

Revolutionary map of the universe planned

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German astronomers are leading a worldwide effort to produce a revolutionary map and first digital "movie" of the universe.

Researchers from the Max-Planck-Institutes for Astronomy in Heidelberg, Germany, and the Max-Planck Institutes for Extraterrestrial Physics in Garching, Germany, and colleagues worldwide will use data from the University of Hawaii's new 5.9-foot (1.8 meter) PS1 telescope to discover billions of new stars, planets, galaxies and solar system objects -- including potential "killer asteroids" that threaten the Earth.

The project will also produce the most extensive 3-dimensional map of the universe ever made.

The consortium includes the two Max Planck Society institutes in Germany, the University of Hawaii, the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, Johns Hopkins University and a group of British universities.

The consortium will contribute the hardware and software for the telescope and data pipeline, as well as the cost of operating the survey in Hawaii for 3 1/2 years.

The astronomers said the telescope is undergoing engineering tests and will soon be equipped with the world's largest digital camera, utilizing 1.4 billion pixels.

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