Nvidia, UNC Researchers Show 3D AR Glasses

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The future of augmented reality belongs to wearable devices, but what will it look like? A few weeks ago, consumers learned about the company's upcoming augmented reality (AR) glasses that can project digital images on top of the everyday world. Today (Aug. 14), some finally had a chance to go hands-on with them for the first time.

Information on the device surfaced a few weeks ago when a research team from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill made plans to present a paper at SIGGRAPH 2014 in

Vancouver. Andrew Maimone and a team of researchers are working alongside Nvidia to design a novel AR device.

The glasses use a technology known as defocused point-light sources, which provide an artificially wide field of view for the wearer. Two LCD panels sit in front of the viewers' eyeballs, which provide a display surface for tiny light sources. By broadcasting out-of-focus lights on the LCD panels, viewers can see realistic three-dimensional digital objects right in front of them.

What makes this technology exciting is that the human eyes can see objects in 3D, but only for a range of about 70 degrees, where the right and left fields of vision intersect. Being able to see 3D objects across a complete field of view could be a radical new way for human beings to observe their surroundings.

One of the first people to tweet about his experiences with the glasses at SIGGRAPH 2014 was Eric Mizufuka, a wearable tech enthusiast. He called the technology "impressive," and confirmed that the product really did allow users to see 3D images across a 110-degree spectrum.

Expect more write-ups to emerge as users begin to come home from SIGGRAPH 2014 (the last day was today) and begin to talk about their experiences. As an experimental product, it's not easy to say what role it might play in the consumer market, but AR technology has potential applications from healthcare to entertainment and beyond.

Marshall Honorof is a Staff Writer for Tom's Guide. Contact him at mhonorof@tomsguide.com. Follow him @marshallhonorof and on Google+. Follow us @tomsguide, on Facebook and on Google+.