



# The Metaverse Messenger

A REAL NEWSPAPER FOR A VIRTUAL WORLD

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

A Rose from Ash Publication

Free

## Science Continent grows to 41 islands

Part two of a two-part feature

By PHOENIX PSALTERY  
Staff writer

Last week in part one of this story, we examined several of the space-related sims in the amazing mini-continent known as the SciLands.

Unnoticed by many SLers, the SciLands is devoted to the real life pursuit of science and is made up of more than 40 sims owned by various organizations and agencies. Six islands have been added in the last month alone.

This week we are taking a look at several of the other amazing sims in the SciLands, and the man who many credit as pulling it all together.

### Exploring at the 'Splo

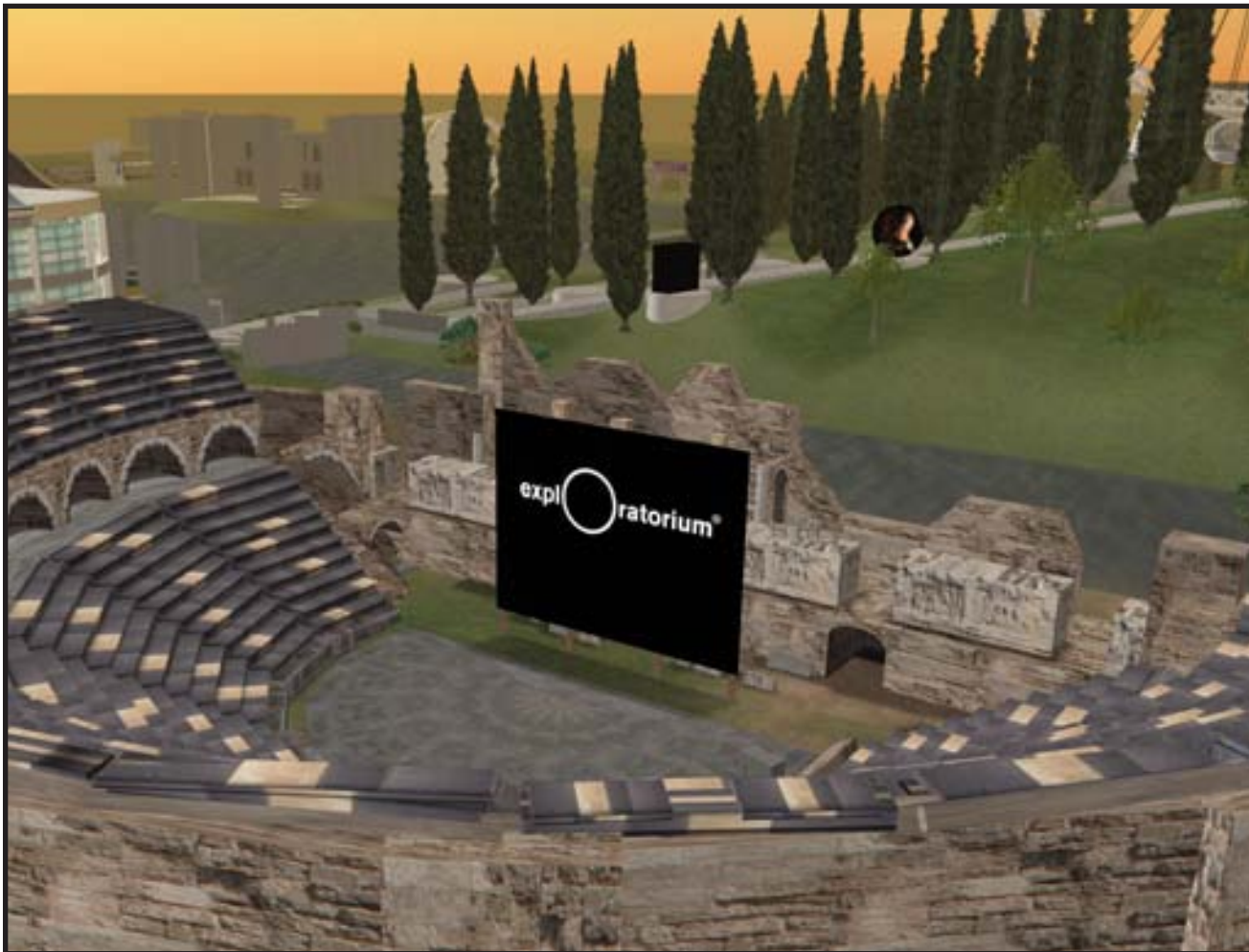
Patio Plasma of the Exploratorium in San Francisco, which bills itself as 'a museum of science, art and human perception,' provided a mini-tour of the Exploratorium and Sploland sims. These were established in February 2007 and were among the first few sims in the SciLands.

