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Biographical statement

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Abstract
While the anthropology of online communities has emerged as a significant area of research, there has been little discussion of the possibilities of the <u>archaeology</u> of virtual settlements, defined here as interactive synthetic environments in which users are sensually immersed and which respond to user input. Bartle (2003: 1) has described such virtual settlements as 'places where the imaginary meets the real'. In this sense, an examination of the role of heritage in virtual settlements has the potential to shed light on the role of heritage in both 'real' and 'imagined' communities more generally. This paper develops the concept of 'cyber-archaeology' (originally devised by Jones, 1997) to study the virtual material culture of the settlement *Second Life*, and in particular, its explicit programme of heritage conservation. A survey of heritage places in *Second Life* suggests that the functions of heritage in virtual settlements may be far more limited than in the actual world, functioning primarily as a structure of governance and control through the establishment of primogenital (virtual) land ownership and the production of a sense of community through memorials which produce a sense of 'rootedness' and materialise social memory. Such functions of heritage are consistent with recent discussion of the role of heritage in Western societies. Nonetheless, this study of heritage and cyber-archaeology provides insights into the ways in which the notions of heritage are transforming in the early twenty-first century in connection with the proliferation of virtual environments, and the challenge this provides to contemporary society.

Keywords
Second Life • Virtual Settlements • Cyber-Archaeology • Heritage • Community

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Introduction
While anthropologists have begun to explore the ways in which Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is giving rise to new forms of virtual communities and the sociocultural implications of new communication technologies (e.g. Hine 2000, Miller and Slater 2000, Fabian 2002, Wilson and Peterson 2002, Eisenlohr 2004, Zongming 2005, Boellstorff 2008), there has been little discussion of an <u>archaeology</u> of virtual communities. This paper develops the concept of 'cyber-archaeology' (originally devised by Jones 1997) to study the virtual settlement *Second Life* (SL), and in particular, its explicit programme of heritage conservation. I argue that the role of cyber-archaeology is not only to study the 'actual' technologies employed by virtual communities, but also the virtual objects they create within cyber-space. Bartle (2003: 1) has described virtual settlements as 'places where the imaginary meets the real'. In this sense, an examination of the role of heritage in virtual worlds has the potential to shed light on the role of heritage in both 'actual' and 'imagined' communities more generally. A survey of heritage places in SL suggests that the functions of heritage in virtual settlements may be far more limited than in the 'actual' world, functioning primarily as a structure of governance and control through the establishment of primogenital (virtual) land ownership and the production of a sense of community through memorials which produce a sense of 'rootedness' and materialise social memory. Such functions of heritage are consistent with recent discussion of the role of heritage in Western societies by Smith (2006) and others. Nonetheless, this study of heritage and cyber-archaeology provides insights into the ways in which the notions of heritage are transforming in the early twenty-first century in connection with the proliferation of virtual environments, and offers challenges to heritage researchers through the ways in which such environments appear to be constraining, rather than enlarging, the perception of heritage in the contemporary world. In the conclusion I consider the ways in which SL functions as a changing moral-ethical space which feeds back to the actual world and consider how ethnographers and archaeologists might address what I consider to be a worrying trend towards homogenous 'official' heritage discourses which allow little space for the development of alternate or subaltern forms of heritage within such virtual environments.

What is a virtual settlement and why is it important?
Virtual settlements have expanded rapidly in response to the development of computerised technologies which allow for the creation of interactive synthetic environments in which users are sensually immersed and which respond to user input (Sherman and Craig 2003: 6). As a medium, virtual reality (VR) has three defining characteristics—it operates in real time, so that feedback is not noticeably delayed from the perspective of the user, it is interactive, and is based on the use of three dimensional spatial models (Whyte 2002: 3). While many early VR mediums employed stand alone computer-based technologies, the widespread availability of the internet and broadband technologies which allow large amounts of data to be downloaded relatively quickly has meant that internet based VR has grown rapidly in the last decade. This has led to the development of what are commonly known as virtual worlds (but which might be better termed virtual 'settlements') and virtual communities. Rheingold (1993: 5) defines virtual communities as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on…public conversations long enough…to form webs of personal relationships in cyber-space". Jones (1997) distinguishes between such virtual communities and their virtual settlements, defining a virtual settlement as 'a cyber-place that is symbolically delineated by topic of interest and within which a significant proportion of interrelated interactive group-CMC occurs' (Jones 1997: 6). He posits that a virtual settlement must meet a minimum set of conditions, requiring a minimum level of interactivity, a variety of communicators, a certain level of sustained membership, and a

public common space where interaction may occur. While Jones is at pains to point at the virtual communities are not *created* by new technologies, it is important to note that the development of virtual communities and settlements is reliant on the technology which realizes the possibility of VR.

While it has its antecedents in the work of Anderson (1983), the anthropology of online communities (e.g. Hine 2000, Miller and Slater 2000, Fabian 2002, Wilson and Peterson 2002; Boellstorff 2008) is a relatively new field of research. Indeed, there is some argument as to whether the concept of an 'online community' is even a useful one (e.g. Rheingold 1993, Hakken 1999). One important aspect of the anthropology of virtual communities has been to emphasize "the link between historically constituted socio-cultural practices within and outside of mediated communication and the language practices, social interactions, and ideologies of technology that emerge from new information and communication technologies" (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 453), and the blurred boundaries between online and offline worlds (Miller and Slater 2000: 5). Wilson and Peterson (2002) distinguish between those studies concerned with offline social, cultural and historical processes (e.g. Garfinkel 2000) and those more concerned with the development, diffusion and reception of new technologies and media (e.g. Latour 1996). Agre's (1999: 4) work has considered the relationship between online and offline identities, suggesting the ways in which 'social and professional identities are continuous over several media, and…people use those several media to develop their identities in ways that carry over to other settings'. The connection between offline and online identities and the cultural significance of the internet and its relationship with nationalism, gender and class is the focus of Miller and Slater's (2000) ethnographic study of the internet in Trinidad. Other areas of anthropological and sociological concern in the study of the internet have included communication and language shifts (e.g. Eisenlohr 2004), and the relationship between ideology and social and linguistic practices in cyberspace (e.g. Crystal 2001, Wilson and Peterson 2002: 461).

The only detailed ethnographic study of SL is Boellstorff's *Coming of Age in Second Life* (2008). This study, which approaches the online settlement of SL as a traditional ethnographic field study, considers changing notions of personhood associated with the emergence of virtual settlements, and draws out the connection between virtual and actual worlds. Boellstorff emphasises the fact that, contrary to the widespread use of terms such as 'post-human' to describe the notions of personhood generated by virtual worlds, that 'virtual worlds reconfigure selfhood and sociality, but this is only possible because they rework the virtuality that characterizes human being in the actual world' (2008: 29). The connection between actual and virtual personhood thus emerges as a critical concern for an anthropology of online communities. My approach to SL in this paper differs from Boellstorff's, not only in the depth of study (his participant observation based on years of research) but also in nature. My study is an attempt to survey some of the types of virtual places conserved as 'heritage' within SL, and as such consists of a series of observations regarding its virtual material culture. My study draws on Boellstorff's ethnography, the preliminary studies of Weinbren (2007, discussed below) and various analyses of SL contained in users blogs and wikis to provide an insider's perspective and to flesh out the accounts from my own more limited experiences within SL, however, my principle focus is on the archaeology of SL and the ways in which virtual heritage objects and places as mobilised in the production of a sense of community and place in virtual settlements.

Cyber-archaeology
Jones (1997, 2003) developed the idea of a 'cyber-archaeology' to suggest a new way of understanding virtual communities through the study of their cultural artefacts. He was influenced in particular by Fletcher's (1995) work on settlement growth, and the ways in

which theories about settlement growth from archaeology might be applied to virtual worlds. To Jones, the notion of cyber-archaeology provided a way of avoiding the technological determinism which saw particular technologies as pre-requisites rather than determinants of the structure and behaviour of virtual communities, and provided a structure for understanding the limits of virtual settlement growth.

