"Coping with our avatars, and the people behind them"
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[11:01] Elektra Panthar: Hello everyone.
Today's presentation is being transcribed so those without audio or who require text only can participate in real time.
A little explanation about this service.
Voice-to-text transcriptionists provide a translation of the key ideas discussed, NOT a word for word transcription.
Voice-to-text services provide an in-the-moment snapshot of ideas and concepts, so that those who are unable to hear or to understand the audio program are able to participate in real-time.
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Transcription is provided by Virtual Ability, Inc.
The transcriptionist is Elektra Panthar
The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speaker:
NB: bowmanspartan (Dr. Nick Bowman)

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[11:04] Gentle Heron: Nick Bowman has presented before
[11:05] Elektra Panthar: GH: He's a professor at Texas Tech and he's experienced with SL
[11:05] Elektra Panthar: NB: I'll try to monitor chat and voice - I've been having tech problems
Feel free to jump in at any time
I came here last year to present a study about avatars
I study interactive media, I've been curious about the extent to which we form relationships with our avatars
Maybe some questions will seem silly to you or foregone conclusions
The avatar and the person become one entity at one pint
It's not simple - sometimes avatars represent features of our personalities, sometimes it can be completely different
Sometimes there can be just a sort of partnership with our avatars
As you can see on the screen, there are various levels
We can see them as just pixels, to the extent of being fully social

[11:08] Linn Darkwatch: You're talking avatar avatars, not avatars as our characters in fantasy roleplaying sims, for instance, I assume?
[11:09] Elektra Panthar: NB: Avatar represents you, something you create
So not a character
It's an important distinction
I bet some of us have had to explain our avatar is not just pixels, it's a part of us
The relationship between user and avatar is complex
Every time we encounter someone there's a full interaction
I don't want to turn this into an academic lesson but I'll answer any question about this chart

[11:11] Shelenn Ayres views social virtual world as an extension of offline world... not a character in a game
[11:12] Elektra Panthar: NB: That's what I'm talking about, this as an authentic space for social interaction
If someone sees what's on the screen as a game, it will change their approach to your avatar
I'm the one behind the keyboard, so of course it's me - but sometimes the avatar can be seen as something like a pet - you are responsible for it not it's not really you
The avatar can be seen as several as different things with different connotations: Object - Me - Symbiote - Other
I'm looking around and I see a great variety - I'm kinda boring in comparison, it's similar to me irl
But you can see it differently
In the case of symbiotes they might have identity issues - so they take different elements of themselves and elements of something other than themselves or what they'd like to be (sometimes this is a way to work through trauma)
You have seen more traffic lately
[11:17] Linn Darkwatch: It's the covid
Some people are coming back who idled out years ago
[11:17] wiki.firestormviewer.org (bluezy.bleac): way more traffic, way more people asking me for help
[11:17] DeNasty Tigerpaw: Definitely. And people who don't normally get all chatty every day will start conversations with me out of boredom

[11:17] Gentle Heron: Em Warrior IMed me about this question: oh good i see ppl changing and trying to be more lenient with them [newcomers] but its hard
Em Warrior also told me: new ppl don't realize that those of us who are older [in SL] are struggling with the pandemic too and that we use sl as our escape as well
[11:18] Shelenn Ayres: In research I supported, with all non-virtual world participants skeptical virtual worlds assist in guided meditation, avatars were seen either as someone they follow or that they embodied. In most cases, the experience evoked emotions and surprised participants at how it did guide them through meditation yielding physical benefits. They no longer viewed the use of a virtual world as a novelty or game.
[11:20] Linn Darkwatch: I've heard someone say that SL is for old people and [redacted term for the disabled]. They are not right, but there are a lot of us in SL who are one or the other or both.

[11:18] Elektra Panthar: NB: One logical conclusion can be it's easy to dismiss digital spaces if you don't need them - but now many of us are quarantined
I'm turning to virtual spaces to fill out social gaps
I went back to WoW - I hadn't been there in a while
There's a newfound drive to try out the social spaces because we need social interaction
This is not news to you, you've been interacting since you've joined SL
My curiosity is : have you felt as if your relationship with your avatar is different?
For example if lately what you've been doing is explaining new people how to use
I've heard people thinking SL was just for old or disabled people
SL can be overwhelming at first
[11:21] Shelenn Ayres: Because I embody my avatar as an extended life, I never feel disconnected.
[11:20] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I don't know, I'm one of the new ones doing the annoying stuff :)
[11:21] Linn Darkwatch: We all spent our time with boxes on our hands, walking into walls. :-)
It's more confusing now than it was when I joined because people can end up wearing both mesh and system clothes at once.
[11:21] Elektra Panthar: NB: Yes exactly! I've worn three outfits once
I'm sure my shoulders shouldn't be this big but I didn't want to ask for help!
[11:23] Shelenn Ayres: The learning curve is too steep for non-technical users. This is one thing we are addressing with our viewer design to reduce onboardings that users can easily embody their avatar.

[11:22] Elektra Panthar: NB: When you're new and the avatar doesn't reflect what you're trying to achieve, you might see it as other, different than yourself
We go with the True self assumption
Some think it doesn't exist
Some think it depends on the context we're in, like the way we change clothes depending on the situation
[11:21] wiki.firestormviewer.org (bluezy.bleac): I change constantly, to make people less scared off me. But, my avatar is more to me then an object. I just like changing my avatar, it changes how I deal with some rl traumas for me.
[11:22] Linn Darkwatch: I spent much of my first week or two customizing my avatar. (As well as finding places that were newbie friendly to go to and learn.)
[11:23] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I started in what wasn't called virtual worlds as nothing more than a name. No image, same color text as everyone else, maybe some a/s/l profile. It was all about what you said and nothing else.
[11:23] Shelenn Ayres: For RPers, there is sometimes danger mentally being unable to separate fantasy from reality.
[11:25] Linn Darkwatch: Shelenn - yes. People can be too close to their RP characters, not separate IC and OOC

[11:24] Elektra Panthar: NB: IRL I'm wearing 'house clothes' and my office needs cleaning, while here I'm fairly put together clothes wise
We may behave to new people differently than people we've been interacting

[11:25] Linn Darkwatch: We also wear different avatars in different settings. When I'm in a fantasy roleplaying sim, I'm different from when I'm in a Tiny sim. Or when I'm dressed up for a mer dance, or Fantasy Faire, or going on a Steampunk hunt. But they all represent parts of me, except the roleplaying avatar much less so, since he's a character I'm playing.

