Accessible Voting Systems: Can Demonstrations Improve Use?

NIST AVT Research Workshop, April 2013

Abbreviated Version of CSUN 2013 Presentation



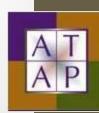
Research Hypotheses

- Demonstration/training will increase voter ability to use access features
- Demonstration/training will increase likelihood a voter will go to a polling place and use the AVS to vote (if they did not currently do so)



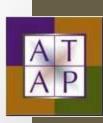
Demonstration Overview

- Demonstrations were conducted in 3 states (IL, MO, ND)
- AVS demonstrated was the machine that participant voter would use at their polling place
- Demonstrations were done by assistive technology specialists with experience in conducting AT demonstrations
- Demonstrations provided guided exploration and supported use of access features sufficient to enable the voter to use the features independently



Data Collection Overview

- Voter characteristics, disability type, age, current use of assistive technology (AT)
- Demonstration time (in minutes) required to become independent using access feature(s)
- Post demonstration time (in minutes) to complete standard ballot using access feature
- Open ended request for suggestions to improve access feature(s) used
- Pre and post rating of comfort using the access features (voter self rating)



Demonstration Data Summary

- 178 total demos conducted
- Disability types: vision 52% motor – 33% intellectual – 25% hearing/speech/other – 13% to 6%
- Age: seniors 44%
 middle aged 41%
 young adults 15%
- AT Use: 60% total; only 8% with AT experience transferable to AVS (screen reader, screen enlargement, etc.)



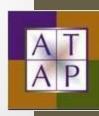
Demo Data by Access Feature

TABLE 1												
Access Feature	N	Minutes to Independent		# Never Independent		Minutes Complete Ballot						
		Mean	Max			Mean	Max					
Large Visual Display	97	5.48	20	5	(5%)	10.68	30					
Speech Output &												
Tactile Keypad Input	41	4.29	15	5	(12%)	10.34	30					
Synchronized												
Speech and Visual												
Display	21	4.76	15		0	10.14	25					
Switch Input	3	2.67	4		0	12.67	25					
Other (Regular												
features w/wo AT)	16	3.57	15		0	6.89	22					



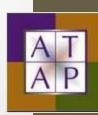
Demonstration Time Required

TABLE 2											
Minutes to											
Independent	Never	20-15	14-10	9-5	4-3	2-1					
Use	Reached	minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes					
N	10	17	16	46	25	64					
Percent	5.62%	9.55%	8.99%	25.84%	14.04%	35.96%					



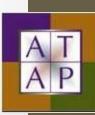
Demo Based Recommendations

- 1) Larger text display AVS "large text" is not nearly large enough
- 2) Larger touchscreen strike areas and adjustable sensitivity
- 3) Improve audio navigation and general instructions
- 4) Improve switch input navigation



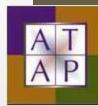
Pre/Post Rating Data

- Self rating of comfort using the AVS on 1 to 10 scale before and after demo
- Pre-demo mean = 5.46 (somewhat comfortable)
- Post-demo mean = 8.41 (very comfortable); almost 3 point increase
- 91% of demo participants reporting increase in comfort using the AVS



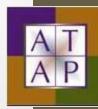
Analysis/General Findings

- Demo/training does seem to be a strategy to use to improve use of AVS
 - Less than 10 minutes will be effective for a majority of voters
 - But will NOT be effective for all individuals
- Poll workers cannot be expected to provide this kind of demonstration during an election. Many of them could benefit from demo/training
- Need AVS demos to be widely available throughout the community on an ongoing basis to ensure all voters can participate in a demo if they so choose



Challenges to Address

- 1) Obtaining AVS for demo purposes
 - Jurisdictions hesitant to lend
 - Vendors reluctant or refuse to sell
 - Ballot must be programmed
- Reaching very specialized disability populations (i.e. switch users)
- 3) One-on-one demo time demands
- 4) Collecting sample ballot completion data from demo participants
 - Performance anxiety?
 - Time limitations?



Future Research

- 1) Replicate in OK and NJ and expand in IL
 - OK with state unique AVS (renting from vendor)
 - NJ may provide jurisdiction where all voters use electronic interface
- 2) Implement targeted outreach for voters who would need switch input access feature
- 3) Recommend best practice strategies for conducting demos (develop written materials?)
- Develop resource guide describing functional limitations of individuals with disabilities, access features of AVS, and association between the two



In Conclusion . . .

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Research Alliance for Accessible Voting http://www.accessiblevoting.org/

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