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[Open CourseWare movement grows across planet](#)

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It sounds like a Utopian vision - a high-quality, free education for everyone - but that's precisely what MIT and other prestigious universities are doing by participating in the The OpenCourseWare movement, a movement that puts all coursework online for anyone to peruse, [reports The Christian Science Monitor](#).

OpenCourseWare (OCW) is a type of intellectual philanthropy. Students don't have to register for classes but only need to log on to more than 1,800 potential courses at 12 universities who provide the course materials such as syllabi, video or audio lectures, notes, homework assignments, illustrations. Contrary to what one might think, giving away their content has not discouraged enrollment to the universities.

The OpenCourseWare movement begun at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2002 and has now spread to some 120 other universities worldwide.

"We believe strongly that education can be best-advanced when knowledge is shared openly and freely," says Anne Margulies, executive director of MIT's OCW program. "MIT is using the power of the Internet to give away all of the educational materials created here."

[The MIT OCW site](#), along with companion sites that translate the material into other languages, now average about 1.4 million visits per month from learners "in every single country on the planet," Margulies says. Those include Iraq, Darfur, "even Antarctica," she says. "We hear from [the online students] all the time with inspirational stories about how they

are using these materials to change their lives. They're really, really motivated."

Of course, perusing courseware is not a replacement for taking a full-fledged course, with interactions with a professor and other students - whether taken online or in person. Despite this, the OCW movement is very popular with students taking classes from all over the world.

But after the OCW project went online, MIT quickly realized it had two other huge constituencies: students at other colleges who wanted to augment what they were learning and "self learners," those not pursuing a formal education but interested in increasing their knowledge.

"The MIT OCW program is a generous and far-sighted initiative that will do more to change the world for the better than a thousand Iraq-style invasions," the MIT site quotes Leigh Pascoe, a self-learner in Paris, as saying. "It does much to restore my faith in the enlightenment of the American people and their great experiment in democracy. This program should be emulated by every university worthy of the name."

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