> …the degree to which communications produced by a community can be effectively processed by members has consequences for the size, viability and duration of a community's existence (1997: 14).

Jones went on to demonstrate the potential applicability of Fletcher's (1995) interaction-communication stress model to virtual settlements. What I want to do in this paper is to suggest a broader concept of cyber-archaeology which extends not only to the actual technologies employed by virtual communities, but also to the objects they create within virtual settlements. My approach in this paper is one which attempts to understand aspects of a virtual community through the study of its virtual material culture. In doing so I want to explore some of the ways in which SL not only allows those with an interest in material culture to explore issues of virtuality (in opposition to 'actuality'), but also to explore some issues which emerge regarding the changing function of heritage within contemporary society.

The relevance of SL to the study of heritage
The relationship between heritage and virtual reality is developing as an increasingly important one, as the way in which people experience museums and heritage sites in actual life is becoming increasingly virtual. Paul Basu (2007), in his study of the relationship between family history research and 'roots tourism' in Scotland, describes the way in which heritage tourists increasingly migrate back and forth between actual and imagined heritage landscapes which are mediated through the internet, film and other media.

> …many journeys begun on the 'digital highway' are continued by air, rail, ferry, hire car and on foot…but neither do these migrations begin online and end offline in a visit to the old country: the frequently involve multiple movements back and forth between these different domains (2007: 97-8).

Similarly, over the past decade we have witnessed the increased 'virtuality' of museums, both in their use of virtual reality and digital imaging within the context of the museum itself, and in the development of vast online catalogues which allow their objects to be interrogated, viewed and studied offline. The ways in which the internet facilitates the reproduction of images of heritage sites and the increased connections between world heritage and tourism as mediated by the internet is another field in which heritage is being transformed in meaning by communication technologies and virtual realities.

Individual virtual settlements like SL provide a crucible within which one can witness the origins and development of settlements which mirror those from the actual world, which we would otherwise not have access to (Jones 1997). This, coupled with the fact that the boundaries of such virtual settlements are blurred and extend into other online environments and the actual world (Miller and Slater 2000, Boellstorff 2008), make virtual settlements important places for academic study. A mobile phone provider has recently launched a service where subscribers can use their phone in the actual world to send messages to users in SL. New initiatives between Linden Labs (the 'creators' of SL) and IBM look to develop systems whereby individuals can use a single Avatar in multiple virtual environments. As such, ideas regarding heritage which circulate within SL have the potential to influence broader notions of heritage in both actual and virtual worlds in the twenty first century, and 'virtual' identities and material cultures are increasingly likely to influence the social lives of internet users in the 'actual' world.

The idea of the 'heritage' of SL, using the example of Governor Linden's Mansion as a 'conserved' heritage site in the virtual settlement, was first described by the authors of the Schome SL wiki in 2006 (Anon. 2008), and subsequently discussed by Weinbren (2007, Ferguson et al. in prep.). A review of SL user's blogs and wikis reveals a large number of virtual sites within SL which are described as 'heritage'-museums, commemorative monuments, conserved buildings and artefacts and replicas of actual heritage sites. There are a number of characteristics of heritage in SL. These can be summarised as follows:

1. The creation of heritage sites and establishment of SL's digital archives seems focussed almost entirely on the development of a sense of 'rootedness' and the creation of an official public memory of the creation myths of the virtual settlement.

2. Partially as a function of the above, heritage in SL is focussed on origin myths and connected almost explicitly with the actions of the 'ruling class'. There is little evidence of heritage being used to celebrate the actions of 'ordinary' residents within SL.

3. There is little space for the existence of subaltern or dissenting views within SL's heritage discourse.

4. Processes of community-building are clearly evident in the erection of memorials and the production of heritage sites in SL. Memorials help transform SL from a digital space into a 'place', and emphasize a sense of community and shared origins.

5. While the preservation and creation of official heritage sites helps make SL seem more like the 'actual' world, the official histories they embody create an origin myth which acts as a way of maintaining a shared sense of belonging and values in a 'virtual' community.

6. Work on CMC communities has demonstrated many similarities between the processes which operate in virtual and local communities (e.g. Blanchard and Markus 2002), and SL appears to be another example of a case where processes of community building from the actual world are used to produce conditions of social cohesion in virtual communities.

Recent work within the field of critical heritage studies emphasises the ways in which 'authorised' heritage discourses are mobilised by groups to control who has access to the materials with which to assemble narratives about the past on which communities, nations and other collectives base their sense of personhood and community. Smith (2006: 11-12) defines the authorized heritage discourse in these terms:

> There is a hegemonic 'authorized heritage discourse', which is reliant on the power/knowledge claims of technical and aesthetic experts, and institutionalized in state cultural agencies and amenities societies. This discourse takes its cue from the grand narratives of nation and class...privileges monumentality and scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth...social consensus and nation building...to establish claims about itself that make it real (which)...disconnects the idea of heritage from the present and present-day values and aspirations so that it becomes something confined to 'the past'.

Hewison (1987) has commented on the rise of popular nostalgia and the obsession with heritage in the second half of the twentieth century, seeing it as a reaction to a sense of social decline and rapid change. Following Adorno and Horkheimer's ([1947] 2002) criticism of the 'culture industry', Hewison believed that the rise of 'the heritage industry' as a form of popular entertainment distracted its patrons from developing an interest in contemporary art and critical culture, providing them instead with a view of culture which was finished and

complete (and firmly in the past). He pointed to the widespread perception of cultural and economic decline which became a feature of Britain's perception of itself as a nation in the decades following the Second World War.

> In the face of apparent decline and disintegration, it is not surprising that the past seems a better place. Yet it is irrecoverable, for we are condemned to live perpetually in the present. What matters is not the past, but our relationship with it. As individuals, our security and identity depend largely on the knowledge we have of our personal and family history; the language and customs which govern our social lives rely for their meaning on a continuity between past and present. Yet at times the pace of change, and its consequences, are so radical that not only is change perceived as decline, but there is the threat of rupture with our past lives (Hewison 1987: 43-5).

This ability of heritage to create a sense of rupture with the present, and to reinforce a belief in the completeness and accuracy of its portrayals of the past (and hence the power-knowledge claims which are brought to bear as a result of it) is an important feature of heritage is SL. What we see in the emergent forms of heritage representation in SL represents the establishment of a system whereby virtual objects and places are used to create a story which establishes and reinforces the power and 'rights' of the ruling classes within SL. Before I go on to discuss these issues, and the ways in which heritage is used within SL in the creation of a sense of virtual community and place, I will discuss SL and the ways in which it functions as a virtual settlement in more detail.

Second Life: **The prehistory of a heterotopia**
Second Life is an internet based graphical interface, three dimensional computer mediated communication space in which residents can buy and sell land to create virtual landscapes of recreation, communication and commerce. A downloadable client software program allows users to interact with each other over the internet using 'avatars' which they design and may modify the appearance of at any time. Although it may at first appear like a game, SL has grown since its launch in 2003 into a serious forum for commerce, communication, recreation, and debate. It has its own unit of currency, the Linden Dollar (L$), which can be purchased and exchanged for US Dollars. On Monday 15th October 2007, the exchange rate was listed as L$268=US$1. As of the same date, 453,097 residents had logged into SL in the previous 7 days, and the total number of resident accounts was listed as 10,079,765 (however, individuals may hold multiple resident accounts and it appears that resident accounts are not deleted even when they have been inactive for a long period of time). In the month of September 2007, 76,048,960m^2 of land had been sold by residents, at an average price of L$6.4622 per m^2.

