Break Out Groups from the Robots & Avatars Forum – 25th November 2009

Break Out Group 4

Imaginations & Reflections | Realities & Representations

- What exactly constitutes an avatar or robot, given that its meaning varies across different cultures and professions? In the West, an avatar is a graphical representation of a person in a virtual reality. An avatar is not a character. Defining what a robot is can be even more problematic and there was no definition that emerged from the discussion. A robot is not a humanoid representation.

- Gaming has introduced (in a practical 'hands-on' sense) the greater majority of people to the notions of avatars and virtual worlds. What will be the exciting developments on these platforms in the next 10 years? Will there be a technological convergence in which the best facilities of competing platforms will become ubiquitous standards? What technologies might allow us as individuals to better represent ourselves in the virtual games and worlds of the near future?

- When is interaction with virtual bodies more rewarding or appropriate than with their physical counterparts? For example, we now prefer physical teachers, but in the future as technology enables better interaction and availability to virtual teachers, how will this change?

- If "you" create an avatar of "me" is it an avatar? How is our notion of "self" affected by avatars?

- How do we (wish) to represent our "true" selves? At present we do this through various media such as virtual bodies, photos, blogs and profiles, each with various degrees of complexity and representation.

- Is an avatar more useful than a robot? Can something be both an avatar and robot?

- Many feel that technology is used today by governments and corporations in ways that erode our civil rights and privacy. In such a world, how are our robots and avatars affected now and potentially in the future?

- In physicality we have conventions for building respect and trust between each other. How will these interactions need to change in virtuality where identities (e.g. avatar bodies) can be controlled by more than one individual?

- In a world in which technology is constantly increasing the facilities of our virtual bodies, in which areas will our physical bodies remain dominant?

- Given the ubiquitous nature of mobile platforms (e.g. smart phones), how will we use these devices to interface with virtual worlds? Is cloud computing a potential solution?

- Nearly all of us have numerous avatars – even though we might not think we do.

- Through our avatar bodies, we can now engage in public 'chat' and discussion across numerous virtual realities. However, is this something that most of us need (or even want) to do? And if so (or if not), how might this change for future generations?