

axicon

THE BARCODE EXPERTS

New Barcode, New Functionality



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BARCODES ARE CHANGING...

The correct name for a barcode is a machine readable symbol. Quite simply that is what they are and still today they are the most accurate, inexpensive and reliable method of data entry.

The limitation has always been that as a data carrier they are restricted in the amount of data they can carry. One development was the PDF code (portable data file) a form of linear barcode which was stacked in rows - but readers were more expensive but more data could be handled.

A few years ago it was recognised that a different form of machine readable code was necessary to meet business needs. Codes which were a pattern of dots or squares were developed. Today the three most common are Datamatrix, QR codes and Aztec.

Datamatrix was adopted by the US Dept of Defence and is also a GS1 standard. It is being used in other areas, notably by Pitney Bowes for document identification in the postal system. However it is seen to have great potential in the pharmaceutical arena for drug dose identification and in the near future for anti counterfeiting where a system is being developed in the EU. Every pharmaceutical pack will have a unique code and this will be linked back to a secure database.



BARCODES ARE CHANGING...

QR (quick response) codes were developed for the needs of the Japanese character language but are finding a wide variety of applications. For some reason the graphic arts industry has taken to them.

A Characteristic of these two matrix codes is that the nature of their design enables them to be woven. Already this technique is being used to prevent counterfeiting of sports goods and could be used elsewhere.

Aztec codes can be easily printed and are being used in applications such as rail tickets so that the customer can print his own ticket and have scanned at the barrier.



Matrix codes have to be read using imaging technology; and its only recently that digital photography has met this need. The barrier dropped with the development of the mobile phone camera. Today software is readily available to read matrix codes easily which means data encoded into a symbol can be read by anyone with such a mobile phone. The breakthrough now is that if the symbol encodes the product's website, the phone will take the consumer directly there and display full information, or it can be used to validate an entry ticket, and so on. Therefore if the products item code of a retail product is encoded, full details of the product can be found and comparison websites will lead the consumer to the best buy.



BARCODES ARE CHANGING...

QR Library Codes

The universities of Bath and Huddersfield have both begun to utilise QR in the library catalogues. An online search will generate a code for any book title, containing details and shelf marks for easy identification. Huddersfield are going one step further, having found that utilising QR in exhibition panels can provide links for students, enabling them to access more information.



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The developments in machine readable symbols which are described in the short document raise's a question,

When I opened the world's smallest bookshop way back in 1981 it was in the belief that the way books would be chosen, as opposed to being read. I was right but very wrong in the way browsing takes place. I believed that access to the microfiche would be the answer.

Today's browsers are the PDAs or phones ect, linked to the internet and website. This will work through a machine readable symbol. The new 2d codes will access the website and comparison sites and will in the long run benefit the conventional bookseller, publisher, or on line supplier.

Industries other than publishing are aware of this but there has been no application rules for the implementation of such codes on posters adverts dust covers etc, also no way of registering their validity.... A problem the French wine trade amongst others has got to come to terms with.

Publishers took the initiative 30 years ago. Perhaps we should again this time undertake it in a manner which could benefit our trade financially.

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