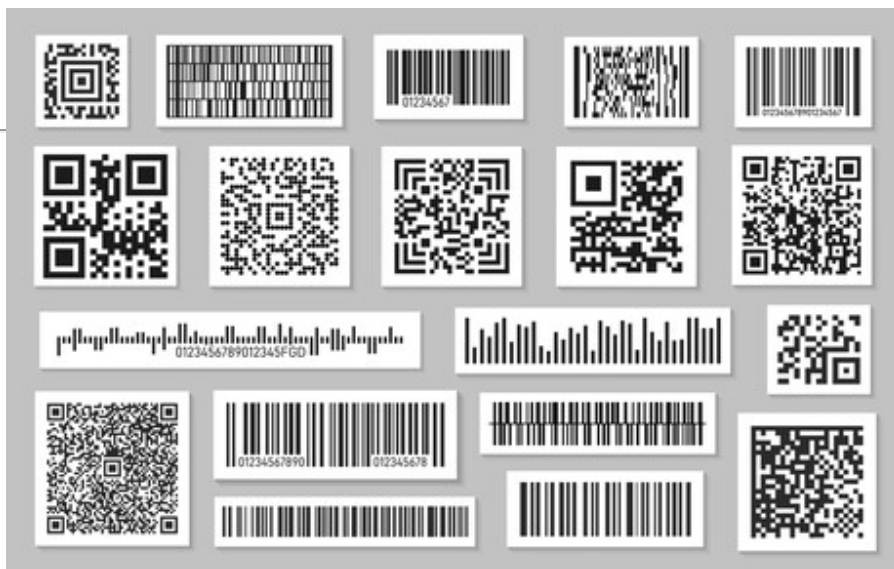


Celebrating the barcode's 50th birthday with next-gen promise

[GS1 Australia](#)

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The BBC has called the barcode “one of the 50 things that made the modern economy”, and rightfully so. Since its creation in 1973, the symbol is now present on over 1 billion products, and the ‘beep’ at the checkout counter of every store is instantly recognisable worldwide.

The barcode has changed the way we have shopped over the past 50 years. Although all barcodes may look pretty similar, the power lies inside, with a simple scan connecting a physical product to digital information that flows across the entire supply chain thanks to global standards.

The organisation behind the barcode and its global standards — [GS1](#) — has evolved over the last five decades from a standards organisation towards a standards and services organisation currently present in 116 markets.

As the barcode turns 50, GS1 is now launching a global transition from traditional barcodes to next-generation barcodes that may once again change our lives in new ways.

“As consumers rightly demand more and better product information, and the planet requires us all to maximise the power of data for smart and efficient decisions, we are now launching a global transition from traditional barcodes to next-generation barcodes and we welcome everybody on board for this journey,” a GS1 spokesperson said.

Next-generation barcodes

Next-generation barcodes, such as two-dimensional QR codes, can capture large amounts of data for businesses, regulators, consumers and patients, offering more than just links to web pages. They may tell a product’s story, its origins, if it contains allergens, if it is organic, how it can be recycled and what its environmental footprint is. This transparency will help people make decisions about what they buy and use.

GS1 is building a coalition of industry leaders to deploy next-generation barcodes globally, putting technology at the service of efficient trade, more sustainable shopping and patient safety.

It launched a global initiative to transition from traditional to next-generation barcodes with key players in the retail sector at the end of 2020. Over 20 countries and districts, including Australia, China and Brazil, have already started successful pilots. In 2021, GS1 China promoted 2D barcodes and 20 major key branches, including the Zhejiang Branch of GS1 China (Zhejiang Institute of Standardisation), joined the project. In Australia, a 2D program designed to increase awareness, capacity and adoption is in full execution.

“The GS1 barcode is globally recognised and ready for new business. We have experienced 50 years of the barcode transforming how we buy and sell things. As consumers rightly demand more and better product information, and the planet requires us all to maximise the power of data for smart and efficient decisions, we are now launching a global transition from traditional barcodes to next-generation barcodes and we welcome everybody on board for this journey.”