



OLN '06-'07 Learning Communities Initiative

Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice
Part I

A. Learning Community (LC) Title

Appalachian Ohio K-12 Second Life Professional Learning Community (Phase II)

B. Community Curator(s). Who has prepared Part I of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Chang Liu

2/21/2008

C. Abstract (75 Words or less) *if it has changed*

The goal of this learning community is to 1) create teaching aids and interactive science experiments in Second Life that are based on the Ohio K-12 Science Academic Content Standards, 2) help K-12 teacher community members learn to use our Second Life teaching aids in class, and 3) establish an active community of K-12 teachers and Ohio University faculty members who are interested in introducing synthetic worlds to classroom.

D. Learning Community Members, units, roles. List your community members, their units or disciplines and roles, *if they have changed*. Who has been added, deleted?

Core members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
Chang Liu	Electrical Engineering and Computer Science	Coordinator

Associate Members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
2.	Ms. Jennifer Henson (Meigs High)	
3.	Mark Thomas, (Meigs High)	
4.	Keith MaCartney, (Federal Hocking Middle School)	
5.	Andrew Goodnite (Ohio University)	
6.	Teresa Franklin (Ohio University)	
7.	Tiao Chang (Ohio University)	

Graduate Students

1. En Ye
2. Bruce Bilyeu

E. Background & Context. Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. What do you intend to achieve? What technologies are you using and how? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have? What types of support would you like?

We are using the Second Life 3-D online virtual environment. In the past, the regular Teen Grid of Second Life requires players to be over 13, we had to work out a special arrangement with Linden Lab to allow our middle school students, some of which are younger than 13, to safely play on our private land. We were the first team nationally to enable middle school students to work in Second Life.

We are working on the Teen Grid part of the Ohio University Second Life Campus. It now has two sims. On these two sims, we have developed a number of teaching aids for middle school students and have tested them in schools. One of the sims is now fully developed and is ready to be moved out of our special, protected area in Tgeen Grid and into the general Teen Grid space.

We enjoy supports from a number of sponsors. We are also strongly endorsed internally at Ohio University.

F. **Description of your early work, planning and preparations.** Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Region's Learning Institute (XXXX). What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and, how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impacts have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?

Examples of our Second Life projects for middle school students including an Interactive Science Lab with two experiments, the Rafting Adventure game, and the Weather game. More information on these teaching aids and screen shots are available at http://vital.cs.ohiou.edu/index.php/Second_Life_Development

School teachers are typically busy with their regular teaching load. It is difficult to find time where they can leave classroom and meet with other learning community members. School visits by graduate students is one effective way of involving teachers in these projects, but this is a very costly way. Another way is to organize after-school events so that there won't be conflicts with their regular classes.

G. **Community building and project development.** Describe early phases of building your community and developing your collaborative project. What key challenges and problems do you face and how do you handle them? What did they - or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? What resources are you using to support community building and how are they making a difference?

As previously mentioned, the key challenge is to get the teachers actively involved and to enable them to commit time on this project. It is also important to provide sufficient technology support to teachers.

We had accomplished significant results with the support of this grant and several other grants. Some of our success stories were reported in local and national media.

H. **Planning Your Assessment Strategies.** How will you evaluate your work/successes? How will you assess member learning, including technology? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project? Both formative (this Case Study is part of this) and summative methods should be used.

We have designed and used pre-use, post-use surveys for our teaching aids on various levels. These surveys contain not only questions to measure the appeal and effectiveness of our teaching aids but also open-ended questions to seek feedback that will help us improve. Preliminary results show that our learning aids were effective in enhancing student learning.

THIS IS THE END OF
Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice
Part I

[Submit Part I to **XXXXXXX** as a MS Word attachment by **XXXXXX**.]

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Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice Part II

To be worked on after your **XXdateXX** Learning Institute
and finalized before the June 15th EXPO.)