Plasma explained that the 'Splo opened a small-scale museum in the Midnight City sim some time ago, but when the Exploratorium chose to put on a video broadcast of a total solar eclipse in SL with the help of builder Aimee Weber, they realized the educational potential of SL and made arrangements to open the two sims. "We filled Sploland pretty quickly," said Patio, explaining that the 'Splo has over 100 exhibits at present, "and we expect to fill the Exploratorium sim in 2008." Many of the exhibits in the Exploratorium's sims have been created by Emileigh Starbrook.

One of the newest is a simulation of Brownian motion where visitors get to ride inside a molecule.

Even newer is a simulation of an asteroid strike on the planet Mars, built in recognition of the possible real life hit that was projected to occur on Jan. 30, but which scientists now say will not happen.

The strike releases a flash of light, a blast roar and falling debris that simulates the estimated three megaton blast that the asteroid strike would have produced, and



**THE TOWER AT THE GENOME** sim contains 18 platforms full of displays on molecular genetics, including the DNA double helix, DNA/RNA replication and information about human chromosomes. The Exploratorium is home to this amphitheater which was originally constructed by Aimee Weber for the broadcast of a real life total solar eclipse into Second Life. - Photo by PHEDRE DUMOURIEZ

leaves an impressive scale model of the impact crater that scientists predicted it would cause.

Many of the 'Splo's exhibits deal with things that trick the eye or mind, such as a circular music keyboard where visitors are asked to find the highest note — but the scale keeps ascending, apparently *ad infinitum*. Another part

of the museum has displays that mock typical science museum displays, such as a scale that "weighs" SL avatars and tells what they would weigh on earth, parodying the typical "your weight on the moon" displays in real life museums.

### Who can this man be?

Zazen Manbi, known in Reality as Jeffrey Corbin, a research assistant in the Department of Physics and Astronomy of the University of Denver, has been described as "the High Priest of the SciLands" and its Ambassador-at-large. He runs Science School, which was one of the cornerstone sims in the SciLands. He also serves as the de facto media cheerleader for SciLands and, indeed, for Second Life itself, having been featured in a July/August 2007 *Technology Review* story on SL:

*A thunderhead towers at knee level, throwing tiny lightning bolts at my shoes. I'm standing—rather, my avatar is standing—astride a giant map of the continental United States, and southern Illinois, at my feet, is evidently getting a good April shower.*

*The weather is nicer on the East Coast: I can see pillowy cumulus clouds floating over Boston and New York, a few virtual meters away. I turn around and look west toward Nevada. There isn't a raindrop in sight, of course; the region's eight-year drought is expected to go on indefinitely, thanks to global warming. But I notice something odd, and I walk over to investigate.*

*The red polka dots over Phoenix and Los Angeles indicate a hot day, as I would expect. But the dot over the North Las Vegas airport is deep-freeze blue. That can't be right. My house is only 30 kilometers from the airport, and I've had the air conditioner running all day.*

*"Any clue why this dot is blue?" I ask the avatar operating the weather map's controls. The character's name, inside the virtual world called Second Life, is Zazen Manbi; he has a pleasant face and well-kept chestnut hair, and the oval spectacles perched on his nose give him a look that's half academic, half John Lennon. The man controlling Manbi is Jeffrey Corbin, a research assistant in the Department of*

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### FYI

It's not too early to purchase advertising space for the 2008 SLCC issue in September. This issue promises to be the biggest and best yet, and more details can be learned by e-mailing Advertising Executive Phoenix Psaltery or Publisher Katt Kongo.

