PROJECT REPORT

3D Solar System Explorer

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1. Introduction

The **3D Solar System Explorer** is a Python-based educational simulation that visualizes our solar system in an interactive, animated 3D-like interface. The project is developed using **Tkinter**, Python's built-in GUI library, and enhanced with advanced mathematical modeling to simulate orbital dynamics and perspective-based 3D visualization. This application is designed primarily for students, educators, and astronomy enthusiasts to explore the structure, motion, and characteristics of planets and moons in an immersive way.

2. Project Objectives

- To develop a user-friendly, interactive simulation of the solar system.
- To represent planetary data using accurate scaled visuals and animation.
- To allow users to explore scientific facts about each celestial body.
- To promote STEM education through hands-on digital exploration.

3. Tools and Technologies Used

Tool / Library	Purpose	
Python 3.x	Core programming language	
Tkinter	GUI development (canvas, controls, menus)	
Pillow (PIL)	Image processing for planets and rings	
CSV Files	Store planetary and satellite data	
Math & Random Libraries	Orbital mechanics and positioning	
Threading	Smooth animation rendering	
Datetime Module	Time simulation	

Note: Although the initial proposal mentioned vPython, the project was implemented entirely using Tkinter with a custom 3D engine. This decision provided finer control over the animation, simplified the architecture, and avoided complex dependencies.

4. System Architecture & Design

4.1 Architecture Overview

- The application follows a modular object-oriented design, with three core classes:
 - Planet: Handles data and position of each planet.
 - Moon: Represents moons orbiting each planet.
 - SolarSystemExplorer: Main application controller (GUI, animation, logic).

4.2 GUI Design

- The main interface is a Tkinter window split into:
 - o Canvas Area (Left): Displays the animated solar system.
 - Control Panel (Right): Includes buttons, sliders, and information text box.

4.3 Key Features

- 3D Simulation: Achieved using 2.5D projection (X, Y, Z with perspective) on a 2D canvas.
- Zoom & Pan: Users can zoom in/out or drag the view to focus on regions.
- **Date Simulation**: Displays current simulated date/time during animation.
- Interactive Info Panel: Clicking on a planet opens a detailed info box.
- Custom Themes: Users can switch between dark, light, and blue themes.
- Orbits, Moons, and Rings: All are dynamically rendered using parametric calculations.

5. Functional Description

5.1 Real-Time Animation

- Each planet orbits the Sun at a different speed using angular motion logic.
- Orbits are elliptical or circular depending on inclination and eccentricity.
- A background thread runs the animation at 20 FPS to ensure smooth rendering.

5.2 Planet Information Display

- Clicking on a planet opens a textual panel showing:
 - Scientific data: Mass, diameter, orbital period, axial tilt, etc.
 - Moon count and names
 - Fun facts and trivia
 - Planet images (if available)

5.3 Interactive Controls

- Play, Pause, Reset, Zoom controls
- Keyboard shortcuts for quick access
- Toggle options for:
 - Orbit paths
 - Planet labels
 - Moons
 - 3D perspective

5.4 Data Loading & Persistence

- Reads planetary and moon data from CSV files.
- Allows saving/loading simulation states using JSON.
- Exports screenshot and save session data.

6. Mathematical and Technical Concepts

- **3D-like Projection**: Converts spherical coordinates into 2D with depth (z) affecting the vertical perspective.
- Orbital Motion: Angular movement using angle += speed * time_scale.
- Axial Tilt and Inclination: Used to visually rotate orbital planes.
- **Image Texturing**: Simulates lighting using pixel intensity shading.
- Zoom and Pan Calculations: Centering based on user interactions and scaling factors.

7. Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Solution
vPython integration complexity	Replaced with custom 3D projection in Tkinter
Performance optimization	Used threading and redraw throttling
Lack of native 3D in Tkinter	Simulated depth using z-axis projections and angle- based rotation
Image scaling artifacts	Applied PIL-based resizing with high-quality filters

8. Results

- The application runs smoothly with interactive controls.
- All major features of the proposal have been fully implemented.
- Moons, rings, orbits, and 3D perspective are functioning accurately.
- Planet data is educational, engaging, and visually supported.
- UI is intuitive and flexible, suitable for both casual users and students.