A three dimensional modelling tool within SL allows residents to build any sort of virtual object they wish. The governing philosophy of SL is that residents create most of the content in the world themselves. Residents own the Intellectual Property rights in any material they create within SL, and it is this feature of the virtual world that has allowed the significant virtual economy in Linden dollars to grow—residents may buy and sell anything they create in SL, including clothing, buildings, vehicles, and 'gestures' amongst other things.

Residents create their own avatars which are computer generated representations of themselves, within SL. Avatars are fully customisable and may be gendered male or female, and while most (and indeed, the default) are anthropomorphic, avatars may also be animal-like in form. Avatars may be modified at any time. Communication between residents in SL occurs as text based messaging, either as 'local chat', where words are keyed into a text box and spoken so that they are relayed to the screens of all other residents within a 20m radius, or as instant messaging, which appears as a private message sent from one resident to another. Audio local chat is also possible via a microphone connected to the user's

computer. Residents move around SL using a combination of foot travel, flying and teleporting between locations (see further discussion of the geography of SL below).

Steve Rosedale, the 'creator' of SL, has said that he was influenced by the concept of the virtual world called the 'Metaverse' in Neal Stephenson's (1992) science fiction novel *Snow Crash* and his experiences at the Burning Man festival in the Nevada desert (Maney 2007). Rosedale and colleague Kapor formed Linden Research Inc. (known as 'Linden Labs') in 1999. SL's 'official' history is detailed by the SL History Wiki (www.slhistory.org), and replicated in documents available from the SL History Museum (see below).

> Alpha started on March 2002, under the name Linden World. The first residents were Steller Sunshine and Paul Zeeman. Other notable Alpha members include Mac Beach, Flyk Escher, BuhBuhCuh Fairchild, and bUTTONpUSHER Jones…Closed beta began on November 2002, with public beta opening on April 2003.

> Beta brought the first economic system, which was an attempt to control resource usage by charging for object creation. It cost L$10 per prim ["primitive"- three dimensional objects used to create things in SL] to rez [to create or make an object appear in SL] an object (this includes attaching objects), and while initially a flat fee of L$3 per prim was charged to keep an object in-world, later a much more complex system was devized, calculating taxes based on each prim's volume and also its altitude (http://www.slhistory.org/index.php/Second_Life_Through_The_Ages).

The terms 'alpha' and 'beta' refer to early testing stages of the software while it was being created by Linden Labs. SL was opened to the public on 23 June 2003.

Experiencing Second Life

While I have referred to the sensual 'immersion' of users in VR, this does little to describe the everyday experience of users of SL. Indeed, as Boellstorff points out, it is very difficult to characterise a 'typical' user of SL and their experiences in the virtual settlement.

> A man spends his days as a tiny chipmunk, elf, or voluptuous woman. Another lives as a child and two other persons agree to be his virtual parents. Two "real"-life sisters living hundreds of miles apart meet every day to play games together or shop for new shoes for their avatars. The person making the shoes has quit his "real"-life job because he is making over five thousand U.S. dollars a month from the sale of virtual clothing…Not far away a newsstand provides copies of a virtual newspaper with ten reporters on staff: it includes advertisements for a "real"-world car company, a virtual university offering classes, a fishing tournament and a spaceflight museum with replicas of rockets and satellites (Boellstorff 2008: 8).

Many SL users keep blogs and wikis in which they recount their experiences within SL, and these form a valuable source of information on the perceptions and embodied experience of virtual life for SL users. While the diversity of sub-cultures and tastes which are catered for within SL make a description of 'typical' experiences difficult, research amongst blogs and wikis associated with SL (in addition to my own experiences within SL) were used to gain an insight into the ways in which heritage sites and other aspects of the virtual are experienced and consumed as a part of both actual and second life. What emerges quite strongly from reading the accounts of SL users is the way in which SL forms a distraction or alternative to actual life for many users. For example, one user notes:

> I came to Second Life to get away from some bad things that happened to me in Real Life. Im still getting over the RL stuff, but I think SL has helped a lot in providing an outlet. I am a lot more alive in SL than I ever have been in RL. I feel safe in SL, and this gives me an incredible sense of freedom. I also feel empowered in SL, cause I can raise my arm and rez a 10 foot wall (or a gold bracelet) instantly. I have fun, because I get to do things I have never tried in RL, like skating, sailing, entering a beauty pageant, not to mention shameless flirting!...Second Life serves an important purpose for many people: some of us need a different existence (sic) from Real Life. There may be issues with health, or relationships, or family, or depression, or anxiety, or fears, or any number of issues that limit full

participation in Real Life (or willingness to do so). Some of us just feel more comfortable in the relative safety of the Second Life environment.

I remember the pilot episode of Star Trek (Im not a Trekkie, so dont know the name), where the original captain of the Enterprise is badly hurt, but can seemingly live a normal life in an alien world thanks to the psychic aliens. Second Life represents such a place for many of us (Zelmanov 2006).

'Heavy' SL users may spend more hours of the day logged in to SL than not, turning on the computer and logging on as soon as they wake, and staying logged on throughout the day. Those who work in an office might logon at the beginning of their day, and subsequently logoff to travel to work, logging on again once they reach their work place. Others might dip in and out of SL throughout the course of the week, or use SL as a regular or casual meeting place for pre-planned meetings which have been negotiated by email or phone in 'real life', or in SL itself. The amount of time spent in SL by an individual usually reflects the overall importance of their virtual life, but most 'heavy' SL users would not draw too clear a distinction between 'actual' and 'second' life. SL is experienced by many users as an integrated part of their communication, working and recreational lives.

Although SL is clearly an alternative to actual life for many SL users, many SL bloggers comment on the actual lives as well as their second lives in their SL blogs. For example, one SL blogger noted on the connection between his Second Life (SL) and actual life (RL):

This blog is meant not to only show what I'm doing or to talk about things I think can be important or interesting, is meant also to show what i'm feeling, a way to express myself in all the sides of my "lifes" (mostly concentrated in my Second Life). RL and SL are together, one affects the other, and now my RL is a bit confused with some changes in my job, some projects not going OK, some problems with friends… you know, not BIG issues, just this kind of small things that don't help to make you feel good, I'm sure you understand.

All that is affecting to my SL too and the things i do, SLphotography, my furniture store, even with some friends. Sometimes I feel like if i was needing a SLvacation (well, actually I think what i need is a RLvacation) (Crimson 2008).

It is important to note that the term 'real life' is most often employed by SL users to mean 'offline' life, or life outside of SL, and does not imply any sort of distinction between the 'reality' of their experience within SL (see also Boellstorff 2008: 20-21). Indeed, some SL users feel their experiences of SL are far more 'real' than their experience of RL.

where's the boarder between the game and our real life? In Sl we share emotions, we make friends, we get disillusions, we fall in love, we get hurt. SL is no longer a game when [it] deals with our real emotions (Matova 2008).

For this reason, and following Boellstorff (2008: 21) to take account of the fact that many SL users appreciate their virtual experience as an aspect of reality, I use the term 'actual', as opposed to 'real' to describe non-virtual life in this paper.

Heritage and the virtual topography of Second Life
As in the actual world, many places in SL are promoted as destinations for visitation. Ida Amida's blog 'Baedeker: A guide for the Second Life tourist' includes a list of 'Areas of Historical Interest' within the virtual world. In describing the purpose of her blog, Amida notes

In the virtual world of Second Life where the landscape changes every day, where the builds can come up and go down in a matter of seconds (depending upon the speed of one's graphics card), "seeing it all" can be a bit tricky. There are no historical markers, there is no board of tourism complete with pamphlets (although Pathfinder's Picks can be a good start), there is no tourist agency to help plan

virtual sightseeing. When I first came in-world, I found this to be rather tragic. I was a little surprised that in a world where building was such an integral part of the culture no one was really highlighting "Tourist Spots" (Amida 2006).

