

Accessible Astronomy to put the universe in the hands of the visually impaired

LOCATION: Granada

DURATION: 1'47''

SUMMARY: Enrique Pérez is an astronomer, but he also suffers from an illness which has caused him to progressively lose his sight. He combined these two aspects of his life and created, along with other members of the Andalusia Astrophysics Institute, based in Granada, the project Accessible Astronomy with which he brings this branch of science closer to the blind or those with poor vision.

VTR:

Enrique Pérez is an astronomer and works in the Andalusia Astrophysics Institute. He also suffers from an illness, Cognitive Pigmentary Retinitis, which has led to him progressively lose his sight. But this hasn't stopped him from committing to research and now, with the Accessible Astronomy project, he is starting to share his knowledge.

Enrique Pérez
Accessible Astronomy

"Sight is very important, nowadays it's very difficult to connect to society without it, but it doesn't stop you from being involved in science or astronomy."

To share his knowledge he has set up this group which, like him, are visually impaired. Thus Accessible Astronomy puts emphasis on the spread of astronomy among the blind and the short sighted.

Enrique Pérez
Accessible Astronomy

"And although my career has revolved around research, I decided to start making my research public and I got a great reception, really nice. Because there's practically no one that does what I do which is teaching astronomy to people that can't see."

To implement all this, he has developed studios throughout Spain where sight is substituted for hearing and touch. In this studio for example they are using semi-spheres to observe the constellations of the northern hemisphere.

Emilio García
Astrophysics Institute
Circulation Unit

"Sharing is communicating, and so you have to try and adapt the communication for everyone. By default, astronomy is such a visual science, so it's a unique challenge from an educative point of view, and in fact on this project I am learning so much from Enrique, and from how to relate to people whose learning process is very different from yours."

A voice acts as a guide for the blind or for people that for a few minutes are left in the dark through a fascinating interstellar journey.

Background

"Join stars in the same constellation."

STUDENT

"Every time I think about the Big Dipper, about the North Star, I know what its shape is. I think about the dotted lines, I think about the dots, about the biggest which are the brightest, and the smallest which are the least bright. So it's been a before and after on my concept of astronomy."

Enrique and his team, through this venture, are putting the universe in their hands.

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