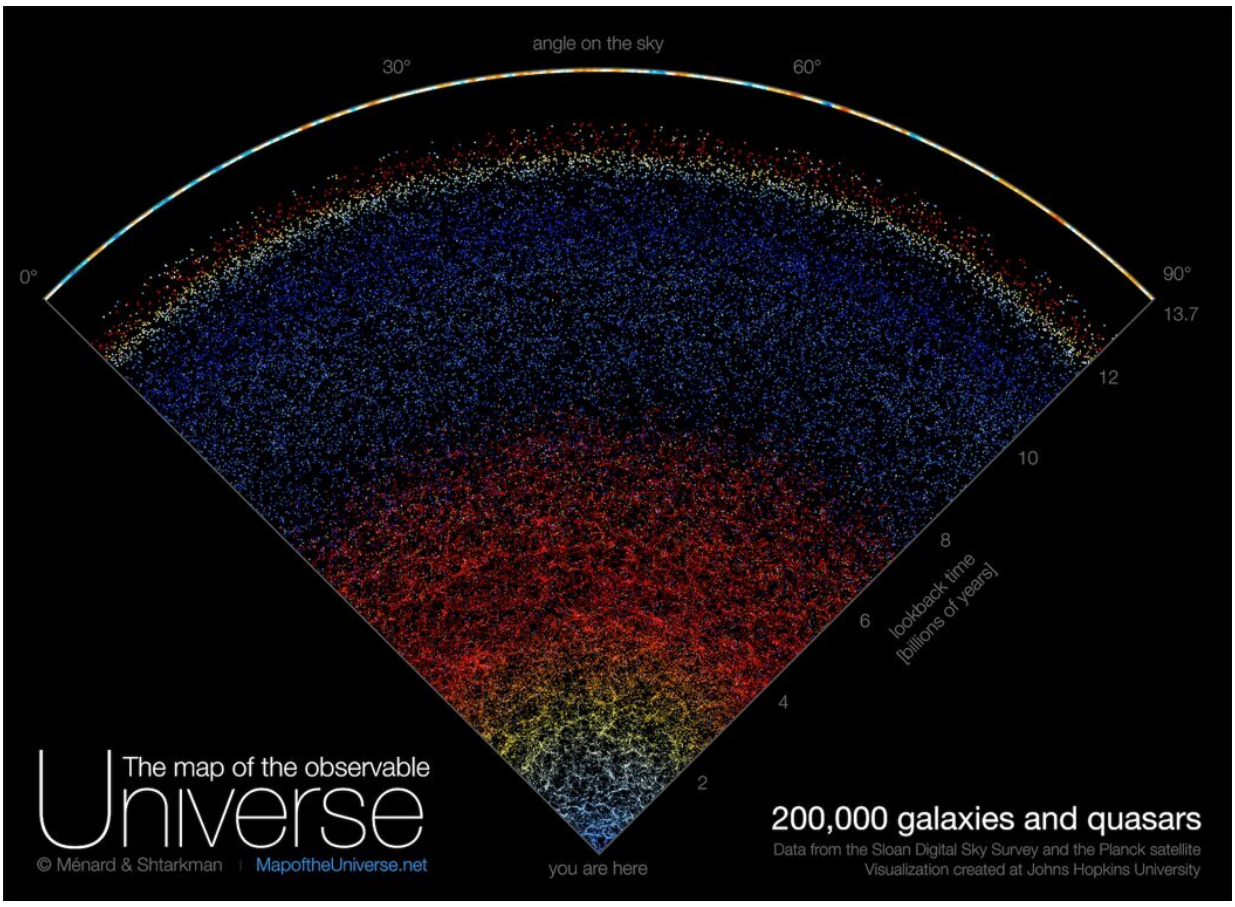
Best of Last Week—New map of universe, smart home vulnerabilities and young people at risk of hearing loss

November 21 2022, by Bob Yirka



Credit: Visualization by B. MéNard & N. Shtarkman

It was a good week for space science as a team of astronomers at Johns Hopkins University created a new map of the universe that shows, for the first time, the span of the entire known cosmos. Also, NASA announced that its moon mission is "exceeding expectations." After blasting off this past Wednesday, the rocket is now close to its rendezvous with the moon. And an international team of researchers detected cesium in the atmosphere of a hot white dwarf, part of their work studying data from the Far Ultraviolet Spectroscopic Explorer telescope.

In technology news, a team of researchers at the University of California, Irvine, discovered a way to use music to trigger a deadly pathogen release—a finding that showed that people working in negative-pressure rooms could be easily put at risk by criminals using smartphones. Also, a team at the University of Copenhagen solved an algorithmic riddle from the 1950s, and may have found a way to greatly improve the precision of self-driving cars and other mapping software. And a team at the University of Georgia found yet more evidence of smart home hubs leaving users vulnerable to hackers. Also, a team of engineers at MIT solved a mystery that could lead to smaller and lighter batteries—it involves replacing the liquid electrolyte with layers of ceramic materials and also replacing one of the electrodes with a solid lithium metal.

In other news, a team at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis found that lung infections caused by soil fungi are now a problem all across the U.S., and its spread appears to be related to climate change. Also, scientists and government representatives around the world voted at this year's General Conference on Weights and Measures to add two new measurements to the International System of Units: quettameters and ronnagrams. They characterized the weight of planet Earth at six ronnagrams. And finally, a team of researchers with members from Sweden, Mexico, Switzerland and the U.S. found

evidence suggesting that more than 1 billion young people are potentially at risk of hearing loss due to use of headphones and earbuds and attendance at loud music venues.

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