SIG/USE made virtual world history as the first ASIS&T SIG to have a presence on ASIST Island in Second Life (SL). The ASIS&T SIG/USE Symposium on November 7, 2009, was attended in Second Life by 16 avatars and nine MLIS students in a University of Hawaii classroom (Figure 1) with the virtual world projected on a large viewing screen and sound through computer speakers.

Allison Brueckner (Teo Matalova in SL) set up a streaming media server in Vancouver. Diane Nahl (Adra Letov in SL) (Figure 2) populated ASIST Island with interactive posters of the SIG/USE Symposium schedule and speakers and the 10 Information Behavior Fellows and their bios, and she publicized the event to several inworld groups such as ASIST in Second Life, ACRL in SL and LIS Educators in Virtual Worlds, among others. SL symposium participants heard David McDonald speak on “An Issue of Scale: Moving toward a Paradigm for Mass Participation Computing.”

Participants used SL text chat to discuss the breakout session questions and their relationship to Second Life as a communication platform. During the discussion on use of media to collaborate and share information, Lorrie Mon (Lorri Momiji in SL), Florida State University, pointed out that “[o]ur task is harder [in SL], we are actually collaborating over computer mediated communication while they are just talking about it.” Diane Nahl (Adra Letov in SL) said, “Collaborative info seeking assignments in my SL classes have been very successful in part because they are learning together and trying to extend their RL (real life) info seeking skills to the virtual world and teaching
each other, laughing over their misconceptions.” Tawnya Means (Tawnya Tuquri in SL), University of Florida, noted “My students feel more like we are having a conversation when we meet in SL.” Sheila Webber (Sheila Yoshikawa in SL), University of Sheffield, pointed out that “[p]eople need to have credibility with the people they are hoping to influence, interacting with them to understand what is going to persuade them. I don’t mean academic credibility; I mean they have to be trusted.” Teo Matalova reported the SL breakout comments to Vancouver.

The SIG/USE 10th Anniversary Panel Session, November 10, 2009, was attended by 13 avatars in Second Life who enjoyed hearing many excellent speakers during the fish bowl dialog and participated via text chat. After the discussion of the significance of context in information behavior research, Sheila Webber commented in chat, “I think that context is very important, including cultural, national, disciplinary. ... One of the things that emerges from the different speakers is that (as researchers) discussing context is important, and although there exist some very different opinions about what it means and whether you take it into account, it thus seems fruitful to probe as researchers.”

Vanessa Morris (marchena Rajal in SL), Drexel University, spoke of SL as context: “I think there is a lot to talk about and think about in terms of how we take what we experience in-world and apply it to our first lives. I think that the context of SL informs our context in RL – I am wondering how we learn in SL at all moments and how that learning becomes embedded in us and then enacted in RL.”

The SL-avatar audience was inspired hearing the Vancouver audience, yet not “heard” despite the active SL chat or live back-channel to the discussion. In future mixed reality meetings we intend to improve interactivity by projecting the virtual world avatars and including live voice and chat interactions within the meeting. It seems likely that accomplishing an integrated hybrid ASIS&T meeting is itself an information behavior research area.