

Dr. Yili Zhao

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Experience

Facebook AI Research Menlo Park, CA

Senior Research Engineer, 2018 - present

- **Architected and led development of the open-sourced "Habitat-Sim"**, a photorealistic, high-performance 3D simulator, that enables researchers to train, develop, and evaluate embodied agents (virtual robots) performing a variety of tasks (navigation, manipulation etc.) in realistic 3D scenes. See [Homepage](#). I was the *sole engineer who wrote the very 1st version of "Habitat-Sim" (internal prototype) from scratch*. In the final release, I developed many core modules, such as physically based rendering, rendering acceleration, scene graph, asset management, visual sensors (pinhole, fisheye etc.). The research was published at **ICCV 2019**, and one of the **"Best Paper Award Nominees"**. (7 out of 1,075).

Facebook Menlo Park, CA

Senior Research Scientist, 2015 - 2018

- **Tech lead** in ads quality team. I devised, led, roadmapped, and developed projects on improving the post-click experience of Facebook ads. I designed metrics to measure the landing page quality, implemented reliable algorithms to improve the ranking precision, built data pipelines to collect real-time machine learning data, and also developed and optimized the deep learning models. My work significantly boosted the quality of the Facebook ads and company revenue.
- I worked in the ads ranking team, designed and developed real-time, ads backend infrastructure, data pipelines that could ingest billions of user events in real-time, and transform them into denormalized, flat data, ready for the Facebook machine-learning system.

Oculus, Facebook Menlo Park, CA

Research Scientist, 2014 - 2015

- I designed and developed a kinematics system to construct and optimize geometric models of human hands from the sampled data.

Nimble VR (acquired by Facebook), San Francisco, CA

Research Engineer, 2014

- I designed and developed visualization tools to analyze the recognition rates of the hand tracking system.

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

Graduate Research Assistant, advisor: Jernej Barbič, August 2010 - August 2014

- Developed a biomechanical model to set the mass density, stiffness, and damping properties of branches and leaves in complex botanical systems. Published at [ACM SIGGRAPH 2017](#).

- Presented a real-time dynamics system, as well as a comprehensive pipeline for simulation of anatomically realistic plants (trees, flowers, bushes, forests, etc.). Published at [ACM SIGGRAPH 2013](#). I delivered the 20-minute SIGGRAPH presentation. Our video clip has been selected as part of the [Technical Papers Video Trailer](#).

Video 1: Oregon White Oak, realistic anatomy, adult tree, 120,000 leaves

Video 2: Real-time physically-based simulation of plants

- Extended the well-known Featherstone's algorithm for linked rigid body systems to the deformable objects. Proposed a novel multi-domain dynamics method in reduced dimensional space for real-time simulation of flexible objects undergoing large-deformations. Published at [ACM SIGGRAPH 2011](#). Our [Oak tree video \(HD\)](#) has been selected as part of the [Technical Papers Video Trailer](#).

See Figure 1.

- Developed an algorithm to simulate time-varying, geometrically complex, penalty-based distributed contact between many rigid objects and articulated objects.

Published at [IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics](#).

Video: [Implicit Multibody Penalty-based Distributed Contact](#)

- **Code contributor to Vega FEM library**, a computationally efficient and stable C/C++ physics library for three-dimensional deformable object simulation.

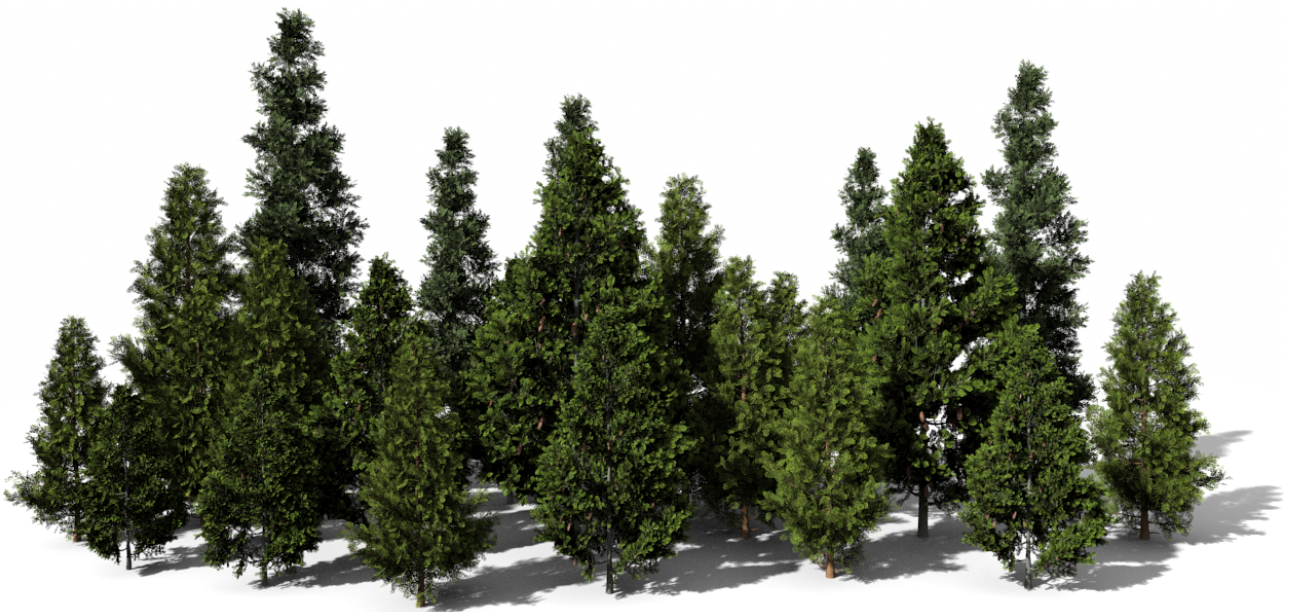


Figure 1: Simulating forest in randomized wind: 3 species, 24 trees, 1,920,525 triangles, 180,795 domains, 139,418 reduced DOFs, simulation fps: 3 Hz. [\[video\]](#)

