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Using Synthetic Worlds for Work and Learning

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Abstract

Synthetic worlds [Castronova 2005] are graphically-rich, three-dimensional (3D), electronic environments where members assume an embodied persona (i.e., avatars) and engage in socializing, competitive quests, and economic transactions with globally distributed others. Frequently categorized as technologies of play, synthetic worlds range from massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) such as World of Warcraft, to virtual reality environments such as Second Life. Increasingly, educators, researchers and corporations are recognizing these 3D online spaces as legitimate communication media, thereby blurring the lines between work and play, and between reality and virtuality. In this panel, presented at the 2007 International Conference on Information Systems, we explore how the fluid work-play and reality-virtuality boundaries are negotiated and managed in practice. The panelists will rely on their research, conducted in educational, corporate and game environments, to address questions about learning, working and playing in these new media spaces.

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