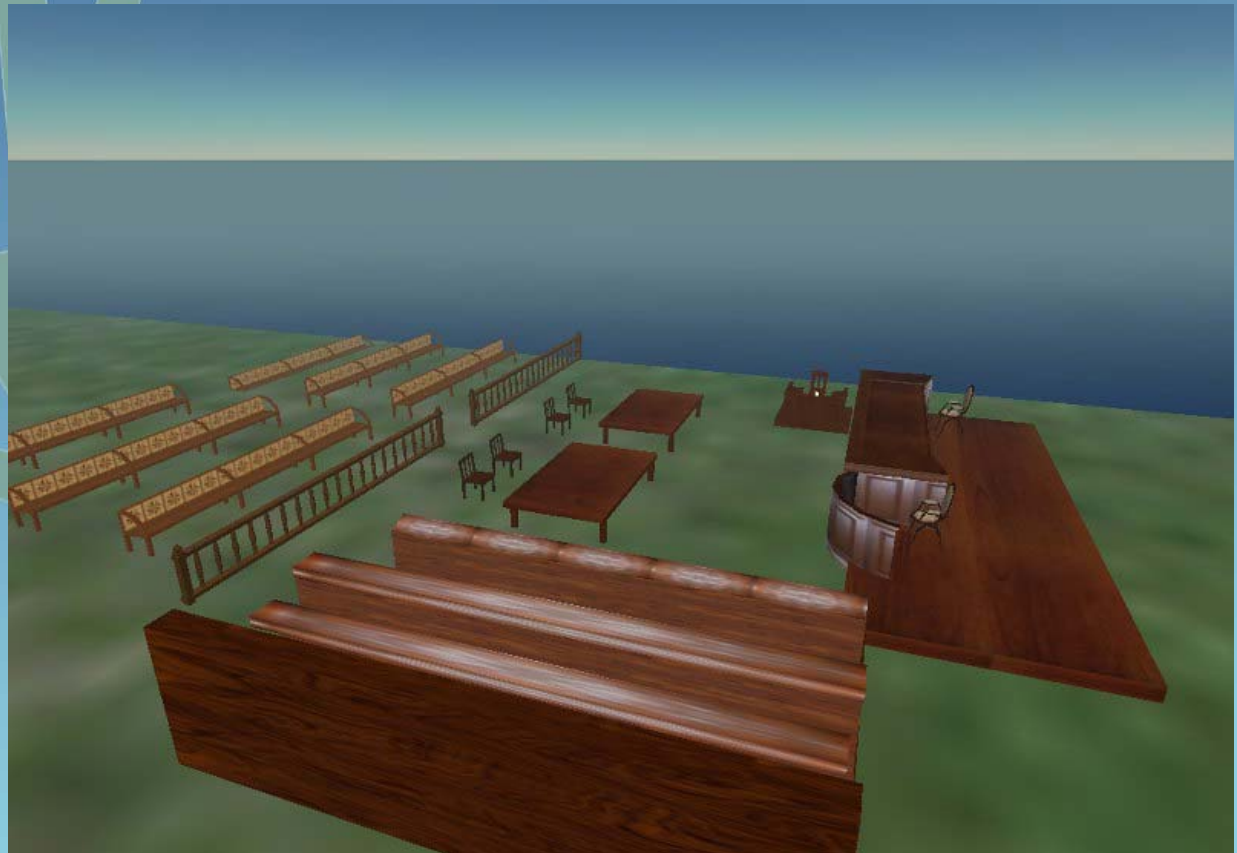
Massey University

University of Edinburgh outdoor lecture theatre



The first education presence on SL

A course in 'cyber law' by Harvard Law School.



Massey University

SL Panel

-  In November 2007, an educators panel was held in second life
-  Attended by 60 academic avatars
-  Presentations from educators and also from the host venue about providing educational environments




SL Panel



Massey University

Use of Second Life in Education

Presentations, Panels and Discussions



 Second Life's ability to create a sense of presence, shared space and shared experience makes it ideal for presentations, panels and discussions. Presenters can show slides and videos and stream their voices into the world.



