

# IBM Academy of Technology runs first multi-day Virtual Conference

3 Days, 150+ people, No travel required...

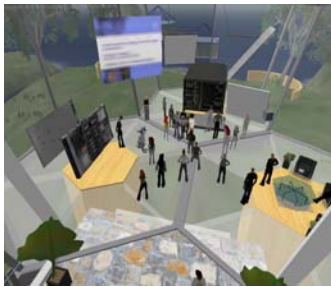
On Oct 21-23<sup>rd</sup> over 150 people attended the Academy of Technology (AoT) Conference on Virtual Worlds held in entirely in a virtual world of Second Life running behind IBM's firewall.

Three days. Nineteen countries. Thirty-seven sessions. Meetings with IBM Distinguished Engineers. Jet skis, hang gliders and dancing – all without ever leaving your office.

At the AoT conference, the individuality and diversity of IBM's employees was obvious from the moment people started arriving "in-world". Participants came from around the world -- some arriving as business people, some as robots; some bald, some bearded; some with brown hair and some with blue hair. Avatars appeared in clothes ranging from fancy dresses to jeans and one person came as a tiny motorcycle (along with sound effects).

*"It is always interesting to see how people present themselves when they aren't limited to a particular shape", observed one person, ah, er, bat-like creature.*

## An immersive experience



The stunning design of both the meeting areas and the social space — spearheaded by IBM's Global Architect for 3D Internet & Virtual Business and a team of volunteers from around the world— created an immersive, engaging and functionally rich environment which amazed the participants.

*"It is so completely different than anything I have ever experienced, I am still trying to understand it all" said one participant. "You can build space in a virtual world to meet the needs of your meeting and your content- that is not possible in the real world" said another.*

Sessions included:

- "Walk around" presentations and poster sessions displayed on viewers mounted in gardens.
- An interactive training module, using a 3-D model of a server, where trainees can follow the step by step process for servicing a machine
- Discussions with researchers about use of virtual worlds to simulate business and sales processes, to assist in training of employees
- Information regarding advances IBM is making in helping the visually impaired navigate in a virtual world
- A "Virtual CRM" approach for turning virtual world visitors into leads by integrating virtual worlds, IBM Infosphere and SAP CRM
- A presenter who encouraged the participants to "staple themselves to an order", and demonstrated how an enterprise's architecture could be visualized and more readily understood in 3-D
- Experts who have been working with clients discussed their experiences bringing real business value to our clients—including a session on do's and the don'ts of virtual world design and one on lessons learned from creating interactive 3-D demonstrations
- Immersive career planning tools to help employees plan their career path
- A virtual green data center and 3-D data center connected to actual equipment

*"This was a GREAT experience...I really got transported to the sessions... the experience of arriving on time, searching the schedule, avoiding bump into each other, choosing a seat and listening to the presentation was amazing. Thanks for making this happen."*

## A clear advantage for geographically dispersed teams

It is hard to understand how a virtual meeting compares to teleconference calls -- or face to face meetings -- without experiencing it for yourself. The most common adjective people use to describe the experience is "engaging". The ability to sit next to colleagues in a virtual meeting space -- as one participant said, "The impact of just being able to see who is talking" -- gives virtual meetings a clear advantage over disembodied voices on the phone.



During the conference's "social" activities, participants had the opportunity to meet with several Distinguished Engineers (DE's). The DE session was a perfect place for people to talk about a wide range of topics that were on their mind-- and talk they did! The ½ hour session ended up lasting over an hour, and would have gone on longer but for 'real life' meetings forcing everyone to say their good byes and leave the virtual world behind... at least for the moment.



*"It was great at the end to meet at the sculpture garden and hear several DEs reflect openly on the conference and where we could take the technology in the future. The ability to see the others there and the sharing of an interesting space together did contribute to a feeling of attending a event in a different way than simply dialing into a large conference call."*

One participant summed up the feeling nicely- "Move over real life events. This is global, secure, fun, visual and green. What's not to like? Welcome to the future of events."

For more information concerning this article, please contact [Keeter, Karen \(kkeeter@us.ibm.com\)](mailto:kkeeter@us.ibm.com). To learn more about IBM's work in virtual environments, visit us on the web at [www.ibm.com/3dinternet](http://www.ibm.com/3dinternet)

## About the IBM Academy of Technology

The IBM Academy of Technology focuses on the technical underpinnings of IBM's future. Its membership consists of the top technical leaders from around the world who are working in research, hardware and software development, manufacturing, applications, and services. Members are elected to the Academy by their peers in recognition of their technical excellence and leadership. Membership is an honor, but also carries the responsibility to engage in Academy-sponsored activities and to promote technical growth IBM-wide -- in addition to one's regular job. The Academy develops a rich technical agenda each year which consists of studies, conferences and consultancies.