Second Life is a three dimensional virtual world that is continuously created by its digital residents. Web users can sign up for a free Second Life account by going to www.secondlife.com where they are immediately supplied with a plain stock avatar, a digital three-dimensional representation of a real person. One simply names their avatar, and then they are given an infinite number of possibilities to customize the look and presentation of this new digital resident. Some people choose to make their avatar look just like them in real life, while others deviate from reality in sometimes shocking displays of creativity.

Second Life residents spend a great deal of time exploring, socializing, and learning about what is possible in a virtual world.

One motivating intricacy of Second Life is that it has its own currency called Linden Dollars, which are currently trading for approximately 250 Linden dollars to 1 U.S. dollar. This currency can be purchased via trading posts or through Second Life’s web site using your credit card. One of the largest sources of income for Second Life is real estate. Residents in this virtual world are able to purchase, own, divide and sell land. There are many income producing trades, like selling avatar accessories, such as hair, shirts, pants, etc.; but the income from these trades are dwarfed by the real estate market. The Second Life financial system is extremely stable and comprehensive. In fact, one Second Life real estate tycoon has already turned about $10 into $1,000,000 by selling virtual real estate!

Once one owns land in Second Life, they are able to create some structures on their land. Most residents build items that reflect real life, like a house with a yard, trees and a Jacuzzi; or perhaps a store front; or even a museum to showcase their electronic art.

Mixing real time communication with a real financial system has produced many different uses for Second Life. Philanthropic activities are beginning to really take off in this virtual world. One great example of a philanthropic activity that took place was when a man decided to transport his avatar to the virtual New York Times Square. He simply sat down in the square during Christmas, at a time when there is a lot of virtual traffic, and he placed a sign next to him asking for Linden dollars for charity. This resident then sold the Linden dollars for real U.S. dollars and donated the profits to the charity of his choice. Philanthropic and activism are common in Second
In the spring of 2007, Chancellor Eddie Hernandez authorized the formation of a new District Technology Committee. This past fall the Technology Advisory Group (TAG) met for the first time on the 4th of October. The group is comprised of SCC and SAC faculty, staff and administration, as well as district staff and management.

The first two meetings were focused mainly on the development of potential action items, but such topics as structure, protocol, and levels of need were also addressed. It appears that the initial activity of the group will be to support the development of a District Technology Plan.

We will continue to provide updates as events transpire.

Joe Yorba

Second Life . . .
(Continued from page 1)
Life and themes tend to mirror real life. The virtual world has already seen picketing and even million avatar marches that seem to have echoing effects into our real life.

Several universities, such as Harvard, Stanford, and Pepperdine have also jumped in to the Second Life world.

Instead of begging for money or selling real estate, these schools are using Second Life as a way to connect with their distance education students. Students agree to meet in virtual classrooms where they conduct class in ways that often mirror the look and feel of a traditional classroom. Second Life also enables students to present the way they would in a traditional classroom. Students can hold meetings to discuss ideas and present to their classmates. These presentations often include audio, video, and, typically, some sort of virtual “build” that helps to either convey a topic or set the tone for the presentation.

Recently, Second Life added the ability to voice chat, making it even easier to communicate. Imagining what Second Life looks like and how it can be used is difficult. Give me a call if you would like to see Second Life without having to sign up; I would be happy to take you on a virtual tour.
Microsoft Vista!

Cynthia Swift

If you are a PC user, you have a major transition in your future. In January 2007 Microsoft released the operating system that will eventually replace Windows XP—and, unfortunately, I have bad news: the conversion is not an easy one.

If you find this news upsetting, you are not alone. Several websites currently do nothing but bash Micro$oft and specifically Vista. Pages like IHATEVISTA.co.uk rage because Microsoft Vista is leased, not sold, to the customer under a license that has many technical limitations. Other websites like IHATEVISTA.co.uk outline the horrors of Vista.

Does everyone feel this way? I started asking around. I talked to several computer programmers, IT support staff, and some other computer-savvy people I know. Every person I talked to said the transition was tough; but once the conversion was complete, they preferred Vista over Windows XP.

So, why is the transition so frustrating? The short answer is unpredictability. Most people do not know what problems they will encounter until they actually attempt to upgrade to Vista. Furthermore, the Vista compatibility wizard that scans your computer to test for readiness is unreliable. Many people who have run the wizard still ended up with the "blue screen of death." In other words, their system froze.

