

Integrating

Publishers Find More Uses for QR Codes

Quick Response, or QR, codes, those black-and-white pixel squares, that function as super-charged consumer bar codes, are on advertisements, Web sites, and anything else at which you can point a QR reader. While publishers have been putting QR codes on jacket covers for several years, they have been slow to integrate them into the text, but that is starting to change.

"This piece of technology changes everything," said Billie Brownell, senior editor at Cool Springs Press, whose title *The Visitor's Guide to American Gardens* comes equipped with scannable QR codes that send readers directly to each featured garden's Web site for real-time garden event information, current attractions, and special collections. The book includes more than 400 gardens around the country. For *Visitor's Guide*, the QR codes keep the book up-to-the-minute, preventing its information from becoming outdated, said Brownell.

For *The Zappos Experience: 5 Principles to Inspire, Engage, and WOW*, publisher McGraw-Hill partnered with Link.Me, a tech startup whose goal is to connect publishers with, and increase, their reading audience. When scanned, the QR codes in the book access supporting multimedia content like a Facebook page devoted to "Delivering Happiness" or behind-the-scenes video clips of Zappos' conference room and its employees' Nerf battle at headquarters. "This is one of the first times that a publisher is embedding QR codes

throughout a book, not just on the jacket," said Antony McGregor Dey, CEO of Link.Me. "This interactive experience really enhances the reader's level of engagement." On McGraw-Hill's end, partnering with Link.Me opened up a few new doors. Sara Hendricksen, marketing manager, business, at McGraw-Hill, said: "We met with Link.Me and realized they could design the platform we needed to take the experience to the next level. Not only has Link.Me enhanced the reader's interaction with the content, but they provided promotional opportunities in the mobile space that were previously unavailable to us."

Link.Me is now working with Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, McGraw-Hill, Penguin, and Random House, many of them only since this June. A central goal of Link.Me is to focus on "the offer of content to build a profile of readers to build out direct marketing databases for the publishers," which is accomplished by creating a detailed database of each customer's interests, enabling the publisher to market to them directly around their specific interests. Link.Me likes to think of its holistic system as "DVD extras for books," which is really just a way for brands to appeal to readers. "The real



With a QR reader, scan the left code for content from The Zappos Experience, and scan the right code for content from The Visitor's Guide to American Gardens.

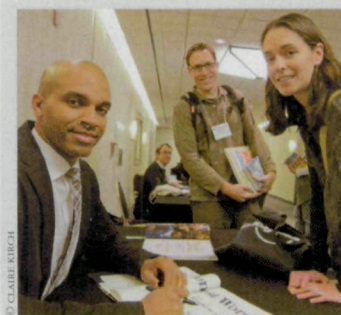
magic," McGregor Dey said, "is in tracking and tagging the readers' access to this content and building a profile."

Cool Springs Press took a different route to getting QR technology into its title. Instead of partnering with an outside developer, the house used its own in-house digital media team, which "built a QR code application to create, track, and manage all of our QR code usage," said Jim Bashour, director of digital media for Cool Springs Press. For Cool Springs, getting the codes into *Visitor's Guide* was easy, but the key is providing quality content after the codes have been scanned. "Perhaps the biggest challenge is to figure out how to use the codes to extend the value of your product for a customer," said Bashour. "Like the days of blinking text on a Web site—we did it because we could—adding QR codes into a book is easy, but they'll have little value if you do not provide readers a useful reason to have scanned them." Cool Springs is confident it has done just that—creating a living document that is always current, existing within the pages of a book.

—Gabe Habash

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Signing at GLiBA

Kadir Nelson (Heart and Soul, Balzer & Bray) signs books after GLiBA's Children's Book & Author Brunch for bookseller Joanna Molitor, co-owner of the Bookbug in Kalamazoo, Mich., while Bookbug co-owner Derek Molitor stands in the background. GLiBA was held in Dearborn, Mich., October 14–16.

"improve our distribution of Spanish content, garner access to understanding of the marketplace, and sign local authors."

Layoffs at Marvel

In a cost-cutting move tied to soft

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