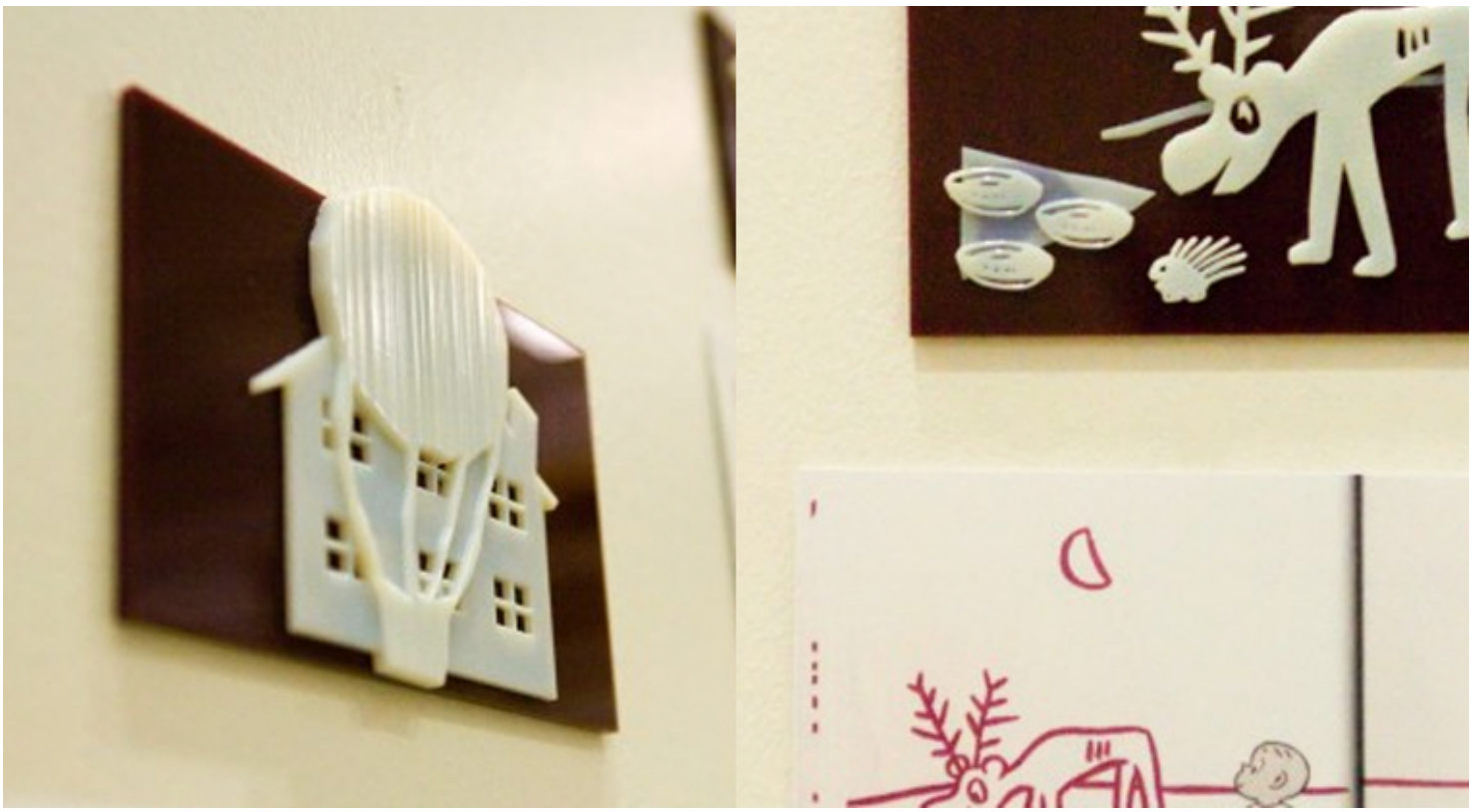

3D PRINTED KIDS' BOOKS ENABLE BLIND READERS TO VISUALIZE THE STORY

PUBLISHING & MEDIA

The Tactile Picture Books Project is using 3D printing to help blind readers use their hands to get more from illustrated narratives.

We've already seen how on-demand 3D printing can turn simple web searches into a tactile experience for the visually impaired through Yahoo! Japan's Hands On Search. Now the Tactile Picture Books Project is using the technology to help blind readers use their hands to get more from illustrated narratives.

Initiated by researchers at the University of Colorado, the scheme reproduces kids' stories and educational resources by transferring the illustrations into textured 3D models. After they're printed and placed on the page, kids can be guided through the book with a helper who can ask them questions about what they think the 3D illustrations represent. However — much like Braille — the books are designed to be suitable for independent reading. One of the benefits of the project is that the books can be used by both blind and non-blind children alike, enabling both to enjoy a joint reading session rather than having to read separate copies.

The project has so far recreated titles such as Harold and the Purple Crayon, Goodnight Moon and Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? Are there other ways 3D printing can be used to help the visually impaired make better sense of the physical world around them?

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