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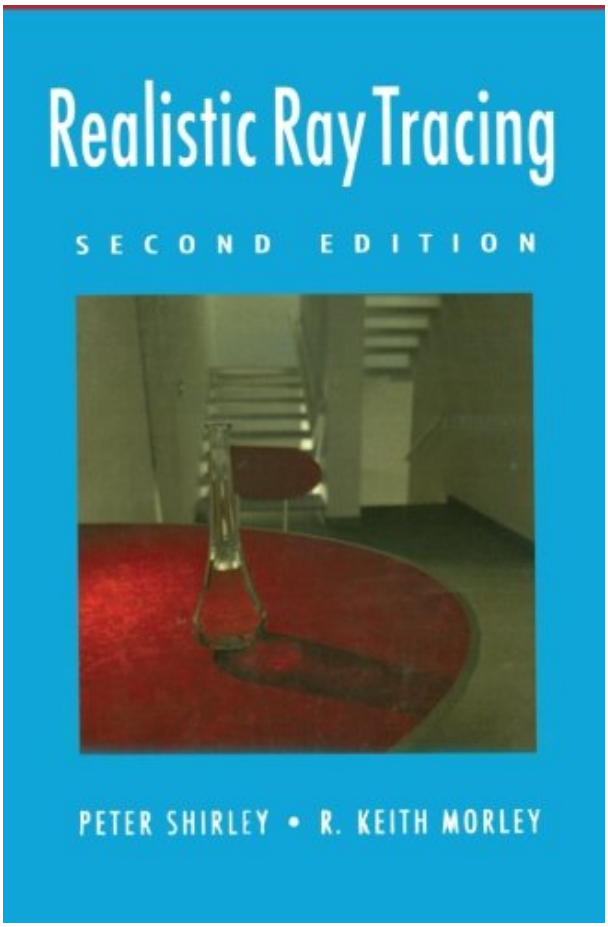

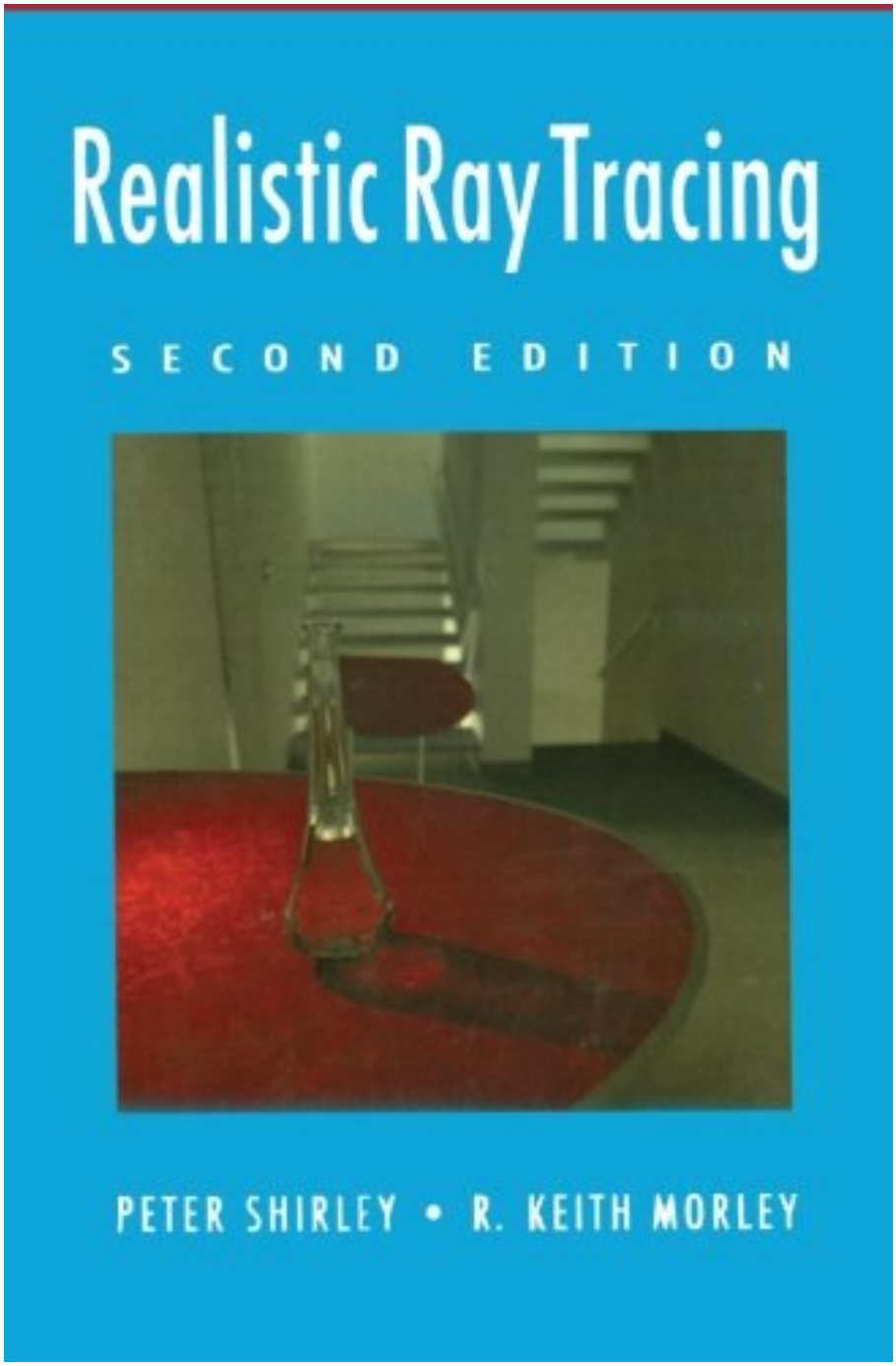

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About the Author

Peter Shirley is a professor in the School of Computing at the University of Utah. He is a member of the Visual Simulation Group, whose work focuses on the creation of images for the human visual system, including static and dynamic imagery for traditional displays and immersive environments. He has held positions at Indiana University and the Cornell Program of Computer Graphics.

