3-D Online Community in the Library Settings

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The Art of Construction “Kunst am Bau" net-art competition were organized by the state of Baden-Württemberg, Federal Republic of Germany for the extension to the University of Constance social sciences library.

The organizer addressed this competition to the subject of "Library/Internet as a means of archiving and communicating knowledge".

The project of 3-D multiuser virtual library was selected for realization in 2003 as one of two winning projects out of 55 works.
Original Project Goals

- 3-D library project declared the goal to design general 3-D space infrastructure for online user support in shared online communication and built on assumption that web environment of online library is less user friendly compared to real world library and an application of 3-D multi-user environment (MUVE) could optimize computer mediated communication - CMC parameters of online library service. The other goals included to increase social awareness of online library users and create online library user’s social network support.

- Special attention was given to increasing importance of 2 selected main functionalities of academic libraries - user education and reference services and the need to realize these functions live and interactively in shared online environment alike.
9 Timeless Design Principles for Community Building by NAIMA

1) Define the purpose of the community
- Audience
- Mission
- Visual Design
- Backstory

2) Create distinct, member-extensible gathering place
- Places
- Map
- Building
- Features
- Gallery
3) Create member profiles that evolve over time

- Barriers to Entry
- Representation
- History

4) Promote effective leadership

- Hosting Program
- ÜberHost
- Hosting manual
- Technical Support

5) Define a clear-yet-flexible code of conduct

- Constitution
- Amendments
6) Organize and promote cyclic events

- Celebrations
- Newsletter
- Surveys
- Contests

7) Provide range of roles that couple with responsibility
- a) visitors
- b) new members
- c) regulars
- d) docents
- e) leaders
- f) owners

- Power
- Access
- Actions
- Representation
- Status

8) Facilitate member-created sub-groups

- Publicity
- Infrastructure
- Events
9) Integrate the online environment with real world

- Shared Events
- Personal Events
- Meeting IRL

Host is Cybrarian

- Host nurtures community memory, pointing newcomers to archives, hunting down the resources add to the collective pool of knowledge
- Communities can’t be manufactured, but host can design the conditions under which they are most likely to emerge, and encourage their growth when they do. Communities are gardened.
3-D Virtual Library Units

- **Ground Zero** served as the information and orientation center of virtual library space. It's the place with information how to use the system and navigate virtual space.
- **Document hall** – main hall of library building with info desk (in given period of daytime with live help)
- **The Library Reference Center**
  The unit devoted to user/real librarian or bot reference dialogue.

- **The Learning Space**
  Learning space will serve possibly for realization of different online education courses, for example online library user training.

- **The Conference Center**

- **The Experimental Zone**
  The special area opened to privileged users for building, creating knowledge representation and other activities

- **The Café**
  The space devoted to informal user meetings

- **Computer lab** – room with computer models, where on it’s screens are links to important information resources displayed

- **The gallery** – a place where information artifacts can be displayed such as an exhibition
- The Document Space - A place for browsing on the fly in broadened context of exposed structures of documents.
Why Active Worlds

Short list of AW functions:
- collaborative information access
- anchored computer mediated communication
- visual browsing
- hyperactive text chat
- collaborative 3-D interface design
- collaborative document annotation
- collaborative space navigation
- collaborative agents – avatar bots
- on-line reference desk
- on-line conferencing
- low hardware requirements
- Proposed Caretaker Team -

**Social Community Caretaker** (1 person)

**Function:** Communication with users - Live presence inside AW World

- 1 - 2 peak hours a day, 3 – 4 times a week

- User incoming and operation
- Virtual campus advisers
- FAQ’s answer
- Help with familiarization with Active Worlds system
- Regular sociable events organization
- Public Speakers
- Chatiquette – Code of conduct authorship
- User rights policy and ejections responsibility
- User response and satisfaction survey production
- **Technical Support** (1 person)
  - Function: World features administration
    - Xelagot caretaking - scripts update and development

- **Content Caretaker** (1 person)
  - Function: Content update
    - Links update
    - Help-pages update
    - 3-D Models update

- **Library Employee** (1 person)

  - Function: User education
    - Online reference services
    - Information literacy online course development

**Total: 5 – 15 hours a week**
The role of images in 3-D MUVE

- Collaborative access to images
- Change the semantic structure of image clusters
- Communicate and annotate images
- Added value for browsing larger collections (clusters)
- Compare real proportions
Conclusion

- The author would shortly list possible reasons why users were disinterested from 3-D multi-user virtual library regular experience in AWEDU as follows:
  - No integration with library web service
  - No live user support in the AWEDU environment
  - No pre-designed to-do activities
  - Outdating 3-D technology and information content
  - Problematic maintaince leading to frustration of interested student community caretakers
  - On the opposite, the success of Second Life with its ever growing cyber population and the buzz around SL Library 2.0 may prove some of assumptions on 3-D MUVL from 2002 to be correct.
The Active Worlds have not delivered the technology for incorporating of main web-based online library services into 3-D interface and Kunst am Bau competition rules disallowed such a solution.

The actual attempts to integrate real library web service into 3-D MUVE Second Life by Alliance Library System and SL Medical library based on conjunction of Library 2.0 technologies are very promising and worthy of further evaluation.

The author understands the 3-D Multi-user Virtual Library project in frames Kunst am Bau for University of Constance Library as one of early experiments that haven’t raised enough attention from online users though, but served to examine the value of 3-D social interface in special conditions of academic library environment.
Thank You for Your Attention

- Documentation about presented project to be found at:
  - www.virtuallibrary.de