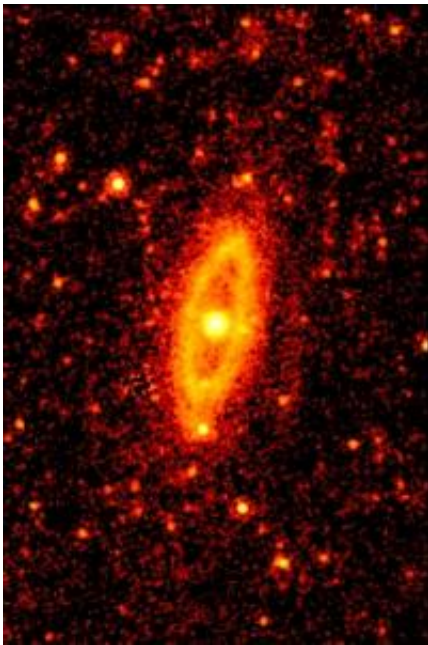


# Public to get access to spectacular infrared images of galaxies

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For the first time, the general public will be able to browse detailed infrared images of more than 200 galaxies. The pictures, originating from data from the orbiting Spitzer Space Telescope, will be released later this year. Dr. George Bendo of the Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics will highlight the new imagery in a preview at the National Astronomy Meeting in Manchester.

The pictures are mid-infrared (24 micron wavelength) reprocessed

images of [nearby galaxies](#) observed with Spitzer between 2003 and 2009. Amongst the images are the galaxies M60, M61, M88, M91 and M98, all of which lie between 47 and 63 million light years away in the large [cluster of galaxies](#) found in the direction of the constellation of Virgo.

The mid-infrared light from these galaxies primarily traces interstellar dust heated by the hot young stars found in the places where stars are forming. The images, which are being made available to the public for the first time, are a small sample of those that will be released later in the year.

Dr. Bendo explains how complicated it was to make the data usable for science. “The 24-160 micron Spitzer images need expert processing to be suitable for scientists, let alone the general public and until now many of them had been overlooked. I volunteered to do this work for these galaxies as they will soon be observed by the Herschel Space Observatory at far-infrared wavelengths. With processed Spitzer data, astronomers will be able to make a direct comparison between the views from each telescope.”

He is delighted to be bringing the Spitzer material to the public: “These data show the intimate connection between the [interstellar dust](#) in galaxies, here seen shining in [infrared light](#), and the formation of stars on a grand scale. Now anyone with Internet access can download these extraordinary pictures for themselves and take a look at some of the objects being studied by the world’s leading astronomers, as part of their effort to better understand the universe we live in.”

Provided by Royal Astronomical Society

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