



## **For Immediate Release**

### **THE TECH MUSEUM OF INNOVATION PARTNERS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS TO HOST FIRST VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL MUSEUMS DAY ON MAY 18**

*The Tech and ICOM to Host 24-Hour Celebration in The Tech Virtual Museum in Second Life To Celebrate International Museum Day Around the World*

SAN JOSE, Calif., May 1, 2008 -- The Tech Museum of Innovation (The Tech), one of the nation's premiere science and technology museums, announced today that it is partnering with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to host the 31<sup>st</sup> annual International Museum Day (IMD) within The Tech Virtual Museum in Second Life on May 18, 2008. This year's IMD theme is "Museums as Agents of Social Change and Development". The Tech and ICOM have been working closely to develop an innovative program that enables museum professionals around the world to interact in the virtual world.

In December 2007, The Tech announced The Tech Virtual, an exhibition design competition focused initially on the theme of "Art, Film and Music". The Tech Virtual includes a replica of The Tech's San Jose facility in Second Life, where the IMD celebration will take place. The entire initiative is designed to facilitate projects and community connections using virtual worlds as a platform to build collaboration within the museum world. The partnership between the international museum professionals' association, ICOM, and The Tech Museum is a collaborative endorsement to support the future of museum exhibit design and an example of how The Tech is acting as an agent of social change and development, supporting ICOM's International Museum Day theme.

"Our partnership with ICOM for a virtual celebration of International Museum Day is very fitting given the theme of 'museums as agents of social change and development' and The Tech's vision of collaboration in the museum community around the creation of new, innovative and educational museum content," said Peter Friess, President of The Tech. "May 18<sup>th</sup> is going to be an exciting day for the global museum community as we experience together one of ways that we can create positive social and cultural change—through an open source approach to museum content and exhibit development."

ICOM has invited its international base of 25,000 individual and institutional members in 146 countries to participate in both the physical world and in the virtual world. The Tech in Second Life will provide a virtual space to host the planned activities, broken up into three unique areas: a welcome area, where staff from museums around the world will greet visitors and provide a tour; a lounge area serving as a forum for participants to mingle and converse about museum ethics; and an exploration area with an outdoor sound garden and a rock art grotto. T-shirt dispensers with ICOM-branded shirts will be placed throughout the virtual museum, and tours, discussions

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and exhibit interactions will run for 24 hours to ensure all who are interested are able to participate regardless of time zone. The celebration will be staffed by museum professionals from all of the major time zones around the world. Each participating museum will be represented by a “curator” avatar. The celebration will begin at 3:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time/9:00 a.m. Paris Time on May 18, 2008 and there will be one major event at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time/6 p.m. Paris time at slurl: <http://tinyurl.com/6hqj84>.

“While traditionally museums are known for their collections, more and more museums are taking an active key role in exploring social issues with communities to contribute to their development. International Museum Day shows that it is possible to gather together in a new way to interpret the past in light of the present to shape a better future,” said Alissandra Cummins, President of ICOM. “The developing world has been suffering from the digital divide. On International Museum Day, we want to show how museums can help bridge the divide between the virtual and real world through new creative interaction between museum professionals.”

Keeping with their commitment to bridging the digital divide, ICOM and The Tech will facilitate making connections between online and offline members so that those without access to Second Life can participate. CDs and DVDs of the opening ceremonies and IMD events will be available to ICOM members through its quarterly publication, or by requesting a copy.

The Tech’s use of Second Life’s platform to build, test and launch new exhibition content serves as a model and a hands-on opportunity for other museums interested in experimenting with new methods for creating content. The Tech’s experience with Second Life is shared and open to everyone. On April 17<sup>th</sup> of this year, The Tech announced the seven winning exhibits selected to be developed in the physical museum in June, along with cash prizes of \$1,000 to the “Best of” winners for Best in SL, Most Educational, Best Collaboration, Best Overall, Best Participant, and Best Teen SL virtual exhibits.

Tours, general meetings, Q&A sessions, “Learn to Build” and “Learn to Script” sessions are offered by The Tech in Second Life regularly. The complete schedule of events can be found on the collaboration Web site at [www.thetechvirtual.org](http://www.thetechvirtual.org). The Tech Virtual, which can be found at The Tech island in Second Life (slurl: <http://tinyurl.com/3x7bf7>).

The Tech’s virtual exhibition creation initiative in Second Life is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

### **About The Tech Museum of Innovation**

The Tech Museum of Innovation is a hands-on technology and science museum for people of all ages and backgrounds. Located in San Jose, California - the Capital of Silicon Valley - its mission, as a public-benefit corporation, is to inspire the innovator in everyone. Through hands-on exhibits, educational programs, the annual Tech Challenge team competition for youth, and the internationally recognized Tech Museum Awards, presented by Applied Materials, Inc., The Tech Museum of Innovation honors the past, celebrates the present, and encourages the development of innovative ideas for a more promising future. For more information about The Tech Museum of Innovation, visit [www.thetech.org](http://www.thetech.org).

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