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Concentrating on the "nuts and bolts" of writing ray tracing programs, this new and revised edition emphasizes practical and implementation issues and takes the reader through all the details needed to write a modern rendering system. Most importantly, the book adds many C++ code segments, and adds new details to provide the reader with a better intuitive understanding of ray tracing algorithms.

- Sales Rank: #389049 in Books
- Brand: Brand: A K Peters/CRC Press
- Published on: 2003-07-09
- Released on: 2008-12-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.88" h x .55" w x 5.81" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 235 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.
Comprehensive but no Introduction
By Eric Dubuis
The book "Realistic Ray Tracing" contains a description of all important ray tracing techniques and a guideline to the implementation of a ray tracing program. The book covers the basics like ray-object intersection, lighting, viewing and materials, but the major part of the text deals with advanced techniques monte carlo integration, antialiasing, soft shadows or path-tracing.
The book contains only some 150 pages and each technique is thus described in 3 to 10 pages. The language used is clear and the book is very readable. It is very easy to read the whole book or just to pick a specific chapter and get an idea of one topic. The main focus of this book is the implementation of a ray tracer. All techniques are described in a way that enables the reader to easily code them. All the math needed is

provided and procedural pseudo code fragments are given in some chapters. Despite being quite a thin book, the selection of topics is very good and most of the important ray tracing techniques are covered.
There are some problems with this book though. First of all, this book does not describe the ray tracing algorithm very well. Readers completely unfamiliar with this method might have some difficulties understanding the overall picture. This is also true for the implementation part. Although a lot of techniques and basics are explained, the author does not cover the implementation of a ray tracing framework.
Some of the chapters are simply too brief. The mathematical background is covered but not explained. In the first chapter, the author introduces 4-dimensional homogeneous coordinate systems without explaining them. This could have been done in 1-2 pages and would have helped to better understand a lot of the transformations used throughout the book. And the chapter about triangle meshes only deals with different approaches to store a triangle mesh. No word about the triangulation process itself.
Overall, this is a lovely book that covers a lot of ray tracing techniques, but is is no introduction to this method.

17 of 17 people found the following review helpful.
Not As Good As I Had Hoped...
By A Customer
I was initially excited about this book, as I have a somewhat silly notion that books produced by authors bold enough to condense a large subject into a compact little package are generally very tight, elegant works that are a joy to read. Wirth's Compiler Construction is an excellent example of this.
As I worked through this book, I found this to be anything but the case. Maybe this is my fault; after all I did say it was a somewhat silly notion.
I have found that the assumed knowledge varies widely as you work your way throughout the book, and not just in an easy-to-difficult progression from front to back. I have worked through approximately 3/4ths of this book, and have found it so riddled with errors that I often wonder if the author didn't just submit his first draft as camera-ready to the publisher. Every time I look at a pseudocode algorithm I check the errata page, and almost every time I find that there are errors. One algorithm was so incredibly wrong that rather than try and correct the code in my book with a pencil, I had to print the correct code, cut it out, and tape it over the existing one! After all of this you start to wonder how much you can trust what is being said, which is unfortunate.
The book does have some redeeming value, and if you keep in mind the large number of errors, you can actually learn quite a bit from it. It just annoys me to spend money on a "rough draft" book that could have benefited so much by a little more "proofing" by the author. I would also take with a grain of salt reviews here that are obviously written by people who read the back cover and the introduction with great zeal and formed their summary based on that. If you have not worked your way through a substantial portion of a book, you have no business writing a review of it.
I did like how the book was divided into a basic ray tracer, bells and whistles, and an advanced section. I got some nice results with just the first part. I also took some useful bits and pieces from the second part, and found the discussion about monte carlo methods and antialiasing interesting. I also did some soft shadow work, but supplemented it with a discussion from the Watt/Watt book (Advanced Animation and Rendering Techniques). This would most likely be a decent book for a dabbler new to the field (but having a decent mathematical background), and those taking a ray tracing class.

20 of 22 people found the following review helpful.
Crystal-clear for the serious programmer
By A Customer
I enjoyed this small, elegant book on how to write a modern ray tracer. As someone who has written his share of rendering programs, it's always a pleasure for me to see someone capture the essence of the idea as well as Shirley has done here.
Ray tracing is particularly well-suited to being broken down conceptually into bite-sized pieces, and this

book uses that concept for its organization. Each of the 18 chapters covers a specific aspect of writing a ray tracing program. The writing and illustractions are clear and easy to follow.

There is no source code in this book, but there are a number of pseudo-code listings. The heart of most of the chapters is captured in the math. The essence of ray-tracing is in the details, and the mathematics capture those details precisely.

Though Shirley has boiled down the math to its minimum, the casual reader with no mathematical background will have trouble understanding the advanced portions of this book. If the sight of an integral sign spooks you, then it's probably a good idea to start with a more basic text. The math isn't gratuitous - this is the real, practical nuts-and-bolts stuff that you need to write a mature, modern renderer.

It's also great fun. Ray tracers are the simplest rendering programs to write, and there's nothing like seeing your own code producing beautiful images. There are plenty of references in the bibliography if you want to go further.

If you're ready to roll up your sleeves and implement a state-of-the-art ray-tracer, and are comfortable with basic calculus, this book will serve you as an ideal roadmap and reference.

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