



Richard Hall



LATROBE UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Brushing up...and then some

Richard Hall received a Ph.D. in computer science from LaTrobe University in Melbourne, Australia, in 2002. Shortly thereafter, Hall found himself playing a different role in LaTrobe's laboratories and lecture halls: teaching courses in introductory information systems, beginning microprocessors, and advanced computer-aided software engineering.

In early 2005, Hall learned that he would also be teaching a fourth-year computer graphics course later in the year. Hall knew immediately that the subject would demand a lot of work on his part, since he had had little experience with this rapidly changing field over the previous 10 years. While casting about for a means to brush up on the topic — intensively, and in hurry! — Hall recalled hearing something about MIT's OpenCourseWare from a member of LaTrobe's technical support staff. He decided to visit the site to see if he could find a solution there.

To his great relief, Hall quickly located the lectures and labs from MIT's Course 6.837 — Computer Graphics, which guided him through an in-depth review of the subject. In fact, Hall credits the 6.837's labs — which he completed over the course of several months — with not only fine-tuning his existing skills, but also adding new techniques to his repertoire.

The whole process, according to Hall, saved him “an enormous amount of time and stress.”

Based on this experience, Hall plans to use a subset of the lectures and labs in his own course next semester. The MIT OCW resource has enabled Hall to offer a course at what he calls a “stunning” level of quality. One of the best things about the MIT OCW computer graphics materials, reports Hall, is how quickly and completely the students are empowered. “The students can get to the fun stuff immediately,” Hall notes. “They're generating aesthetic pictures right from the start, and all the while their math understanding is growing almost visibly in the background.”

And Hall is equally impressed by the aesthetic approach of the materials. “I was also delighted by the weaving in of historical art techniques,” he adds, “and the way the material is so coherently presented. It is truly inspiring to see this level of excellence.”