I. **Community Curator(s).** Who has prepared Part II of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Chang Liu, 8/9/2008

J. **Key Resources.** Who and what are the beneficial people, organizations, materials, websites, and other resources you have utilized? What help/support did you get from instructional designers, IT staff and other tech support personnel? *What types of support did you receive from departments, colleges, administration? Of all resources, which were essential and why were they essential?*

In addition to the resources provided by the OLN Grant via Shawnee State University, we enjoyed assistance from students funded by Ohio University and other sponsored projects. These students worked on related projects and brought rich contents and experiences into this project. Separately, the learning community had access to a virtual island in Second Life that was funded by another grant. This allowed the group to have hands-on experience with the learning tools that we discussed in the community. Finally, a learning project funded by the credit union industry helped provided contents for one of the discussion sessions.

All these resources were essential to the richness and activeness of this learning community.

K. **Your Assessment Strategies.** How did you evaluate your work/successes? How did you assess member learning, including technology? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project?

What have you observed or concluded at this point with respect to member learning, your community's growth, and student learning?

We measured impacts of our professional learning community on community members and students using surveys, observations, and informal interviews. In addition, we encouraged learning community members and students who worked with them to participate in various events such as the Ohio University Student Research and Creative

Activity Fair, the OLN Teaching and Learning Expo, eTech Ohio, and Shawnee Conference 5.0. During these events, members and students had opportunities to interact with outsiders and talk about our projects. This provided an opportunity for them to further the learning process and an opportunity for the learning community to assess our success. Based on what we observed from these events, our learning community members were highly interested and motivated on topics related to teaching and learning in 3-D virtual environments. They were familiar with existing tools that we developed and could explain them clearly to visitors. Several of them had also successfully adopted some of the tools in their own teaching practice. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this learning community had a concrete and positive impact on the members with respect to teaching and learning in 3-D virtual environments.

L. What others know about what you've done. Beyond your community members, who else is vested in what you're doing? How did you communicate and update these stakeholders on your efforts and successes? What questions do your colleagues have? What have you told your students about your learning community?

Learning community members participated in several events in which we connected to those beyond our own learning community members. Over one thousand people visited the Ohio University Student Research and Creative Activity Fair, including those from the Ohio University and the surrounding communities and several hundred middle-school students that we invited to the event. Thousands of people attended eTech Ohio. Over 200 attended the OLN Teaching and Learning Expo. Out of these attendees, many of them had an opportunity to learn about our projects, outcomes, and experiences.

M. Dissemination. What visible bridgework -- structural elements, findings, lessons, ideas, beauties, legacies, processes, relationships, etc -- is your learning community leaving, that inspires others to *build their own bridges as they walk on them*? What digital resources have you developed that you will place into the E-Learning Athenaeum of Ohio? What might members offer, such as informal "brown bag" lunches, research, write articles, give presentations about your work? What is important to tell others "not to do"?

We released the "Ohio Teen" island in Second Life Teen Grid, which had about ten learning games deployed on it. This allowed other teen learners not connected to our programs to visit our island and use our learning tools.

In addition to the events listed earlier, which were highly effective dissemination channels, we also received media coverage on local and national medias. Separately, we

have submitted academic papers to conferences and workshops such as the Educator's Workshop at the 2008 Second Life Community Convention, which have been accepted. The presentation will take place in September 2008 in Tampa, Florida.

N. 20/20 Hindsight. If you were to start over again, what would you do differently and why? What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures, would you handle differently? To what degree would you change your goals? What additional successes would you enjoy? *What worked - or didn't work -- and why?*

We learned from Phase I of this grant and made improvements during Phase II, which went smoothly and was highly successful.

O. What's next? Will your community continue? Formally? Informally? What could be next in another cycle of reflective practice? The next steps may not be totally predictable and yet, they would take you in another fruitful direction that builds upon your community's growth and knowledge.

This is the final year of funding from OLN and Shawnee State University for this particular professional learning community. Beyond that, we intend to apply for additional funding from various sources, include the National Science Foundation, to further our research and community-building activities in this area. This learning community may not continue as it is right now, but we will certainly continue to work together in smaller groups for various projects. All past learning community members are excellent, proven project partners that we will include in our future grant proposals.

This is the end of Part II
Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice

Please bring a Final Copy of PORTRAIT OF PRACTICE - Parts I and II to the Ohio Learning Network's June 15, 2007 EXPO at the Reese Center, Central Ohio Technical College/OSU-Newark, and send a copy to your XXXXX Regional Center.

Thank You!