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New Report Available Now

Real Life Brands in Second Life Q3 2007

State of the Art Market Research & Analysis  
Market Truths 50, 185, 35  
sl.markettruths.com





# SL News

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**CYN LINDEN** (seen here) has been promoted to the position of Vice-President of Linden Lab's customer relations.

## Cyn Linden promoted to VP-Customer Relations

Linden Lab recently announced the appointment of Cyn Skyberg to Vice President of Customer Relations, promoting her from her previous position as Director of Customer Relations.

Skyberg, known as Cyn Linden in-world, served in her previous position since joining the company in 2005. In her expanded role, Skyberg will guide the SL support teams including overseeing billing, risk management and in-world support, as well as all external sales and management.

Skyberg brought more than 15 years of customer relationship management experience to LL. During her tenure at Linden Lab, Skyberg has implemented several successful communications platforms and established an in-

tegrated network of support for residents and internal service teams.

"Cyn is an integral part of the Linden Lab team, and her promotion to VP of customer relations reflects her dedication and importance to the Second Life community," said Philip Rosedale (known as Philip Linden in-world), founder and CEO of Linden Lab. "Cyn's knowledge, drive and diverse experience are invaluable and the residents are in great hands with her at the helm."

"Second Life is driven by the passion and creativity of the residents and I'm proud to play a role in their continued success," said Skyberg. "Linden Lab has a long history of innovation, with some of the best minds in the

business and I'm thrilled to join the leadership team and have the opportunity to build on its success."

Prior to joining Linden Lab, Skyberg was a director at the San Jose Museum of Art and a senior manager at the Portland Art Museum, where she honed her skills in customer relationship management. She holds a Bachelor's degree with honors in Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Her varied background includes owning a coffeehouse in Colorado, working as a telephone cable contractor across the United States, sorting osteopathic remains in a natural history museum, and managing a large travel book and map business.

Don't forget the Valentine issue  
of the Metaverse Messenger

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## Stanford to host the Metaverse U conference

Stanford University, in conjunction with the Stanford Humanities Lab, will host the Metaverse U conference on Feb. 16 and 17. Technology leaders, artists and academics will come together and exchange ideas in a public forum, about the hot topics of virtual worlds and Second Life.

Conference highlights will include virtual art galleries and a Saturday afternoon panel discussion with three of the leading thinkers on virtual communities: Howard Rheingold, Cory Ondrejka and Raph Koster. Metaverse U aims to challenge traditional conference models with collaborative and inclusive opportunities for participants, both virtual and corporeal.

"Virtual worlds have garnered tremendous interest since their recent proliferation, both in the media and in academia. Given Stanford University's prime location in the heart of Silicon Valley, we think the time has come to explore the cultural, technological, legal, and economic issues surrounding virtual worlds." Henry Lowood, Metaverse U conference organizer and curator for history of science & technology collections and film & media collections in the Stanford University Libraries

Discounted advance admis-

sion rates, (corporate \$400, academic \$200, student \$100), are available through February 11. Registrants will have access to all conference activities, including networking events, and lunch on both days. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$500 (cash only) and no student or academic discounts will apply.

To ensure that its impact extends well beyond the actual conference, video from Metaverse U will be streamed live to the web, free of charge. After the conference, these videos will be archived and made available on a Stanford University website, to become part of a global conversation on virtual worlds.

Metaverse U falls between two other major events in the Bay Area: the next Metaverse Roadmap workshop, hosted at Stanford University on Feb. 15, as well as the 2008 Game Developers Conference that starts on Feb. 18. Accordingly, seasoned academics, journalists, and industry leaders in both virtual worlds and games will be flooding the Bay Area.

Participants include Jeremy Bailenson (Stanford), Jon Brouchoud (Wikitecture), Beth Coleman (MIT), Parvati Dev (Innovation in Learning), Brewster Kahle (The Internet Archive) and others.

## Austin City Limits come to SL

Experience history being made as the "Live Music Capital of the World" shares its famous stage. Shelley King and her band perform live on the virtual stage of Second Life via live streaming simulcast. Mingle with your avatar at PBS's longest running popular live concert music series, Austin City Limits.

PBS TeacherLine of Texas and KLRU-TV, Austin PBS, along with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) offer an unforgettable evening of fun and music in the virtual build of the legendary soundstage Austin City Limits on Feb. 6 from 4:30 to 7pm SLT. Participants will enjoy dancing and music while learning about a valuable resource for teachers, PBS TeacherLine of Texas, the premier online professional development program for K-12

educators.

