

10 00 2008 - MIT's Mission To Teach The World

MIT's OpenCourseWare project represents a progressive take on the future of education in regards to an increasingly global world. The program, which seeks to put the best of an MIT education within reach of anyone with a computer, has been around for quite some time now but has just recently become accessible from all corners of the planet thanks to the growing availability of broadband access.



The program already has an extensive collection of lectures and reading material on everything from Architecture and Engineering to Management and Physics - with new material arriving almost daily. To date, MIT's pilot program has made some 1800 courses available to anyone with the web; in fact, it's entirely possible that a relatively young child somewhere in Egypt is hard at work studying the words of some of MIT's finest as you're reading this.



To further the global reach of its OpenCourseWare program, MIT has begun making its materials available in an increasing number of languages including Traditional Chinese, Spanish, and Portuguese with more to follow sometime in the near future.

Though the program represents the bulk of MIT's undergraduate and graduate curriculum, the institution is careful to note that its program is not equivalent to a full education and that its online libraries do not come with degrees. Still, the possibilities created by the widespread availability of such a sheer amount of educational material are sure to open doors for children and adults alike both here at home and abroad as more of the world becomes connected each day.

Globally, MIT's OpenCourseWare site is accessed by more than 1.5 million people each month - a testament to the impact already delivered by its unique take on the world of knowledge. In the wake of its success, a number of other prestigious universities including Stanford and UCLA have followed suit with similar (but smaller) programs that complement Apple's iTunes U service - currently anchored by a substantial amount of content from MIT's program.

While the service may not provide a degree, it does provide a wealth of knowledge at a price that can't be argued with - free. In fact, by design, OpenCourseWare is perhaps the least restricted form of modern education available anywhere in the world. Anyone, at any time, can begin to teach his or herself some of the most complicated topics in the world thanks to the extensive library at their fingertips thanks to MIT. Of course, it goes without saying that without class times, grades, and other time constraints imposed by attendance at a university, the ease at which someone can pick up a subject in his or her spare time increases tenfold.

With MIT in front of you, you're free to learn, well, whatever it is that you'd like to learn. How about a little physics on your lunch break?