



Myth busting education in a virtual world – changing demands and directions

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Abstract and Symposium Plan

There has been much media reporting on the efficacy of virtual worlds for education over the last few years. Some of the claims made are unfounded and not based on empirical evidence. All panel members have been teaching and conducting research in virtual worlds for several years. They will address many of the myths about teaching and learning in a virtual world. The format will follow Jamie Hyneman and Adam Savage's television series, "Myth Busters" ("MythBusters," 2011) to find out whether the myths are "founded", "busted" or "plausible". To date there has been limited research and publications reporting on myths surrounding the teaching and learning in virtual worlds. However, Calani (2010) attempted to resolve the myths around immersion, James (2007) set about resolving the myths surrounding business in *Second Life* and, Hendrich & Mesch (2009), discussed 10,000 reasons why a virtual world will or won't work. This interactive session will seek audience participation in resolving these myths through evidence-based practice. In this symposium we will endeavour to address some of the following myths that have been perpetuated about teaching in learning over the last few years:

- Virtual worlds are not a platform in which one should do business.
- Virtual worlds offer no educational value.
- Anything you can do in a virtual world you can do somewhere else.
- Virtual worlds are too complicated for students.
- Virtual worlds take too long for academics, teachers and students to learn. *Second Life* is really expensive.

- Why not just use Skype instead of using a virtual world for conversations?
- *Second Life* is not scalable.
- You need to be a computer geek to be effective with using a virtual world.
- Virtual worlds won't survive; the 'hype' is over.
- *Second Life* is designed to be all things to all people; thus, it is not good for specialised activities such as teaching and learning.
- There are risks to students, as *Second Life* is all about sex, gambling and entertainment.
- There are too many distractions in *Second Life*.
- Young kids aren't allowed in *Second Life* then why use it with teachers when they can't use it for their own teaching?
- Students with disabilities cannot access virtual worlds.
- Virtual worlds contribute to the 'digital divide' by creating barriers to students from equity groups.

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<http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/hobart11/procs/Gregory-symposium.pdf>

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