



# PRESS RELEASE

—For Immediate Release—

## New Media Consortium Launches Open Virtual Worlds Project with Sun Microsystems

Today the New Media Consortium (NMC) announced a two-year collaboration with Sun Microsystems to launch the Open Virtual Worlds Project that is aimed at making it easier to learn, work, and exchange ideas in virtual space. The project will develop a range of open-source, open-content educational spaces, content, and objects, and use them to extend the open source Project Darkstar and Project Wonderland virtual world platforms.

The New Media Consortium will build on its extensive presence in the virtual world arena, where it currently operates the premier educational virtual world development services company, NMC Virtual Worlds. While the NMC plans to continue to offer comprehensive services for the Second Life platform, the not-for-profit educational consortium believes that Sun's open-source platforms will meet the needs that many institutions have for higher levels of security, clear ownership of intellectual property, and portability.

The NMC's Second Life project has grown to be the largest educational effort on that platform by any measure, and as new alternatives to Second Life have emerged, the NMC has experimented with those as well. As NMC CEO Larry Johnson observed, "Over the past two years, we have focused a great deal of effort on how to bring people up to speed quickly in virtual environments, how to help organizations use these spaces for effective teaching and training, how to craft immersive and useful 3D simulations — and most importantly, how to bring people together to exchange knowledge and ideas."

"These goals overlap virtually 100% with those of the Sun Immersion Special Interest Group," Johnson continued, "and all of us in the NMC look forward to applying the knowledge and experience we've gained to open source worlds — and to developing specialized virtual spaces and a range of accompanying X3D and Collada-compatible open content for education and training."

The Sun Immersion Special Interest Group is a Sun Microsystems Inc. sponsored community dedicated to advancing the state of open source technology and content for virtual worlds and gaming in education using the Project Wonderland and Project Darkstar technology platforms.

"As the original creator of the Project Darkstar and Wonderland technologies, Sun is delighted to collaborate with the New Media Consortium and their outstanding community of creative individuals and organizations in expanding the opportunity and use of open source virtual worlds and game-based learning to enhance student achievement and academic scholarship around the world with Sun's Project Wonderland and Darkstar technologies," said Kevin Roebuck, Community Manager, Immersive Education, Sun Microsystems, Inc.

Under the Open Virtual Worlds umbrella, Sun and NMC plan to work together to bring this content to the Project Darkstar and Project Wonderland platforms, and to work with CommonNeed and MoodleRooms to establish a range of scalable hosted virtual worlds solutions.

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The project's business plan includes scalable hosted solutions that will make it very easy for any institution to experiment with the educational spaces and content that is planned for development, as well as very high quality custom development services. Over the long term, the revenues from custom development will support a range of off-the-shelf products, activities, and events that will be open to all.

The mission of *NMC Virtual Worlds* is to help learning-focused organizations to explore the potential of virtual spaces in a manner that builds on community knowledge, is cost-effective, and ensures high quality. To those ends, over the past two years, the NMC and NMC Virtual Worlds have provided a comprehensive set of premium development services for education and training, and conducted an ongoing series of events, conferences, and programs, all within the virtual world of Second Life. The goal of the Open Virtual Worlds project is to extend the same set of services, support, and activities into open-source virtual worlds based on Project Darkstar and Project Wonderland.

The vision for these multi-user virtual environments is that they be robust enough in terms of security, scalability, reliability, and functionality that colleges, universities, and other organizations can rely on them as a place to conduct their real business, especially in the realms of teaching, learning, and research. The types of collaborations that can happen within Wonderland-based spaces, which can be installed behind a firewall to take advantage of existing security and single-sign-on systems, include audio communication, live desktop applications of all kinds, and eventually the collaborative creation of in-world content (both graphical and procedural). Privacy, security, and intellectual property concerns that are an inescapable part of working on other platforms are easily addressed on open platforms like Projects Darkstar and Wonderland.

One important goal of the project is for these environments to be completely extensible. Building on a core set of objects and worlds developed by the NMC, developers and graphic artists will be able extend the functionality to create entire new worlds, new features in existing worlds, or new behaviors for objects and avatars. The content path for Wonderland is also open. The eventual goal is to support content creation within the world, but in the shorter term, the goal is to support importing objects, avatars, and other content from widely available standards-based open source 3D content creation tools as well as professional 3D modeling and animation applications.

To learn more about *Project Darkstar*, see: <http://www.projectdarkstar.com/>

To learn more about *Wonderland*, see: <https://lg3d-wonderland.dev.java.net/>

To learn more about *NMC Virtual Worlds*: <http://virtualworlds.nmc.org>

To learn more about the NMC's work in virtual worlds: <http://www.nmc.org/sl>.

To learn more about the Sun Immersion Special Interest Group: <http://sun-isig.org/>

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**About the NMC**

*The New Media Consortium (NMC) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit consortium of nearly 300 leading colleges, universities, research centers, and museums from across the world who are dedicated to the exploration and use of new media and new technologies. The consortium serves as a catalyst for the development of new applications of technology to support learning and creative expression, and sponsors programs and activities designed to stimulate innovation, encourage collaboration, and stimulate dialog and understanding through the exploration of promising ideas, technologies, and applications. For more information on the NMC, see its web site at [www.nmc.org](http://www.nmc.org).*

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