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Voting: International perspectives

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UK

- Uses traditional paper ballots
- Less extensive than in the US – fewer races, fewer elected officials
- Traditionally first-past-the-post system (easy to count)

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UK

- Paper ballots
 - Much improved design through pressure from plain language groups
 - Still suffer from design problems – design driven by traditional practice,
 - ‘this is the way we’ve always done it’
 - Design elements mandated by law e.g. capitals for surname (as in the US)

UK

- Government pressure towards electronic systems
 - Concerns over falling turnout
 - (e-voting as ‘the solution’ to ‘voter apathy’)
 - “If Big Brother can do it, why can’t we?”
 - Increasing complexity of newer races e.g. transferable vote for Mayor of London – implications for speed of counting

UK

- Several 'new technology' pilots each year since 2000 (local, regional and European Parliament elections only)
 - SMS (cell phone texting)
 - Telephone
 - Internet
 - Digital interactive TV
 - Touch-screen kiosks in polling stations
 - Touch-screen kiosks in remote locations e.g. shopping centres, libraries
 - Electronic counting of paper ballots
 - All-postal

UK

- Accessibility now on the agenda
 - Disability rights organisations driving forward and doing research projects
- No mention of usability in official literature, requirements documents etc.
- Concerns about usability of (for e.g.)
 - SMS – long strings of numbers to enter
 - DiTV – poor interface
- No standards, except international ones

UK

- Lack of knowledge about voter behaviour
 - Electoral Commission research and reports limited to opinion surveys (exit polls)
- Lack of involvement of usability professionals in the voting design process
- Government wishes to implement e-voting nationally “some time after 2006”
 - Favours Internet voting and remote kiosk voting, and all-postal voting

- Internet/remote/postal voting
 - Over a period of time – effect on election campaigning
 - Non-controlled environment
 - potential for social engineering
 - independent monitoring/observing no longer possible
 - Interaction between campaign websites/pop-ups etc and official voting sites – unexplored/ungoverned terrain

- UK government now advising Eastern European countries on adopting new voting methods

Ireland

- US Nedap/Powervote equipment
- Pilot in Dublin and elsewhere
- Computer scientists report and criticism from opposition political party
- Government-sponsored inquiry
- Plans for 100% e-voting in 2004 dropped 2 months ago
- Usability not on the agenda

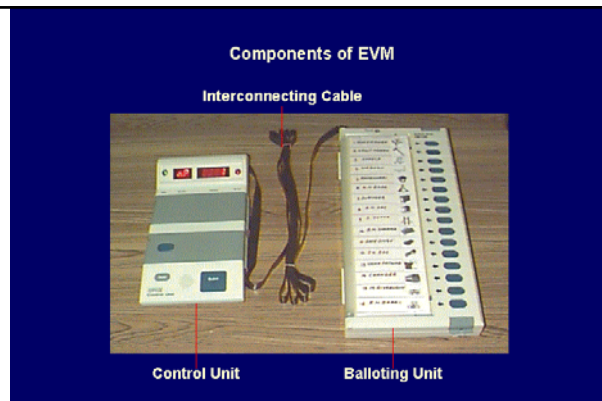
Elsewhere in Europe

- France – independent body has recommended against Internet voting for state elections
- Belgium – divided into paper ballot areas and other areas using older machines
- Switzerland – tiny pilot (60 people) with e-voting

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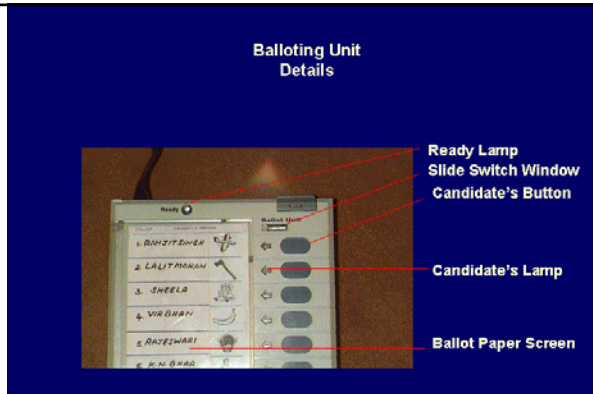
India

- All-electronic elections for first time in 2004
- Equipment manufactured in India to a single government-approved design
- Easily transportable units
- Many people in India are completely unfamiliar with computers – some villages still don't have electricity



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India



- All units have a permanent cut-off switch, in case the polling station is over-run. Officials have failed to use it.

Brazil

- Transportable e-voting system in use at present
- Both India and Brazil have issues of illiteracy
- In Brazil, voters enter the candidate's **number**

Australia

- The country that invented the secret ballot and polling station system – response to fraudulent practice
 - Adopted in other countries (US, UK etc.) in 19th century
- Some states now considering Internet voting for remote voters (Antarctica, overseas residents e.g. London) – but not for mainland voting

Conclusion

- Other countries importing US equipment
- Vendors are global/international – election officials, governments etc. working in isolation
- Absence of knowledge about voter behaviour, lack of research into voting process/experience
- Lack of awareness from governments regarding usability in context of voting
- Lack of involvement of usability professionals in the voting design process