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Virtualis: Experience a Wow Meeting Environment

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The avatar of Dan Parks, founder of Virtualis and president and creative director of Corporate Planners Unlimited Inc.

If you've ever looked for an excuse to try out the 3-D online environment called Second Life, here's a good one: The grand opening of Virtualis, an eye-popping event island complete with convention center, exhibition spaces, and The Joan Eisenstodt Learning and Community Matters Center, a way-way-way-outside-the-box venue.

The opening celebrations happen April 23 and 24, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Pacific time, with a roster of speakers and educators that includes author Joseph Pine; meeting industry lawyers John Foster and Barbara Dunn; Stuart Mann, dean of the Harrah College of Hotel Administration at UNLV; futurist Jim Carroll; and more.



The Second Life world allows for wildly original décor in the Joan Eisenstodt Learning and Community Matters Center.

Of course, Dan Parks will be there, too. Parks, president and creative director of Corporate Planners Unlimited Inc., is the energy behind Virtualis. This is his second Second Life creation. In 2007, he launched the MeCo Mansion, a Second Life home for the Meetings Community listserv. And he's now directing his passion for the creative possibilities of Second Life to this more ambitious venture.

For those new to the concept, Second Life is a online world where visitors are rendered as avatars—virtual people. As a user's avatar walks or flies through the virtual world, he or she can be seen by any other user viewing that part of the world. Second Life is seen as many things, from hip and creative to clunky and hyped, but millions of “residents” have joined—some to gawk and play, many to create community and join in the building, and others to use the platform for marketing, education, or even [meetings](#).



The Virtualis Convention Center

Virtualis is best seen to be appreciated, but highlights include meeting rooms with full audiovisual capabilities, including streaming live video; and dramatic architecture and exquisitely rendered details, from swaying trees to working escalators to a sculpture that morphs every few minutes. The exhibition spaces can support up to four media sources, and in the smaller Eisenstodt center, up to 40 attendees at a time can convene in “meeting spaces” that can simulate a variety of stimulating environments, from a stalactite-filled cave to the Amazon jungle to an underwater environment, and more.

For more information and to receive a full schedule of events, e-mail [Dan Parks](#).

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