

Proving the potential of virtual worlds

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I often get asked to explain why [SecondLife](#) (SL) is more than just a geek and sex fest. Millions of people have visited this virtual world only to give up and abandon their avatar on day one (over 10 million according to [Wikipedia](#)). I don't blame them. SecondLife isn't ready for the mainstream. And nor is it SecondLife per-se that's important.

SecondLife isn't the future of life online. But what it is is an indicator of the kind of behaviour online that may soon become as mainstream as YouTube. SecondLife is really a live innovation of means of interacting online. It is used by a relatively restricted number of people and often quite fanatically by these. It isn't mainstream and couldn't become so until we all have significantly better computing power at home.

This is what makes SecondLife so exciting. It's difficult to visualise what it represents; what virtual worlds will become online. It's the same as how difficult it was to imagine what the internet would be like when the web was just a couple of computers connected together.

I think that the innovation that is being developed through the use of SecondLife will bring real change to our behaviour online. A company will make the innovation leap necessary to extend avatars and virtual worlds to the mainstream. I don't know who, when or how this will be done, but the ingredients and behaviours typical of innovation are present and so it will happen.

Today I came across a company that shows one potential development of integrating virtual worlds into our online experience. ROCKETON turns the entire web into a virtual world where your avatar travels with you. And as you read a page you come across the avatars of others' who also happen to be visiting. Could this be the future of forums? Or online communities? I think it's a fantastic idea and it seems pretty well executed (see the [Techcrunch post](#)).