[11:25] Elektra Panthar: NB: that's what I'm talking about, Linn
You have different avatars, different representations of yourself

[11:25] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I don't know, I think D&D was different, since you were a chosen race, category, and maybe clothes and tools and spells

[11:25] Shelenn Ayres: AOs are most commonly used to establish an avatar's personality.

[11:26] Linn Darkwatch: Shelenn - I suspect that's why Tinies emote a lot! The old Tiny AOs were pretty limited.

[11:27] Shelenn Ayres: Linn - there are different types of RP... emoting is a common type for writers but yes animations for tinies and furries are lacking.

[11:26] wiki.firestormviewer.org (bluezy.bleac): Linn, I haven't roleplayed in sl for 7 years or so.

[11:27] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I learned how to interact, mostly online. I'd read a lot and was good with words (in my head, not talking), and since people could make you disappear on their end if they didn't like how you "spoke," you had to learn quickly.

[11:26] Elektra Panthar: NB: you have to recognize that different users have different motivations and engagement
It makes it difficult when you have a set of assumptions and others have a different set f assumptions
Sometimes students email me with a very formal style - and that happens when they want something
When they start talking to me they become more informal

[11:26] Elektra Panthar: NB: We've seen an influx of people, new people here too

[11:29] Shelenn Ayres was in virtual back in active worlds and cybertown... so SL wasn't a new experience.

[11:29] Elektra Panthar: NB: for folks who are new, do any of you have any idea about your avatar? Is it an object, is it part of you, is it something you interact with ?

[11:29] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): It's neither of that. It's more of an artistic representation of some sort of trauma i went through
I'm quite new but a returner

[11:28] Ashon Violet: Its been about 5 year, and I came back lately

[11:28] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): 38 days old here
I've edited the face a bit and tried to get decent clothes, but that's about it. I bought a "new" body but he didn't feel like me and I don't use him.

[11:29] DeNasty Tigerpaw: My avatar is a big aspect of me. But the aesthetic I use isn't something I would use RL
I enjoy keeping the aesthetic matching my first name

[11:29] pokemonxu: i think of it as an object that should resemble me

[11:29] wiki.firestormviewer.org (bluezy.bleac): Oh, my avatar is a way for me to give back to the community that saved me.

[11:30] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): I actually view my avatar as I view my RL body. Both are simply an interface to allow me to interact with other people, in various different places.
I am not my body, or my avatar.

[11:29] Elektra Panthar: NB: they are all legitimate ways to see an avatar
When I first joined I just saw it as an object to present here
Changing my shirt to my uni's made the avatar mine, it made it me
Some are talking about artistic representation - that fits the symbiote model
Interstitial role
[11:30] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): My first reaction to this place was, it's like everyone's a Greek God, and all the gods are dressing up to play mortal
[11:30] Linn Darkwatch: John - yes. Though some bodies you buy are editable, so you can get it closer to who you are.
[11:31] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I am having trouble going to a mesh body. I've been here 14 years and I've tried to make the mesh bodies look like me and I can't. They're too sexy!
[11:31] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I agree Ludova
I don't know if we're embracing or mocking physical perfection here
[11:31] Shelenn Ayres intentionally created a shape that is non-standard to discourage body shaming in world - I do the same not in world.
[11:32] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I like it Shelenn
I was thinking this morning of getting an on-all-fours cat avi
[11:32] Shelenn Ayres: John - the issue is the animations are for idealistic perfect bodies and people don't like to see hands passing through their bodies. How an avatar appears is not nearly as important as the animation of the avatar.
[11:33] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Shelenn I just thought the animations couldn't get everything right because we don't all wear a standard body
[11:33] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): L*O*L
[11:33] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I get annoyed with seated poses because I can't turn my head to look at the person I'm talking to.
[11:33] Linn Darkwatch: Ludo - yes! Or if the pose puts you in a weird position or your feet are in the ground.
[11:34] Shelenn Ayres: animations can be remade for specific shapes - time consuming and expensive

[11:31] Elektra Panthar: NB: some are talking about names as well - some are talking about aesthetic
People who see avatar as object ad those who see it as part of themselves, they might see the environment differently, give different meanings to things like personal space for example
I see many are talking about bodies
About houses, maybe people who are new and don't know about the significance of houses, they might just walk in because they see a building there and want to explore
[11:32] Linn Darkwatch: There is a strong taboo in SL against entering people's homes without their permission
[11:34] Elektra Panthar: NB: some might do that because they're used to videogames
They might not see those things are relevant, like owning spaces, etc

To some it's just pixels
[11:34] Linn Darkwatch has done some videogames.
But in games, houses that you can enter are meant to be entered.
They don't belong to people
[11:34] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): we are trained to smash and enter everything in games
But SL is more than just a game
[11:34] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I keep hitting things, and nothing breaks into little Lego coins
[11:34] Shelenn Ayres: Most people in virtual worlds view their homes as property
Court cases solidify that belief

[11:35] Elektra Panthar: NB: the argument I'm trying to make is on this idea of understanding how this is unique, special to digital spaces as opposed to non-digital spaces
I almost never use the term real life
[11:36] wiki.firestormviewer.org (bluezy.bleac): sorry, I must leave, I got a few people begging for support with their viewer. (call it first life)
[11:36] Shelenn Ayres: digital presences is real
[11:36] Tredi Felisimo: my students always say "when I get out of school and am in RL"...
[11:36] Linn Darkwatch: I just spent 2000 L$ on a piece of entirely virtual art here in SL, to add to my collection of literally scores of pieces of virtual art. I'm paying the artist behind the piece for my appreciation of it. (And a copy to rez and appreciate.) The art is only real in SL, but the artist is real anywhere.

