



Microsoft is Open-Sourcing WorldWide Telescope in 2015

Why is this great news? Millions of people rely on [WorldWide Telescope \(WWT\)](#) as their unified astronomical image and data environment for exploratory research, teaching, and public outreach. **With [OpenWWT](#), any individual or organization will be able to adapt and extend the functionality of WorldWide Telescope to meet any research or educational need.** Extensions to the software will continuously enhance astronomical research, formal and informal learning, and public outreach.

What is WWT, and where did it come from?

WorldWide Telescope began in 2007 as a research project, led from within Microsoft Research. Early partners included astronomers and educators from Caltech, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and several NASA facilities. Thanks to these collaborations and Microsoft's leadership, WWT has reached its goal of creating a free unified contextual visualization of the Universe with global reach that lets users explore multispectral imagery, all of which is deeply connected to scholarly publications and online research databases.

The WWT software was designed with rich interactivity in mind. **Guided tours** which can be created within the program, offer scripted paths through the 3D environment, allowing media-rich interactive stories to be told, about anything from star formation to the discovery of the large scale structure of the Universe. **On the web**, WWT is used as both as a standalone program and as an API, in teaching and in research—where it offers unparalleled options for sharing and contextualizing data sets, on the “2D” multispectral sky and/or within the “3D” Universe.

How can you help? Open-sourcing WWT will allow the **people who can best imagine how WWT should evolve** to meet the expanding research and teaching challenges in astronomy to guide and foster future development. The [OpenWWT Consortium's](#) members are **institutions who will guide WWT's transition from Microsoft Research to a new host organization.** The Consortium and hosting organization will work with the broader astronomical community on a three-part mission of: 1) advancing astronomical research, 2) improving formal and informal astronomy education; and 3) enhancing public outreach.

Join us. If you and your institution want to **help shape the future of WWT** to support your needs, and the future of open-source software development in Astronomy, then ask us about joining the OpenWWT Consortium.



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To contact the WWT team, or inquire about joining the OpenWWT Consortium, contact Doug Roberts at doug-roberts@northwestern.edu.