Presentation panels for in-world learning



Training and Skills Development

-  The Second Life platform also allows for the development of a variety of strategies and ideas for training and skills development.
-  Students can access a range of training options in Second Life - both useful in the virtual world and in real life!




Health Education Library



Massey University

Role plays and Simulations

 Second Life allows students to undertake a range of role-plays and simulations, practicing real life skills in a virtual space or exploring situations that they could not undertake safely or easily in the real world.



Heart murmur training simulator



Libraries, Art Galleries and Museums



Second Life currently hosts a range of Libraries, Art Galleries and Museums where residents can engage in events, discussions, and displays on a wide range of topics.






In-world art gallery



Massey University

History

-  Historical Re-creations and Re-enactments, Living and Immersive Archaeology
 -  The Second Life platform allows for the creation of amazing, immersive environments based on historical places and events.
 -  These environments can be used for a range of learning activities including role-plays, action learning and research and historical study.



Recreation of ancient Rome






Massey University

Literature Alive!

- 👁️ Located in the Knightsbridge Sim, which is designed to represent real world London
- 👁️ All of the houses are modelled after houses in real life
- 👁️ By clicking on paintings and furniture in the mansion's three floors students receive course material, including syllabi, assignments, activities and a selection of study texts
- 👁️ The classroom was developed by Beth Ritter-Guth (SL name - Desideria Stockton), Instructor of English, at Lehigh Carbon Community College to teach Brit Lit classes. This resource is open to any person to use.



Virtual Tourism, Cultural Immersion and Exchange

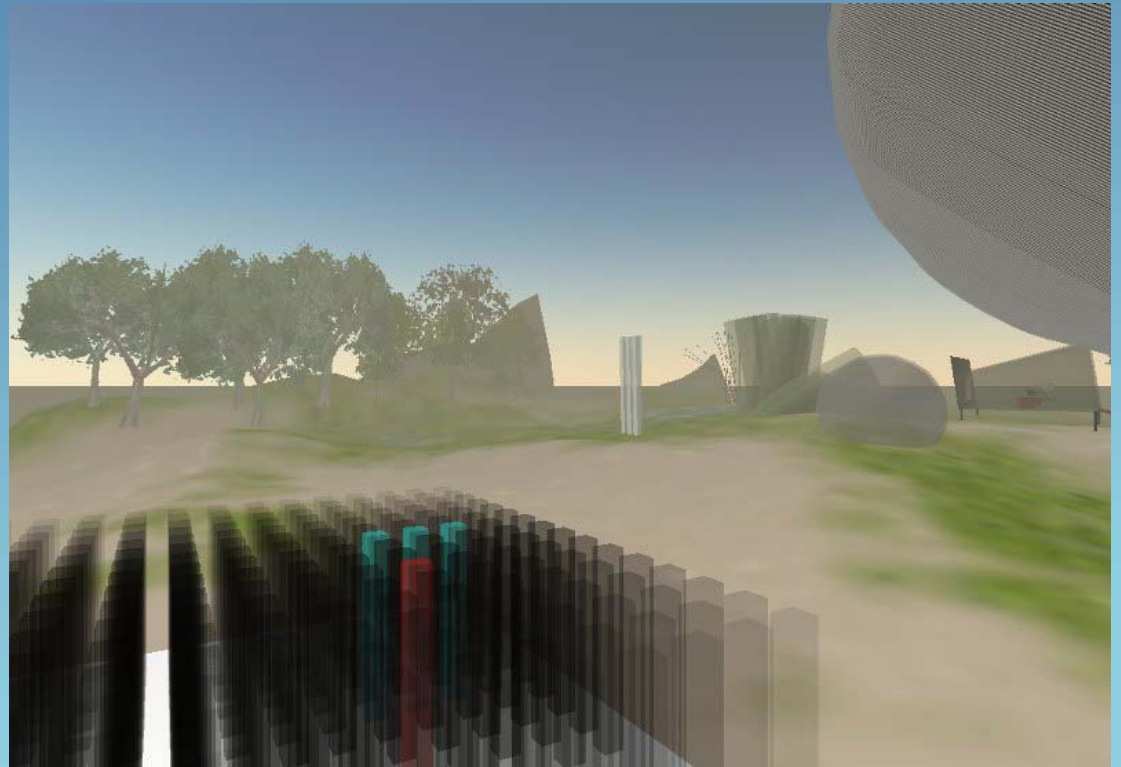
-  Stan Trevena, the Director of Technology for Modesto City Schools in Modesto, California (USA)
-  Building a learning environment consisting of several islands on Teen Second Life for a virtual exchange program between his students and those from Kyoto Gakuen High School, Japan.
-  The idea is that future exchange students will interact prior to their exchanges, sharing their interests and their cultures, getting to know each other a bit, and maybe learn a little of their host country's language before their exchange.



