

Oculus VR Goes "Half Dome"

Written by Frederick Douglas
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The Facebook F8 conference has Oculus present an interesting take on the VR headset-- the "Half Dome," promising users a wider range of view and means to make virtual objects look better up close.



The Half Dome increases field of view from the 110-degree offered by the Oculus Rift and HTC Vive to 140-degrees. Thus, users can view more of the virtual world, even as the prototype retains the same dimensions as the existing Rift headset. Oculus says such a development comes through "continued advances in displays," something it will continue to work on before shifting focus on shrinking the headset.

Speaking of focus, another advancement seen in the Half Dome involves the way users focus on virtual objects. One problem with VR headsets is the lack of multiple focal lengths, making looking at a virtual object in close up difficult. Magic Leap claims to have resolved the issue, but does not actually detail how. Oculus, on the other hand, describes a variable focus solution with lenses shifting inside the headset.

Oculus dubs the solution a "varifocal" display, and it works in a similar fashion to the auto-focus function in cameras. It also promises the system does not cause any noise or vibration, and internal sensors track the gaze of the wearer to assist the dynamic field of vision re-focusing.

A final F8 panel on VR tackles the topic of hand tracking-- specifically a solution built into the headset. Oculus did not have a working prototype for this one, instead showing a demo with virtual, 3D-rendered fingers manipulating objects within a VR space.

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Oculus does not say when these advancements will hit a commercial product, instead simply pointing out a "five-year timeline." An interesting headset mentioned in the timeline is "Santa Cruz," a wireless, fully-tracked prototype currently in development.

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