

Conducting empirical studies within Second Life

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At the Open University in the UK, we are currently involved in two research projects related to 3D virtual worlds. These projects involve interviewing educators, designers and students in Second Life. Our empirical investigations involve interviews and conducting focus groups. In this presentation, we will share our experiences of conducting research in-world: for example, developing research materials to address the possible concerns of the Ethics Committee who may not be familiar with the avatar-based interactions in 3D virtual worlds; in-world recruitment of participants; interviewing techniques in Second Life; running focus groups in Second Life; and logistics of conducting empirical research in Second Life. We hope that the presentation will trigger discussions and sharing of ideas about ethical considerations, data protection issues, and identity rights of the avatar and how they are same different from the identity rights of the person behind the avatar?, and so on.