A new trend in Sabancı University Information Center: QR Code Application

Cem Özel and Mine Akkurt
Information Center, Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract: The rapid development of mobile technologies in recent years has facilitated the use of the popular QR code application for various purposes. The new generation's rapid adaptation to change has allowed this application's widespread usage. QR codes with structural properties can be supported with new ideas. It has developed into a new trend in libraries/information centers, as well as in the other areas. One of the usage areas of the QR code is in the marketing field. In this study, various QR code applications used for study room booking, filling out request forms, promoting e-resources and especially e-books which are successfully being practiced in Sabancı University Information Center will be emphasized.

Keywords: Libraries, information centers, QR Code, mobile technologies, marketing, promoting e-resources

1. Introduction

The rapid development of mobile technologies recent years has facilitated the use of the popular QR code application to be used for various purposes and in different areas. New generation's rapid adaptation to the change allowed this application's widespread usage. QR code with structural properties can be supported with new ideas and considered a practical solution.

The QR code application has developed into a new trend in libraries/information centers as well as in the other areas. The QR code applications in libraries/information centers are used in a variety of areas. One of the usage areas of the QR code is in the marketing field. Along with the realization of the QR code project, creating awareness and especially the effective promotion and usage of e-resources is intended.

In this study, various QR code applications used for study room booking, filling out request forms, promoting e-resources and especially e-books which are successfully being practiced in Sabancı University Information Center will be emphasized. In addition to these promotional activities, the study will also focus

on the preparation process, how these applications serve users and the effects of these studies on the result.

2. What is a QR Code?

'QR Code' stands for Quick Response, as they allow the contents to be decoded at high speed. A QR Code is a kind of barcode readable by the cameras of smartphones. They are sometimes referred to as 2d codes, 2d barcodes, or mobile codes Ashford (2010). Actually it is not **bar**code, it is QR code.

A sample QR Code

There are challenges to consider. Awareness is likely to be a major challenge for the incorporator of the QR code; on the first glance at a QR code, what is commonly seen is the phrase "Scan Here," which supplies little direction to the potential user on how and why to scan the code Hampton, Peach and Rawlins (2012). Appearance of QR Code can be unlikable at the first glance; but in time when people realize how useful it is, we believe that people will like it more.

QR is an ISO standard that no matter what region they are created in and well-designed with a higher capacity than other matrix codes, such as Data Matrix. QR is an ideal container for large amounts of data. QR is also enriching that ties the physical to the digital Pulliam and Landry (2011).

The QR code typically appears as a small white square with black geometric shapes, though colored and even branded QR codes are now being used Ashford (2010). In order to read the QR Code, a free QR Code application can be downloaded from application stores.

QR codes have several distinct advantages over conventional barcodes. Conventional barcodes can store up to 20 digits, whereas QR codes can store up to 7089 digits or 4296 alphanumeric characters Hoy (2011). The information encoded in a QR code can be a URL, a phone number, an SMS message, a V-card, or any text Ashford (2010). Furthermore they can be used to automate small tasks such as dialing a phone number or sending a text message; scanning the QR code with the number and type of message embedded in it prompts the user's device to start a call or text to that number Hoy (2011).

3. History of the QR Code

QR codes were originally developed by the Japanese corporation Denso Wave in 1994. They were designed for use in inventory management, where speed and

error correction are major concerns. Denso Wave freely shared the idea for their codes with others, and over the next decade several standards organizations developed their own guidelines for implementing QR codes Hoy (2011).

While they are currently very popular in Japan, QR codes are just beginning to gain traction in the United States. Businesses are beginning to use QR codes in U.S. to promote their brands and entice customers in new ways. They are following the trends that show we may soon have a critical mass of the population with the equipment in their hands to leverage this technology Hoy (2011).

QR codes are ubiquitous in Japan, where they originated, and have been popular for years. They appear in store windows, on posters, billboards, and buildings; they are on receipts, in doctor's offices, TV commercials and even on gravestones where the code is scanned for ingredients/nutritional content. Yes you did not read incorrectly. A Japanese gravestone maker has even embedded QR codes within gravestones so that people are able to find out more about the person buried there Ashford (2010).

4. QR Codes in Libraries / Information Centers

The QR code application is a new trend in Turkey that has been implemented in the libraries/information centers.

Promoting library events/special collections, making services more discoverable and creating digital "wayfinders" in the stacks are general uses for QR Codes in libraries Pulliam and Landry (2011).

