
Tech tips for libraries: QR codes



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This is the first in a planned series of short articles on useful technologies for academic libraries.

QR codes ('Quick Response' codes) are two-dimensional, black-and-white, square barcodes that can be used around the library to provide users with links to additional information about resources and services.

These barcodes, popularised in Japan, can store a telephone number, a short piece of text, or—most commonly—a URL (web address). They can be created and printed easily, requiring no special software or equipment.

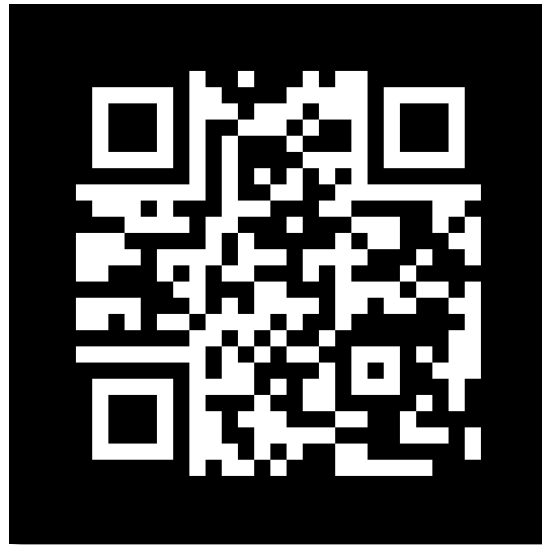
A code can be recognised and decoded by a 'smart' mobile telephone with a built-in camera and web browser (and QR code-reading software installed), simply by pointing the phone's camera at the code. The phone's browser will then launch the appropriate web page.

Services that can be used to generate a QR code from a web address include Kaywa (<http://qrcode.kaywa.com/>) and Linking You (<http://lincn.eu/>). Both sites create a QR code in the form of an image file that can be printed or embedded within a library's website.

QR-code reading software for a range of different 'smartphone' models is available from the Mobile Barcodes website (<http://mobile-barcodes.com/>). It's likely that most students in an academic library will own a phone capable of running QR software.

One possible use for codes in libraries is to provide contextual help: linking, for example, from a QR code printed on a photocopier to a web page containing instructions and copyright advice.

The example QR code printed on this page links to the home page for SCONUL Focus (<http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/>).



Suggested further reading: Walsh, A. (2009) Quick response codes and libraries. *Library Hi Tech News* [Online], 26 (5/6). pp.7–9. Available from: <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/5209/> [Accessed on 1 September 2010]