Amida's blog contains descriptions of tourist destinations and heritage sites alongside 'SLurls' (Second Life uniform resource locators) which provide direct links to take users to the SL locations discussed. The graphic interface of SL employs a series of geographic terms and metaphors to create a virtual topography and a sense of 'reality' within the settlement. SL exists as what is known as the 'Grid', a series of servers that run simulators or 'sims' which are composed of a 256m x 256m space in which all things which exist within that virtual space reside. Each server hosts between two and four sims. The terms 'world' and 'grid' are interchangeable in SL. The 'world' is made up of any number of sims linked together to give the impression of a seamless landscape.

Locations within SL are named for the sim on which they reside, followed by an x, y and z co-ordinate. 'SLurls' (Second Life uniform resource locators) provide links by which users can teleport to locations within SL, and exist in the form http://slurl.com/secondlife/<region>/<x-coordinate>/<y-coordinate>/<z-coordinate>/. On clicking the link, a web page is launched which displays a SL world map showing the location of the site and giving users the option of clicking on the map link to start the SL client software and teleport to the location. SL users are known as 'residents', further reinforcing the geographic metaphor of SL.

Natalia Zelmanov's blog provides further insight into the ways in which virtual heritage sites are experienced by SL users. Like Amida's, her blog, which is partially aimed at helping to orient newcomers to SL, includes a 'travel guide' which lists gardens, SL replicas of actual travel destinations, and 'things to see' (Zelmanov 2006). The SL replicas of actual destinations include more or less accurate virtual replicas of Barcelona City, Christ the Redeemer, the Taj Mahal, Chichen-Itza, Dublin, Galveston Island (Texas), Paris, Scotland, Venice and Morocco, amongst others. Zelmanov includes accounts of her visits to each of these sites, along with photos of herself at the sites.

> The famous Brazilian landmark, Christ Redeemer, overlooks Rio de Janeiro. In SL, he also stands atop a mountain, overlooking the Gourdneck sim.
>
> The SL Christ Redeemer was built by Blaze Columbia (who owns Blaze Fashions). The description welcomes all visitors and asks them to leave a candle at the base of the statue.
>
> So I left a messy candle there and made a wish. Come see what my wish is and leave your own candle! (Zelmanov 2007b).

Her list of things to see includes a large number of virtual museums and 'historic' buildings which were built in the early period of SL, amongst a long list of attractions. Like the example above, each of the places is described from an experiential point of view as a visitor.

> Since visiting Chichen-Itza a couple weeks ago, Ive been inspired to visit all of the New 7 Wonders of the World (or their equivalents) in Second Life :)
>
> In no particular order, heres World Wonder #2: The Great Wall of Second Life…the Great Wall is a Linden-created landmark that stretches from the Athetis sim to the Horisme sim, across 14 different sims! This is possibly one of the largest single structure in SL!…The bottom level is like an enclosed tunnel. You can enter the bottom level either from the Athetis sim end…Or at one of several entrances along the Great Wall…Theres actually not much to do at the Great Wall. But its interesting to see a piece of SL history and culture. So stop by if you have a spare moment… Click on Map, and enter "horisme" as the sim name. The SLURL is Horisme (79,33,152) (Zelmanov 2007c).

Places delineated as heritage sites are thus experienced as part of the everyday, recreational lives of SL users. They form places to visit or meet, and are created for a wide range of reasons-enjoyment, as places of commerce, but also to contribute to the overall architecture of the virtual settlement. Heritage places can be visited with the ease of a click on a SLurl, and travel between heritage sites is instantaneous. This makes it possible to visit and explore dozens of SL heritage sites in a short period of time. Finally, as in the case of the actual world, many SL users like to record or memorialise their visits to SL heritage sites by taking pictures or snapshots of themselves at these sites and then creating a blog about their experiences there.

It should be noted that most heritage sites in SL appear to be places which are visited on one's own and not in the company of online friends. Very few of the blogs record regular meetings at particular places delineated as heritage sites. The experience of heritage and exploring history in SL appears to be largely a solitary one.

Heritage Sites in Second Life
There are a number of places within SL which are formally presented as heritage sites, either having been consciously preserved from an early period of SL for the sake of conservation, or acting as places to visit to understand the history of SL. As discussed above, some of these places are promoted as sites for virtual tourism in websites and blogs on the internet (e.g. Amida 2006, Zelmanov 2007). Appendix 1 includes descriptions of a series of virtual heritage places which I visited in SL in October 2007. I considered only places which were described explicitly using the language of heritage—being labelled as heritage, or described as museums—although I also spent time speaking to SL users online and researching SL users' blogs to get a sense of the ways in which the past is experienced in the online environment.

SL registers 'traffic' at each location on the grid, when a resident is present for five minutes or more (a single resident present for half an hour would thus register as 6 traffic counts). The previous day's traffic statistic is displayed for each place in SL, with the twenty most visited places listed as 'popular places'. While none of the heritage sites listed here receive the sort of high visitor numbers of commercial or interactive/gaming spaces within SL which would place them in the popular places list, Governor Linden's Mansion, for example, was listed as having been visited 2634 times by residents on 15 October 2007 (the most popular place on this day was 'Little Japan', a theme park which had registered 140575 traffic counts). I was surprised by how high this number was, considering that many places in SL are 'active' entertainment spaces that change frequently and provide a commercial, communicative, gaming or 'interactive' experience. This suggests that there is certainly some interest in heritage sites in SL, and that the representations of heritage at Governor Linden's Mansion and elsewhere have an influence on the perception of SL by its residents. The visitor statistics for the other sites, although lower, also indicate that they are actively visited places with the virtual world, and thus have some degree of influence on the way in which SL is perceived by its residents (see Table 1).

SL Heritage Site	Traffic
Governor Linden's Mansion, Clementina (188, 122, 62)	2634
SL Historical Museum, Phobos (217, 166, 33)	211
Beta Contributors Wall, Plum (128, 53)	59
Second Life's Wall of History, Kirkby (133, 164, 24)	55

Table 1: Traffic statistics for SL Heritage Sites on 15 October 2007

How objects acquire age in Second Life

In SL, objects carry information about who made them and when they were created, and this information can be interrogated at any time by selecting the object and 'querying' it with a series of mouse clicks (Figure 1). Objects and gestures are frequently queried by SL users, to find out who 'owns' them (and the copyright in them). The 'history' of the creation of any object is contained in its code. All SL objects are composed of a series of three dimensional shapes, created using a limited three dimensional modelling tool or the more sophisticated Linden Scripting Language (LSL) which is used to give objects within SL autonomous behaviour. Once an object has been created by a user in SL, it is registered as 'created by' and 'owned by' particular residents. The owner and the creator of the object maintain certain rights over the object, and the creator of an object may mark it as uncopyable, unable to be modified, or unable to be transferred to another resident. Objects which have been marked as able to be copied, modified or transferred preserve a history of all such actions which are carried out on them. These constitute an amazing digital archive of the traffic in virtual objects throughout SL, and allow one to build up a picture of the ways in which objects have been modified and used throughout their virtual lives.

In addition to this ability to look in detail at the ways in which objects have been created, used, modified and moved around the virtual settlement, the significant digital archives produced by SL allow the potential for a study of the ways in which the 'meaning' of objects and places have changed through time. For example, one artefact which is conserved in the SL History Museum is a small statue of a hippo. A wide range of mythology surround hippos in SL, although it appears that more recent users may not be aware of this mythology as it relates to old versions and social practices dating to 2004 and 2005.

