QR CODES:
All you need to know to have a go

I tried to ignore the square black and white barcodes that were rapidly appearing on advertising material in public places, particularly grocery stores where customers were scanning items, presumably for a discount coupon or nutritional value. I admit to finding it hard to try out new technologies, particularly in the social media realm, but am now relatively proficient in using Facebook, have a Twitter and a Pinterest account, and regularly peruse Instagram (and love it). So when I noticed my new ALIA business cards had a QR code on the back I knew I couldn't put it off any longer. I had to get my head around what they do and why.

A quick check of a search engine informed me that QR stands for Quick Response and that they were originally invented in Japan to keep track of vehicle parts in the car manufacturing industry. I found it was necessary to download a QR app on my iPhone which enabled me to scan the codes. You can also download the app to an iPad, tablet, iPod touch, or other mobile devices with a camera and internet access. This is straight forward and the app is free, so it was all relatively painless so far. I discovered that in order to create QR codes, there are websites that enable users to make and download them for free. Then I started digging to find out what else can be achieved through the use of QR codes.

Uses for QR codes in the library setting are wide and varied. From a simple link to your website or blog, to instructions on how to use a service in the library more efficiently, this is a technology that could appeal to a percentage of your clientele you may not have been reaching previously.

QR codes can become an additional feature in your library marketing campaign. The codes can link your users to your library brochure, bookmarks, and other promotional materials for your library, including posters and fliers for events. Even surveys, online quizzes, treasure hunts, links to social media, and competitions can be delivered by QR codes.

QR codes can be useful in promoting literature and reading as you can link your users to book trailers, author interviews, free e-books, e-audio books, and online magazines. Educators and librarians will be thrilled with the ability of QR codes to provide presentations, notes, handouts, worksheets, and online content to students.

Whether your focus is promoting your library, marketing an event or service, providing access to resources, or raising your library's profile, QR codes have the potential to be a very useful tool. Just don't delay giving it a go or the next new technology will be available for grappling with before you know it!

Rachael Hind
ALIA ACT Manager
rachael.hind@alia.org.au

SHADES OF GREY – LITERATURE

Grey literature is information produced by organisations where publishing is not their main role. An example of grey literature is a report: a recognised, authoritative information source. The rise of social media and increased material appearing as grey literature makes its identification, worth definition, and retrieval necessary skills for librarians.

There are so many formats for grey literature that it is almost possible to have a complete A-Z of grey literature types; from Annuals through to Yearbooks and everything in between!

Peggy Gross, Public Health Informationist, Welch Medical Library at John Hopkins University has produced an easy to follow online video tutorial on grey literature. You can view it at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZCe50APtts.

The Good...

What works for grey literature? The main 'good, is the extensive subject-related material that is developed by specialists in their discipline. The material is often as vigorously tested as peer reviewed material and is often developed within an academic or organisational environment. Grey literature may be authoritative, high level information that is often not found elsewhere. For this reason, grey literature must be included in an exhaustive literature search to ensure consideration of all available topical material. Another advantage of grey literature is the good range of immediately accessible, full-text material.

The Bad...

So, what is on the downside? As Simkhada & Knight (2005), Huffine (2010) identify, there are a range of reasons why grey literature causes problems, mainly the time related to processing and search/validation; issues of accessibility and cost around storage; and search issues such as the size of the web and the lack of a specific search engine. Most importantly, there are issues around validity of the information contained within grey literature; before use, it must be checked and double checked for sources and content.

Where do we find Grey Literature?

More often than not, grey literature is hidden on the *Invisible Web*. You will hear numerous aliases for the Invisible Web; perhaps you have already heard of the *Cloaked Web*, *Deep Net*, *Deep Web*, *Hidden Web*, or even the *Undernet*. Remember there is not a single database or means of searching all resources and websites. Gil (2012) identifies that only 8% of information on the web is immediately searchable. Why? It is often deliberate. Site owners develop and install technical barriers, through tagging to keep info hidden and within their control; that is they mount it on the *Invisible Web*. Keep this in mind when you are searching; this is where you can demonstrate your value as an information professional. Remember there is not a single database or means of searching all resources and websites. There are, however, a couple of useful tools available for you to use including *Deep Web* and *The Virtual Library*. *Deep Web* was developed by Marcus Zillman. It is an easy to use annual publication on how