Robert Freedman ’85 (English) ’87 (education) wants you to make money while playing a video game. Second Life (http://secondlife.com), a 3-D, virtual social networking world that makes The Sims™ look like a teething ring in comparison, is positioned, with its millions of “residents” worldwide, to be a marketplace force where real dollars can be earned.

Freedman, the past president of the American Society of Business Publication Editors and a senior editor of REALTOR® Magazine, has penned How to Make Real Money in Second Life (McGraw-Hill: 2007) to teach others how to hang their shingles in virtual reality.

The beauty of Second Life, which falls within the canon of computer and Internet games known as “massively multiplayer role-playing games,” is that you can open a virtual storefront for pennies, but you can attract real customers and rake in real dollars for your real business, Freedman says.

“Second Life is a 3-D world with a fully functioning economy in which people use “avatars”—virtual stand-ins of themselves—to navigate the environment,” he says. “Using their avatars, people build a parallel world and conduct business using virtual money that’s fully convertible to U.S. currency. Some people are earning thousands of dollars through their Second Life activity, and others are boosting their real-word businesses.”

It’s cheap to set up shop in Second Life. “You can rent an office space from someone for about $20 per month in real money, and buy office furniture for a couple of dollars,” he says.

Real estate powerhouse Coldwell Banker, for example, opened a store in Second Life, and created virtual tours of real properties for sale. “They got more than 5,000 virtual tours from people all over the world,” Freedman notes.