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

Graduate Research Assistant, advisor: Suyu You, August 2009 - May 2010

- Developed a 3D simulator that allows the user to navigate in a virtual, **large-scale** and **complex scene** with many textured three-dimensional building models, and provides augmented reality experience to the user.

Peking University, Beijing, China

Graduate Research Assistant, advisor: Guoping Wang, September 2006 - July 2009

- Developed novel algorithms to accelerate rendering of a **large-scale, complex** scene with many three-dimensional massive models (funded by China National High-tech Research and Development Program).
- Developed algorithms to detect and repair the irregularities on three-dimensional triangle meshes (funded by National Grand Fundamental Research Program of China).

Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Undergraduate Research Assistant, advisor: Songcan Chen, Liyan Zhang, September 2005 - June 2006

- Developed an algorithm based on quadric error metrics to segment three-dimensional triangle meshes with color and texture properties.

Education

Ph.D., Computer Science

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, United States (2009 - 2014)

Advisor: Jernej Barbič

Thesis: *Plant Substructuring and Real-time Simulation Using Model Reduction*

M.S., Computer Science

Peking University, Beijing, China (2006 - 2009)

Advisor: Guoping Wang

Thesis: *Acceleration Techniques in Rendering Large-scale and Complex Scenes*

B.S., Computer Science

Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China (2002 - 2006)

Ranked **2nd out of 268**

Advisor: Songcan Chen, Liyan Zhang

Thesis: *Research on Segmentation of three-dimensional Meshes with Color and Texture*

Publications

Manolis Savva, Abhishek Kadian, Oleksandr Maksymets, **Yili Zhao**, Erik Wijmans, Bhavana Jain, Julian Straub, Jia Liu, Vladlen Koltun, Jitendra Malik, Devi Parikh, Dhruv Batra: “**Habitat: A Platform for Embodied AI Research**” *Proceedings of the IEEE International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV 2019)*, **Best Paper Award Nominee**

Bohan Wang, **Yili Zhao**, Jernej Barbič: “**Botanical Materials Based on Biomechanics.**” *ACM Transactions on Graphics*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (SIGGRAPH 2017) (July 2017)

Hongyi Xu*, **Yili Zhao***, Jernej Barbič: “**Implicit Multibody Penalty-based Distributed Contact.**” *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics (TVCG)*, Vol. 20(9), 2014 (* **joint first authors**)

Yili Zhao and Jernej Barbič: “**Interactive authoring of simulation-ready plants.**” *ACM Transactions on Graphics*, Vol. 32, No. 4, (SIGGRAPH 2013) (July 2013)

Skills

Strong research & programming experience in physically-based simulation, robotics, computer graphics, animation, numerical optimization, machine learning.

Solid experience in designing, developing, and debugging software, written mostly in C++, using state-of-the-art algorithms and procedures.

Solid knowledge of calculus, advanced linear algebra, classical mechanics (forward/inverse kinematics/dynamics, etc.), robotics (PD, PID controller, Featherstone’s algorithm etc.), Finite Element Method, numerical methods (optimization, Lagrange multiplier method, implicit numerical integration, etc.), physically based rendering, Object Oriented Programming, C/C++, computer architecture, parallel programming.

Languages: C/C++ (since 2002), Python, Objective-C, Presto, HiveQL, L^AT_EX, HTML;

Tools: vi, clang, gcc, Makefiles (Linux), CMake, OpenMP, OpenGL, Intel MKL, Intel TBB, gdb, gnuplot, git, Mercurial

Platforms: Mac OS X, Linux, Windows. All three used on a regular basis.

Paper Reviews

- SIGGRAPH 2016, 2017, 2021
- SIGGRAPH Asia 2015, 2016, 2017, 2020
- Eurographics 2017
- Pacific Graphics 2014, 2015, 2016
- Graphical Models 2016, 2017
- Neurocomputing 2016
- Computers & Graphics 2013
- CASA 2017

Honors and Awards

Best Poster for Visual Presentation, Department of Computer Science, USC, 2012, 2013

Chiang Chen Scholarship, Peking University, 2006 (**1 of 20** winners, university-wide)

Excellent Graduate 2006, NUAA, June 2006 (**top 1%**)

Bronze medal, the 29th ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest (Hangzhou site, 2005)

Member of Outstanding Student Program, NUAA, An elite subset of University Undergraduate Program, 2003 - 2004 (Ranked **2nd** out of 32)

Excellent Student Scholarship, 1st Prize, NUAA, 2003 - 2006 (Consecutive **4** years, **top 2%**)

Personal

I like swimming, free style. I swim 1 mile (nonstop) every day in USC Daland’s Swim Stadium. Now I usually do 2 ~ 2.5 km per day.

References

Dr. Jernej Barbič, Associate Professor,

Viterbi Early Career Chair

MIT TR35 Winner, Sloan Fellow

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Dr. Hao Li, Associate Professor,

MIT TR35 Winner

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