> The tale of the hippo began simply enough in a forum thread by Darwin Appleby in which he strikes a long lasting topic about hippos, which became one of the longest lasting threads on the SL forums. It was then carried over into the grid when Hikaru Yamamoto started a zoo in which a small hippo family could be found. This small yet humble family loved to be fed by visitors and soon became a crowd favorite! Soon enough hippo statues and avatars began to appear through-out the grid…Some may have forgotten about the beloved hippo, but to others the hippos shall never die…HIPPO was also the name of a Linden-made object that you could put keywords into and it would detect other people wearing HIPPOs that had the same keywords in them as well. Example: Oz Spade has "cats" in his HIPPO, Bob Boberson has "cats" in his HIPPO, Oz walks past Bob, and both of their HIPPOs light up. The HIPPOs still work, but are not used by many residents, becoming one of those things that "never really caught on" (http://www.slhistory.org/index.php/Hippo).

While this particular artefact is clearly intended to be humorous, it does demonstrate the way in which certain types of technologies in SL, as in the real world, become defunct not only because their function is taken over by new technology, but also because they go out of fashion or do not prove to be socially popular.
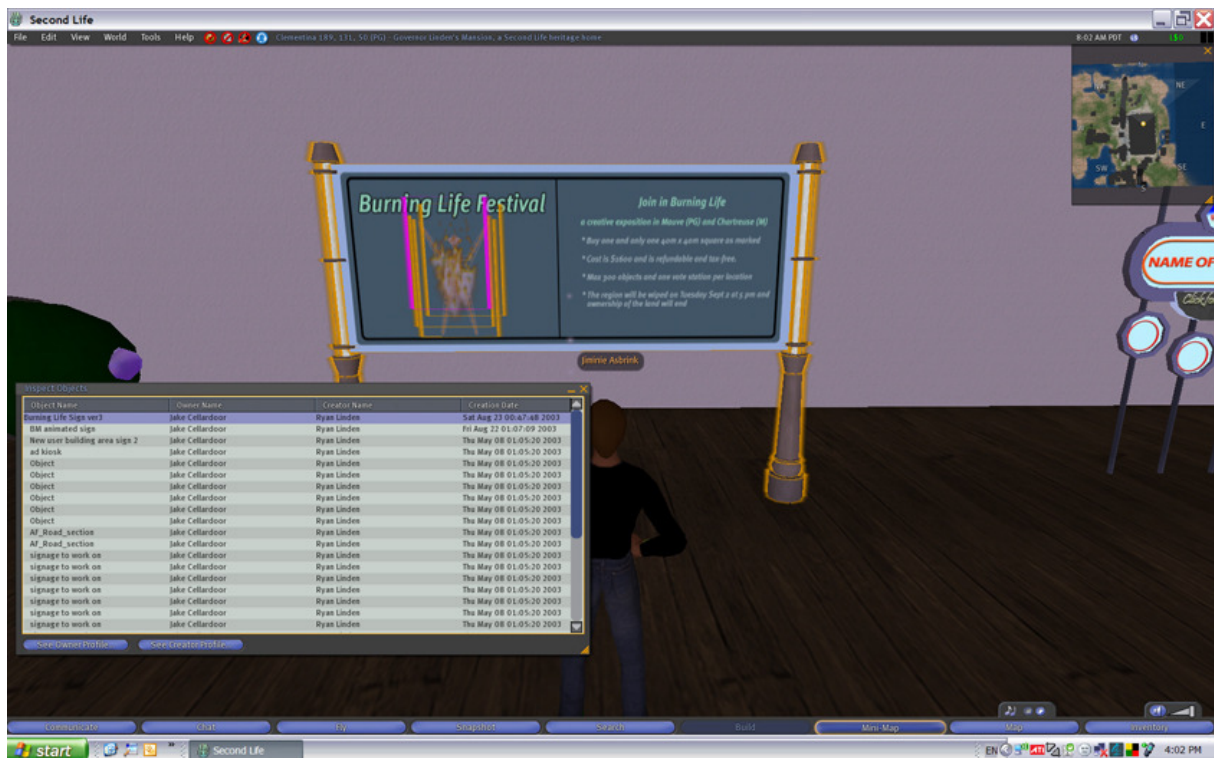
Figure 1: Querying the Burning Life festival sign in the basement of Governor Linden's Mansion to show the history of its creation.

Discussion

Authorised Heritage Discourses in Second Life

The issue of governance in SL remains one of the least visible aspects of SL's online presence, both within SL itself and in the variety of online media surrounding it. Officially, SL is governed "laws of the State of California without regard to conflict of law principles or the United Nations Convention on the International Sale of Goods" (Linden Labs 2007). Although real world government policies on the application of taxation to transactions made in SL remain open to discussion and the legal position of gambling is yet to be established, Linden Labs outlawed simulated gambling in SL on July 26, 2007 in response to U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation enquiry of SL gambling and casino sites (Reuters 2007). Protests against this ban by a large number of SL residents were held outside Governor Linden's Mansion in the days that followed (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE_5rD_4Smg), suggesting that many SL users see this as SL's symbolic seat of power. As 'owners' and 'creators' of the virtual world, Linden Labs are seen as the ruling class. In the same way that Stephenson (1992) outlined in his vision of the Metaverse in *Snow Crash*, Linden Lab's code protocols function as laws and constitute a form of governance and control. Ultimately, all virtual life is governed by the SL Terms of Service (Linden Labs 2007) and the code which determines the ways in which the software operates.

The histories of SL contained within the SL Historical Museum and embodied in Governor Linden's Mansion have features in common with authorized heritage discourses from the actual world—indeed, the mansion might be seen as a typical 'country house museum', celebrating the life and history of the landed classes. That the most popular heritage site in SL should be a 'mansion' seems telling, given that the buying and selling of land and property is the fundamental basis of SL's virtual economy. Heritage in SL is focussed on origin myths and connected almost explicitly with the actions of the ruling class (the Lindens). There is little evidence of heritage being used to celebrate the actions of 'ordinary' residents within SL. Despite having been the location of significant anti-Linden protest on several occasions,

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the history of protest at Governor Linden's Mansion remains un-interpreted. There is little space for the existence of subaltern or dissenting views within SL's heritage discourse. Given Linden Labs' role as the creators (and hence original owners) of all land which is brought and sold in SL, which remains the source of all economic profit within the virtual settlement, the need for a heritage discourse which establishes the primogeniture of Linden Labs is obvious.

Heritage, community and collective memory in Second Life
Paul Basu has noted

> It is somewhat paradoxical that the internet, this globalising technology *par excellance*, should prove such an effective facilitator of individuals' localising strategies (2007: 97).

The ways in which virtual communities use heritage to create both a sense of belonging and a sense of 'place' emerges as a new area of study from this brief survey of heritage sites in SL. Elsewhere I have discussed the importance of Arjun Appadurai's work to understanding the role of heritage in actual world contexts (this section after Harrison 2008). Appadurai has described 'locality' in the actual world as a concept which is constantly in production through the processes of everyday life. For Appadurai, locality is primarily a relational concept, rather than a spatial or scalar one, 'a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts' (1996: 178). Locality is not inherent, but instead, societies must do social 'work' to produce it. Appadurai says this gives rise to a series of techniques, or technologies, for the production of locality, the sorts of activities which might be referred to as 'rites of passage', and which are connected with heritage by the desire to root particular practices in the past to legitimise them.

In a latter interview which specifically addressed the relationship between *Modernity at Large* and heritage (2001), Appadurai emphasizes the politics of remembering and forgetting and the role of the nation-state in controlling 'the apparati through which the economy of remembering and forgetting is configured' (2001: 37). He notes that archaeology plays a role in the development of 'specific mechanisms for remembering and forgetting' which should be set against popular and diasporic memory practices, the media, and the state's articulation of national heritage. Through the relationship between archaeology and State heritage institutions, Appadurai sees the profession of archaeology as a 'key site through which the apparatus of nations can reflect on the politics of remembering'. He suggests the focus of archaeology on the politics of recovery and remembering might mask the need to equally examine the politics of erasure and forgetting. Instead he advocates an examination of the narratives of political 'layering' which is sensitive both to the politics of remembering and forgetting, as well as the struggle between the local and the nation-state (2001: 39).