[11:36] Elektra Panthar: NB: To say something is real speaks more of its consequences and the impact it has
Every interaction we have potentially influences us
We don't separate digital experiences to 'real ones' in our brains
Like when you apologize to SIRI or yell at the computer to load faster
I recognize the social construct of 'IRL' but I don't use it
[11:37] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I always say thank you to my Alexa :)
[11:37] Shelenn Ayres: i am not controlling an AI experiment or generating my side of the conversation with AIML... therefore i am real ;)
[11:37] Tredi Felisimo: we call it the physical world and this is the virtual world
[11:37] VAI Serenity agrees with Tredi
[11:38] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): Some say "in world, and out world"
[11:38] Shelenn Ayres: same here James
[11:38] Mook Wheeler: "Reality was what went on inside people's heads." --Terry Pratchett
[11:38] Linn Darkwatch: Mook - YES
YES YES!
[11:38] Tredi Felisimo: so true Mook!
[11:38] VAI Serenity: oh great quote, Mook

[11:38] Elektra Panthar: NB: I'm curious to know how those interactions have changed, if they have, since this uptick in users, towards your avatar
The concept of main / alts can be tricky

[11:38] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I've had three women I talk to want to give me a make over - not sure how to take that :)
I guess they want me in a different package. Too much like RL for me.
[11:39] Linn Darkwatch: Heh, I've had friends who wanted to do that too.
[11:39] VAI Serenity: "Friends don't force friends to have makeovers."
[11:39] Naniel Finlayson: agree
[11:38] Shelenn Ayres: many people use alts
I am not one of them
[11:39] Tredi Felisimo: <--- not an alt
My human's alt?
[11:39] Ruby Vandyke: 13 years, no alt
[11:40] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): I am actually NOT a 'visual' person. So...
I focus on the people behind the avatars.
[11:40] Shelenn Ayres takes some offense to human males pretending to be females in world for nefarious purposes
Once found out those will get blocked and muted permanently

[11:40] Elektra Panthar: NB: you might be experiencing a level of stress, since there are many new people who don't know the 'rules' yet
Are you excited about the new faces, are you feeling as if you're losing connection with your avatar or maybe the opposite, you feel more connected with it
[11:40] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): 38 days, they're all new to me
[11:40] Ruby Vandyke: I am happy to see and help new residents
[11:40] Ashon Violet: its easier to make friends.
[11:41] VAI Serenity: I am sympathetic to newcomers, and don't mind helping them unless as Shelenn points out they are here for nefarious purposes.
[11:41] DeNasty Tigerpaw: covid-19 hasn't changed much of my life, as far as how often I get out of the house. So for me, nothing has really changed. But dealing with people who are stressed by the changes, that is adding stress to me
[11:41] VAI Serenity: Yes DeNasty, whether they are old or new in SL, if they are stressed those of us who remain calm can be a great resource.
[11:41] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I pretty much keep to myself in RL, and it's nice to meet people here and interact as I would want to do in RL
[11:41] Naniel Finlayson: i'm glad more people come sl, to see new faces and talk to them
[11:41] Linn Darkwatch: Some people are very specific avatars in SL, and never change. I have friends who are always Tiny. I know someone who is always a unicorn. Other people change depending on where they are or how they feel.

[11:41] Elektra Panthar: NB: sometime the avatars are separate agents
Hear me out, it will sound provocative - what is nefarious?
Some say 'it's just a game, I can do what I want'
[11:42] Shelenn Ayres: i don't agree Nick... the people I meet in world are the people behind the avatar... i take the time to determine whether the new person sees it as a game or not... those who see it as a game is someone i am not likely to engage further... nefarious can also be not game related but predatory or with intent to emotionally harm others

[11:42] Elektra Panthar: NB: Strange case of the electronic lover - ever heard of it?
A man was pretending to be a disabled woman to seduce women
He developed a very strong following, and even convinced someone to fly to him
His cover story was that the disabled woman was too shy - he absolutely wanted to cause harm. But he said he just wanted to see what being a woman felt like
[11:43] Shelenn Ayres: That person IMO intended emotional harm
Bogus defense
[11:44] DeNasty Tigerpaw: agreed, Shelenn, definitely a bogus defense
[11:44] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): You can develop and grow your soul in a virtual world, or you can let the harm done to you envelop you and have free play

[11:44] Elektra Panthar: NB: And this ties in with sexual abuse in virtual spaces
[11:44] Linn Darkwatch: I've also seen people in games who emote raping others, which is very violating
[11:45] Shelenn Ayres: Virtual rape is something i experienced on the first day in SL
[11:45] Linn Darkwatch: I'm sorry to hear that Shelenn. *offers a hug if you accept it*
[11:45] Shelenn Ayres: ty Linn... i see others continue to experience it

[11:45] Elektra Panthar: NB: in another case someone wrote a program where he could make a character say whatever they wanted
This is not easy to hear, I'm sorry
If you're familiar with Westworld, SL is similar in the way that people come in and look for experiences sometimes without waiting for consent from others
Some people's fantasies are other people's disasters and they affect communities
[11:47] Shelenn Ayres: i don't "live" in SL because of the high level of sexual content in SL
[11:48] Linn Darkwatch: Shelenn - it depends on the community. Some are just social
[11:48] Shelenn Ayres: People online often feel free to hide behind anonymity and engage in behavior they would not engage in offline. This extends into virtual.
[11:48] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I so rarely get near sexual content, Shelenn. I tend to avoid adult-rated regions
[11:49] Shelenn Ayres: DeNasty I experience and see it in newbie regions even today.
[11:50] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I suppose it helps I don't get near newbie regions, then, Shelenn!