9. Learning Outcomes

- Mastery of Python GUI development using Tkinter
- Practical understanding of orbital mechanics and projections
- Experience with real-time animation, threading, and simulation loops
- Enhanced problem-solving in adapting to tech constraints (e.g., replacing vPython)
- Integrated art and science through dynamic visualization and design

10. Core Classes & Their Functions

10.1 Planet Class

Purpose: Represents a celestial body (planet) with physical, orbital, and visual properties.

Attribute	Description	Why Used?	Alternative Approach	Possible Improvement
name	Planet name (e.g., "Earth")	Basic identification	Could use enum for planets	Add IAU naming conventions
radius	Scaled radius for visualization	Controls planet size in GUI	Dynamic scaling based on real size	Auto-scale based on window size
distance_from_sun	Scaled distance from sun	Controls orbit radius	Logarithmic scaling for realism	Adjustable scale factor
orbital_speed	Radians per frame for orbit	Determines movement speed	Real-time physics (Newtonian)	Use Kepler's laws for accuracy
color	Hex color for planet (fallback)	Visual representation	Use only textures, no color	Dynamic color based on temp
moons	Number of moons	Info display	List of `Moon` objects	Load from NASA API
facts	Fun facts about planet	Educational content	Link to Wikipedia	Add citations/sources

axial_tilt	Tilt in	3D rotation	Ignore tilt in	Animate
	degrees	effect	2D mode	seasonal
	(e.g., 23.5°			changes
	for Earth)			
orbital_inclination	Orbit tilt	Realistic 3D	Assume 0°	Adjustable view
	relative to	orbits	for simplicity	angles
	ecliptic			
has_rings	Boolean for	Visual effect	Auto-detect	Procedural ring
	ringed		from texture	generation
	planets			
image_path	Path to	High-quality	Use vector	Support WebP
	planet	visuals	graphics	format
	texture			
mass, diameter,	Scientific	Detailed info	Load from	Real-time data
etc	properties	panel	CSV/API	updates

Key Methods:

- update_position(): Updates planet's location based on orbital mechanics.
- **reset_position():** Resets to initial state (for simulation reset).

10.2 Moon Class

Purpose: Represents a moon orbiting a planet.

Attribute	Description	Why Used?	Alternative	Possible
			Approach	Improvement
name	Moon name	Identification	Use NASA IDs	Add discovery
	(e.g., "Moon")			details
planet	Parent planet	Orbital	Store planet	Support binary
	object	reference	name only	systems
radius	Scaled size	Visual size	Relative to	Real-scale
			planet	rendering
distance	Distance from	Orbit radius	Dynamic tidal	Simulate
	planet		forces	Lagrange
				points
orbital_speed	Movement	Animation	Physics-based	Perturbation
	speed			effects
color	Fallback color	If no texture	Grayscale	Procedural
			based on	generation
			albedo	
facts	Moon	Education	Link to	Add crater
	information		database	maps

Key Methods:

- update_position(): Adjusts moon's position relative to its planet.
- reset_position(): Returns to starting location.

11. Main Application: SolarSystemExplorer

11.1 Initialization & Setup

Key Steps:

1. Window Setup:

- 1400x900 resolution, dark theme (#121212).
- Why? Space-themed UI, better contrast for stars.
- Alternative: Responsive layout.

2. Pygame Mixer:

- Background music support.
- Why? Better than playsound for looping.
- Alternative: Use simpleaudio for lightweight option.

3. Image Loading:

- Sun, planets, rings loaded via PIL (ImageTk.PhotoImage).
- Why? Tkinter-compatible format.
- Alternative: Use OpenCV for advanced effects.

4. Data Loading:

- Planets from *planets.csv*, moons from *satellites.csv*.
- Why? Easy to modify without code changes.
- Alternative: SQLite database.