Architectural Design and Modelling





Second Life can be used to create prototype architectural designs



Massey University

Theatre and Performance Art




-  Second Life offers the ability to create a range of performances and theatrical events
-  Easy to customise avatars, and the ability to make elaborate sets and props quickly and cheaply makes it an appealing platform to some performance artists.



Inside the 'New Globe' theatre





Advantages of using Second Life

-  SL gives students an opportunity to explore their creative ideas by using SL technology before they could use them in the real-world environment
-  Using SL for experimental learning helps students to practice their ideas and skills, allowing them to learn from their mistakes.
-  It's possible for some shy students in real-world learning environment to sit in the back of the room and never participate. In SL this is impossible, since students aren't graded just for logging on. They must participate in discussions and communicate throughout the course.



Advantages of using Second Life (Cont.)

-  SL gives the students an opportunity to interact more socially, realistically as well as personally with other students even if they are distance learners.
-  Versatility of SL is attracting educators to move from traditional networked communication tools such as MS messenger to a place where they can invite students and teachers around.





Advantages of using Second Life (Cont.)

👁️ Though other online platforms are excellent in providing and delivering materials and combining practical tools, they tend to produce rather dry social communication.






Disadvantages of using Second Life

-  If experimental learning is not mainly focused onto real-world rules, students may treat it as a game and not as seriously as it should be.
-  SL may give students a sense of isolation as some students are more familiar with real social dimensions and may feel as though they don't fit into the SL culture.



Disadvantages of using Second Life (Cont.)

-  The amount of time and effort expended by the students may be excessive
-  SL has a learning curve and some inconveniences (e.g. having to type in order to talk, dealing with the technical problems/bugs)
-  It takes a lot of preparation and willingness to accept technology failure



Disadvantages of using Second Life (Cont.)

- 👉 SL may not benefit all topics
- 👉 A literature course which highlights differing interpretations of a passage by having students communicate their unique interpretations and represent them in some visual way in the environment
- 👉 An economic theory?





