ALA Virtual Communities in Libraries Member Initiative Report
October 2015

**Purpose:** To provide a group within ALA for members interested in fostering the practice of library work, the visibility of libraries and library workers, and the extension of library services within online social networks, virtual worlds, and other communities of intention. To provide a mechanism for sharing experiences and practices in-person or virtually through programming or asynchronous communications. To encourage wider participation by the profession and the association in virtual worlds. To establish a forum across all types of libraries and at all levels of library employment concerned with the development of library services in emerging social networks, virtual worlds, and other communities of intention. This group is open to all members.

The petition to establish the Virtual Communities in Libraries Member Initiative Group met the requirement of over 100 signatures. See http://www.ala.org/CFApps/epetition/index.cfm?pid=56F8F30B5355CA6D

The Community Virtual Library is a HUB in the virtual world of Second Life which has been maintained since 2007. The CVL calendar can be accessed at http://www.infoisland.org/.

Other communication venues:
Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/CommunityVirtualLibrary
Facebook Group (closed so members must be approved)
https://www.facebook.com/groups/27821618044/

The Community Virtual Library moved to Bradley University Island in May, 2015. CVL, along with the Seanchai Library occupy half of the sim. Neighbors include the San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science Island. The Space is smaller, but so is the cost in time and money to support CVL. The new CVL still has a reference area, the Main Library, event and exhibit spaces. Info Groupies also have space for dancing and socializing.

Librarians in virtual worlds have numerous activities and accomplishments, including: library related simulations, historical museum tours, reference work, book discussions, educational displays, 3D tours of immersive simulations, educational speakers and live global events. As gamification and immersive virtual reality (Oculus Rift, for example) emerge into mainstream use and educational pedagogies, librarians are at the forefront in exploring new venues for content delivery and information literacy instruction.

Working with librarians on an international scale, the ALA Virtual Communities in Libraries Group has held joint events with the ALA ACRL Virtual Worlds Interest Group with as many as 5 different continents represented. The groups meet jointly each month, usually on the third Sunday. Librarians and LIS educators are collaborating across distance to utilize new media tools to promote the profession and serve library users.

Many of the events and activities of the ALA VCL MIG have taken place in the virtual world of Second Life on Imagination Island. ALA Island in Second Life was closed after Linden Labs ended the educational discount in the virtual world. ALA staff has worked with the ALA VCL
MIG to use space on Imagination Island through fundraising events held by the group. Although Second Life has been the primary work space for the ALA VCL MIG, members have explored numerous other virtual world spaces, such as Sococo, Kitely, Reaction Grid, Open Sim, Jokaydia and Inworldz. Librarians have made strides in building library spaces in each of these worlds.

A generation of young people are now entering college with a background in video games and immersive environments. Librarians are utilizing virtual environments (such as Minecraft) to embed information literacy skills for children. Understanding best practices for using social media, virtual spaces, and digital citizenship is high priority for librarians in digital culture.

Because it is not possible for every librarian to become an expert in the many technology tools emerging in today’s global participatory digital culture, the ALA VCL MIG members strive to explore best practices in emerging virtual community spaces for libraries, librarians, and library users. Sharing the accomplishments made by librarians and LIS educators with others may help them in decisions about virtual environments in the future.

Submitted by
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