

Re: Web-based Google Sky

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- *From:* Chris L Peterson <clp@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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On Fri, 9 May 2008 17:10:49 +0200 (CEST), Andrew Smallshaw <andrews@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

I've only looked at Google Sky briefly but I didn't really find it to be that good.

I agree. Google Earth makes great sense as a Web app, because the database is both very large and very dynamic. This would be difficult for most people to maintain locally, so it's worth the performance hit to run this application over the Web.

On the other hand, viewing the sky requires much less data— an amount most people can store locally (and most of the data is in the public domain, unlike satellite imagery). It's much nicer to use an app accessing local data, and there are a number to choose from.

The promise of something like Google Sky really lies in the possibility of integrating much richer data. For instance, it would be nice to look at a section of sky and view it in any wavelength range, or even "see" non-EM data like gravity maps. As wide field, fast survey cameras start coming on line, there's also the possibility of seeing truly current data.

Of course, apps like Google Sky are great for casual users, who are not likely to load a dedicated astronomy application on their computer. But that doesn't generally include amateur astronomers.

From what I've seen of Microsoft's new WorldWide Telescope project, it will pretty much blow away Google Sky in terms of the richness of its data.

Chris L Peterson
Cloudbait Observatory
<http://www.cloudbait.com>

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