ASCII Stereograms

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Here are some ASCII single image random dot stereograms for your enjoyment (e.g., see figure 1). To obtain the 3-D effect, you need to diverge (unfocus) your eyes such that two adjacent letters in the same row come together. To help you focus, try to make the two capital `O`s at the top look like three. Ensure that the image of the central dot a stable and in focus. Once you have done that, look down at the rest of the image and the 3-D effect should jump out at you! If you make the `O`s at the bottom look like three then the effect is reversed. It is also possible to get opposite 3-D effects by crossing your eyes rather than diverging them, although some people find this harder to to (including me!).

Figure 2 demonstrates the effect even more dramatically. Try moving your head back from the screen once you have focused on the image to increase the stereo effect even more. You can also move it horizontally and vertically a little and observe the effect. Figure 3 shows a random letter stereogram, based on the same idea as a random dot stereogram. You should see the word "`Hi`" in relief when the image clicks into place. Recently, some people have started to include stereograms in their "signatures" at the end of electronic mail messages and news articles; see for example Figure 4.

Acknowledgements

Figures 1, 3 and 4 are due to David B. Thomas, Charles Durst and Marty Hewes respectively. All these stereograms appeared on the `alt.3d` USENET newsgroup, which is recommended reading for stereogram addicts. Other examples of ASCII stereograms will be gratefully received by the author (preferably electronically).

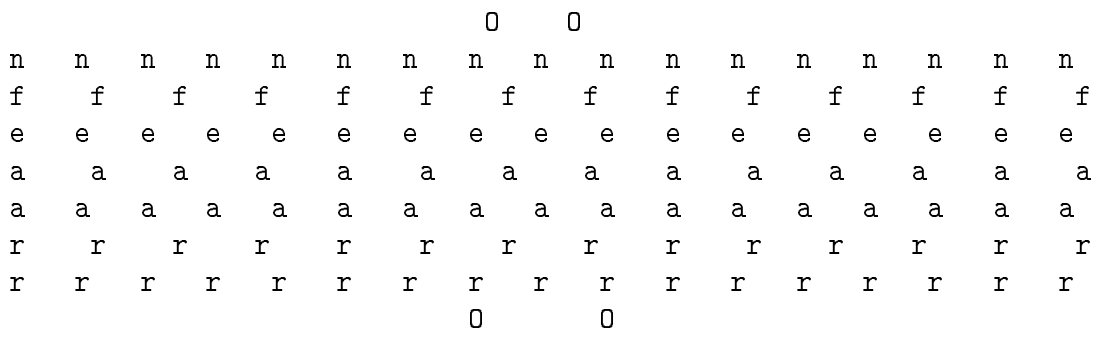

Figure 1: Near and far distances.

