

Feedback to “Who Will Provide Linden Labs serious competition to Second Life?”

By Dusan Writer (AKA Doug Thompson, CEO of Remedy Communications)
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Hmmm. I have to say, I read this post a few times and I keep coming back to it, feeling lost. I suppose my question is, what do you define as "answering the call"? Because aren't there already scores of people doing just that?

Aren't there roughly 400 people working, for free, on OpenSim, which reverse engineered the basic SL Grid concept and has since added a visual richness (e.g. the RealXtend fork, now being integrated with the main kernel), ability import meshes, modularized feature sets, physics control, server architectures and coding, etc? OpenSim has a development group roughly the size of the Lab, by some accounts, have achieved basic interoperability with SL itself, and is seeing a rapidly growing "land mass" through hosts like OpenLife and Reaction Grid.

So that's the "free" one. But what about other virtual world platforms that are free or nearly free? Metaplace, for example, in beta, and under the guidance of Raph Koster, will provide elegant 'build your own world' mechanics to the masses - focused at first on game and social mechanics to start with, but with an architecture that has definitely learned from the mistakes of centralized MMORPGs and worlds like SL.

OpenCobalt is taking a different approach, as are Qwak, Sun's Project Wonderland, and others...but all are virtual worlds, all are open source, and all are being built for specific use applications and with differing architectures.

On the commercial side there is a lot of competition nipping around the edges. I mean, isn't Entropia a virtual world? But so is Mycosym - a "build your own world" platform that will be basically free with a content creation model not dissimilar to SL (although you'll create content external to the app, like in Google Sketch Up). Icarus Studios, Forterra Systems...yet more virtual world platforms, aimed at enterprise and simulation use, sure, but with many of the same feature sets as SL. Even Nortel is getting into the game with its own virtual world platform. Blue Mars, slated for next year, is a gorgeous high-end graphical version of SL - think of it as a PC version of Sony's Home (oh yeah, there's another one!)

And all of these basically ignore the innovation in the 2.5D space, the stuff that's spinning out of Papervision for example and the new 3D capabilities of Flash.

Microsoft has developed the pipeline for virtual world development as well - I mean, they have Virtual Earth, they own TrueSpace for 3D modelling, and other components in the pipeline including game engines etc.

Second Life is being threatened from all sides, in my opinion. I really don't understand how you can make the claim that there's silence, or that people are sitting on their hands while Linden Lab lurches forward, juggling in-world PR crises, trying to quickly launch private, firewalled servers, new pricing models, new clients....anything to keep up interest and distract people from the fact that there is a rapidly growing group of competitors.