Drop an IM to Joie Despres to RSVP. Seating is limited to the first 50 responses. If you respond in time, your RSVP will be acknowledged and you will get a landmark notice on Wednesday. So, hurry and don't miss your chance to be part of this special event!

If you are going to be at TCEA and would like to attend the real event, at KLRU's Austin City Limits Studios, the festivities start at 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 6. Cost is \$20. Shuttle buses will be provided.

Shelley King is the first woman to be named Official Texas State Musician. A singer, songwriter, and seasoned bandleader, she has won many awards. She has been called a "powerhouse," "soothing," and "blistering" all in the same review for her style of roots music.

## Avatrait featured in Italian publication

The Italian publication of Condé Nast magazines' *Architectural Digest* recently released a "special supplement" for art collectors called "AD Collectors." The cover story of this edition was on the world of "metaverse art" and featured interviews with several real-world European galleries that have been selling pieces from virtual worlds for as much as €7,000!

Even at these very high prices, their recommendation was that collectors should be taking a serious look at this emerging genre.

Of the many thousands of in-world galleries, only Avatrait was mentioned by name, no doubt because the Avatrait Gallery (<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Simuality/41/213/35>) not only features virtual copies of prints for usage within Second

Life environments, but also sells framed high-quality prints through the Avatrait.com web site.

Additionally, the vast majority of the pictures used to illustrate this story (a file of thumbnail pages from the magazine and a translation of the Italian original can be found at <http://simuality.com/press/IADC.doc>), were artists affiliated with the Avatrait Gallery.

Avatrait founder Greg Houston (Track Hax in S.L.) was extremely pleased and surprised when copies of "AD Collectors" arrived from the Editor-In-Chief of Italian Architectural Digest. Houston was quoted: "It's just further support for what I've been claiming all along, that Second Life art is something special, and is evolving into a genre all its own!"

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# Perspectives

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## A Bird's Eye View

Observations on  
Second Life  
and its denizens

By Phoenix Psaltery

### The winter of our discontent

*Now is the winter of our discontent*

*Made glorious summer by this sun of York;*

*And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house*

*In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.*

*Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;*

*Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;*

*Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,*

*Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.*

— William Shakespeare:  
*Richard III*, Act I, scene 1

OK, it's time for Punxsutawney Phil to shine. By the time this column is published, ol' Phil will already have had his moment in the spotlight — peeking out of his burrow in Pennsylvania and, depending on whether he sees his shadow or not, indicating to the watching world whether we'll have an early spring or six more weeks of winter.

Note to our readers from outside the US and Canada: It's a North American thing, you wouldn't understand. However, let me attempt an explanation: "Groundhog Day" is not simply the title of a Bill Murray film. It's a minor holiday celebrated the second day of February.

Legend says that on this day, the groundhog — also known as a woodchuck, marmot or ground

squirrel — emerges from its burrow and fails to see its shadow because the weather is cloudy, winter will soon end.

On the other hand, if it does see its shadow, it will return into its burrow, and winter will continue for six more weeks.

Punxsutawney Phil is the name of one particular groundhog, a resident of the city of the same name in Pennsylvania. He has allegedly been in continuous service to the community for 121 years.

So what does this mean for those of us in Second Life? Well, as you all know, we have our own Phil — Linden high poobah Philip Rosedale, known as Philip Linden in-world. Let's refer to him as "San Francisco Phil."

On Linden Groundhog Day, San Francisco Phil pokes his head out of his burrow at Linden Lab and looks around.

If he sees his shadow, Second Life will have six more weeks of lagginess, inventory loss and general crappy performance.

Please, somebody shine a flashlight at him and point out his shadow!

In *Richard III*, Gloucester speaks of harsh times that have passed away, calling them "the winter of our discontent," and speaks of a time of celebration: "Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths / Our bruised arms hung up for monuments / Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings / Our dreadful

See BIRD'S, Page 20



## The Weekly M2 Mini-Poll

Week of 01-29-2008

Do you use the Land Store?

Yes.

15%

No.

85%

TOTAL

100.0%

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to participate in our online poll.

