

A Celebration of Usability in Civic Life

Access + Usability

The LEO Kit: Usability Testing for Local Election Officials

Dorothy

County Clerk

- Prints ballots
- Trains inspectors
- Purchases and maintains voting equipment

“No news is good news: I don’t want to see my name in the paper the day after the election; I want to see the names of the winners.”

Walter

Poll Worker

- Checks registrations, records voters
- Prepares ballots and records numbers
- Handles voter and equipment problems

“This is a long day and a ballot problem makes it that much longer.”

Jevon

City Elections Director

- Keeps city registration records
- Runs city elections
- Prints city ballots

“The state and the feds have so many new laws and requirements I can’t afford to have a problem.”

Why a usability testing kit?

We created a usability testing kit for local elections officials with these goals in mind:

- Make it more likely the voter’s intention is carried out
- Make it easier for voters to use ballots
- Identify design problems in ballots that could lead to voters making mistakes
- Make it more likely that media coverage of an election is positive

When should ballots be tested?

There are 3 points in an election cycle when it could be good to test ballots:

- When something about the voting situation has changed since the last election, such as the voting system
- When it is known what’s going to be on the ballot
- When some significant event happens that may change the overall layout of a ballot, such as the death of a candidate

How do we know the ballot can be voted properly?

Only by observing voters using ballots *before* Election Day can we be sure that they are able to vote as they intend to.

If voters

- Overvote or undervote
- Ask for help
- Say they’re confused

It may mean

- Instructions aren’t clear.
- It may not be easy to mark the ballot
- They don’t have experience voting and need help

Kathy

Voter and Mom

- Her busy schedule means it is hard to find time to vote
- She brings her children to teach them civic pride

“I can’t take the time to wait in two-hour lines. I need to be in and out before the baby wakes up from her nap.”

James

Busy Voter

- Stops in to vote on his lunch hour
- Unfamiliar with the new voting system

“Okay, I haven’t voted on a touch screen. How do I know I’m doing this right?”

Jeanette

Differently Abled Voter

- Learning disorders do not affect her ability to vote; only her ability to read the ballot easily
- She doesn’t want to vote with anyone’s help; she’s not a child and she’s not helpless

“A simple ballot makes it easier for all of us to vote.”