Reflecting on the relationship between commemoration and memorialisation, Casey (2000: 252ff) notes that by making drawing commemoration and memorialisation into the public sphere, these practices become tools with which communities can produce locality and through collective participation, community. Casey (2000: 253) goes on to note that 'commemoration brings together such seemingly disconnected things as past and present, self and other, body and mind...it draws on powers of participation that are at play in every act of remembering'. The recursive nature of community, locality and commemorative acts/objects is central to understanding the role of heritage in locality building.

Appadurai's observations regarding the State's production of national heritage are relevant to understanding the role of heritage in SL. In the wake of the forms of transnationalism, migrancy, diaspora and movement that have become commonplace experiences of late twentieth century modernity, the link between community and locality has been increasingly

questioned. Benedict Anderson (1983) developed the concept of the 'imagined community' to attempt to account for the power and spread of nationalism in the West at the same time that the links between community and locality were becoming increasingly broken. Following Anderson, Cohen (1985) and Appadurai (1996) have argued that the dissolution of the spatial boundaries of a localised community has lead to the increased importance of the symbolic and imagined forms of community. Recent work on community has sought to explore the alternate forms of community which have arisen in response to the uncoupling of community and locality (eg papers in Amit ed., 2002). While some of these forms of community are best thought of as 'imagined', other forms which manifest themselves through both long distance and face to face social relationships which may or may not be centred on place are increasingly becoming apparent. Such dual forms of 'imagined' and 'social' community may actually develop as part of a process of social mobility, or even physical movement and diaspora (Clifford 1997; Basu 2007). Drawing on shared experience, interest, histories and common experiences, these new articulations of community 'arise…out of an interaction between the imagination of solidarity and its realization through social relations' (Amit 2002: 18).

These processes of community-building are clearly evident in the erection of memorials and the production of heritage sites in SL. Memorials such as the Beta contributor's wall help transform SL from a digital space into a 'place', and emphasize a sense of community and shared origins. The creation of heritage sites and establishment of its digital archives seems focussed almost entirely on the development of a sense of 'rootedness' and the creation of an official public memory of the creation myths of the virtual settlement. While the preservation and creation of official heritage sites helps make SL seem more like the actual world, the official histories they embody create an origin myth which acts as a way of maintaining a shared sense of belonging and values in the virtual community, but also as an apparatus for controlling the community and excluding those who do not hold to those same values. Again, these territorialising aspects of heritage have previously been noted in the actual world through the connection between heritage and nationalism, and the control of heritage discourses by the nation state (Smith 2006, Appadurai 2001).

Conclusion: the challenges of virtual settlements for heritage in the twenty first century
As I noted earlier in this paper, the boundaries of SL as a community are blurred and extend into other online environments and the actual world. Therefore, ideas regarding heritage which circulate within SL and other virtual communities have the potential to influence broader notions of heritage in the twenty first century. One of the most obvious points which this survey of heritage sites within SL demonstrates is the way in which the idea of heritage as something which is 'old' is becoming outdated as the pace of change within the contemporary world increases. In *The Postmodern Condition*, French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard (1979) suggested that modernity should be seen as a cultural condition characterized by rapid change and the pursuit of progress, while postmodernity is the logical end product of this process, where constant change has become the status quo. Heritage sites and artefacts in SL are objects that were produced as recently as two years ago. This phenomenon of the compression of the age of that which is seen to be worth preserving as 'heritage' has been noted by a number of heritage managers and archaeologists working on the recent and contemporary past (e.g. Graves-Brown 2000, Buchli and Lucas 2001, Bradley et al. 2004, Schofield and Johnson 2006, Fairclough 2007), and should be seen as a symptom of what has elsewhere been described as a time-space compression produced by changes in technology and society that occurred during the later part of the twentieth century that have given rise to a distinct way of experiencing time and place (Harvey 1990).

Another issue which this survey of heritage sites in SL raises is the way in which heritage within the virtual environment is extremely self-conscious and rigid in definition. While archaeologists working in the field of heritage have become accustomed to the idea of subaltern and alternate forms of heritage, and even official heritage management agencies see the need to preserve the heritage of multiculturalism and heritage 'from below' (e.g. Thomas 2001), there is little evidence within SL of alternative heritage discourses or community generated heritage projects. Perhaps this is because SL is still very young, or, indeed, because of its commercial nature. It is always possible that with time, such endeavours and projects will emerge. Nonetheless, the image of heritage in SL which emerges from this study is one which is very much rooted in the 'oldest' and 'greatest', and one which is concerned with the 'official' rather than 'vernacular'. Paradoxically, for objects and places which only exist 'virtually', SL heritage also seems steadfastly attached to tangible forms of heritage—as far as I am aware, there is no such thing as 'intangible' heritage in SL. The ways in which this perception of heritage might influence perceptions of heritage in the actual world is quite worrying, particularly at a time when many archaeologists and heritage managers are increasingly focussed on developing complex and multi-vocal interpretations of the material (and immaterial) world which emphasize the value of diverse and alternate readings of the past.

Appadurai has been critical of what he calls the 'concatenations of images' (1990: 298) within the public sphere (or 'mediascape') which fabricate 'invented homelands' which feed of the nostalgia of de-localised communities and populations to establish their effective connections to place (see discussion in Basu 2007: 66ff.). While it is possible to see the value in forms of discourse relating to heritage in virtual settlements which assist virtual communities in undertaking the social 'work' (Byrne 2008) involved in the production a sense of community and locality, it is important that this work is undertaken in such a way to promote the broader values of inclusiveness and acceptance and not in a way which excludes particular expressions of cultural values. The ways in which SL functions as space which both relates to, and changes individuals' sense of personhood and being in the (actual) world suggests that we should be concerned with this trend towards homogenous 'official' heritage discourses which allow little space for the development of alternate or subaltern forms of heritage within such virtual environments. It is important that those involved in developing a critical voice within the academic field of heritage studies engage with such limited notions of heritage to facilitate the broadening of the field of virtual heritage and anticipate its influence on the perception of heritage within the actual world.

It is clear that the engagement of communities with virtual settlements in the twenty first century is changing their relationship with material culture in the sense in which the boundaries of the actual and the virtual are becoming increasingly blurred. While there has been some engagement of anthropologists with VR through their interest in online communities, to date there has been little serious scholarly work on virtual material culture. In this paper I have suggested the possibilities for a cyber-archaeology of virtual settlements, through a survey of heritage sites in *Second Life*. I have suggested that cyber-archaeology must operate on two levels—the study of the relationship between virtual settlements and the 'actual' technologies which enable their development, and the study of the 'virtual' objects they create. The study of virtual heritage and cyber-archaeology has the potential to provide insights into the ways in which the notions of heritage are transforming in the early twenty-first century in connection with the proliferation of virtual environments. A survey of heritage places in *Second Life* suggests that the functions of heritage in virtual settlements may be far more limited than in the 'actual' world, functioning primarily as a structure of governance and control through the establishment of primogenital (virtual) land ownership and the production of a sense of community through memorials which produce a sense of

'rootedness' and materialize social memory. Although such functions of heritage are consistent with recent discussion of the role of heritage in Western societies, I believe they also demonstrate a worrying trend towards homogenous 'official' heritage discourses which allow little space for the development of alternate or subaltern forms of heritage. The challenge for archaeologists, anthropologists and heritage managers in the twenty first century is to encourage and develop a space for debate within heritage discourses which will allow such alternative and subaltern forms to continue to develop.

