ISSIE LAPOWSKY BUSINESS FEB 13, 2015 11:55 AM

Google Partners With Mattel to Bring VR to the Iconic View-Master

Mattel is giving the View-Master, that retro vestige of Christmas mornings gone by, a futuristic facelift through a partnership with Google.

MATTEL

SAVE

https://www.wired.com/2015/02/google-mattel/

ORIGINALLY LAUNCHED IN 1939 at the New York World's Fair, the View-Master was arguably one of the earliest attempts at virtual reality. Stick the head-mounted display over your eyes, and you'd see a photo of the Grand Canyon or some other scenic landscape. Over time, however, the View-Master has become something of a relic, falling into disuse in the age of smartphones and higher tech screens.

Now, Mattel is giving this retro vestige of Christmas mornings gone by a futuristic facelift through a partnership with Google, which the companies announced today. The new View-Master is like Oculus Rift for kids. It delivers a true virtual reality and augmented reality experience by integrating with Google Cardboard technology, the search giant's own attempt at affordable, virtual reality. To use the new View-Master, a chubby red and white device designed for kids seven and older, you simply download the View-Master app on your phone, stick the phone in the View-Master, and get started.

"Virtual reality, photospheric imaging, and augmented reality are all technologies that aren't necessarily new," says Doug Wadleigh, senior vice president of global brands at Mattel, "But it's our goal with the View-Master brand to make virtual reality accessible, easy to use, entertaining, educational, and family friendly."

While this may be Mattel's first step toward modernizing its enormous catalog of toys, it is just the latest example of how Google is trying to woo younger users. Last summer, Google announced it would be opening up its Google Classroom product, a tool that helps teachers organize assignments, to schools across the country. Google Chromebook laptops have become one of the most popular tech devices used in schools today. And last year, Google announced its intentions to begin redesigning some of its most popular products, like YouTube and Chrome, for the 12-and-under set. With View-Master, Google is finding yet another way into children's lives, planting the seed for a future generation of users.

Virtual Field Trips

The new View-Master could potentially become a ubiquitous and beloved educational tool. At just $30 a piece, they're affordable both for families and for schools, and after just a few minutes testing out an early version of the product today, even I wanted to take one home.

One View-Master reel transported me around San Francisco, from Fisherman's Wharf to Alcatraz, showing me bite-sized bits of text that taught me about the Golden Gate Bridge and some of Alcatraz's most famous prisoners. In that case, the world around me looked like one giant 360 degree photograph of each place. The next reel, however, brought me to prehistoric times, where a giant CGI brontosaurus tossed back his long neck and moved above me.

Virtual reality has long promised to take students on virtual field trips, but while devices like the Oculus would likely be too expensive for resource-strapped schools, the View-Master's low price point might actually make that kind of thing possible.

The Next 75 Years

The Google-Mattel partnership is still relatively new---a little under five months in the making. But according to Wadleigh, Mattel plans to bring other gaming features to the View-Master as well, that will encourage kids to go on a treasure hunt to navigate the experience.

Wadleigh says Mattel will also look for ways to integrate some of its archival footage from over the last century into the platform. And while the device is only compatible with Android phones today, he says that will change by the time the device hits store shelves later this year.

"Our goal," he says, "is to create the View-Master brand for the next 75 years using this new technology."

Issie Lapowsky is a senior writer for WIRED covering the intersection of tech, politics, and national affairs. Lapowsky covered startups and small business as a staff writer for Inc. magazine before joining WIRED, and before that she worked for the New York Daily News. Lapowsky received a bachelor's degree from... Read more

SENIOR WRITER

TOPICS GOOGLE

DDC Tech., LLC - Ex. 2026, p. 4
Google LLC v. DDC Tech., LLC
IPR2023-00707

MORE FROM WIRED

You're Probably Underestimating AI Chatbots

Just as the first iPhone reviews mostly missed the device's huge potential, it's folly to draw conclusions from today's unrefined technology.

STEVEN LEVY

DDC Tech., LLC - Ex. 2026, p. 5
Google LLC v. DDC Tech., LLC
IPR2023-00707

ChatGPT Now Has an iPhone App

Six months after OpenAI's silver-tongued chatbot launched on the web and set off an AI arms race, you can put it in your pocket.

LAUREN GOODE

We Put Google's New AI Writing Assistant to the Test

I used Duet AI to send emails and plan my wedding. Its writing can be stuffy and stereotyping—but it's a glimpse of the future of productivity apps.

PARESH DAVE

DDC Tech., LLC - Ex. 2026, p. 6
Google LLC v. DDC Tech., LLC
IPR2023-00707

OpenAI’s CEO Says the Age of Giant AI Models Is Already Over

Sam Altman says the research strategy that birthed ChatGPT is played out and future strides in artificial intelligence will require new ideas.

WILL KNIGHT

How ChatGPT and Other LLMs Work—and Where They Could Go Next

Large language models like AI chatbots seem to be everywhere. If you understand them better, you can use them better.

DAVID NIELD

DDC Tech., LLC - Ex. 2026, p. 7
Google LLC v. DDC Tech., LLC
IPR2023-00707

11 Tips to Take Your ChatGPT Prompts to the Next Level

Sure, anyone can use OpenAI's chatbot. But with smart engineering, you can get way more interesting results.

DAVID NIELD

What Really Made Geoffrey Hinton Into an AI Doomer

The AI pioneer is alarmed by how clever the technology he helped create has become. And it all started with a joke.

WILL KNIGHT

DDC Tech., LLC - Ex. 2026, p. 8
Google LLC v. DDC Tech., LLC
IPR2023-00707

Pete Buttigieg Loves God, Beer, and His Electric Mustang

Sure, the US secretary of transportation has thoughts on building bridges. But infrastructure occupies just a sliver of his voluminous mind.

VIRGINIA HEFFERNAN

WIRED
Get 1 year for
~~$29.99~~ $5
SUBSCRIBE