A Primer on QR Codes

What are they? When should I use one? How do I make one?

What are QR Codes and how do I use them?

A Quick Reference (QR) Code is a matrix style barcode designed to be scanned by a camera, like those on smartphones or tablets. They are usually linked to websites, and serve to quickly bring users to a specific location without the need to navigate by typing in full web addresses. QR code technology has become more widely used in recent years, and your group may find it useful to have some for your members.

QR codes will generally look like the image to the right, though they can be differently shaped, colored, or feature borders or text, such as "scan me."

To access the website embedded in the code, follow these steps:

1. Open the camera application on a smartphone or tablet that has a connection to the internet.
2. Ensure you are using the rear facing camera.
3. Hold your device so that the QR code appears in the viewfinder in the Camera app. Your device should automatically recognize the QR code and show a notification/website link underneath the viewfinder.
4. Tap the notification/website link to open the link associated with the QR code.

When should I use a QR code?

QR codes may be useful in any number of situations. Some examples of when you might want to use one could include:

- Sharing Zoom meeting information for easily signing in
- Directing attendees to make a 7th tradition contribution for your meeting
- Distributing a survey to members during a workshop
- Helping people navigate to a specific website or specific section of your website

And these are by no means the only use for QR codes. Get creative!

How do I make a QR code?

There are a number of free online resources for generating basic QR codes. Here are two that I would recommend:

- https://www.beaconstac.com/qr-code-generator is a completely free and easy to use site. There are some premium features, like adding borders or text, but basic QR codes are free.

- https://www.qrcode-monkey.com/ is another free QR code generator, and offers a few more options for customizations and download preferences if you're looking for something a little less basic.

No matter what site you decide to use to make the QR code, you will need to know the website you want to link to. Once you have the website address, paste it into one of the QR code generators and then save the QR code that is produced. Most QR codes will be saved in a .PNG file format. That picture can then be inserted into PowerPoint presentations, printed on flyers, shared on Zoom, posted to websites, etc. The sky is the limit!

One last tip for using QR codes: I have found that putting them on a white or light-colored background seems to work best for the camera to pick up all of the pixels correctly. So if you're inserting the picture into a PowerPoint with a dark background, consider adding a white border around your QR code.

If you have any questions, please send an email to techwebchair@oaregion8.org

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