

THE VIRTUAL OBSERVATORY

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The Virtual Observatory (VO) is a 'movement' aimed at achieving interoperability among major astrophysical archives. The VO is supported by a number of national projects, and by an international collaboration, the International Virtual Observatory Alliance (IVOA), aimed at establishing world-wide interoperability standards in astronomy. The VO will make possible for the average astronomer to mine and easily compare data from different sites (and wavelengths), as well as to share data with the community. I will give the scientific rationale for the VO, describe the IVOA activities, and discuss the present achievements and future outlook.