[11:47] Elektra Panthar: NB: This is not a warning about how new people are dangerous
Maybe people presume things that are not true - for example I'm not here to interact all the time with everyone
People online feel safer behind anonymity sometimes and try different things they wouldn't normally try
[11:49] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): You still build up a reputation
At least for your avatar
[11:49] Linn Darkwatch: When you've been associated with an online name or avatar for a while, you feel more like their reputation matters.
[11:49] Elektra Panthar: NB: That's also another concept - in my case I'm not anonymous now, I'm pretty much me
Sometimes their 'reputation' doesn't carry to the physical world, other times it's one and the same

[11:50] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): I am pretty much the same in SL and RL. I even put my avatar in bed, before I log out. :D

[11:51] Shelenn Ayres: As with any online presence, people users will perceive you the way you present yourself - often we don't present ourselves accurately and sometimes don't even perceive ourselves as we should.

[11:51] Elektra Panthar: NB: our presentations change quite a bit, yes. Some people are more social here

[11:51] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I'm the same person that I would be in RL, but I interact more here. But I usually wait to be approached first, like in RL

[11:52] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I try to behave as i would in the offline world

[11:51] Elektra Panthar: NB: There's also pseudo anonymity - some things like speech pattern are recognizable

[11:51] Linn Darkwatch: In RP sims where some people play several alts, you can sometimes tell who is who just from their regular pattern of speech and typos

[11:52] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Yes Linn, if you had the right program go through the conversations, it might be able to detect all the "alts" and connect them to the main person :)

[11:52] Elektra Panthar: NB: Maybe some have come here especially to be social.
A lot come for social support

[11:52] Shelenn Ayres: Many people entering virtual worlds are looking for support. comfort, friendship, and pick me ups.
An interesting fact is that I know 3 female users who pretend to be males in world so they are not sexually harassed by males.

[11:54] Linn Darkwatch: Shelenn - I suspect it's a fairly high number

[11:53] Elektra Panthar: NB: Do people know Arpanet
Universities were connected to each there and sending data, keeping it secure
What else do you think they shared?
Yep, jokes (similar people with similar education and similarly isolated)
They even had to send a message out to please stop flirting so much! but that's because humans are very social

[11:55] Shelenn Ayres: I don't think anyone in SL can have an expectation of privacy or not being observed, studied, or recorded. Communications are not encrypted and even private spaces are accessible by admins, helpers, or camming avatars.
In my view, I have the power to control who has access to me or my attention. Blocking and muting is a right.

[11:55] Elektra Panthar: NB: Digital networks have been a space for social support for a LONG time - even back to late 70s
So it's not surprising seeing people joining SL or there virtual spaces now that we can't interact in the physical world
If we feel a deep connection to our avatars and our community it's going to be difficult to be asked to log off - because it's like saying 'I don't want to talk to these people anymore'
If you were to leave, how would losing all those connections impact you?

How many of you would be losing connections to people who you don't have other means to connect to outside sl?

This is a social enough space that I'd lose much if I left

[11:57] Buffy Beale: yes definitely would miss my connections here

[11:57] Linn Darkwatch: The people here are real! Real people, real friends.

[11:57] Ruby Vandyke: it would impact me greatly.

[11:58] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I've only been her for almost 2 weeks and I'd already miss too many people if i would stop with sl

[11:58] Suellen Heartsong: would be losing friends that are sometimes RL friends as well

[11:58] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I'm sicker so I'm shucking responsibilities here, but I have two RP groups that keep tempting me to come back.

Yes, in those groups I don't have other ways of connecting with.

[11:58] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): It's harder to leave now because you spend money - this is the first online community I've spent money in

[11:58] Suellen Heartsong works here and makes L's

[11:58] Naniel Finlayson: i had several breaks and came back a few weeks ago. i was glad to see that still some people on my friendlist were still here and i talked with them, how they have been

[11:58] DeNasty Tigerpaw: Given that SL is my primary source of social interaction, I'd lose a lot by never returning to SL

[11:59] Ruby Vandyke: my closest SL friends have my RL info so we can contact each other should something happen to SL

[11:59] Shelenn Ayres: The same is true on social media and sites of choice. SL is a technology of choice. OpenSimulator is a technology preferred - 100% control and ownership.

[11:59] Buffy Beale: I've been meeting in SL every week with people from the Nonprofit Commons for 12 years but never met anyone in RL

[11:59] Shelenn Ayres: Buffy I've met people from MOSES, SL, and OS offline.

[11:59] Buffy Beale: nice going Shelenn!

[11:59] Linn Darkwatch: Some of us connect in Discord or Facebook, but it's not the same.

[11:59] Naniel Finlayson: i also have some sl friends who have my rl dates to keep contact out of sl

[12:00] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Virtual friends are like virtual employees - chosen solely because they fit, not because they're within driving distance

I started before we thought about things being recorded and looked at by others, either because no one bothered then or we just didn't know about it.

[12:00] Shelenn Ayres: But as with any online contact, you must be very careful about meeting in person or revealing personal information

[12:01] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I just assume I'll never 'meet' anyone from here

[12:01] Shelenn Ayres: never say never

[12:01] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): OK :)

[12:01] Linn Darkwatch: And some people who've met in SL have gotten married IRL. (I also know two couples who met in usenet back in the day who got married after meeting IRL.) It takes a lot of knowing someone and trust to meet someone IRL first time.