This week's question:

"Do you expect the introduction of

Mono to improve SL performance?"

See next week's issue for the results.

## WANT TO WRITE?

The *Metaverse Messenger* accepts signed letters to the editor/publisher from our readers. Letters must include avatar name for verification.

Send letters to

[mm@metaversemessenger.com](mailto:mm@metaversemessenger.com).

## The Metaverse Messenger

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**For a complete list of  
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# THE LINE

*Studying the line between our two lives*  
 by NORINN RICHARD  
 norinnrichard.blogspot.com

**Joking Around**

I have to start by admitting that this week I'm abusing my power. All I can say in my defense is that this is really funny to the folks involved. But to share the joke with the rest of you, I have to give you a little background. Jokes that need to be explained are rarely funny, but there is a good statement about The Line here as well.

As I have mentioned some in the past, I work at a bank now. When I was hired, I made no secret of the time I spend on Second Life and what I do here. On the contrary, my writing here at the paper is something I listed among my job experiences on my resume. So everyone in the department has at least heard me mention Second Life a few times.

Several months ago, one of my co-workers heard Second Life mentioned by another of his friends, one of the system administrators over in the server team.

That is how I met Patrick. When our co-worker heard of Second Life from both of us, he suggested we chat. So he introduced us. It turns out that Pat has a dry sense of humor similar to my own, so we became fairly good friends pretty quickly. If human resources ever pulls the logs of our instant mes-

sage chats, they will be very confused.

Pat has introduced me to his real life wife, and I have met them for lunch with both my ex-wife and Rose. During one of these meetings, I mentioned to him an opening in my department at work. The next several days were a frantic rush to get him considered for the internal transfer before an offer was made to someone else. As a result, we are now in the same area of the building.

That led to the following exchange between us the other day. I saw Pat returning to his desk, with his normal "I just got the best of someone, but don't want to show it" look on his face. When I asked him why he was trying to look innocent, he responded, "Oh, no, I'm not innocent. Didn't you see it in the *Messenger*? It was real news!" I almost told him the *Messenger* only covered real news, and his guilt didn't qualify on the spot. On reflection, however, I decided saying so in the paper itself would be a lot more fun. So I called in a favor with Katt (I remain shocked that I ever have any favors granted, given how often I am late). The comment you see to the side is the result.

What does that say about The

See LINE, Page 20

**Patrick is not innocent!**  
 (Those who know him know this is not news).

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## Something Virgin

*A pedestrian view of the avant-garde*

By **ALYSON ZHUKOVSKY**  
Columnist

I have been asked numerous times why I write; my personality is one that is conflicted with cynicism, extraversion, and apathy. To report on attempting something new every week seems to be out of the ordinary for me. As I once stated, this is a lesson in journalistic misadventures; but why do it?

To be a column writer is actually an easy thing to do if you have the patience to fail frequently, be rejected by many people and to have the patience to keep at it.

In my case, it was spite that kept me attempting to become a writer in Second Life.

In the world of writing in SL, being a writer means you need a unique idea to make your own. As you can see, my goal is to report on doing something new weekly. A strong vocabulary is a nice addition; however, it is not required.

What *is* required is common sense. If you can explain your viewpoints, ideas, or even make advertisements in a fashion that makes sense, you'll more than likely to be accepted in the writing community.

To get your start as a writer, I

would suggest starting a blog. Your blog entries are not required to be long or every day. If you make paragraph-long columns that explain your viewpoint on a common topic, you'll establish a bit of credibility. Share this blog with all of your friends; ask them to share it with *their* friends.

Once your blog has blossomed and has developed a following, start contacting potential editors, publishers, or even make a few advertisements for yourself offering your services as a writer.

This method may not work for everyone. That's okay; don't give up on your failures. Find a better, more unique method for sharing your ideas. If you're an aspiring writer, I wish you the best of luck!

I would like to thank all of my friends for their support of my writing. I would also like to thank Katt Kongo for giving me this wonderful opportunity to write for her.

I say this every column: I am begging all of you for ideas now! I'm running out of topics! If you have a unique or even an everyday job, activity, hobby, or game you participate in, please contact me in-world via instant message. I could always use new and fresh ideas.



