Project Proposal: QR Codes in Clearwater Countryside Library

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Abstract

The Clearwater Public Library System primarily depends on print materials to share information regarding library events, services, and policies, and overlooks the option of paperless dissemination of information. It is proposed the Clearwater Countryside branch pilots the display of quick-response (QR) code sheets featuring the most popular handouts to increase information accessibility, general outreach, and technological practices. The following document outlines a method of creating QR code sheets in Canva, includes a budget and timeline, and discusses additional uses for QR codes in the library.

Keywords: QR code, quick-response code, smartphone, public library, library services, Canva, internet browsers

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Problem

Quick-response (QR) technology in the Clearwater Public Library System is not utilized and is undervalued as a means for information dissemination. The Countryside branch does attract older adults that favor print materials, but there is a digital gap of convenient information access that neglects the preferences of tech-advanced and younger people.

Why Use QR Codes and What Are They?

Libraries are historically associated with knowledge and learning, and with the increased technological engagement of information users comes the need for libraries to keep up with digital fluency and literacy. The responsibility of identifying and utilizing technologies that aid in the independent discovery and access of information for users is a core element of librarianship. One such technology is the QR code, which can help satisfy the needs of information users accurately and instantaneously. (Breeding, 2018; Singh & Madhusudhan, 2023)

A QR code, as seen in Figure 1, is a matrix-shaped barcode that handles information vertically and horizontally. When scanned with a smartphone, a QR code may display a webpage, image, video, or text. The smartphone's camera is used as the scanner: iPhones (with iOS 11 and higher) are programmed to detect and scan QR codes from its camera app, and is also equipped with a QR reader that may be accessed from the Control Panel; Android phones (version 9 and higher) can scan QR codes from its built-in camera app; smartphones with older operating systems can download free apps such as QR Code Reader. (Kulesh, 2017)

Figure 1

A QR Code

In addition to printed materials in libraries, QR codes provide a paperless option for patrons to quickly access information about library services and upcoming events. Promoting QR codes as an eco-friendly and sustainable method of information dissemination boosts the confidence of the community and may reduce the costs of material production. Other experiences QR codes can offer library patrons include: scavenger hunts, readers' advisory, community outreach, and commentary. (Porter & King, 2013; Shettar, 2013)

Solution

The Countryside library has designated areas for paper leaflets, advertisements, and magazines that can also be used to present QR codes of popular distributables. On a single sheet of paper, QR codes linked to the three most commonly referenced and used library handouts can be put on display; the most popular handouts are the library branch's calendar, the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (PPLC) monthly program guide, and the My Clearwater magazine.

All three resources have online counterparts and may be accessed by the public. It is worth pursuing a QR code for the My Clearwater magazine because it is only produced three times a year, has a limited quantity produced for distribution in libraries and recreation centers, and the online version is only discoverable through Clearwater's Public Communications webpage. The monthly Countryside event calendars on Canva will need to be made "live" for public viewing. The monthly PPLC program guides are available on the first of every month on its website. Creating a sheet of QR codes linking to the three event-based handouts is an effective and easy method of information dissemination for anyone with a capable smartphone.
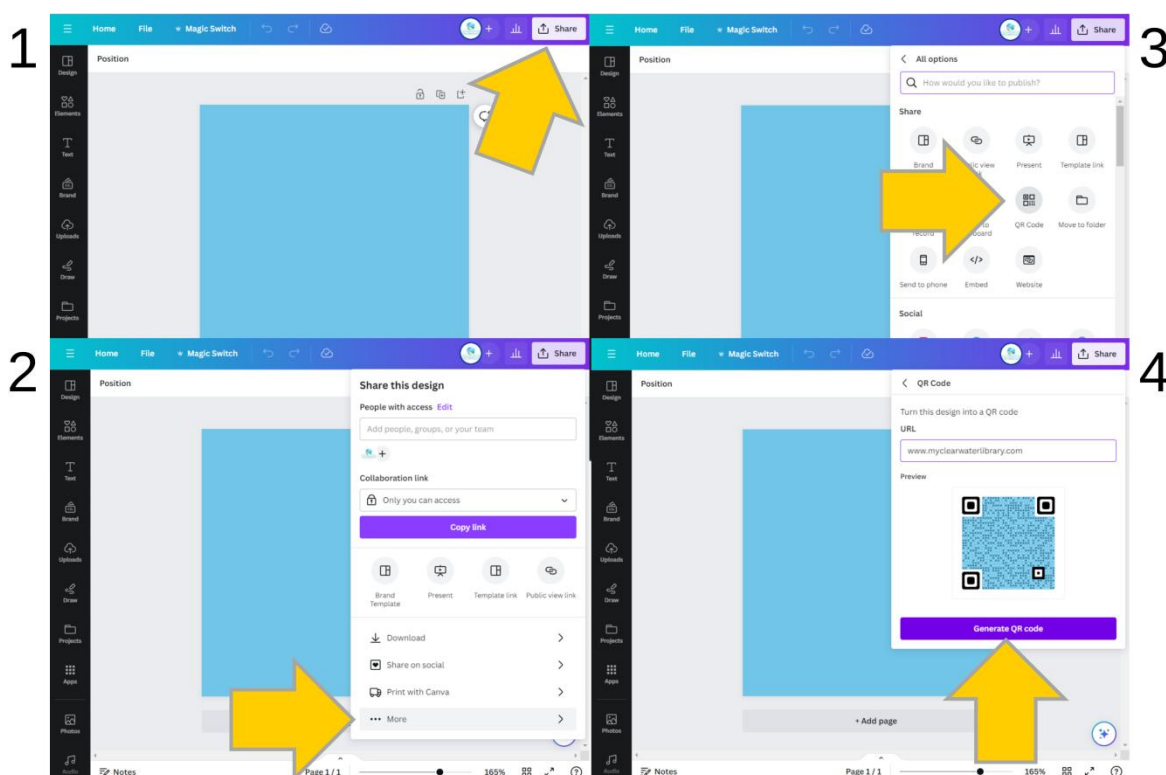
Method