[12:02] Suellen Heartsong: very true Linn, James and I were very careful to get to know each other before travelling to meet in RL

[12:02] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): Well... I kiss my wife more often in RL. It is more fun than in SL. :D

[12:00] Elektra Panthar: NB: For many of us, we have interactions with people in different spaces, sometimes with the same person the interaction varies depending on the environment
My avatar also changes - when I send an email it's my formal signature - on FB my photo can be anything casual - if i play a game it might be a picture of a skateboard
[12:02] Naniel Finlayson: my look may change but the way i treat people here in sl is similar in rl and wont change in case i know them better
[12:03] Elektra Panthar: NB: Meeting people in different spaces- some of you have that motivation - meeting people they met here in the physical world too, others don't
[12:02] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I've met some people from SL. But always the first meeting was in a public place
[12:03] Ruby Vandyke: I have met several people in RL that I knew online first
[12:03] Shelenn Ayres: I think it is because people fear the person they perceive is not the one they meet.
This happens
[12:03] Linn Darkwatch: I absolutely AM a skwerl in RL!
[12:03] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): It's wrong, but I think that people who like me here, probably wouldn't in RL. I'm very quiet and anxious in RL.
[12:04] Linn Darkwatch: John - my partner teases me that I am so shy and withdrawn IRL and a social butterfly here in SL
[12:03] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I came late and didn't hear about that chart, but I recognize that in any world I hate giving up control, and a lot of my problems with people in any world stem from that.

[12:03] Elektra Panthar: NB if you see your avatar as character it might not make sense meeting others 'out there', because it exists only in SL
Some are more comfortable interacting here
[12:04] Linn Darkwatch: It's not as scary here
[12:04] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Well Linn we are safe here pretty much
[12:04] Linn Darkwatch: Yesh
[12:04] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I love that avi Linn but surely that fish gets heavy
[12:04] Shelenn Ayres: Some years back, we rented half the Doubletree Hotel in Austin for an online meetup by many users who had been chatting online for years.... It was mostly successful ;)

[12:04] Elektra Panthar: NB: People think I'm extrovert but I actually have trouble making eye contact with people, I move around a lot
I'm more comfortable in a virtual setting
I don't like talking to people one on one, I do better with crowds
[12:04] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I'm an introvert offline but here its way easier to talk to people for me
[12:05] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I love Zoom because I can see people's faces.

[12:05] Suellen Heartsong: yes Ludova

[12:06] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): Yes Ludova. Zoom rocks!

[12:05] Shelenn Ayres: I prefer not using video... it is mentally exhausting in large meetings and distracting from the topic.

So If I video chat only my image is displayed.

[12:06] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I think I'm really an extrovert, I just got an AO from my childhood that prevents me from doing it

[12:06] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I'm an introvert on all sides of the screen

[12:06] Ludova (quippe.wylder): Ditto DeNasty

[12:06] Elektra Panthar: NB: For folks who feel shy, have you done this to your avatar to feel less shy?

Things like clothing etc

[12:06] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): hmm I don't know if I really look like an extrovert here. I'm definitely looking bolder and sticking more out than offline

[12:06] Shelenn Ayres: I am proud of my wrinkles and scars of life but they are not part of my avatar.

But my shape has my crooked nose and face shape and body are similar to my own.

[12:06] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): When I first got here, I made my avatar bigger. Now my avatar is the pretty much the same size here as my body in RL.

[12:07] Shelenn Ayres: The ideal you versus the real you

[12:07] Linn Darkwatch: I have customized my avatars a lot. My Tiny used to be a puppeh, which I really liked, but then I got a skwerl last year and fell in love with it. The skwerl is definitely me now. When I wear the puppeh now, it doesn't feel like me.

[12:07] DeNasty Tigerpaw: a friend of mine uses a feral/quad black wolf as her primary avatar

She found that conversations with males were a ton better when she's in wolf, but as soon as she goes humanoid? Their brains went to mush

[12:08] Elektra Panthar: NB: exactly DeNasty

[12:07] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Yes, I had a mesh body, but it and the head were so butch, I couldn't use it to be me

[12:07] Elektra Panthar: NB: People will talk about creating an avatar that reflects the personality they'd like to have

I'm surprised I don't see many non humans

[12:07] Linn Darkwatch raises paw

[12:08] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I'd like to try being a cat and see how that goes

[12:08] Linn Darkwatch: My main community is Tinies; we are small anthropomatic animals

[12:08] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I never thought of having anything other than a human avatar

[12:08] Elektra Panthar: NB: Maybe because I was logging in as researcher I found it more 'natural' to go as human

There's also a skillset involved with that

I'm not collecting data here, I'd have brought forms

Also a financial cost, I wonder if there are features of the world you struggle with to relate to your avatar

[12:09] Shelenn Ayres: Extending one's creativity can be a good thing :)
[12:09] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): I have been a little cat. I was fun! :D
It was fun
[12:09] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I think I will try it James
[12:09] DeNasty Tigerpaw: and the joy of SL, an avatar's apparent gender may not match the person behind the keyboard
[12:09] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I had a friend in the Tiny community so I have a Dinkie Squirrel avatar. Just to fit in. But I'm a biggie at heart.
[12:10] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): "Biggie at heart"
[12:10] Linn Darkwatch: Ludo - we accept avatars of all shapes and sizes. As long as all bits are covered and they don't step on us.
[12:10] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I wanted to look closer to my RL age, which is a huge challenge in here
[12:11] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Speaking of bits covered up, I like zooming inside heads and seeing what is or isn't there
[12:11] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I know, Linn, and sometimes I show up in Raglan as a biggie, but sometimes I fell more comfortable a s a squirrel.

[12:10] Mook Wheeler: NEWCOMERS & IMMERSION
** This generally applies to people totally new to virtual worlds and virtual game environments. SL= Second Life; PW= Physical World
A newcomer to SL does not yet have a sense of the place, or a 'feel for the game', so they drive their new avatar using what is immediately and naturally available -- their presiding everyday PW self. This creates immersion, because they take their avatar to represent themself. Thus they enter SL in 'default mode' -- they come in carrying a PW sense of self and their PW values, beliefs and understandings. Immersion is strong at this point because they are basically operating as themselves, only in a new place.
In other words, newcomers arrive in SL and wander around 'being themselves' initially. Over time -- (given enough time) -- everyone adapts to the environment, learning how to interact with it and its inhabitants, and the 'unwary immersion' of the newcomer changes: they learn to protect themselves by developing disassociative and augmentative
operational elements -- to 'step back' and not take things too personally, as it were. They become like a first-person/third-person hybrid. Like any person arriving in a new country, or settling in at a new job, the newcomer will adapt, evolve and eventually, learn how best to use (and manipulate) the environment to produce the most advantageous outcome for themselves. Learning how to protect oneself in SL -- both emotionally and physically -- is part of this process. Over time, the SL user will develop an 'SL self' that grew in sync with their SL use, which carries a set of literacies and understandings specifically adjusted for the SL environment.

