QR Codes:
Best Practices & Tips to Help Libraries Market Valuable Electronic Resources

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Death of QR Codes?

“The report of my death was an exaggeration.”

—Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain), 1835-1910

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96503317/
QR Codes Failing?

“A QR code is a tool, nothing more, and it is a poor marketer who blames the tool. The vast majority of those I scanned landed me on a webpage that was the same URL as in the ad itself. That is about as useful as telling someone your name while wearing a name tag.”

—Why the QR Code is Failing by Sean Cummings
(October 14, 2011)

http://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/A11NAANametag.jpg
Smartphone Ubiquity

“Smartphone users now outnumber users of more basic mobile phones within the national adult population” & “Overall adoption levels are at 60% or more within several cohorts, such as college graduates [and] 18-35 year olds”

—46% of American Adults are Smartphone Owners (March 1, 2012) by Aaron Smith, Senior Research Specialist, Pew Internet Project

http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2012/Smartphone%20ownership%202012.pdf
Changes in smartphone ownership, 2011-2012

% of US adults who own...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>May 2011</th>
<th>February 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cell phone</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cell phone</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project April 26-May 22, 2011 and January 20-February 19, 2012 tracking surveys. For 2011 data, n=2,277 adults ages 18 and older, including 755 interviews conducted on respondent’s cell phone. For 2012 data, n=2,253 adults and survey includes 901 cell phone interviews. Both 2011 and 2012 data include Spanish-language interviews.
Press Release

14 Million Americans Scanned QR Codes on their Mobile Phones in June 2011

Newspapers/Magazines and Product Packaging Most Likely Sources

QR Code Users Most Likely to Scan Code while at Home or S

RESTON, VA, August 12, 2011 - comScore, Inc. (NASDAQ: SCOR), today released results of a study on mobile QR code scanning. A QR ("Quick Response") code is a two-dimensional code that is readable by smartphones. The study found that mobile users in the U.S., representing 6.2 percent of the total mobile population, were more likely to be male (60.5 percent of code scanning audience percent) and have a household income of $100k or above (36.1 percent).

Source: comScore, used with permission
Get Ready! Get Set! Scan!

Scan the QR code symbol in the next slide. Whoever loads the text first & then wants to read it out loud, raise your hand!

(Hint: Participation is rewarded.)
QR Code Best Practice #1

QR codes should lead to value-added content. There should be a "reward" in the form of useful content delivered at the point of need.
QR Code Tips

1. For an up-to-date, searchable list of QR code reader software based on phone models, see http://www.Mobile-Barcodes.com.

2. To batch produce up to 500 QR codes all at once, use http://www.QRStuff.com.

3. QR codes used electronically are a green solution; use them on digital displays & eliminate the need for printed handouts.
QR Code Best Practice #2

Links should go to mobile-optimized sites whenever possible.

goes to
This video is not available on mobile
More QR Code Tips

4. Leave a minimum of 4 module widths around the outside of the QR code symbol, this is the "quiet zone".

5. QR codes do not need to be black & white, as long as there is sufficient contrast between the selected colors.

QR Code Best Practice #3

Use a URL shortener. This will create a cleaner, easier-to-scan QR code symbol.

versus
Even More QR Code Tips

URL Shorteners:
• http://bit.ly
• http://goo.gl
• http://delivr.com
• http://tinyurl.com
QR Code Best Practice #4

Do not use QR codes because they are trendy & cool. Use them as part of an overall mobile & emerging technologies plan.
Oh, No, Technical QR Code Tips!
A QR code can store up to a maximum of 7,089 characters, as follows:

- **Numeric only** - maximum 7,089 characters (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)
- **Alphanumeric** - maximum 4,296 characters (0-9, A-Z [upper-case only], space, $, %, *, +, -, .., /, :)
- **Binary/Byte** - maximum 2,953 characters (8-bit bytes)
- **Kanji/Kana** - maximum 1,817 characters
QR Code Best Practice #5

Test everything:
• the QR code
• the link to mobile-optimized content
• using different smartphone models
• using different QR code readers.
Yes, More QR Codes Tips

7. Design mobile-friendly quizzes on http://www.MobileStudy.org & have a QR code to link to a quiz on literacy sessions handouts to test knowledge.

8. SurveyMonkey.com is mobile-friendly; pair the survey with a QR code to quickly link students to surveys.
QR Code Best Practice #6

Include text information next to the QR code; to tell users what QR codes are & how to scan them, plus to let users know how the content will benefit them.
QR Code Tips, Last Ones!

9. Although Denso Wave owns the patent for QR codes, they have opted not to exercise their patent rights. QR codes have been around for almost 20 years & provide a stable tool to use.

QR Code Best Practice #7

The library must promote their QR code usage & distribute the promotion widely around campus.
QR Code Best Practice #8

Gather statistical data & use it to improve, as well as modify your library's mobile & emerging technologies plan.
QR Code Best Practice #9

Strategically place your QR codes so they are easy & accessible to scan. Don't blanket the library with codes!

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Bibliography