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Appendix 1

A description of some heritage sites in Second Life

Governor Linden's Mansion, Clementina (188, 122, 62)
Governor Linden's Mansion is described by the SL History Wiki as the oldest house within SL, having originally been created by Stellar Sunshine, one of the two original residents of Linden World, on 11 July 2002.

> The lovely **Governor's Mansion** was originally built by Steller Sunshine way back during the Alpha (early, early testing) days of Second Life (at that time known as Linden World). All other resident builds created during Alpha were deleted, except for the Mansion and another build by Steller which was a cabin, her first home (The Man Statue being the only Linden build from Alpha). After being carried over to the main grid, the cabin was used by Robin Linden in Taber as her home for a while. The mansion, which resides in Clementina, was given by Steller to the Lindens to preserve it for the crossover from Alpha to Beta testing.

> The mansion was home to Steller throughout the Alpha testing phases, and was the location for many of the first parties in Second Life and other memorable events. Now the mansion is home to Governor Linden… With its beautiful view, great architecture, fantastic use of prims, and friendly environment, this mansion still stands as one of the greater builds in Second Life. And it will continue to do so because a group was put together (in large part by the efforts of Jake Cellardoor) to restore the Governor's Mansion to its former original glory. The team, under Linden Lab backing, has so far done a great job of replacing lost objects-even some that have been missing since 1.2 or earlier (http://www.slhistory.org/index.php/Governor%27s_Mansion).

The 'mansion' comprises two, two-storey buildings designed around an open swimming pool and courtyard with a small grassed area containing two memorial plaques (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Screenshot showing external view of Governor Linden's Mansion.

In the basement of one of the buildings are stored several artefacts associated with the history of SL, along with a display of historical screenshots and two early maps of SL dating to November 2002 and early 2003. The first of the memorial plaques is known as the Beta test monument, dating to June 12, 2003 and created by Skippy Powers. It is a stone slab standing approximately 3 metres tall, with an inscription reading:

This monument has been presented to Linden Labs to mark the culmination of its Beta test. This will be an everlasting reminder of all they have done for and given to their beta testers. May it ever be a token of our appreciation and Gratitude for giving us the tools to create this amazing project.

The second plaque is a large sign with a vase and flowers and the message:

Thank you early creators for your hard work and dedication to our success. Linden Lab Staff.

The basement is not signposted as a museum, and only a single sign with an arrow, installed in February 2005, directs the visitor from the ground floor of the mansion down to the display below. The basement contains six artefacts, none of which are interpreted or sign posted, all of which were created in the period 2002-2003 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Screenshot showing the museum in the basement of Governor Linden's Mansion, containing artefacts related to the early years of SL.

SL Historical Museum, Phobos (217, 166, 33)
The SL Historical Museum is a two storey building in Phobos, created on 7 December 2004 by Oz Spade. It was moved to its present location on the 18 February 2005. The SL Historical Museum display is broken into five areas over two floors, labelled 'Archives', 'Objects', 'Locations', 'Events' and 'Miscellaneous' (see Figure 4).
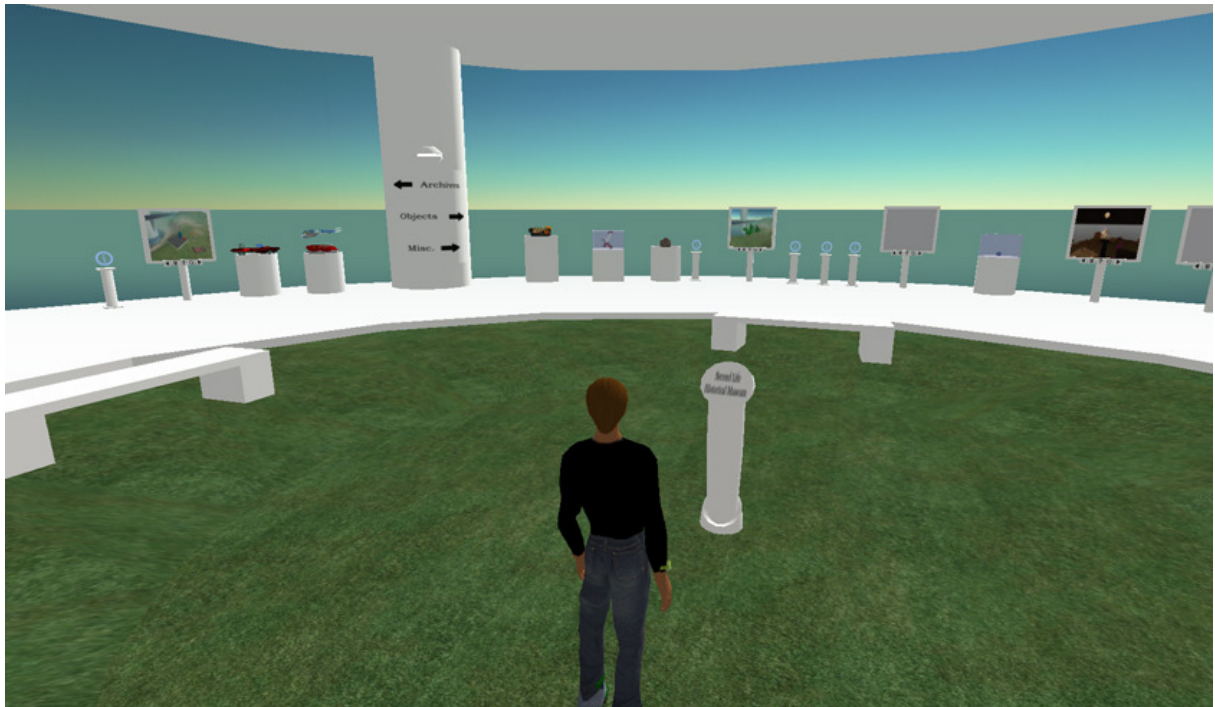
Figure 4: Screenshot showing the inside the first floor of the SL History Museum.

A notecard which is provided in the centre of the building welcomes the visitor to the museum:

> Thank you for taking an interest in the museum!
> The Second Life Historical Museum is a project dedicated to chronicling and preserving the history of Second Life. The objective is to remember our past and where we have been and come from, while we continue to move forward into the future.
> The past is an important part of all walks of life. To remember prior expirences [sic], mistakes, achievements, so we can better ourselves as we move on.
> And plus, its just fun and interesting to look back on things. :)

The origins of the museum are then described on the notecard:

> In a forum thread made by Lordfly Digeridoo, he asked about museum projects and the like (http://forums.secondlife.com//showthread.php?s&threadid=10581). The idea to start a Historical Museum and Society group was then braught [sic] up there.
>
> After some talking a group was then formed with the following people:
> Oz Spade
> Merwan Marker
> Zero Medici
> and then the following members joined different times later:
> Bino Arbuckle
> Salazar Jack
> YadNi Monde
> Nick Fairlight
> Jacqueline Richelieu
> Phineas Clio
>
> A museum was then built in Phobos on land that Zero thankfully donated, the museum rested on that land untill [sic] 02/18/05 at which point it was moved to its current location at Phobos (220, 167) (See landmark at bottom of notecard). Hopefully over timer more and more things will be added so that the museum can serve as a comprehensive guide through the past. There is also a SL History Wiki that anyone is free to make history information contributions too, and of course read to find out more about SL history. The Wiki will more than likely be updated faster than the museum can be

because of its Wikiness, the museum will however be updated as well to reflect Wiki changes. The wiki is moderated by Oz Spade and Eggy Lippmann, hosting by Adam Zaius.

