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## Microsoft and NASA's WorldWide Telescope

By [Roy Mark](#)  
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### Under a new agreement between Microsoft and NASA, planetary images and data from NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter will be available for Internet viewing through Microsoft's WorldWide Telescope.

Microsoft and NASA are teaming to make planetary images and data available over the [Internet](#). Through a Space Act agreement, Microsoft and NASA will jointly develop the technology and infrastructure necessary to make NASA content available—including high-resolution scientific images and data from Mars and the moon—for viewing through WorldWide Telescope, Microsoft's online virtual telescope.

Under the joint agreement, NASA's Ames Research Center in Moffett Field, Calif., will process and host more than 100 terabytes of data while WWT will incorporate the data later this year and feature imagery from NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. Launched in August 2005, MRO has been examining Mars with a high-resolution camera and five other instruments since 2006 and has returned more data than all other Mars missions combined.

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Microsoft and NASA also plan to make available images from a camera aboard NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter when publicly released starting this fall. With a scheduled May launch, the LRO will spend at least a year in a low, polar orbit approximately 30 miles above the lunar surface collecting detailed information about the lunar environment.

"This collaboration between Microsoft and NASA will enable people around the

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world to explore new images of the moon and Mars in a rich, interactive environment through the WorldWide Telescope," Tony Hey, corporate vice president of Microsoft External Research, said in a statement. "WorldWide Telescope serves as a powerful tool for [computer](#) science researchers, educators and [students](#) to explore space and experience the excitement of computer science."

To further complement the collaboration, Ames Research Center is developing a suite of planetary data processing tools that will convert historic and current space imagery data into a variety of formats and images of the moon, Mars and other planetary bodies.

"NASA has a wealth of images and data, from the Apollo and Lunar Orbiter missions to Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the Mercury Messenger flybys," said Chris C. Kemp, CIO at Ames. "This collaboration makes it possible for NASA to leverage exciting new Microsoft technologies to make NASA's data—and America's space program—more accessible to the public."

Microsoft's WWT is a Web 2.0 visualization environment that functions as a virtual telescope, bringing together imagery from both ground-based and space-based telescopes. The application allows users to pan and zoom in on images without distorted views at the poles.

"Making NASA's scientific and astronomical data more accessible to the public is a high priority for NASA, especially given the new administration's recent emphasis on open government and transparency," said Ed Weiler, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

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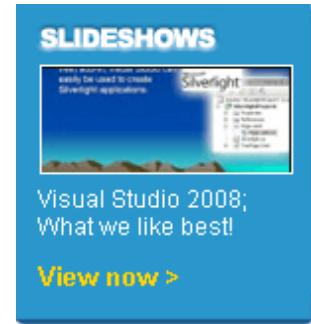
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