11.2 GUI Components

Component	Description	Why Used?	Alternative	Improvement
-----------	-------------	-----------	-------------	-------------

Canvas	1100x700	Tkinter's built-	Pygame/QtCanvas	GPU
	drawing area	in graphics		acceleration
Control	Right sidebar	Easy access	Collapsible panel	Dark/light
Panel	(250px)	to controls		mode
Music	Play/pause,	Interactive	Remove if not	Spotify API
Controls	volume	experience	needed	integration
Time Scale	0.1x to 5.0x	Adjust	Fixed increments	Logarithmic
Slider	speed	simulation		scaling
		speed		
View Options	Toggles	Customizable	Presets (e.g.,	Save
	(orbits,	UI	"Education Mode")	preferences
	names, 3D)			
Planet	Dropdown for	Easy selection	Click-to-select on	Search
ComboBox	planet info		canvas	functionality

11.3 Core Functionality

A. Animation System

Threaded Animation

- Runs in a separate thread (threading.Thread).
- o Why? Prevents GUI freezing.
- o Alternative: root.after() for simpler logic.

Time Scaling

- Adjusts planet.update_position(time_scale).
- Improvement: Add acceleration/deceleration.

B. Rendering Engine

Starfield Background

- o 100 random white dots (canvas.create_oval).
- o Why? Simple space effect.
- o Alternative: Use Milky Way panorama.

3D Effects

- Z-axis depth (y += z * depth_factor).
- o Why? Fake 3D without OpenGL.
- o Alternative: Use pygame for real 3D.

Planet Textures

- Loaded via Pillow → ImageTk.PhotoImage.
- Why? Tkinter compatibility.
- Alternative: Use OpenCV for dynamic lighting.

C. User Interaction

Feature	Implementation	Why?	Improvement
Click & Drag	canvas.bind(" <b1-motion>")</b1-motion>	Pan the view	Inertia scrolling
Mouse Wheel	canvas.bind(" <mousewheel>")</mousewheel>	Zoom in/out	Smooth zooming
Zoom			_
Planet	get_planet_at_position()	Click-to-info	Tooltip previews
Selection			

12. Comparison: Current vs. Improved Approach

Feature	Current	Better Alternative	Reason
	Implementation		
3D Rendering	Fake depth with z-	Pygame	Realistic shadows
	axis	3D`/`OpenGL	
Physics	Fixed orbital speed	Newtonian gravity	More accurate
Data Loading	CSV files	SQLite/NASA API	Live updates
UI Framework	Tkinter	PyQt/PySide	Modern look
Textures	Static images	Procedural	Dynamic weather
		generation	

13. Conclusion

The **3D Solar System Explorer** is a successful demonstration of using Python to create an interactive, educational, and visually rich software application. By blending scientific accuracy with user-focused design, the project fulfills its educational purpose while offering extensibility for future enhancements like sound, VR support, or deeper planetary exploration.

14. References

- NASA Planetary Fact Sheets: https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/factsheet/
- Tkinter Documentation: https://docs.python.org/3/library/tkinter.html
- Pillow (PIL): https://pillow.readthedocs.io/
- Python Math Module: https://docs.python.org/3/library/math.html
- Astronomy Articles and Wikipedia

