1. What types of simulations are available in your workplace?

In the CIS department for our Intro to Networking students we have a software product from Cisco Systems called Packet Tracer that allows students to build virtual networks and then test them for functionality. It is a drag-and-drop/properties sheet style interface which allows students to drag-and-drop devices, like switches, routers, workstations, and servers into a "sandbox", wire them up and then the network configuration properties of each devices. One the design is complete they can then test to see if they can communicate between devices by sending packets out onto their virtual network.

We also have our networking classroom setup so that students can physically build networks and sub-networks using actual switches and routers, this is kind of quasi-virtual environment in that the networks they build aren't really used for any other purpose than just giving them hands on with equipment and giving them the opportunity to troubleshoot various networking problem scenarios.

A couple of years ago we (MSJC) spent a ton of money on a high-end server from HP (32 CPU cores and 32 GB RAM) and a fiber-channel storage area network (SANS) which is setup to give students access to virtual machines (VMs). Virtual Machines replicate a computer environment in the memory of the HP server. Students are able to use a standard Web browser to log into the VM server, which loads up a computer desktop environment for them to use over the Internet. Mostly it is used by students who are taking computer application classes like Word, Excel, Access, Expression Web, or the like, in an online class. By using the VM they don't have to purchase the software for their home computers to be able to complete the assignments in the online courses which require they use the products I mentioned. We also tried using the VMs in one of my Microsoft Certification courses where students needed to administer their own servers. They would set up their server VMs as domain controllers, DNS servers, DHCP servers, Web servers, etc. For the most part it worked well, although we did run into problems with testing the DHCP servers, we couldn't seem to get the virtual networking functions of the VM environment to work as advertised.

2. If simulations are not available in your workplace, think about how simulations may fit into your workplace- share your thoughts with us.

N/A

3. One of the better known virtual simulation environments is Secondlife.com please take some time to explore the www.secondlife.com website http://secondlife.com/destinations/learning to find out how SL is used as a virtual training tool in education, the medical field, and/or research. If you have time and have not logged in to SL- test it out (not required but an interesting way to explore the simulation environment).

After your explorations in SL or via the SL website please respond to the following questions:

1. Share one way that SL is used in education, the medical field and/or research.

I went to DePaul University's location, it looked nice, but since this was the first location I was visiting I didn't really have anything to compare it to. I walk around in the virtual environment and ended up getting stuck on the big ship. I didn't discover any learning tools at this location. I also went to "The Particle Laboratory", but had a tough time trying get things to work. Apparently I was supposed to write some kind of a script, but I wasn't clear where how to do it and what to do with it. Then I went to go up a walkway to see something "cool" about particles, but ended up going of the edge of the walkway and ended up at the bottom of the ocean.

2. Share your thoughts about a simulation learning environment--effective? somewhat effective? not effective? Provide a rationale to support your viewpoints.

I joined up and created an avatar for Second Life and spent about an hour cruising around. Not having a lot of knowledge about how things work in this space I wasn't really able to do much. I'm sure there is a lot of potential in SL once you know how things work. I think that Dr. G. should take us on a tour and show us around, so that we can get a better understanding of how these different educational areas of SL work.