Encoding the Information Age　小兵立大功－**QR** 码的妙用

In the past few years, they have appeared everywhere. First they came to product packaging in supermarkets and **tags** in department stores. Later they arrived on the backs of books and magazines. Now they have been spotted in **advertisements** and on posters. They are small, square, black-and-white patterns, resembling the writing of an **alien civilization**. You've certainly seen them yourself, probably hundreds of times. So what are they?

它们在过去这几年中随处可见。它们起初出现在超市的产品包装上，还有百货公司的货品标签上。后来它们现身在书本与杂志的封底上。现在它们已经可以在广告与海报中发现。它们是方方小小的黑白图案，状似某种外星文明的文字。你一定亲眼看过它们，也许还有好几百次。那它们到底是什么呢？

They are Quick Response (QR) codes, invented by a Japanese company in the early 1990s as a way to **encode** information for stock management. Compared with traditional **bar codes**, which carry information only **horizontally**, QR codes carry it in two **dimensions**, horizontally and **vertically**. As a result, they can store hundreds of times more information in a similar amount of space. What's more, they can be read in any direction, and the data can be recovered **even if** the symbol is dirty or damaged.

它们是 QR 码（二维条形码的一种），在 90 年代由一家日本公司所发明，用来当作仓储管理信息编码的方式。传统的条形码只能负载水平方向的信息；相较之下，QR 码能负载水平与垂直二维的信息。所以在大小相近的空间中，QR 码能储存其好几百倍的信息。此外，它们也能以任何方向来读取，如果图案脏了或是损毁了，数据依然能恢复。

Because QR codes can be read by anyone with a smart phone and the right software, many groups are **experimenting** with them as a way to reach the public, especially via the Internet. For example, one supermarket chain in Korea uses posters with product images and QR codes as a virtual "store," letting shoppers scan the items they want and order them online for home **delivery**. And the Dutch government even **minted** a series of coins bearing QR codes that contain a link to a website with some fun activities. As these useful little **symbols** gain in **popularity**, their possibilities seem **limitless**.

因为每个人都能用智能型手机与适用的软件来读取 QR 码，所以许多团体都试着用它们，把它们当成接触群众的方法，尤其是透过网络。例如，韩国的一家连锁超市在海报上放上产品的图片与 QR 条形码，以此当作虚拟商店，让购物者扫瞄他们想要的东西，并且在在线订购后送货到府。荷兰政府甚至铸造了一系列附有 QR 条形码的硬币，条形码里面的连结网站有许多有趣的活动。随着这些好用的小图案愈来愈受欢迎，它们的可能性似乎无穷无极。

－*by Dmitri Detwyler*

Vocabulary
alien [ˋelɪən] adj. 外星人的
civilization [ˌsɪvḷəˋzeʃən] n. 文明
horizontally [ˌhɑrəˋzɑntḷɪ] adv. 水平地

vertically [`vɜtɪklɪ] adv. 垂直地

experiment [ɪk`spɛrəmənt] v. 试验；证明

advertisement [ˌædvɚ`taɪzmənt] n. 广告

popularity [ˌpɑpjə`lærətɪ] n. 普及，流行

limitless [`lɪmɪtlɪs] adj. 无限的

delivery [dɪ`lɪvərɪ] n. 投递

More Information

tag [tæg] n. 标签

bar code 条形码

dimension [dɪ`mɛnʃən] n.【数】维

even if: 即使 no matter whether

mint: [mɪnt] v. 铸造（硬币）to produce (money) by stamping metal; coin

symbol [`sɪmbl] n. 记号，符号

encode [ɪn`kod] v. 把…译成电码[密码]