

What's on or in a card? How technology and card collecting have linked up.

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The mobile phone is now an everyday and everyway servant or some would say master of our lives. Many of us use a bewildering range of applications (apps) that give us all sorts of information.

Over the last couple of years two Australian companies Tap 'n' Play Technologies and Nestle's Milo have found a way to link cards to our mobile phones and provide us with new experiences via the world of virtual reality. This has been achieved by embedding a small piece of technology in the card.

These developments have prompted me to reflect on how over the past ninety years technology in various forms has linked up with card collecting to give collectors something just a bit different. This historical look back explores this link between card collecting and technology. This review will largely be from a sporting card perspective, but there will likely be similar examples from other collecting themes that could be explored.



In 1929 the English postcard and greetings card company Raphael Tuck and Sons issued what were known as Gramophone Record Postcards. These were small 75 mm (3 inches) gramophone records that were attached to postcards.



These records were made of shellac and were glued to the postcard with a hole going through both the centre of the record and the postcard to allow them to be played.

Given their small size the records played for only one minute at 78 rpm. The postcards were released in series that carried the letters A to T with the letter "I" not being issued. They were sold for one shilling for a set of four. Altogether Tuck's issued 77 of these gramophone postcards.

Tuck's advertised them as *"a novelty record on picture cards that play, sing and talk"*. The subjects covered were broad and contained many musical themes including piano and instrumental solos as well as Xmas carols.

The only sporting gramophone card was the 1929 one of cricketer Jack Hobbs. It was marketed as a “new record by Hobbs” as he had recently beaten W.G. Grace’s record of number of first-class centuries.

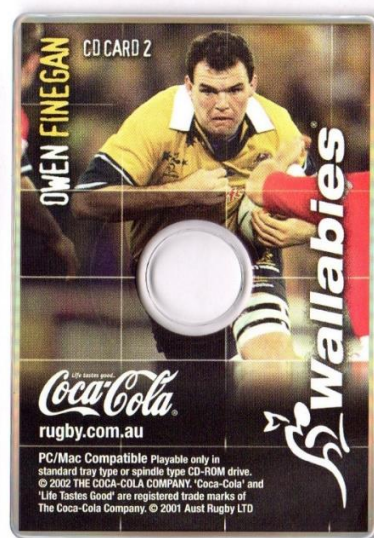
The gramophone postcard faded out by the 1940’s and by the 1990’s technology had taken many new “spins”. Bakelite used in records had been replaced by the polycarbonate plastic in compact disc CDs.

In the early 2000’s the English firm Serious Sportz produced the *England Dream Tour* a set of 16 collectable cricket CD cards made of polycarbonate plastic. These cards are rectangular and are around the size of a standard, modern collectable card. Like the Tuck’s cards they had a hole in the centre to allow them to fit over the spindle of a computer CD tray.

These CD cards have a picture of the player on the front. When played, they provided a profile of the player’s statistics, photographs and videos of the players. In 2004 Serious Sportz followed this up with a playable set of European soccer players cards.

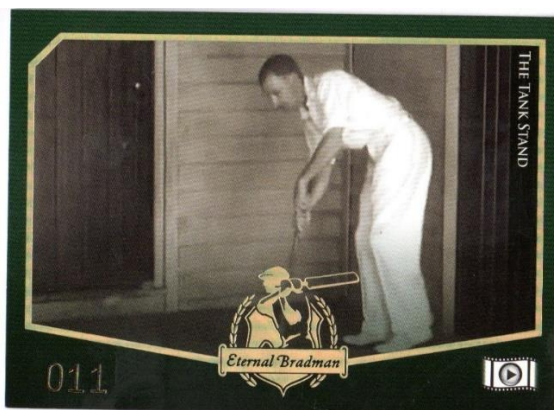


Serious Sportz playable CD Card



Coca Cola’s playable CD card

In like manner, Coca Cola ventured into this form of cards releasing a set of playable CD cards in 2002. These cards featured members the Australian Wallabies Rugby Union team.

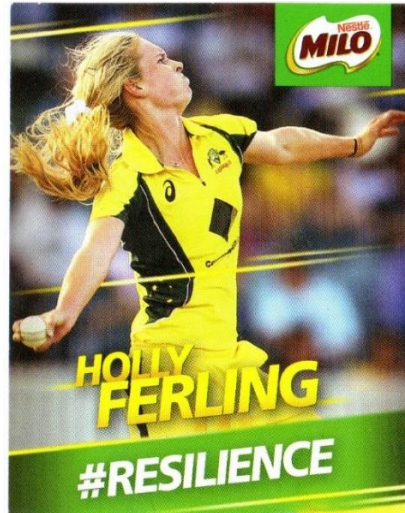


Moving forward Tap ‘n’ Play Technologies an Australian company that produces sports cards has issued several sets that have been packaged as interactive virtual reality. In 2017 Tap ‘n’ Play released the *Eternal Bradman* set of 21 cards. Eight of the cards have the embedded technology that allows them to link via a mobile phone application to watch videos of Don Bradman.

Tap 'n' Play have also released two small sets of cards featuring players from the Brisbane Heat team that play in the Big Bash League. Cards from this set also have videos that can be watched on a phone app.



Brisbane Heat virtual reality card



Milo's cricket value video playing card

Rounding off this rush of interactive card technology has been an eight-card set distributed in tins of Nestlé's Milo (These cards were reviewed in the October 2017 edition of the ACS magazine). These cards not only have images of the players but when an app is downloaded, and the card placed on the phone screen a video message reinforces each of the cricketing values shown on the card.

Are these releases a trend or a fad? I am not sure where these recent developments will take the hobby. I guess - we can only be sure that there will be more examples of technology and cards getting together.

So, in the meantime, grab your mobile phone and some of these cards and see what technology can do with the humble card. You can then return them to their folders and await that next development.

Sources of information

William A. Powell, *Cricket in Sound and Vision*, County Print Services, Essex, 1994.

Acknowledgement to Gerry Wolstenholme who provided much of the information about the Tuck's gramophone postcards.

Downloading the applications: The Milo, Brisbane Heat and Eternal Bradman applications can be downloaded from the Application Store on your Android or Apple phone.

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