15. Code Snippets

```
import warnings
warnings.filterwarnings( action: "ignore", category=UserWarning)
import tkinter as tk
from tkinter import ttk, messagebox, filedialog
import math
import time
import threading
from PIL import Image, ImageTk, ImageOps
import os
import csv
import random
from datetime import datetime, timedelta
import pygame # Added for background music
class Planet:
   def __init__(self, name, radius, distance_from_sun, orbital_speed, color,
                 moons, facts, axial_tilt, orbital_inclination, has_rings=False,
                 image_path=None, mass=None, diameter=None, density=None,
                 gravity=None, escape_velocity=None, rotation_period=None,
                 length_of_day=None, perihelion=None, aphelion=None,
                 orbital_period=None, orbital_velocity=None,
                 orbital_eccentricity=None, obliquity_to_orbit=None,
                 mean_temperature=None, surface_pressure=None,
                 has_ring_system=None, has_global_magnetic_field=None):
        self.name = name
        self.radius = radius # Scaled radius for visualization
        self.distance_from_sun = distance_from_sun # Scaled distance
        self.orbital_speed = orbital_speed # Radians per frame
        self.color = color
        self.moons = moons
        self.facts = facts
        self.axial_tilt = axial_tilt # Axial tilt in degrees
        self.orbital_inclination = orbital_inclination # Orbital inclination in degrees
       self.has_rings = has_rings # Whether the planet has rings
```

```
class Planet:
   def __init__(self, name, radius, distance_from_sun, orbital_speed, color,
       self.angle = random.uniform( a: 0, 2 * math.pi) # Random starting position
       self.initial_angle = self.angle # Store initial angle for reset
       self.z = 0 # For 3D depth
       self.rotation_angle = 0 # For planet rotation
       # Image handling
       self.image_path = image_path
       self.image = None # Will store the processed image
        self.photo_image = None # Will store the PhotoImage for tkinter
        self.texture_image = None # For 3D texture mapping
       self.mass = mass # 10^24 kg
       self.diameter = diameter # km
       self.density = density # kg/m<sup>3</sup>
       self.gravity = gravity # m/s²
       self.escape_velocity = escape_velocity # km/s
       self.rotation_period = rotation_period # hours
       self.length_of_day = length_of_day # hours
       self.perihelion = perihelion # 10^6 km
        self.aphelion = aphelion # 10<sup>6</sup> km
       self.orbital_period = orbital_period # days
       self.orbital_velocity = orbital_velocity # km/s
       self.orbital_eccentricity = orbital_eccentricity
       self.obliquity_to_orbit = obliquity_to_orbit # degrees
        self.mean_temperature = mean_temperature # °C
        self.surface_pressure = surface_pressure # bars
        self.has_ring_system = has_ring_system
        self.has_global_magnetic_field = has_global_magnetic_field
       self.moon_objects = []
    def update_position(self, time_scale=1.0):
       self.angle += self.orbital_speed * time_scale
```

```
self.rotation_angle += 0.02 * time_scale # Planet rotation
        # Calculate position in 3D space with inclination
        self.x = self.distance_from_sun * math.cos(self.angle)
        self.y = self.distance_from_sun * math.sin(self.angle) * math.cos(math.radians(self.orbital_inclination))
        self.z = self.distance_from_sun * math.sin(self.angle) * math.sin(math.radians(self.orbital_inclination))
        for moon in self.moon_objects:
            moon.update_position(time_scale)
    def reset_position(self):
        self.angle = self.initial_angle
        self.rotation_angle = 0
        for moon in self.moon_objects:
           moon.reset_position()
class Moon:
    def __init__(self, name, planet, radius, distance, orbital_speed, color, facts=None):
        self.name = name
        self.planet = planet
        self.radius = radius
        self.distance = distance
        self.orbital_speed = orbital_speed
        self.color = color
        self.facts = facts or f"Natural satellite of {planet.name}"
        self.angle = random.uniform( a: 0, 2 * math.pi)
        self.initial_angle = self.angle # Store initial angle for reset
        self.x = 0
    def update_position(self, time_scale=1.0):
```

```
def update_position(self, time_scale=1.0):
       self.angle += self.orbital_speed * time_scale
       self.x = self.planet.x + self.distance * math.cos(self.angle)