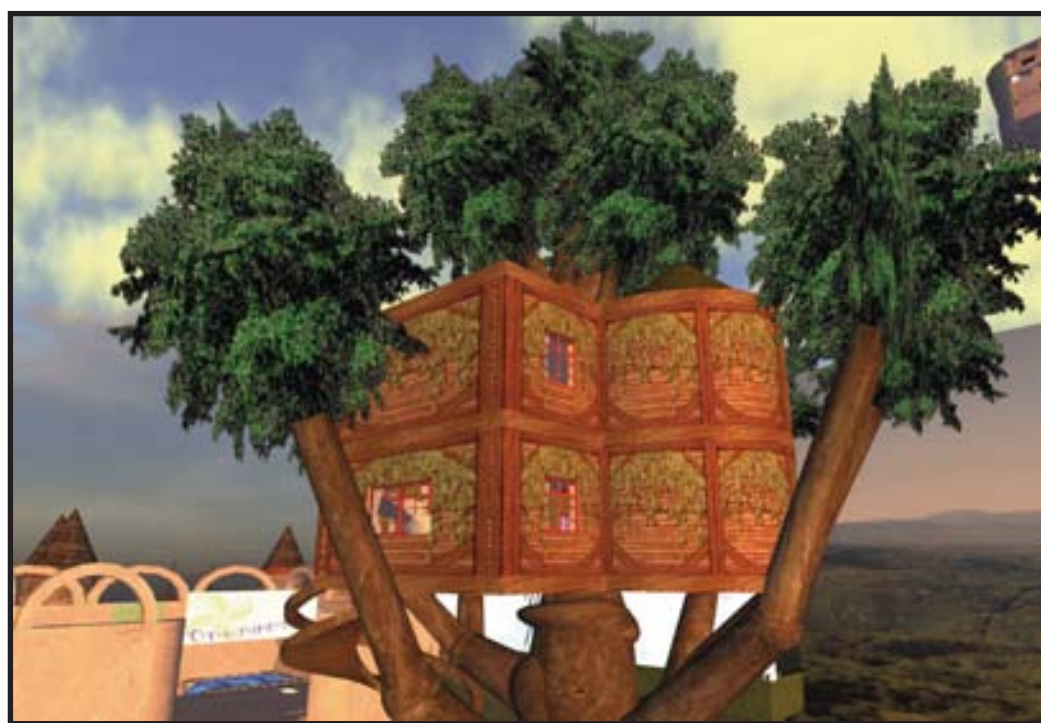
**WIN L\$4,000** in the M2'S Eagle Eye Photo ID Contest! If you think you know where this picture was taken, e-mail your answer to [eagleeye@metaversemessenger.com](mailto:eagleeye@metaversemessenger.com) along with your avatar's name. The deadline for this week's contest is Feb 11. No one correctly identified last week's photo as Info Island. For a complete list of rules for the contest, visit the M2 website at [www.metaversemessenger.com](http://www.metaversemessenger.com)



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**THE HARBOURNE SIM** is home to the Cynthetic store, owned by Delcynthe Glineux. She produces jewelry with a flair, including earrings and necklaces in a variety of metals. At right, Tarzan Flanagan's home, next door to Glineux's store, is a twisted and gnarled tree cradling a two story house in its branches. - Photos by WELLINGTON BAHRAM

**Sim of the Week:** HARBOURNE

Yes, this week should be Mija's turn. However, that dreaded beast known as real life has visited her, with the flu as a present. So Rose and I will be making a visit a bit early.

Our travels of the wide world of Second Life this week have run us aground on the hills of Harbourne, a landlocked sim on the north side of the Northern Continent. It is bound on the landward sides by Blacksticks and Evora and on the ocean side by Zamojski and Ribblesdale.

Teleporting into Harbourne drops you into a French formal garden owned by AzureBlue Sands. This sculpted and restful place boasts several hummingbirds in various shades of blue and purple which seem to follow you around the garden. Raised beds cradle perfectly manicured bushes and plantings. In the center splashes a lion headed fountain with benches for quiet contemplation. Topiary archways allow access to the four cardinal points. Sands' masterpiece of a garden is laid out in the four square pattern that is the earmark of the best French formal style gardens. You can easily imagine teams of gardeners hovering just out of sight waiting to banish the most recalcitrant of fallen leaves or stray twigs.