The library is a subscribed member to Canva, so it is the proposed method of producing the sheet of QR codes. A designated folder will be created specifically for the QR

code sheets on Canva. Within the folder will be three square designs that will designate the three handouts and the document that will host the QR codes.

The steps to turn a square design into a QR code in Canva are illustrated in Figure 2: (1) select the Share button, (2) then More, and (3) under the Share heading is a QR option available for selection. The square design will then be generated into a QR code (4) that can be downloaded and added to the sheet of QR codes.

Figure 2

Turning a Canva Design into a QR Code

Note: Share options are displayed as available for Pro subscription to Canva

After all square designs have been turned into QR codes and downloaded, the finished QR codes should be compiled on to another document fit to print on a single letter-sized sheet of paper. Two examples are provided in Figure 3; the first example shows the sheet at the beginning of a month, while the other reflects the later part of a month when the next month's calendar may be available for distribution.

Figure 3

QR Code Sheets

There are four potential areas that could host the created QR code sheet that already supply calendar handouts, are high traffic, or are regular hubs for other information dissemination (Figure 4). The locations, starting from the bottom star in Figure 4, are: the lobby, the counter below the book return, the information desk, and the slatted wall behind the public computers.

Figure 4

Locations in Countryside Library for QR Code Sheets

The sheets will be displayed in an acrylic sign holder, either bottom load for table top or wall-mounted. Table 1 and Table 2 break down the budget and anticipated timeline for production of the QR code sheets.

Table 1

Budget for One Year of Producing QR Code Sheets

Supplies	Expenses	Comments
Paper	$1	Two pages per four locations every month
Ink	9	Two pages per four locations every month
Sign holders	20	Quantity: 4; one-time purchase
Equipment		
Canva	192	Estimated cost to maintain Pro subscription
Total	**$222**	

Table 2

Timeline Showing Maintenance of QR Code Sheets

Due Date	Activity
November xx, 2023	Canva: QR code sheet folder created; QR code squares and QR code sheet designed
November xx, 2023	Canva: Countryside calendar for December published
November xx, 2023	Canva: square designs turned into QR codes for: Countryside November and December calendars, PPLC November program guide, My Clearwater magazine (Sept-Dec); QR codes inserted on sheet
November xx, 2023	QR code sheets printed and displayed
December 1, 2023	Canva: QR code sheet modification: remove Countryside November calendar; create QR code with PPLC design for program guide to

	December; QR codes inserted on sheet
December 1, 2023	QR code sheets printed and displayed
December xx, 2023	Canva: Countryside calendar for January 2024 published
December xx, 2023	Canva: QR code sheet modified to add Countryside calendar for January
December xx, 2023	QR code sheets printed and displayed
January 1, 2024	Canva: QR code sheet modification: remove Countryside December calendar; create QR code with PPLC design for program guide to January; create QR code with My Clearwater magazine design for January-April issue; QR codes inserted on sheet
January 1, 2024	QR code sheets printed and displayed
January xx, 2024	Canva: Countryside calendar for February 2024 published
January xx, 2024	Canva: QR code sheet modified to add Countryside calendar for February
January xx, 2024	QR code sheets printed and displayed
February 1, 2024	Canva: QR code sheet modification: remove Countryside January calendar; create QR code with PPLC design for program guide to February; QR codes inserted on sheet
February 1, 2024	QR code sheet printed and displayed

Notes: The timeline features library activity only. The pattern of publishing, modifying, and printing continues throughout the year.