[12:11] Linn Darkwatch: Mook - I'd wonder if that might be "as themselves or as an idealized version of themselves"
[12:11] Mook Wheeler: second one, Linn Yes
[12:11] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Thanks Mook, I have that saved
[12:13] Elektra Panthar: NB: this idea that when someone logs in they come in as themselves so they use their presumptions linked to the physical world- if that presumes they are here for a particular reason

Are their motivations social?

[12:12] Linn Darkwatch took a few years and pounds off when creating my first avatar, though otherwise it looked a lot like me

[12:12] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I first came in more as myself before i formed the idea and concept of my current representation

[12:13] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I'm an idealized version of me. I have an avatar that is my age, but she's not fat and she can stand up and walk.

[12:13] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I came in because I know I can interact online better than RL

[12:13] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I came in knowing that in SL, one can be anything. So I didn't feel tied to importing the physical world into the virtual

[12:14] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I make all the same social mistakes here, John. I think people might be a bit more forgiving here.

[12:14] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Mistakes aren't as important here, to either party

[12:14] Elektra Panthar: NB: So what they want to do is forming relationships and they are being themselves, and sometimes they might meet someone that treats this as 'just a game' I've always wondered about the logic behind that assumption - that they can bring a university here 'as is'

[12:14] Linn Darkwatch: I originally came in because SL was supposed to be going to be the next big thing in education, 10-12 years ago. But then I got hooked.

[12:15] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): 18+ education, unfortunately

[12:15] Suellen Heartsong: there are several campuses that are actually teaching classes online here, as well as support groups for different disabilities or medical issues

[12:16] Linn Darkwatch: Suellen - yes. But it's not the big thing that we thought it would be, a dozen years ago.
I kind of wish it was

[12:16] Suellen Heartsong nods

[12:16] Elektra Panthar: NB: It's why some have trouble bringing education in Facebook - many see it as 'leisure' place, not as a place for education
Context collapse - like if people came to my backyard
Different avatars don't all represent people in the way we think they represent people
I suspect the newest folks are motivated by social interaction, so with a 'human to human' script

[12:16] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Facebook is a pain
But you have to keep up with RL people there

[12:18] Elektra Panthar: NB: Here though sometimes you don't meet people but avatars - a version of a person in a specific context
There's a great research in this

[12:18] DeNasty Tigerpaw: I think people underestimate just how much of the real person bleeds into their avatars and how they act and talk, even if they're "playing a character"

[12:18] Ludova (quippe.wylder): In the physical sometimes we're meeting people, and sometimes salesmen, and sometimes politicians.

[12:19] Elektra Panthar: NB: In many ways yes those people are wearing different faces when they're being businessman i the physical world

[12:19] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I just said this elsewhere and maybe it would fit here -- I made a blind friend who avis as a mermaid, a nice room that is underwater. And I want to place markers around to help her since her "Radegast" viewer can see those and she can go to them.

[12:20] Elektra Panthar: NB: Would it be useful to have a systematic way of understanding that people and avatars are not always the same?

[12:21] Ludova (quippe.wylder): A book was written years ago that divided people in SL into three classes, dissociative, immersive, and something starting with A that is neither.

[12:22] Mook Wheeler: @Ludova -- Pamala Clift's notion of 'Disassociative, Immersive and Augmentative'

[12:19] DeNasty Tigerpaw: Language usage can tell you roughly how old someone is and where they're from in the world

[12:20] Linn Darkwatch: That's one thing that always takes me aback about Sansar assumptions - the idea that I would actually *want* to be a human avatar all the time and *want* to have my avatar reflect my RL expressions as I'm talking. I so would not want that. That's for video chat, not for being in a virtual world, to my mind.

[12:21] Elektra Panthar: NB: Yes that came out in discussion in virtual reality - why is there an assumption you'd want to go as human as default?
They've been designed to remove layers of mediation between you and the world
If you take technology and try to make them hyperrealistic, like putting cameras on athletes
We're seeing a similar thing in virtual spaces

[12:21] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Some people have hyper-real homes in SL, and I like having meditation orbs and weird lamps and things that are great but couldn't happen in RL

[12:22] Linn Darkwatch: John:' "Only possible in Second Life"

[12:23] DeNasty Tigerpaw: oh heck, I put train scripts into a mesh elephant to ride the rails

[12:23] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Oh maybe I should get some tiny-friendly furniture in my place

[12:23] Elektra Panthar: NB: I fly around even if I don't have to - it's more fun that way
I feared that if I presented hovering like this people would think I feel higher than others

[12:23] Mook Wheeler: we have a member who is a cloud, so he floats above us all the time

[12:23] Linn Darkwatch: And when I'm humanoid (elven, but that's a quibble), I sometimes jump because my AO does a cool flip when I jump.

[12:24] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): We saw that

[12:24] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I usually don't fly. I don't even camera-shop. I'm usually actually walking around the places I visit

[12:24] Elektra Panthar: NB: We don't have to replicate anything, we can go as far as we want in virtual spaces
It should not be possible to have a relationship with the avatar as me if it's non humanoid, and yet
That fascinates me
I wish we had more appreciation for it

[12:25] Linn Darkwatch: It's me in SL. Being run by me in meatspace.

