

## **Realism or non-realism: Design of learning spaces in Second Life**

### **Presenters:**

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The designs of learning spaces in 3D virtual worlds such as Second Life can have widely different degrees of visual realism. For example, it could be a replica of a university's real-life campus or a fantasy space with undersea areas and airships. At the Open University in the UK, we are investigating the relationship between the visual realism of the learning space design, design of pedagogical activities, and learner engagement. In this presentation, based on our empirical research involving educators, designers and students, we will present key guiding principles for designing learning spaces in 3D virtual worlds and specifically the issues of realism and fantasy that need to be considered. We hope that the guidance and recommendations from our research will support educators and designers to design learning spaces that foster students' socialisation, informal learning, collaboration, and creativity.

### **Shailey Minocha**

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Shailey Minocha is Senior Lecturer of Human-Computer Interaction in the Department of Computing of the Open University, UK. Her research involves investigating user behaviour with computer systems, users' requirements from technologies, and the nature of the user-system interactions, which influence the design and usability of electronic environments. Shailey's avatar name in Second Life is Shailey Garfield.

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Ahmad John Reeves is a Research Fellow working on the 'DELVE' project (Design of Learning Spaces in 3-D Virtual Environments) in the Department of Computing of the Open University, UK. His research interests include the use of linguistic models of participation to better understand what happens between people who interact through collaborative technologies, and how "designed structures" are appropriated by the communities that form within them. Ahmad's avatar name in Second Life is Idem Rajal.