

# **Call for Papers**

## **Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS)**

### **Special Issue on Team Collaboration in Virtual Worlds**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In his famous science-fiction novel *Snow Crash*, Neal Stephenson envisioned the evolution of the Internet into what he called a “Metaverse”, a three dimensional (3D) virtual reality-based space where people interacted with each other through their avatars (i.e. graphical representation of themselves) and manipulated virtual artifacts. Since the last few years, Metaverses have become a reality with the development of virtual/mixed reality applications, called 3D virtual worlds.

A growing and strong interest has emerged in the field of information systems (IS) around the characteristics and possibilities of these virtual worlds. Virtual worlds have now evolved into sophisticated social systems, such as Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), where millions of people chat, collaborate and compete with each other through their avatars. According to Gartner Group, 80% of active Internet users will use a virtual world by the end of 2011. Beyond the entertainment and game play features, virtual worlds are evolving towards business needs, where social, organizational and economic interactions are the main drivers. In fact, today’s virtual worlds bring a variety of opportunities to organizations with respect to team collaboration. Several companies such as IBM, Intel, Cisco, Microsoft, e-Bay, Accenture, and others are already using virtual worlds for their team collaborations – meetings, seminars (internal or with partners), training/certification, recruitment, or simply for socialization (virtual events). As collaboration has become the predominant modus in which organizations accomplish work, recent surveys show that collaboration is a key driver in organizational performance and may contribute more to organizational performance than strategic orientation. Therefore it is important to understand how virtual worlds can best be used as an environment for organizational teams to collaborate.

Successful performance is by no means a guarantee for teams that employ collaboration techniques and technology. Teams have to align their work processes and procedures, their personalities and motivations, their leadership styles and approaches, their information and knowledge resources, and their technology support to create value. In this mix, virtual worlds present challenges and opportunities for organizational teams at the same time: challenges as team using virtual worlds may have to overcome limitations originating from not sharing the same physical space and opportunities as virtual worlds offer teams possibilities that are impossible in the real world. Virtual worlds provide a visual window to a persistent and synthetic world inhabited by avatars that are deeply involved in social interactions, along with economic and commercial activities. More specifically, the vivid and interactive features of virtual worlds lead users to experience flow states that may influence their subsequent behavior. Moreover, these virtual worlds enhance the user perceptions of presence and co-presence. They are immersive by nature and reinvent the notions of “being together” and awareness for distributed teams. Finally, these virtual worlds provide a tangible ‘physical’ environment with geographical

boundaries, composed of homes, furniture, streets, trees, ground and sky that inhabitants can use to situate their social interactions and behaviors.

To study issues of team collaboration in virtual worlds, different disciplines and theoretical perspectives are required. Existing theories from IS/IT, Communication, Psychology, Education and other fields may help explain and predict relevant phenomena related to team collaboration in virtual worlds. Yet, new theories and theoretical perspectives are required as our existing body of knowledge regarding collaboration in physical “face-to-face” worlds is insufficient to address all relevant issues and perspectives. Thus, team collaboration in virtual worlds presents an area of new theoretical interest.

### **THE CALL**

We are pleased to invite scholars from any discipline to contribute papers that advance our theoretical understanding of team collaboration in virtual worlds (from small team to large groups and communities). The special issue aims to publish theoretical and empirical research that will investigate how individuals and teams within and between organizations use this type of environment to coordinate tasks, share information, simulate processes, solve problems, make decisions, create and manipulate objects, innovate, and create value.

Suggested topics include but are not limited to:

- What relevant theoretical perspectives help researchers better understand team collaborations in virtual worlds?
- How do virtual world collaborations influence team processes and outcomes?
- What is the impact of virtual world collaborations on individual’s or team’s behaviors?
- What is the impact of virtual world collaborations on organizational performance?
- What are the effects of management and leadership styles and behavior on virtual world team performance?
- What embedded technologies do teams require to effectively use virtual worlds?
- How can teams in virtual worlds access, process, and disseminate information relevant to their work?
- In what way is team collaboration in virtual worlds different from other well-known computer-mediated communications?
- How do personality characteristics of team members influence the progress of work in virtual worlds?
- What is the effect of team size in virtual world collaboration?
- How can collaboration processes for virtual world teams be purposefully designed?
- How are individuals and teams motivated to perform in virtual worlds?
- How do organizational strategies and models have to be adapted or rethought in the context of virtual world collaborations?
- What are the impacts of team collaboration in virtual worlds on creativity and innovation?
- How can virtual worlds support collaboration process simulation?

- How can teams be effectively trained to collaborate in virtual worlds?
- What abilities should individuals and teams develop in order to collaborate successfully in virtual worlds?
- What role does culture play in virtual world team collaboration?
- Which tasks and task types are more conducive to be executed in virtual world environments?

Team Collaboration in Virtual Worlds is a nascent field of study whose boundaries have yet to be demarcated. We seek contributions from all epistemological perspectives, including:

- **Critical Perspective:** The value and social significance of the collaboration in virtual worlds and the tasks to which virtual worlds could be applied from a critical perspective.
- **Logical Positivist Perspective:** Theoretical, experimental studies of possible causes of the phenomena of interest, and their applications to design and deploy collaborative work practices in virtual worlds.
- **Interpretivist Perspective:** The inferences people draw from and the meanings they ascribe to the actions of actors in the context of collaboration in virtual worlds.

#### **REVIEW PROCESS**

All prospective authors are encouraged to send a brief, preliminary abstract to the Special Issue editors at their earliest convenience. The editors will provide informal, constructive, developmental feedback about how to position the paper for the best fit to the Special Issue.

Full-paper submissions will have two rounds of peer review. The first round reviews will provide developmental guidance for improving those papers that are conditionally accepted. Final selections for the Special Issue will be made from the second-round submissions.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES**

**At your earliest convenience** – We encourage you to send an abstract to the Special Issue editors to receive guidance about how best to make the paper fit the special issue.

- August, 2010** – Writer’s Workshop at AMCIS 2010.
- September, 2010** – Writer’s Workshop at MCIS 2010.
- October, 30, 2010** – Submissions due.
- January, 31, 2011** – First round acceptances announced.
- March, 31, 2011** – Revisions due.
- August, 1, 2011** – Final acceptances. Issue goes to press.

#### **SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

Abstracts and full papers should be submitted as e-mail attachments to the guest editors in Word format.

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