



LuAnn Phillips, through her avatar Thynka Little, is a consultant working as the Virtual Worlds Coordinator for the National eXtension Initiative, an Internet-based educational partnership of the Land-Grant University system, specifically addressing new models of delivery for their Cooperative Extension community educational programs. eXtension promotes collaborative development of web-based educational materials through national communities of practice and provides public access to these materials 24/7/365 via their website, with a goal of increasing educational capacity, expanding partnerships, and reaching new audiences. Virtual worlds technology is just one new tool being used as part of this process.

There are about 15,000 educators and supporting staff in the Cooperative Extension system, and Phillips' work is to support their efforts to experiment and explore how to use virtual worlds for extension education, to create and maintain a Cooperative Extension presence in the Second Life virtual world, to cultivate new partnerships and projects in immersive spaces, and to keep eXtension informed about emerging trends and issues in the use of virtual worlds for education. Thynka Little, LuAnn's Second Life avatar, can often be found at the Virtual County Cooperative Extension building on the Morrill2 sim in Second Life.

Ms. Phillips began using innovative technologies in 1985 in the paper industry, where she was involved in a pilot project that created an intranet and email system to connect mills, sales force, and distributors. A career segue into community mobilization around issues of homelessness and youth development provided her with new skills in project management, grant writing, and group facilitation. These new interests led her to a position as a Community Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development with Cornell Cooperative Extension, and subsequently to her work with eXtension.

As an avid and knowledgeable user of Internet technologies, Phillips sees the migration of Extension work into virtual worlds to be a natural fit. "Experiential hands-on learning has always been a core methodology for Cooperative Extension programs, and doing this in 3D virtual space will allow this paradigm to scale in a cost-effective way to reach new — even global — audiences." Phillips holds a BA in Psychology from Bates College, and is nearing completion of a Masters in Teaching With Technology at Marlboro College Graduate School in Brattleboro,

VT.



Her avatar, Thynka Little, can be found on the Morrill sims in the Second Life virtual world, building, scripting, planning projects, conducting tours, professional development classes, in-world meetups, and mixed reality events. Her first project for eXtension was the creation of a Virtual State Fair, an iconic venue familiar to all and dear to the hearts of Cooperative Extension professionals. The venue was designed to celebrate the launch of the eXtension Initiative in February 2008, and remains today as the hub of eXtension's activities in SL.