Conclusion

The goal of this report was to show that social virtual worlds like Second Life are not a fad. They have a long history of use and are supported by a rich field of research that has been conducted in several disciplines. There are many social as well as technical challenges that must be overcome in order to successfully adopt a virtual world into a library. The technical challenges include high-speed Internet connections, high-end graphics cards, and learning how to use a poorly designed interface. The social challenges include managing communities, plugging into social networks, and becoming accustomed to the cultures within a virtual world.

If I were in a position to decide whether or not a library should create a presence in Second Life at this point I would be cautious. Based on my years of teaching with Second Life and as a user, it seems like many libraries have struggled to engage patrons with a Second Life presence. I would, however, encourage the use of Second Life amongst library staff as an avenue for professional development and networking. Both ALA and the Alliance Library System have offered free seminars, discussions groups, and other professional development services via Second Life. I have also found Second Life to be a great place for professional networking and collaboration.

I have been working on a project called the Educators Coop (Co-op) that has shown that Second Life is a rapid-collaboration platform, the affordances of which facilitate collaboration between geospatially distant people. These findings are significant in that they support the assumption of Second Life users that using the virtual world does indeed lead to professional collaborations and helps to build working relationships.

The future is bright for virtual worlds and while I remain cautious about creating a library presence in Second Life, I highly encourage librarians to create an account and give it a try. In the near future virtual worlds will be a common technology in the same ways that steaming video, blogs, web pages, and databases have become today.

Notes

1. Jarmon, Leslie & Sanchez, Joe. (2008). "The Educators Coop Experience in Second Life: A Model for Collaboration," *Journal of the Research Center for Educational Technology,* Vol. 4(2)

2. Jarmon, L. & Sanchez, J. (2009 forthcoming). "The Educators Coop: A Model for Collaboration and LSI Communication Research in the Virtual World," *Electronic Journal of Communication.* CIOS