The library world has used the QR Code in different areas such as

- Linking to the online versions of print materials
- Library exhibits that include a QR code link to songs, videos, Web sites, surveys, contests, etc. or other information that augments the exhibits Ashford (2010)
- Linking to online study room reservations
- Linking to library audio tours for orientations Garrett (2012)
- Linking catalog records, users can scan the code and go to the shelves.
- Linking to trailers by attaching CD/DVD cases
- Loading the library's text message reference service and other contact information into the patron's phone Garrett (2012)
- Linking to author interviews or book reviews by attaching on audio book cases.

More examples can be added to this list.

5. A New Trend in the Sabancı University Information Center

First of all, we would like to give some brief information about our University and Information Center.

Sabancı University (SU) is a non-profit private research institution. SU was founded in Istanbul by Sabancı Holding, one of the two largest Turkish industrial and financial international companies in Turkey. Since its first academic year in 1999, the University has attempted to establish itself as a

world-class university. Sabancı University meets the demands of the 21st century and offers an interdisciplinary education.

The Information Center, as a service department of Sabancı University established with the aim of becoming a "world university", conducted its foundation activities in 1997-1998 and it opened its gates to users and started to render service in 1999, with the initiation of academic studies in the university.

As Sabancı University Information Center, we have made an effort to be proactive and at the forefront of innovation. Therefore, we have decided to use this new application, QR Code in the Information Center's services.

Now various QR code applications are used for study room booking, filling out request forms, promoting e-resources which are successfully practicing in Sabancı University Information Center will be emphasized. In addition to these promotional activities, the study will also focus on preparation process, serving of these applications to the users and the effects of these studies on the result.

In order to manage easily through use of this application, different ideas can put into practice in the libraries/information centers. Although we have different kinds of user groups, the new generation users can adapt themselves easily and increase their usage of these applications.

Presented below are the usage areas of QR Codes in the Sabancı University Information Center.

The Suggestion Box & Its QR Code

The Suggestion Box covered with a QR Code was designed by the Information Center. Users can write their suggestions or comments on paper and put it into the Suggestion Box, or they have the option to send their suggestions or comments by scanning the QR Code on the Box, which links to the online suggestion form (http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/bm/en/submit-your-ideas).

Group Study and Multimedia Rooms Reservation & Their QR Code

Users can make reservations for a group study or a multimedia room via their smartphones by scanning the qr codes on the labels of the rooms without using a computer.

The SelfCheck & Its QR Code

Users can scan the QR Codes located next to the SelfCheck machine for the video tutorials (http://youtu.be/ymMnizIAqIM) that explain how to borrow, return and renew.
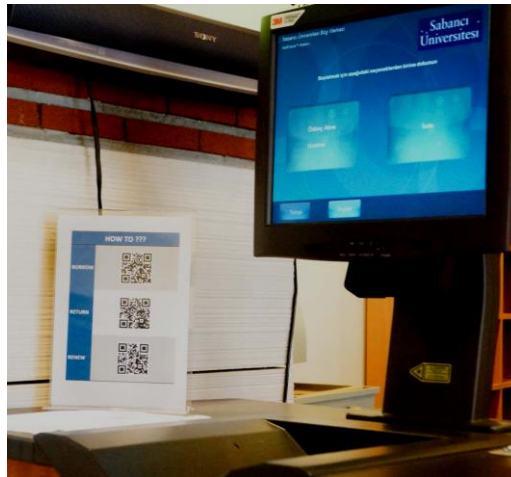
Periodicals & Their QR Code

Through attached QR Codes on the Periodicals Shelves, it can be easy access to information concerning the previous issues of the journals in the Catalog. Current issues of journals and bounded journals are kept in separate areas inside the building. Therefore, we link the current issue and the bounded ones.

Promoting E-Books on Fliers with the QR Codes

We have subscriptions to rich e-book databases such as Ebrary, Safari and Springer. Until now we were displaying printed books that were newly added to our collection, as well as on certain subject areas, on the "*New Arrivals Shelf*".

After implementing the QR Code to our services, we also started to promote our e-books on the "New Arrivals Shelf".

To use a QR Code in this promotion service, firstly we select attractive subject topics such as "*...for dummies*", "*the history of ...*", "*about Turkey*" (http://youtu.be/YnsMB_p_5O4), "*a short introduction to...*", "*... before*" then we search for books on these topics via the e-book databases. We prepare the e-books list and send to a colleague who designs visuals including the title of the book, an image of the book cover and the QR Code.
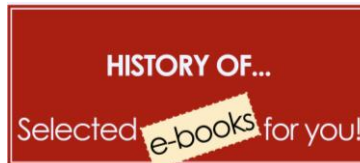
We display these visuals on the "*New Arrivals Shelf*".