Maybe good, maybe not

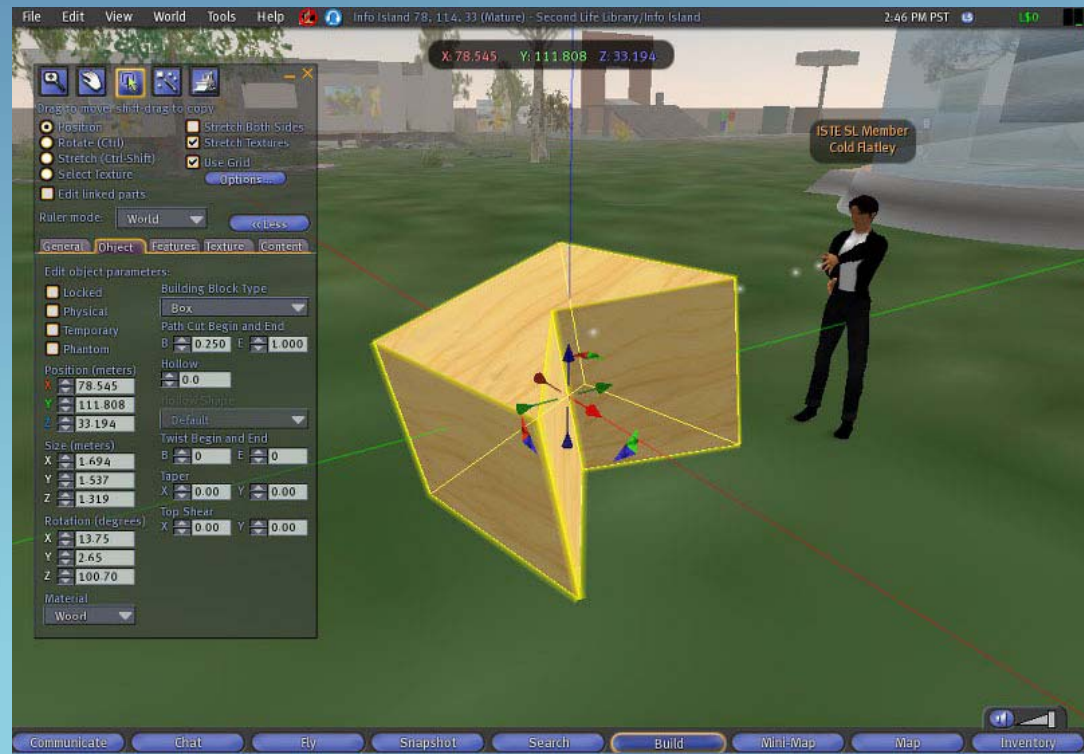


SL may also hide the student's true personality for some time.




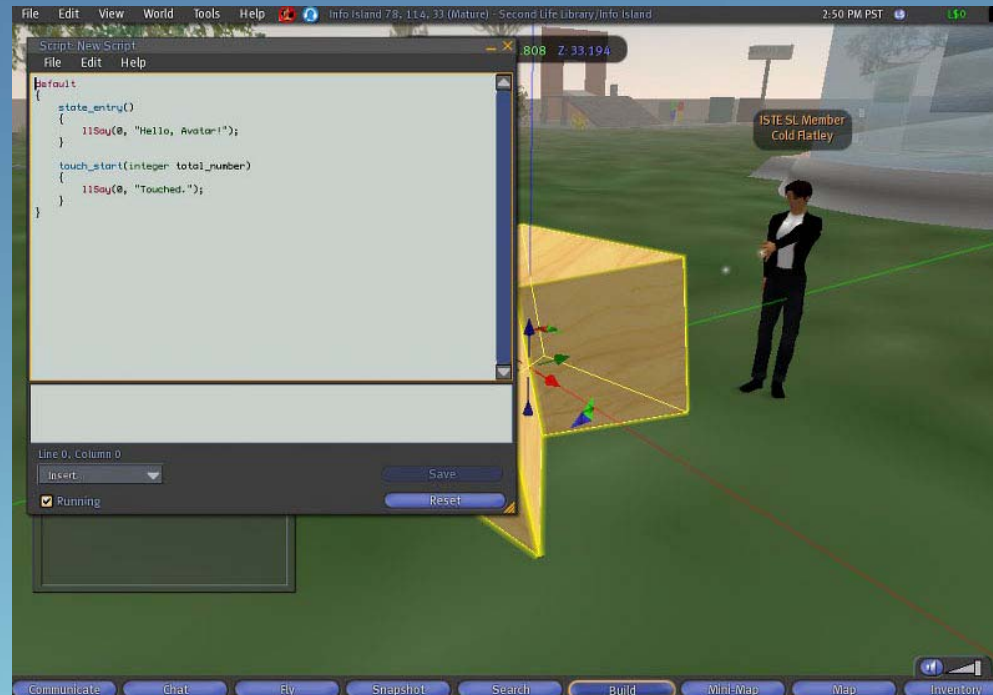
Create Anything

-  Second Life includes a set of easy to use building tools.
-  Objects are built up using primitive shapes



Scripting

 Linden Script Language (LSL), Custom event driven language.