[12:25] DeNasty Tigerpaw: it's the understanding that our essence isn't tied to our physical appearance...or digital appearance
[12:26] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): love the term meatspace
[12:26] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): "meatspace"
[12:26] Ludova (quippe.wylder): I put a lot of effort into making avatars that I feel comfortable with being me in.
[12:26] Ɖᵃʸᵗᵒⁿᵃ (daytona.coba): Didn't consider that: I turn from role playing in SL but am I actually role playing as this avatar?
[12:27] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): When my dad was in his last months, that's what I felt though I didn't express it that way, there's a real person in there but he's completely defeated by a horrible avi

[12:26] Elektra Panthar: NB: Yes I talk about meatspace as well, I refer to humans as fleshbags that way
It's about notions of singularity and how we might not need the 'fleshbags' in the future
[12:27] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): well where is the line between roleplaying and representing yourself?
[12:27] DeNasty Tigerpaw: the line is fuzzy
[12:27] Elektra Panthar: NB: I almost want to go so far as saying that it doesn't exist - I know it's controversial
[12:27] Mook Wheeler: how we use our avatars as 'visual profiles' depends a lot on whether there is an 'audience' or not, and what type of audience.
Nods. I said 'visual' because I don't speak in SL.
[12:28] Elektra Panthar: NB: If you define roleplaying as playing for an audience, then we could think we're always roleplaying
[12:28] DeNasty Tigerpaw: so true
[12:29] VAI Serenity: "all the world's a stage"
[12:29] Elektra Panthar: NB: if I came here and talked about statistic analysis without sharing data, some would follow, others would think I don't really want to interact etc. So we more or less are always performing in some way

[12:29] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): What might be the differences between 'wearing different hats', and 'wearing different faces'?
[12:29] VAI Serenity: oh wow James
[12:30] Elektra Panthar: NB: I'm not saying it's a bad thing. What's the difference between wearing a different hat or a different face?
They're intrinsically tied for me
[12:31] Ludova (quippe.wylder): My RP group needs a villain, so I offered to play the villain, and I'm learning a lot about myself that way, because I am exercising some impulses to be rude that are quite natural to me.
[12:32] Linn Darkwatch: Some RP villains have problems because others act as though the player was that way too
[12:32] Ludova (quippe.wylder): It's not other, it's a possible me.
[12:31] Elektra Panthar: NB: There [are] also behavioral profiles, speech profiles
I use a different accent and volume at home than the one I use when I present
With the character as symbiote, you merge with your avatar in a way, maybe it shows you aspects of yourself you hadn't considered before

[12:33] Ludova (quippe.wylder): Yes, it's the self I'd be if I were brought up in the society that that character was brought up in.

[12:33] Elektra Panthar: NB: I think it's psychological, about your connection to the avatar
These on the chart, they're intuitive neural processes, you don't go around thinking about it

[12:33] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): I remember long ago, when I left the military, I had to retrain my face to smile more, and look less 'dangerous'.
Made it a lot easier to talk with people.

[12:33] VAI Serenity: Question- When do we refer to our avatar as "I/me" and when do we say "he/him/she/her" or even "it"?

[12:34] Ruby Vandyke: I always say I or me

[12:34] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I always refer to my avatar as me, because he is an extension of my personality

[12:35] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): I'll say 'he' if he's glitching or an AO is making him look weird

[12:35] Buffy Beale: I think once I felt immersed then I started referring to my avatar as me, but before then it was just a cartoon

[12:37] Mook Wheeler: the 'disassociative/immersive/augmentative' continuum is a constant dynamic -- depends on the moment and context

[12:37] Linn Darkwatch: It's whether I'm talking about my avatar as the avatar body or whether I'm talking about the avatar as myself, things I'm doing. "The skwerl is glitched, but I will move that game piece anyway."

[12:38] Buffy Beale: Maybe it has something to do with customization... if you can change the avatar

[12:36] Elektra Panthar: NB: The way people refer to their avatar is an indicator of how they see their avatar
Some say whenever there's a glitch I call the avatar 'it', when it fails
In SL there's an overwhelming percentage of 'me' category

[12:37] Elektra Panthar: NB: In traditional videogame, which one do you think is the majority?
If you play things like Mario they see it as 'object' - the game environment gives a different perspective than a social platform like SL
In cases where you construct the avatar from the ground up there' s more 'personal ' investment
Do you have any observations or questions?

[12:38] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): When I play the Witcher its just Geralt. I feel more like a film director giving directions to an actor than it actually being me

[12:39] Ɖᵃʸᵗᵒⁿᵃ (daytona.coba): Many games have cosmetic options now. Allowing you to choose how the character looks based on your preference.. not the characters.

[12:41] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): I think it might be helpful for some of us with disabilities, to... hmm... learn to view our RL bodies the same ways we view our SL Bodies. So, if there is anything 'wrong', we can take as something which has little to do with the "REAL" us.

[12:41] VAI Serenity: Sounds very reasonable, James.

[12:41] Elektra Panthar: NB: I think having this idea that the user and the avatar can have different types of relationship between each other can be useful
It's fun and important to consider this with the prevalence and reliance of digital and social spaces in this time in history
This dichotomy has always been there for many people, but it's being brought to the foreground now - it's not seen as luxury or curiosity anymore
We are figuring out this complicated interaction that technically is two ways, but can be four ways (person and avatar)
At the beginning of FB there were college students just sharing pics, goofing around, and then it went public and it changed our perception of it
[12:43] Buffy Beale: Really interesting to see how it will change SL if at all with the new people coming/staying
Hopefully there will be more people who are interested in the good side of SL, the education and nonprofits etc and help the reputation of SL, that it's not just a game.
[12:45] Gentle Heron: Buffy, I hope so too, but am not sure how best to achieve that.
[12:46] Buffy Beale: Gentle I think we just keep plugging along...