Continuing Use of QR Codes

Furthering the application of QR codes can go on to boost efficiency of in-person reference help or readers' advisory. I have experimented with the receipt printers at staff computers and have successfully printed and scanned a QR code. Instead of writing out a web address or dictating directions to a web page, a QR code may be printed or shared for the

inquiring patron to scan. Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge browsers make this process simple: a right-click to the context menu reveals an option to generate a QR code of the web page being viewed (Figures 5 and 6). This method of sharing puts information into the hands of the seeker with more immediacy.

Figure 5

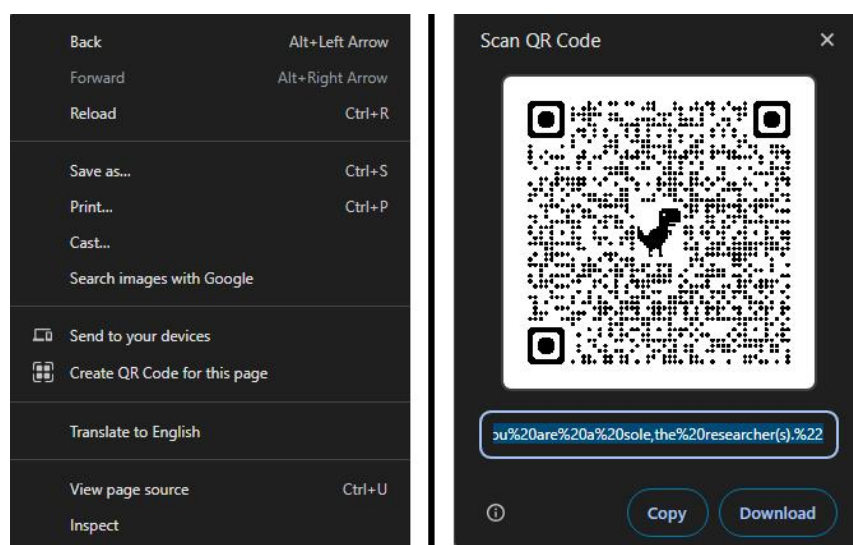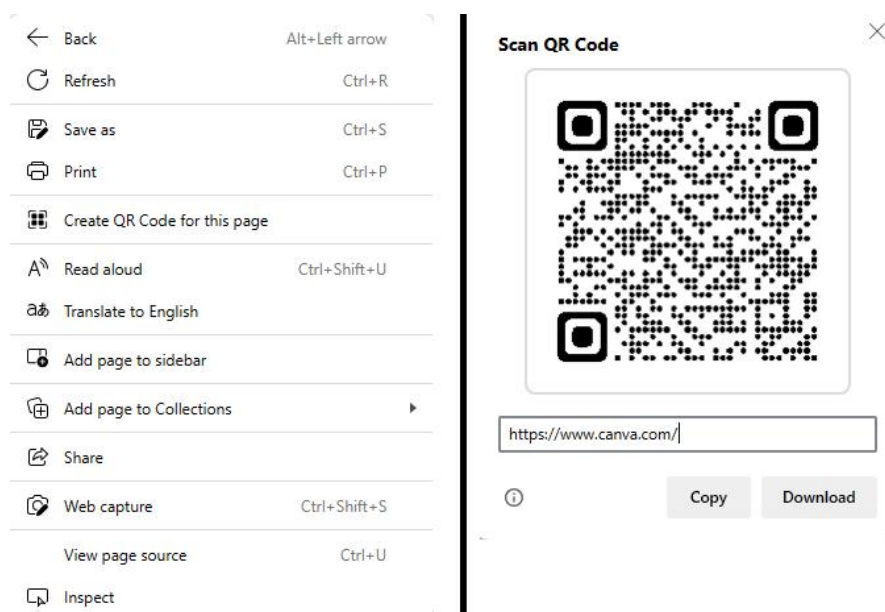*Google Chrome Context Menu and Created QR Code*

Figure 6

Microsoft Edge Context Menu and Created QR Code

The QR codes in this proposal have been discussed as static codes, so they are not able to track information or be edited. Canva uses static QR codes. Dynamic QR codes are capable of what static ones are not and may be worth looking into if metrics are of interest, though a subscription to a reputable company will be necessary to utilize such features.

In Summary

Increasing the presence of technology in the library with QR codes can create opportunities for learning and interactivity that are simple and cost-effective. The addition of QR code sheets linked to popular handouts throughout the library will supplement information users' needs, increase community engagement in library events by reaching more people, and overall elevate the level of service to the public.

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