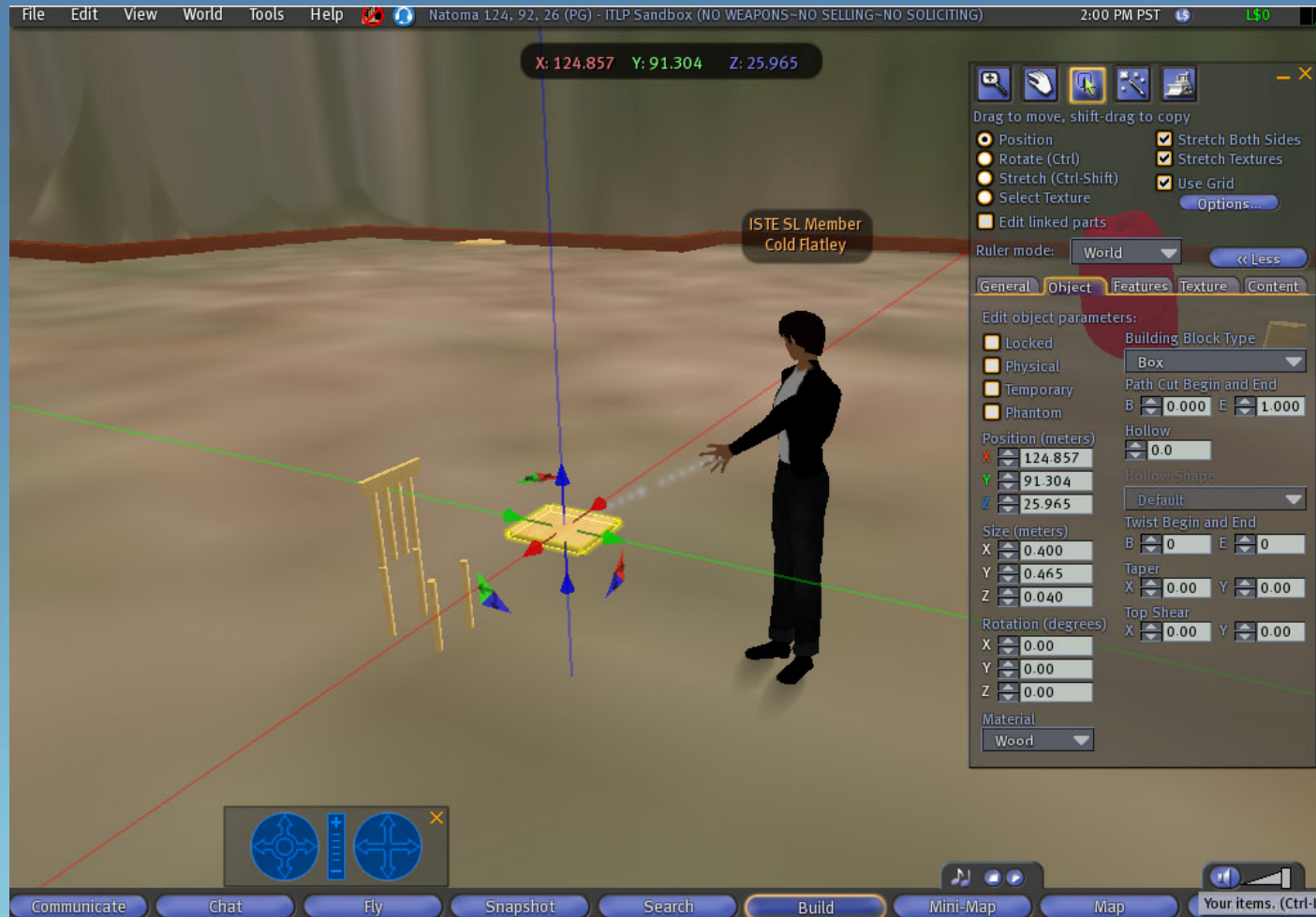


 Similar syntax to C, easy for programmers to pick up.



Massey University




Building a Chair



Using the Chair



Our Aims

-  To apply for free experimental learning space in semester 1, 2008
-  To explore the potential to support extramural study in Second Life
-  To run at least one SL session in a virtual Massey from the UK

