

[Catch them with your mouse if you can!](#)

By Maged N. Kamel Boulos - <http://sl-sexualhealth.org.uk/?p=20>



Learning can and should be fun! Our giant and colourful, butterfly-emitting flowers are a good example of how we designed our SIM to be a truly immersive world in which reality (RL) and fantasy are seamlessly mixed in a carefully balanced way that is warmly-inviting, youthful, cheerful, enjoyable, practical and functional, and aesthetically pleasing, all at the same time (apologies for the long list of adjectives :-). We avoided the replication of a boring and often intimidating RL institutional or classroom environment in SL, but at the same time maintained solid and familiar links with RL.

Our in-world objects are not [too abstract](#), thus reducing learners' [cognitive load](#) – even if over-sized or presented on purpose in some other “odd” way, they remain in essence familiar RL objects that visitors can easily relate to, without being at the same time boring exact replicas of the RL objects they represent. (But faithful replicas of RL objects and buildings in SL are sometimes necessary and to be encouraged depending on context/application, e.g., [virtual tourism](#)/history and architectural modelling of RL buildings in SL for various RL planning/testing, simulation, training and marketing purposes. On the other hand, very abstract creations also have a place as forms of art in SL.) Realistic [sound effects](#) can also greatly enhance the ambience and immersiveness of educational SIMs.

But too much fun and fantasy ('bells and whistles' not directly reinforcing the educational message) might also negatively affect the learning process by acting as distractors. So again a good balance is needed.

We hope this approach will positively effect our young visitors' learning experience and retention, and also encourage longer visits and more exploration of, and interaction with, our SIM's educational objects, as well as more repeat visits and 'teleport offers' to friends.

These beautiful flying butterflies (pictured above) are continuously emitted by a hidden scripted object that is only one prim (bought for L\$100). Catch them with your mouse if you can! (The giant flowers were created by SL:Troy McLuhan and were free to 'Take Copy' at another SIM, and that's how we acquired them, a good example of how (prefab) objects can be reused unchanged or modified, remixed and

repurposed in many creative ways in the immersive, vast 3D wiki that is SL, much à la Web 2.0 (subject to the object having its SL DRM properties set to allow reuse/modification.)

Related food for thought:

- Kemp J. Designing in Second Life (The SLED Picayune - 2 June 2007) - <http://sledpicayune.blogspot.com/2007/06/designing-in-second-life.html>
- Mosely B. Keynote session at Second Life Best Practices in Education Conference 2007 (25 May 2007) - http://healthcybermap.org/MNKB_slbp2007.pdf
- ‘The copying of RL into SL is rather silly’—multiple with and against opinions/messages with this subject line (SL Educators List - July 2007) - <https://lists.secondlife.com/pipermail/educators/2007-July/subject.html>

—[M.N.K. Boulos](#) - 28 July 2007

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One Response to “Catch them with your mouse if you can!”

1. *Harry Greiner* Says:
[July 28th, 2007 at 1:20 pm](#) [edit](#)

Looks great MB. Will be interested in how it develops. I’m going to be bringing our enrichment officer into SL shortly, for the first time. I’ll show her your project as an example of how she can engage learners here in SL.

Cheers

Harry (City College Norwich)