

OUR VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT



In 1938 a Portland, Oregon pharmacist named Edwin Eugene Mayer took the first steps toward the creation of the “3D View Master”... some of you may remember this device that looked similar to binoculars into which you inserted a disk; the disk incorporated 14 slides of images and whose output was 7 stereo images seen simultaneously. At first its usage was primarily for children’s entertainment but during World War II it was used to aid the military in artillery spotting and identification. Was this device perhaps a precursor of today’s “VR” world?

The terms “**Virtual Reality**” and “**Virtual Environment**” are now being used synonymously because it is an artificial **environment** that is created with software and presented to the user such that the user **suspends belief** in what is real and accepts what is digitally created as a **real** environment. The simplest form of “VR” is any 3D image that can be explored interactively at a personal computer/device by manipulating keys or the mouse so that the content of the image moves in some direction or zooms in or out. More sophisticated devices include wrap-around display screens, actual rooms augmented with wearable computers, and devices that let you **feel** the display images... all creating an out-of-your-own-world experience. Different users/technicians/experts differ on what exactly constitutes a true “VR” experience, but generally it should include:

- Three-dimensional images that appear to be life-sized from the user's perspective
- The ability to track a user's motions, particularly head and eye movements, and correspondingly adjust the images on the user's display to reflect the change in perspective

Anyone who is a gamer knows full well how far this virtual world extends, but for the average user the technology is still somewhat far-fetched. But be aware that even our daily lives are slowly being infused with “VR” application software. For example “**2 Board**”, the official Athens Airport magazine, has since 2015 used “*Zappar*” coding on their printed pages. Unlike “QR” codes which are designed to be scanned and connect the user to the client's website, the “*Zappar*” code scans the printed material and the user views an animated video...a quick and useful tool for educators, informational and publishing agencies. Visit <https://www.zappar.com/> to find out how it works.

Our human environments are changing all around us but for some, it may not be so pleasant so “VR” worlds are a great escape. Without a doubt, there is much more coming our way as inventors seek to conquer new worlds – virtually that is.