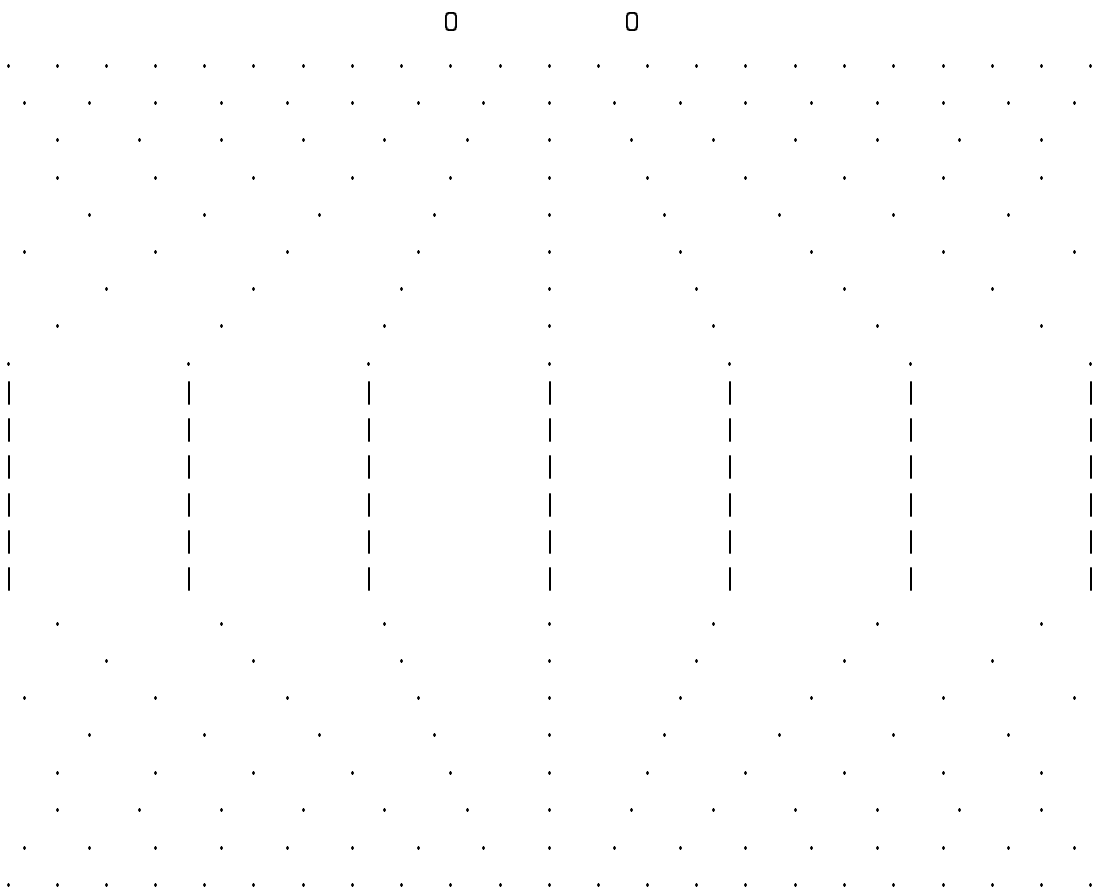

Figure 2: A floor, wall and ceiling.

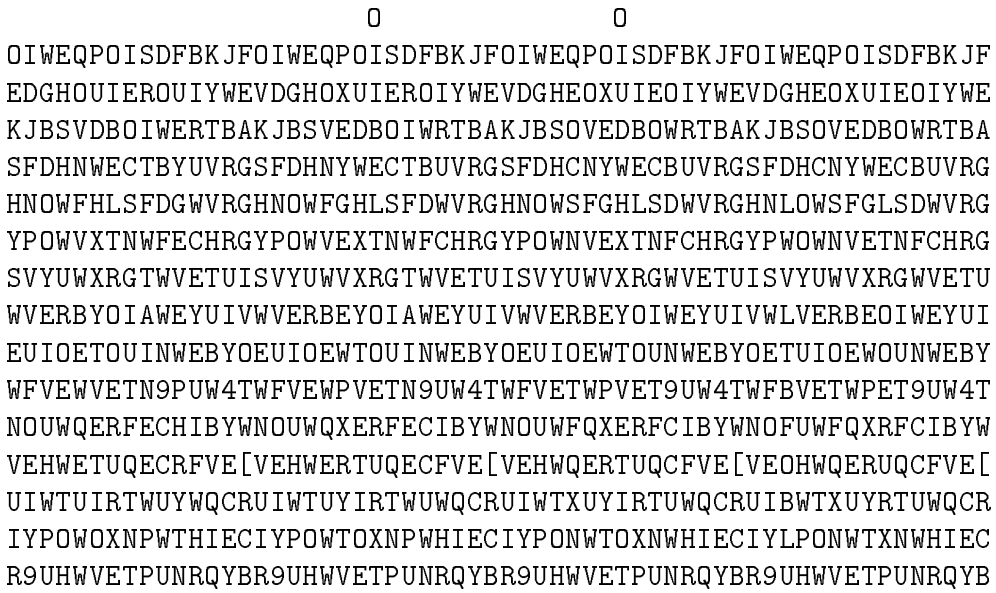

Figure 3: A random letter stereogram.

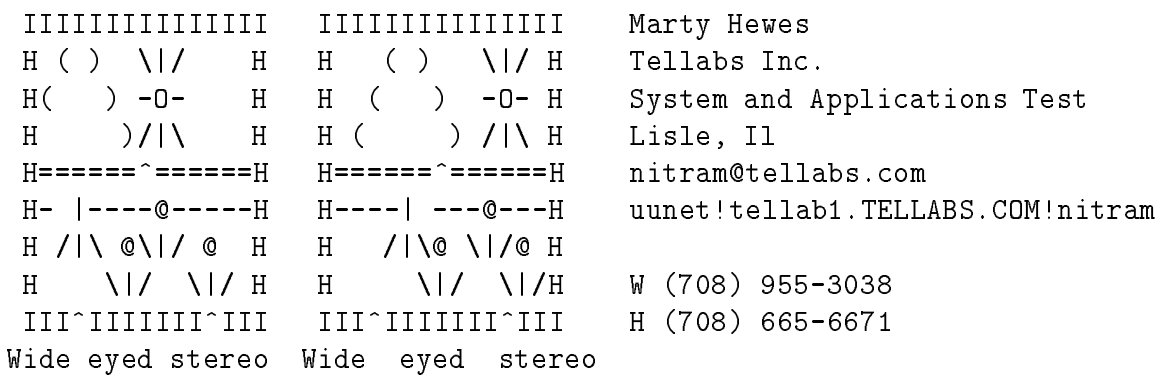

Figure 4: A stereogram signature.