



As some of you may have noticed, today's Google doodle is the barcode.

This because today marks the 57th anniversary of the day the first patent was made on the bar code.

We thought we'd take the opportunity to introduce you to a similar application of technology:

the Quick Response Code (QR code).



QR code is a 2-dimensional (2D) barcode that links printed graphics to websites via a web-enabled camera phone with a QR app. Though created in 1994, the QR code went public in early 2000 and really hit it big in 2003. Where? Japan, of course; where phones were QR-enabled long before ours (surprise).

"So?"

Glad you asked.

The ubiquitous barcode with which we are all familiar is the UPC code found on almost every product we purchase. It's a 1-Dimensional (1D) graphic that, when scanned by a laser, communicates up to 13 digits (letters or numbers) identifying the product. The laser reads the white space between the black bars and voila - \$1.29 for a pack of gum just got added to your grocery bill. There are variations on the barcode: UPC, EAN-8, EAN-13, Code92, Code 128, and POSTNET, but in all cases, the code presents information in the horizontal only (left-to-right on the code at the top of this page).

Great.

So what happens if you want to store more than 13 digits of information. What happens if you want to store, say, 4,000 digits of information? You can't just make a longer 1D code. First, because space limitations make it impractical and second, the scanner needs to read the entire code in one shot. Big scanner.

Enter the Quick Response code.

The code presents information in both the horizontal and vertical direction, allowing for just over 4,000 digits of information to be presented. There are, as with the barcode, variations on the QR code: QR Code, Color Code, EZcode, Aztec code, MaxiCode, Shot Code and SemaCode.



From URLs, to business cards, to maps, ... . As with anything new, we use it in ways to which we are accustom and therefore the possibilities of QR code are just beginning to develop. Perhaps they can be included on building directories to direct visitors to an office; on Metro maps to indicate points of interest or nearby restaurants and clubs; on invitations or other mailers to expand the information provided; the poor man's GPS - "You are HERE"; who knows where this will lead.

An article from 2008 on "[Why QR Codes Will Be Big Business in the U.S.](#)"

You decide.

Some other examples:

From [2d code](#) :

With [QR Map](#) you center the map so that the pointer is on your location, set the scale and then click on the mail icon at the top of the map. I centered the map on 1023 31<sup>st</sup> St., NW and the following e-mail message was generated: "You can see this map at: <http://tinyurl.com/yckx2zq> (38.903259,-77.06083)". The URL redirects to a QR code that decodes as a Google 240 x 320 staticmap for mobiles.



Self-proclaimed "alpha-nerd bonding" from [P8TCH](#)



The [QR Store](#), turning Ink into Bits



[WIRED](#) Magazine highlighted designer barcodes from Adidas, Marc Jacobs, and Louis Vuitton.

I love the guidance in the WIRED article about designing your own QR code: "Change the code in Photoshop until it stops working, then back up one step so it works again."

Genius.



Adidas - Marc Jacobs - Louis Vuitton

There are others on the market already - McDonalds allows you to link to nutritional information about your purchase, and Microsoft developed a High Capacity Color Barcode to be used on TV, in magazines, and on billboards (among other places), from which you'll be able to scan them with your cellphone to get additional information about a product.

Billboards? Yes. As long as you can take a picture of an entire QR code, it works ... even from a mile away.



McDonalds



Microsoft



Shibuya (Tokyo, Japan)

So, for anyone so inclined, get an app now!

Quickmark is a commonly referred product - you can find it for \$0.99 online or through iTunes in the Apple App Store.

Here are some we generated:



This article was compiled from a number of web-based sources, including:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/6268827/Bar-code-invention-history-behind-new-Google-doodle.html>  
<http://freebarcodefonts.dobsonsw.com/images/code128bar.jpg>  
<http://www.qrme.co.uk/qr-codes-explained.html>  
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.12/start.html?pg=3>

<http://www.wired.co.uk/wired-magazine/archive/2009/10/start/express-yourself-with-a-designer-barcode.aspx>  
and  
<http://fluidforms.eu/blog/2009/06/10/an-almost-ultimate-link-list-to-qr-codes-barcodes-and-mobile-tagging/>

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