



Nancy's Pantry: Bringing Printed Materials to the Visually Impaired

2Dcode Envisioned Product

Assuming you've read our descriptions of the barcode, scanning device and approach to processing, you're now prepared to imagine putting it all together.

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During February of 2003 we learned that [Symbol Technologies](#) makes a PDA that can house a PDF417 scanner. The whole package is about one and a half times the size of a typical PDA. That's exciting news to us because all of the functionality we've described on preceding pages can now be embodied in one pocketable/purseable package. The cost is currently about \$1500. We hope to find a way to reduce the cost. A picture of the Symbol scanning PDA appears to the right.



[Who's Nancy?](#)

[Encoding printed text](#)

Recall the acts of scanning and delivering information to a user can be decoupled. So, for example, if memory cards continue to come down in cost, it might be possible to use a common PDA that accepts the kind of memory cards that fit into digital cameras (e.g. Smart Card, CompactFlash, SD, XD) and a growing number of PDAs, to deliver information that would otherwise be presented in a barcode. This would remove the need for a scanner. We haven't suggested this approach as a current solution because the cost of printing PDF417 barcodes onto a piece of paper are about 1/1000th the cost of owning and maintaining flash memory cards. And while flash memory cards may work for menus, they're impractical for soup cans and utility bills.

[Scanning the barcode](#)

[Processing the text](#)

By decoupling the receipt of information about printed materials from processing them and delivering them through audio channels to a user, we have left open the possibility of implementing our technology in an all electronic version. We're watching wireless technologies, as a substitute information delivery mechanism in restaurants. Wireless doesn't do much for pantries

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however. We're considering alternatives.

[Envisioned product](#) Ultimately we envision a combined scanning and processing device that could fit into a pocket or purse, and sell for under \$400. It's time the visually impaired community had a good supporting technology that didn't cost them their life savings to acquire! Do contact us if you're interested and/or have ideas..

[The researchers](#)