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O25 - A Galaxy Within Reach: Navigating the Milky Way Galaxy through Tactile Models

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The study of Astronomy has established a reputation as fundamentally visual, but the desire to give visually impaired and blind people access to astronomy has long been pursued. Limited resources have impeded our curiosity about the cosmos, especially when studying complex celestial objects like galaxies. Even though telescopes offer useful astronomical image resources, there is a necessity to innovate and create new resources to cater to a wider audience and produce a more inclusive representation that will help the blind and visually impaired community gain access to astronomical resources. The goal for this project was to improve astronomy accessibility by using three different 3D models of a galaxy to translate visual information into tactile objects that can be explored through touch. The study aims to scrutinize the effectiveness of integrating 3D models in discussing astronomical concepts in hopes of clearing up common misconceptions and promoting a better understanding of the topic. The integration and use of 3D models in representing visual images of celestial objects, such as the galaxies, is an innovative and effective way to ensure that everyone can explore astronomy more inclusively. This aims to break down obstacles to accessibility and promote a more inclusive approach to astronomy education.

Primary author: REVENTAR, Rika Mei (National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand)

Presenter: REVENTAR, Rika Mei (National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand)

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