STEREOGRAMS.ILLUSIONS.IM

The stereograph craze

Official Library of Congress wording keeps its dates, and its two collection sizes, distinct.

“Stereographs were first made in the 1850s and are still made today. They were most popular between 1870 and 1920.” Official wording also says that in 1851 stereo daguerreotypes were exhibited for the first time to the general public at the London International Exhibition (Crystal Palace), and that in 1859 Oliver Wendell Holmes designed a hand-held viewer for stereoscopes.

Official date	Kept as written
1851	The first public exhibition of stereo daguerreotypes, at the Crystal Palace. A later stereograph of the relocated palace, dated 1854 to 1862 on its file, is not treated as that official exhibition.
1850s, and 1859	Stereographs were first made in the 1850s, officially. A museum file range of 1840s–60s is not used to change that. Holmes’s official year for a hand-held viewer is 1859.
1870 to 1920	The official span of greatest popularity, and also the official bulk of the Library of Congress collection, inside a wider official holdings span from the 1850s to the 1940s.
Two official sizes	“More than 50,000 stereograph cards in the Prints & Photographs Division’s holdings,” and “Approximately 52,000 stereographs are organized and available in the Stereograph Cards collection.” They are not blended into one number.

A short quiz

1. When, in official wording, were stereographs most popular?
2. What official first public exhibition is dated 1851?
3. Does this sheet average the two official collection sizes?

Answers. Between 1870 and 1920. Stereo daguerreotypes at the Crystal Palace. No — both official figures are kept.

Wording from the Library of Congress, “About this Collection | Stereograph Cards,” re-checked 18 November 2026. stereograms.illusions.im is independent of the Library of Congress. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.