It can be used to promote just one book for special days. For example, "*12 years a slave*" was selected as the best picture of 2014. We found this movie's book from the Ebrary e-book database. We decided to promote just this book. We thought that it was a unique idea and its design should have been so attractive because we would have been promoting chapters of this book: however, there was a problem. When you access to the Ebrary, there was no link for each chapter. To solve this problem, we put a short part of each chapter on the visual and the QR Code which has the book's link. In all, this promotion covers visuals including the title of the book, a summary of the book, a short part of each chapter and QR Codes.
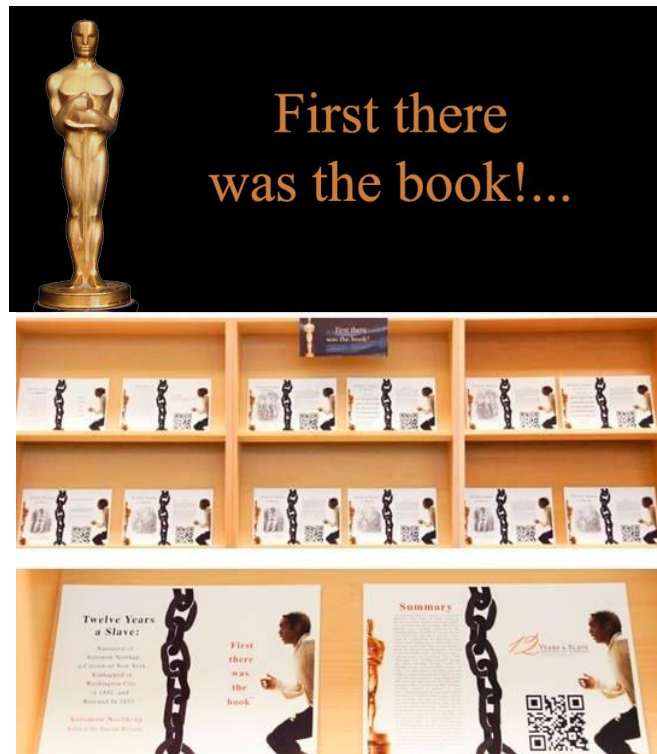
Besides displaying e-books on the "*New Arrivals Shelf*", we have designed fliers to promote e-books. These two sided fliers consist of selected e-books from the "*For Dummies*" series. Users can take these fliers when they come to the Circulation Desk while they are borrowing other materials. We introduced this promotional activity, as "*Buy 1 Get 10 Free*".

Flier side 1   **Flier side 2**

Promoting E-Journals & QR Codes

After working on e-books, we have decided to promote articles from a new issue of popular or academic journals. For instance, we have selected articles from the current Issue of Harvard Business Review. We have designed visuals that cover, journal title, article title, a short part or abstract of the article and QR Code for the full article. These QR Codes also cover a proxy link for access of SU members only.

We will add more examples to the promotional activities mentioned above in the near future. We share these activities on social media: you can follow us from our Facebook page or Twitter.

We will add more examples to promotional activities mentioned above in the near future. For instance we are planning to prepare bookmarks that have QR Code of an e-book, display top ten articles indexed in WoS written by SU members on "*New Arrivals Shelf*" and put stickers of QR Code on to the printed books which have also online versions. We will share these activities on our social media platform. You can follow us from our Facebook page or Twitter.

6. Conclusions

The QR Code trend in the world, has been rapidly started to use in a variety of areas. The Information Center and Libraries also benefit from this new trend to effective promotion and usage of e-resources.

The QR code application makes a great difference in the Sabancı University Information Center's marketing activities. Especially it can be synchronously promoted all of printed books, e-books, and e-journals. The QR Code adds value to our marketing activities. This is a chance to promote our e-resources, which naturally cannot be seen on the shelves. If we look at our statistics, the usage is increasing consistently. Different types of users can benefit from this activity. New generation users who own Smartphone or tablets may directly use with their devices, while others can be aware of promoted e-resources when they browse from their computers. "*New Arrivals Shelf*" is located in the foyer area of the building. Therefore, we can reach all kinds of user groups.

Finally, we hope that the work will bring new ideas to our colleague's minds.

References
Ashford, R., (2010). QR Codes and Academic Libraries. *College & Research Libraries News,* Vol.71, No.10, 526 – 530.

Garrett, T., (2012). QR Codes & Libraries. *Florida Libraries,* Vol.55, No.2, 27 - 30.

Hampton, D., Peach, A. and Rawlins B., (2012). Extending Library Services with QR Codes. *The Reference Librarian*, 53, 403 - 414.

Hoy, M. B., (2011). An Introduction to QR Codes: Linking Libraries and Mobile Partons, *Medical Reference Services Quarterly,* Vol.30, No.3, 295 - 300.

Pulliam, B. and Landry, C. Tag, You're it! Using QR Codes to Promote Library Services. *The Reference Librarian*, 52, 68-74