The westernmost archway gives access to Sands' brooding castle of a home. This is no light, airy Louis XIV fairytale creation, but an imposing structure built to withstand siege engines and brutal frontal assaults.

Sands also owns the adjacent plot to the south that seems to be under construc-

tion. It is bordered by the same sculpted hedges as her French formal garden but the interior looks to be a work in progress. Several white column arches set a lovely stage against a backdrop of clouded blue sky. I would guess that this is the beginnings of a wedding garden. A security system warns that you are not on the guest list for this plot and then bumps you back if you venture inside.

The next plot of land to the north is a rental property that is group owned by Ocean Breeze Rentals, a group owned by mach Marthy. This 6144 square meter plot comes complete with a furnished castle and a prim limit of 300 and rents for L\$4000 per week.

The next plot west is the privately owned castle of Leaf and Zoebabe. It is group owned by Castle Zoleaf. From the property line you can see the lovely castle itself and the rather inviting looking stairway to the front door. This rough stone castle seems to almost float in midair, which tends to be one of my pet peeves about construction in Second Life.

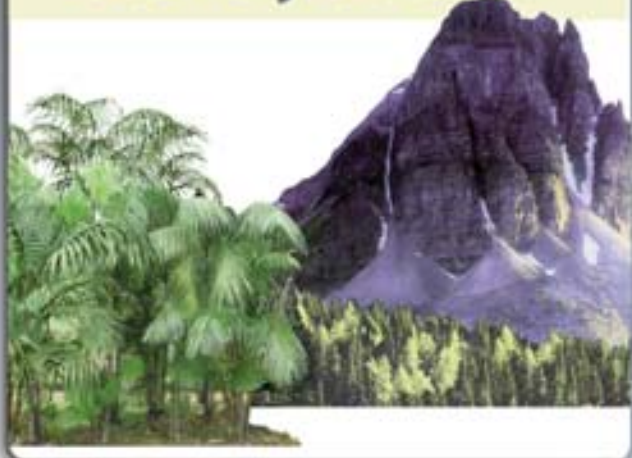
One of the things I noticed most about Harbourne is that the residents rarely use the red bars of friendship, instead preferring to use gently bumping security orbs or ones that will throw you back to your home point. It is a little disconcerting when it first happens and you are bumped out past the property line, but watch for the

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**THE CATTERY DISPLAY** at the Genome sim uses examples provided by the inheritance of fur patterns by tortoiseshell cats. It's similar to the examples most readers are probably familiar with about eye color on fruit flies. - Photo by PHEDRE DUMOURIEZ



## SCIENCE From Page 1

*Physics and Astronomy at the University of Denver.*

"Let me check something," Manbi/Corbin responds. "I can reset the map — sometimes it gets stuck." He presses a button, and fresh data rushes in from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's network of airport weather stations. The clouds over the East shift slightly. Los Angeles goes orange, meaning it's cooled off a bit. But there's still a spot of indigo over Vegas.

"I guess it's feeling blue," he jokes.

"The Washington Times, the AP is coming out with one soon, MSNBC, the local papers..." Manbi muses over the pleasant flood of publicity that the SciLands is attracting.

"We get a regular flow of [Linden Lab employees] at the Science Friday show," Manbi notes as he reviews traffic figures in the various sims. "Particularly Prospero — he is here every week. Funny guy, and gets some of his intelligent questions on the [Science Friday] show. Ira Flatow, host of the program, known in SL as Ira Flatley, 'loves SL,'" Manbi smiled.

"What we at [the University of Denver] are doing is a distance learning graduate course in Environmental Impact statements for Nuclear Power... and some of the lab experiments will take place here. This is going to be a joint venture with the National Physical Laboratory in the UK."

He showed a photo of a proposed build. "This is a generation three reactor model we will build here... the model itself is a pain — like 3400 pieces." Manbi explained that Aimee Weber Studios has been enlisted to construct the model. "So this will be quite a job, but at least we have a floor plan. One island won't hold it all, though."

Manbi explained that he has been working in SL on his own since last October, with a fellow professor. They finally got a grant for their work and started pretty much full time in SL in September.

