

DISCUSSION CONCLUDING AAS 11-680

Paul Gabor asked regarding the degree of relationship of the Virtual Observatory (VO) project with the Microsoft WorldWide Telescope project. He noted that the Microsoft WorldWide Telescope has been in development for almost two decades and is free, but is not platform independent. Rob Seaman responded that VO has been collaborating with Microsoft WorldWide Telescope, citing its “knowledge” of VO tables as an example, and that the main difference between Virtual Observatory and WorldWide Telescope is implementation details. Compatibility should be anticipated.

Neil deGrasse Tyson noted that Virtual Observatory project has been discussed since early 1990's; Tyson was therefore curious about its rate of progress, understanding that new data types are always forthcoming. Daniel Gambis believed the major issues in progress with Virtual Observatory project are related to system integrity, such as how to ensure that the files are correct. Tyson noted that when the Sloan Digital Sky survey was planned, the amount of photometric data created was expected to be greater than all of the other data up to that date, so careful thought went into setting a new photometric data standard; he queried whether VO has an occasion to foresee the expanding data needs of its community going forward. Gambis could not answer the question with any certainty, but Seaman followed that VO is a mature technology and interoperability is a key aspect of VO; nevertheless it still was not clear how digital signatures should work with VO tables.