[12:46] Elektra Panthar: NB: One area I'm proposing is to think of how we relate to our avatar
I haven't shared a lot of data but I can send the chart if you like
[12:46] Linn Darkwatch: Oh, I would say people relate to their avatars quite differently in SL as in most games
[12:47] Elektra Panthar: NB I can see us expanding our focus
We have a dataset of about 900 people - half are WoW people but we didn't plan that
We noticed the WoW players had slightly different parameters
I find myself staring at avatars and trying to analyze them
[12:49] Linn Darkwatch: Were the WoW players more immersed in their avatars? Or was the difference something else?

[12:49] Elektra Panthar: NB: one of the wild things is that talking to people through avatars or photos are very very different
[12:48] Buffy Beale: lol yes, that's the difference with a Zoom call, we can check out the avatars
[12:49] Gentle Heron: Wouldn't it be cool if we could click and read everyone's RL Profiles?
[12:49] Buffy Beale: for sure Gentle lol

[12:33] DeNasty Tigerpaw: my apologies, but RL is getting noisy. Thank you for the great session and discussion, Dr. Bowman!
[12:46] John Laughing (thesoundofonemanlaughing): Thank you for the presentation! I will excuse myself at this point. It was very interesting.
[12:47] Buffy Beale: this has been really great, and interesting discussion, thanks so much!
[12:33] bowmanspartan: nick.bowman@ttu.edu
[12:34] Elektra Panthar: NB: The email is the best way to get hold of me
[12:50] bowmanspartan: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/comc/faculty/faculty/nbowman.php

[12:50] Linn Darkwatch: Griefers treat everyone's avatars as objects.
[12:50] Elektra Panthar: NB: Object orientation is wired a lot towards competition

The griefers are interesting in the sense that they engage your avatar as object
For them it's doing things outside the rules

[Missing Chat: NB: Has anyone had encounters with griefers?]

[12:51] Ruby Vandyke: oh yes {laughing}
[12:51] Ɖᵃʸᵗᵒⁿᵃ (daytona.coba): too many times
[12:51] Linn Darkwatch: We have griefers, oh yah
[12:51] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): luckily not yet
[12:51] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): L*O*L
[12:51] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): yes
[12:51] Suellen Heartsong: yes
[12:51] Buffy Beale: sure, griefers are never far away
[12:51] Eme Capalini: yes, but you can leave
[12:51] Gentle Heron: I think it may be easier to stay safe in SL than in RL.
[12:51] Suellen Heartsong: exactly Gentle
[12:51] Linn Darkwatch: Gentle - usually
[12:52] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): Right Click, Derender & Blacklist
Wish could do that in RL
[12:52] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): I can't poof away in RL for sure
[12:52] Linn Darkwatch: Can't block someone IRL
[12:52] Ludova (quippe.wylder): There are griefer communities. They keep score of how much trouble they can cause and brag to each other.

[12:53] Elektra Panthar: NB: it's a great way to close! I see that toxic behaviour and a mismatch of how they see their avatars and how you see your avatar
Maybe someone in physical space is very kind and here they just see a bunch of pixels to have fun with
That's why I'm interested in studying this, it might give us tools to classify these things
Often I think people don't think there are consequences in the digital spaces
They don't think about emotional investment
[12:53] Buffy Beale: great observation, makes more sense to think of a griefer as not immersed
[12:54] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): they definitely don't see our avatars as we see them
[12:54] Linn Darkwatch thinks it's also like kids who scrawl rude graffiti on school lockers and laugh at the adults getting all upset about it
Sometimes they like to wind people up
They don't have to deal with the consequences - cleaning things, paying for it.

[12:57] Mook Wheeler: The problem with 'safety' in SL is that SL [personal] safety features are all 'passive' (except for the AR). The features tend to feature personal DISempowerment, unfortunately. All of them involves us running away or retreating or being passive, in some form. TP out. Log out. Mute. Derender. Even the Mute/Block/Derender feature is like putting a blindfold over your own eyes, or sticking your head in the sand. YOU can't see your tormentor anymore, but they're actually still right there in the environment, untouched, unabashed... lol

[12:57] Linn Darkwatch: Mook - and if you retaliate, then you can get reported for griefing yourself.
[12:57] Mook Wheeler: yes Linn
[12:58] Elektra Panthar: NB: in physical space it's similar when they tell you 'oh just file a report'
[12:58] Gentle Heron: It is the "turn the other cheek" doctrine in techno-action
[12:59] James Heartsong (peacefuljames.heartsong): When I Derender/Blacklist a real jerk, I get the same satisfaction as if I had gunned them down in RL.
Hope that does not make me 'bad'

[12:57] Linn Darkwatch: Oh, by the way, I wanted to comment that we associate others with their avatar too - not just us. It can be very shocking when you meet someone who you've always known in one avatar and suddenly they're in a different avatar
[12:57] Gentle Heron: Good point Linn
[12:59] Elektra Panthar: NB sometimes we make the same attribution mistake - we tend to think everyone else has the same relationship with their avatar than the one we have with our own avatar
[12:59] Ludova (quippe.wylder): Hubby is immersive and I'm just not. His RP avatar never leaves the RP sim.

[12:56] Gentle Heron: It is almost time to wind up this session.
Thank you Nick for this very stimulating discussion. I am sure we will all be thinking about many of the points that will be raised for a while. Thanks to Elektra for her transcription. And thanks to the audience for your interest and participation. Don't forget we have another session coming up on Wednesday 1pm SLT, and that one is about privacy and research.
https://virtualability.org/mental-health-symposia/mental-health-symposium-2020/
[12:56] Buffy Beale: this has been really great, thanks so much!
[12:56] Ruby Vandyke: yes, thanks so much!
[12:59] Gentle Heron: Goodbye to those leaving, or those standing to exercise their leg muscles
[12:59] Zacharias Zeppelin (olivenrot): thanks so much
[12:59] Ruby Vandyke: thanks for arranging this, Gentle!
It was very interesting
[12:59] Elektra Panthar: NB: Thank you very much everyone

[12:59] Elektra Panthar: <>