Below is a summary of the three most reported problems:

1) Not enough memory — Vista is known as a memory hog. It requires at least 1 GB of RAM and that may still not be enough. If you want to install Vista on a computer that is more than a year old, you will need to purchase memory and have it installed. Believe me, after all of the reviews I have read, it would be cheaper and easier to buy a new computer.

2) Incompatible driver — A driver is the software that allows the computer to communicate with your printer, scanner, camera, speakers, video card, etc. Odds are, for example, the printer you are using doesn’t have a Vista compatible driver and your printer manufacturer doesn’t plan to provide one. So, when you upgrade to Vista, you probably won’t be able to use your existing printer, scanner, camera, etc., and you will have to buy all new peripherals.

3) Incompatible programs — Most of the software programs you are currently using, if not all, will not run on Vista. If you have a grade-book or test-generation program, it will not work on Vista unless you recently purchased it. So, when you upgrade to Vista, be prepared to buy new software.

So why change? The major motivation for building a brand-new operating system was security. Windows XP has been around a long time. In addition to being familiar to people, it has a lot of holes; and hackers know how to penetrate the system. Vista, however, is advertised as being designed from the ground up to limit security vulnerabilities; but security is not the only benefit. Vista claims to have improved media features, useful parental controls, and better backups. The overall appearance also receives high marks.

Are these upgrades worth the hassles? Unfortunately, Microsoft is taking that decision out of our hands. If you buy a computer after June 2008, you will not be able to get Windows XP. In addition, the newer printers and other peripherals will eventually not provide drivers for Windows XP, and newer software programs will not run on Windows XP.

I asked Chris Eakin, co-founder and president of Infracore, a technology consulting firm in the San Diego area, if he recommends Vista as an operating system to his clients. His reply was, "No". His company policy for any new applications, especially operating systems or Office suites, is to wait for the first service pack to be released. That way, other users work out the bugs that could cause challenges for his clients.

Microsoft is being very tight-lipped about the official release date, and the company is not forthcoming about what the service pack will contain.

One final note. The transition to Vista has already started at SCC. The computer classroom in B-208 is successfully running both Microsoft Vista and Office 2007. According to Curt Childress, Director of Academic Support, upgrades at SCC will take place in the classrooms and computer labs before the administrative and faculty office computers are updated because instructional equipment dollars can be allocated for the classroom computers. Curt is very aware that the IT department has a difficult task ahead: "A college is not a self-contained business. We must do everything we can with the limited resources available to meet the needs of our customer [the students]."
Faculty Development Center

Alice Ho

The mission of the Faculty Development Center (FDC), located in L-115 in the Library, is to support faculty and staff in the use of technology. It serves as a dedicated space for technology training, as well as a meeting place for faculty to share their expertise and explore new ideas and different technologies. In addition, it provides a quiet place for adjunct faculty to work on their lesson plans, check their email and grade students’ assignments.

The FDC is equipped with seven Dell computers, one Mac with a 23-inch LCD, one printer, one TV/DVD/VHS/CD player and one Smartboard. There is, also, one digital camera and one camcorder available for check out at the Library Circulation Desk.

All PCs have the following software installed:

- **Microsoft Office** - (Word, Excel, PowerPoint & Publisher)
- **Camtasia Studio** - Screen Recorder & Presentation Software
- **Macromedia Captivate** - Screen Actions Recorder and Flash Animations Software
- **SnagIt** - Screen Capture Software
- **Photoshop** - Image Editing Software
- **Fireworks** - Web Graphics Editing Software
- **Flash** - Flash Animation and Web Design Software
- **Dreamweaver** - Web Design Software
- **JAWS** - Zoom Text Software
- **Kurzweil** - Assistive Software

The Mac has iMovie and iDVD programs for transferring and editing videos and makes them available in DVD format.

This hardware and software assist faculty in creating documents, images, multimedia presentations and e-learning materials for use in lectures, publications and online courses.

Some of the adjunct faculty have already discovered the FDC and have become frequent visitors. Terrence Snodgrass, the part-time instructor for Interpersonal Communication classes, expressed his appreciation for what the FDC provides. He usually stops by the Center to check his email and prepare for his classes. He also works at Santa Ana College and Chapman University. None of the other colleges provides a facility like this for the part-time instructors.

Although the Center has not been open for very long, a number of training sessions on different technologies have been held here. Some campus-wide committees such as the Faculty Development Committee and the SCC Book Club also hold their regular meetings at the FDC.

The Division Secretary Barbara Garrahy (ext. 5031) handles all room reservations.