Around the perimeter of the floor are a number of screens containing static screenshots of historic places and events from SL, and information points which can be clicked by the user to obtain a notecard containing more information about the topics listed on captions above them. Of particular interest are the archives, which contain a 'history' of SL, which is both a summary of the idea of SL, as well as a comprehensive listing of release notes associated with each release of the SL software and an archive of old event cards. In addition, an archive of Town Hall address notes is held. Town Hall addresses are topical conferences held at the Town Hall in SL, usually with Philip Linden (CEO Philip Rosedale) as the key speaker.

Objects in the display include a model of a taxi. A notecard explains:

> Before teleporting was free, residents had to pay a fee based on how far the destination was in order to teleport there. In order to aid in the sometimes rather expensive transportation and at the same time provide a nice way to "sight-see", James Miller created the James Miller Taxi Co.

Other historical artefacts include several 'donate boxes' and 'voting stations'.

> While not a Linden-made or distributed item, the donate box was often present near a voting station. These objects, made by Phil Metalhead, were used mainly to collect donations people gave in order to contribute to the builder's project. Nicely built and made similar to the voting stations, they went very well together. The donate boxes still work; right-clicking the object and selecting "Pay..." enables a resident to donate the amount they wish to the owner of the donate box.

Beta Contributors Wall, Plum (128, 53)
The Beta Contributors wall is a three sided, 'U' shaped monument created on 19 June 2003 by Governor Linden to commemorate the "1500+" beta testers of SL (Figure 5). It contains an inscription explaining its purpose on the central wall on the inside of the monument, with the names of 1593 Beta testers on the left and right walls. The inscription reads:

> The 1500+ names listed here recognize the most active residents who made the Second Life beta such a tremendous success. Whether you are still part of the journey or someone we hope will someday return we are all part of this community. A big thank you from all the Lindens with a promise of much more excitement to come.

The monument is located away from any buildings in a green park and surrounded by trees in Plum sim.

Figure 5: The Beta contributor's wall.

Second Life's Wall of History, Kirkby (133, 164, 24)
This 'wall' is a monument which contains a series of buttons which when pressed provide information about various aspects of SL's history. The wall was created on 21 June 2005 for the SL second birthday celebrations by Pathfinder Linden. The Wall of History is located within the Linden Village and Office in an area close to where new residents first land after they have created their avatars and worked their way through Orientation Island. It sits on an isolated part of the Linden Village looking out across a water feature. The information supplied by touching the buttons largely replicates that found in the SL History Museum, however, the information has not been updated since its creation, and in that sense, the Wall is conserved as monument and heritage site as well as museum.

The Man Statue, Natoma (60, 208)
This large statue comprizes a stone plinth and silver anthropomorphic figure with its arms raised and is an early structure from the Alpha period of SL, created by oldjohn Linden on 19 July 2002 (see Figure 6). It is not interpreted as a heritage site within SL, and is not signposted in any way, however it is listed in the SL History Wiki as an object which has been preserved from the earliest period of SL.

> It all started back in the Alpha stage of Second Life (then Linden World) when Linden Lab wanted to test a new rendering engine, how feasible a city scape would be, and other general content testing. This city was built in Natoma before any non-employee users had logged into SL and was not named but often referred to as "Linden Town" or "Linden City". The town/city contained many buildings (mostly unfurnished and low texture usage), a small park-like town square with a fountain, and roads all through it. The city also had a statue in its town square behind a "City Hall". The statue turned out of course to be "The Man" built by a content developer (oldjohn Linden) hired at the time by LL (in 2002)… The Man stands today as the oldest original still-standing build within Second Life. Presently it is owned by Philip Linden (this happened sometime ago, perhaps during its moving) and has had a few objects left around it over time by residents as "offerings" to The Man, giving it a kind of realistic feeling of a mysterious symbolic statue (http://www.slhistory.org/index.php/The_Man).
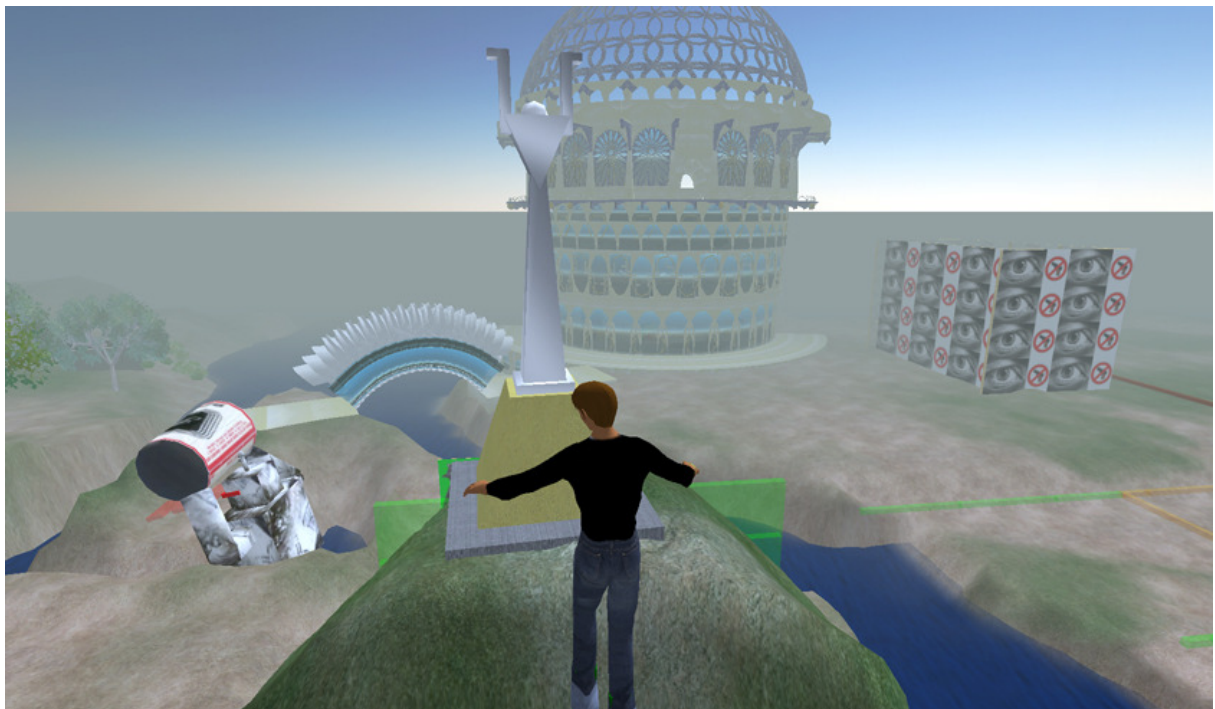
Figure 6: 'The Man' statue.

When I visited the Man statue on 17 October 2007, there was a sake bottle at the base of the statue, which I presume was one such 'offering' that had been left to the statue (see Figure 7). A number of the SL user's blogs record leaving artefacts at sites which they have visited, such as the candle left by Natalia Zelmanov at the virtual Taj Mahal discussed above. This seems to be one of the ways in which SL users connect with heritage sites in SL.

Figure 7: Offering of sake bottle left at the base of 'The Man' Statue, 17th October 2007.

Other museums and heritage sites in SL

There are a number of other museums and heritage sites in SL. A search on the term 'museum' revealed 100 places, ranging from the Star Trek Museum of Science to the Museum of Teacups. The 'Unauthorized history of Second Life museum, Da Boom (178, 167, 98)' contains a series of documents and interviews on the history of Da Boom sim within SL and was created by Tree Kyomoon on September 23, 2007, indicating a trend towards the development of individual sim histories. In addition, as described above there are virtual replicas of heritage sites and museums in SL, such as the 'Second Louvre', 'Second Chichen-Itza', and 'Stonehenge'. Such replicas range from attempts to build and render exact copies of real world heritage places, to fanciful recreations and commercial places using the theme of heritage to attract visitors.