"I have been associated with Dr. Robert Ameer [Professor of Physics at the University of Denver] since the mid 80s. See, back in the 80s I was with a hands-on science museum, and we were somewhat associated with the Exploratorium... that is when I met Patio [Plasma]. We closed the doors due to lack of funds in about 1989. I went to work for the Soviet oil industry in Denver."

Manbi said he saw a Popular Science story on SL in August 2006. "Then I heard Harvard [University] was here, so I pursued DU through my friend that we needed to make science in

SL... I met with Kat [Lemieux] and Troy [McLuhan, of the ISM] and we talked about [creating an] archipelago... so I got an island immediately. It there in the ocean for about two weeks, and they started to appear," he smiled.

"In my mind, Patio was behind some of this," Manbi said. "I was going to go where Patio went, and Lori Bell at Info Islands [the SL Library sims] wanted us up there... Larry [Pixel] wanted us to be part of NMC [the New Media Consortium education sims]. We decided that we could hold our own... and we are holding our own quite well."

"We now have, also, Piet Hut — he's a famous astrophysicist, doesn't have an island yet," said Manbi. Hut, for the record, is professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at the previously mentioned Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, which is the old stomping grounds of no less a luminary than Albert Einstein.

### Genetics at Genome Island

"We bio types are definitely in the minority!" said Max Chatnoir, who runs Genome Island, home of a multitude of genetics exhibits. "Genetics is a natural because it's so mathy," she added. "For example, you can get a sequence from the sequencer, and then compare it to known sequences for a match, or compare fossil DNA to living examples to see who the nearest living relatives are."

"I put [Genome Island] together for teaching genetics for [University] undergrads, or anybody else who wants to drop in," Chatnoir said. Many of the exhibits are similar to the diagrams in old biology texts showing what number of fruit fly offspring will have red eyes and what number will have white eyes for a given pair of parents — but these are interactive.

An exhibit in the animal area uses tortoiseshell cats to explain genetics; most of the objects generate some kind of data which appears in the chat record, so it can be transferred to a notecard, spreadsheet or notebook.

The Abbey contains historical information about Gregor Mendel, an Austrian priest who is known as the "father of genetics" for his studies on how characteristics are inherited. It also contains informational slideshows, but the Abbey is mostly used for meetings and discussions.

"Most of the experiments are out in the greenhouse and gardens," said Chatnoir. "Lots of experiments with peas in here!" There are several testing objects such as a game where students have to figure out which genes are in all of the parent peas by doing the crosses. There are ex-

amples of various types of genetic-related topics," Chatnoir continued.

Chatnoir teaches at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. "I started this to try to develop an online laboratory environment for online science courses," she said. "I'm going to try a full immersion course for non-majors next fall. We just got new computer labs last spring, so I couldn't run the program at school until then. So I'm just beginning to get students in here... That's the acid test, of course!"

A tour of the Tower showed off information on molecular genetics. Each floor has a small set of experiments. The Tower contains 18 floors, but the top few are still open, providing room for expansion.

Displays in the Tower explain topics such as Watson and Crick's discovery of the DNA double helix, DNA and RNA replication and the like. Another display includes mice which are a reproduction of one of the first experiments with DNA. It showed that DNA from dead bacterial cells could enter live cells and transform them into virulent cells.

Another display is an entire floor of the Tower ringed with models of the human chromosomes. "Each chromosome has info about some gene. If you click on a chromosome you'll get a little gene story," Chatnoir said. "I think this is the heart of the island. You can either start with Mendel or start with DNA. There isn't a fixed order for the experiments."

At this point, she asked whether I had a favorite chromosome. I replied that I had never considered it, and asked what her favorite was. "I like [chromosome] 2, because of its origin," she replied. She explained, "In other primates, the material in human 2 is found in two different chromosomes.

"Apparently they fused to make one big chromosome in humans. I think a lot of speciation has to do with chromosome rearrangement, rather than getting new genes. Humans pretty much have chimp genes, but the order is a little different." Well, I'll be a chimpanzee's great-great-grandson.

"There are little experiments like this all over the island," Chatnoir said, explaining that visitors should feel free to drop in and poke around any time. "The island is totally public access."

It's amazing what you can do with prims and scripts. SL is an incredible medium for education.

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