**More Real than Reality?: A 3D Virtual Space for MLS Education**

Abstract

The acceptance of online distance education (DE) for MLS/MLIS programs has given rise to various technologies that facilitate faculty-student interactions in cyberspace. The primary vehicle has been learning management systems such as Blackboard or Moodle. Though these interfaces include the capability of hearing and seeing the instructor, the overall experience generally lacks social presence. Some universities use a 3D space such as Second Life (SL) to enhance students’ experience. This presentation will focus on a space that is not based on SL called OpenKwaq (OK). It has been successfully used for almost a decade by an MLS program in North Carolina and allows faculty to have maximum flexibility in the variety of material that can be presented (e.g., videos, podcasts, blog posts, PDFs, url links, etc.). Due to its capabilities, OK also affords greater engagement between students and professors, as well as among learners, and with the course content. The advantages to LIS programs using this modality are: more involved and satisfied DE students who are likely to be future advocates for the program; a venue for doctoral students to develop their skills as online instructors; and a means to have more effective collaborations and professional development experiences with colleagues throughout the world.