       self.y = self.planet.y + self.distance * math.sin(self.angle)
   def reset_position(self):
       self.angle = self.initial_angle
class SolarSystemExplorer:
   def mix_colors(self, color1, color2, ratio):
       def hex_to_rgb(hex_color):
            hex_color = hex_color.lstrip('#')
           return tuple(int(hex_color[i:i + 2], 16) for i in (0, 2, 4))
       def rgb_to_hex(rgb):
           return '#%02x%02x%02x' % rgb
       rgb1 = hex_to_rgb(color1)
       rgb2 = hex_to_rgb(color2)
       mixed = tuple(int(rgb1[i] * ratio + rgb2[i] * (1 - ratio)) for i in range(3))
       return rgb_to_hex(mixed)
   def __init__(self, root):
       self.root = root
       self.root.title("3D Solar System Explorer")
       self.root.geometry("1400x900")
       self.root.configure(bg='#121212')
```

```
def load_planet_data(self, filename):
   try:
        with open(filename, newline='') as csvfile:
            return {row['planet']: row for row in csv.DictReader(csvfile)}
   except Exception as e:
        print(f"Error loading planet data: {e}")
        return {}
def load_satellite_data(self, filename):
   try:
        with open(filename, newline='') as csvfile:
           return list(csv.DictReader(csvfile))
   except Exception as e:
        print(f"Error loading satellite data: {e}")
       return []
def initialize_planets(self):
   planets_data = {
        'Mercury': {
                "Closest to the Sun. Temperature varies from 800°F to -300°F! "
                "Spins backward and has a thick, toxic atmosphere of CO<sub>2</sub> with clouds of sulfuric acid."
        'Earth': {
```

```
def count_moons(self, planet_name):
   return sum(1 for moon in self.satellite_data if moon['planet'] == planet_name)
def initialize_moons(self):
    moon_data = {
    for planet in self.planets:
        if planet.name in moon_data:
            for moon_info in moon_data[planet.name]:
                name, radius, distance, speed, color = moon_info
                moon = Moon(name, planet, radius, distance, speed, color)
                planet.moon_objects.append(moon)
def load_images(self):
    sun_paths = ['images/sun.jpg', 'images/sun.png', 'images/Sun.jpg', 'images/Sun.png']
    for path in sun_paths:
        if os.path.exists(path):
                img = Image.open(path)
                img = img.resize( size: (100, 100), Image.Resampling.LANCZOS)
                self.sun_image = ImageTk.PhotoImage(img)
                break
            except Exception as e:
                print(f"Error loading sun image: {e}")
```

```
print(f"Error loading ring image: {e}")
def create_texture_map(self, img, base_color):
   try:
        if img.mode != 'RGBA':
            img = img.convert('RGBA')
        width, height = img.size
        pixels = img.load()
        for y in range(height):
            for x in range(width):
                r, g, b, a = pixels[x, y]
                dx = (x - width / 2) / (width / 2)
                dy = (y - height / 2) / (height / 2)
                distance = math.sqrt(dx * dx + dy * dy)
                if distance <= 1.0: # Inside circle</pre>
                    intensity = 1.0 - distance * 0.7
                    intensity = max(0.3, min(1.0, intensity))
                    r = int(r * intensity)
                    g = int(g * intensity)
                    b = int(b * intensity)
                    # Keep original alpha
                    pixels[x, y] = (r, g, b, a)
                    pixels[x, y] = (0, 0, 0, 0)
        return img
    except Exception as e:
        print(f"Error creating texture map: {e}")
        return None
```

```
🥏 solar_app.py
class SolarSystemExplorer:
   self.last_x = event.x
           self.last_y = event.y
           self.draw_solar_system()
       if event.delta > 0:
           self.zoom_factor *= 1.1
           self.zoom_factor /= 1.1
       self.draw_solar_system()
       planet = self.get_planet_at_position(event.x, event.y)
           self.canvas.config(cursor="hand2")
           self.canvas.config(cursor="")
       for planet in self.planets:
           px = self.center_x + planet.x * self.zoom_factor
           py = self.center_y + planet.y * self.zoom_factor
           if self.show_3d:
               py += planet.z * self.depth_factor * self.zoom_factor
           distance = math.sqrt((x - px) ** 2 + (y - py) ** 2)
           if distance <= planet.radius * self.zoom_factor:</pre>
       while self.is_running:
```

16. Output Snippets





