Starting from People

Whitney Quesenbery
Usability Professionals' Association
Director, Voting and Usability Project

Whitney Interactive Design, LLC
UPA Voting and Usability Project

- Project founded in late 2000
- Focus on the user experience of an election and what knowledge and skills usability professionals can bring to improving the elections process
- Interested in guidelines for usability testing of voting systems
- Cooperation with other efforts, such as the Design for Democracy, AIGA and ACM SIGCHI
- International e-list provides a discussion forum and a place for researchers in usability in e-voting and e-participation to meet

http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org/upa_projects/voting_and_usability/
Is usability important?

How hard is it to put an “x” next to your candidate’s name? Most people manage it just fine!

Usability is the last thing we should be worried about...if we can’t trust the technology nothing else matters.
A different view

Usability and the entire user experience, not technology, should be the starting point for the design of any voting system.

Only through a user-centered design approach can we design voting systems that meet the needs of all the people who use it:

- voters
- officials
- candidates
- society as a whole
A user-centered approach

ISO 13407 - Human-centred design process
What is usability?

Usability:
The extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use.

ISO 9241-11
Usability testing

**Formative**
Understand how the current system works.
Investigate users and the context of use

**Diagnostic**
Evaluate the product (both design and implementation) throughout the development process

**Summative**
Evaluate the finished product against usability requirements to measure its success against user performance
Quality and usability are different

Quality looks for:
- Correctly spelled names
- Approved position on the ballot
- Relative font size

Usability looks for:
- Unambiguous voting process
- Readability of text
- Successful performance
It’s important to watch voters in context

photos from
Susan King Roth
“Disenfranchised by Design” in IDJ, 1998
Good design supports usability

From Design for Democracy project case studies
Usability testing after release

When should a ballot be usability tested because the election requirements change the context of use?

Dorothy Tirpok, Hunterdon, NJ County Clerk
"I was trying to make the print bigger so elderly people in Palm Beach County can read it. We sent out sample ballots to all registered voters, and no one said a word."

Theresa LaPore
Supervisor of Elections
Palm Beach County
November 2000
The UPA supports those who promote and advance the development of usable products, reaching out to people who act as advocates for usability and the user experience. Members come from across the broad family of disciplines that create the user experience.

The goals of the UPA are to:

- **Provide an international network** through which usability professionals can share information about the techniques and methodologies in the profession.
- **Create an inclusive community** for those interested in usability, whether it is their primary focus or related to another discipline.
- **Change new product development processes** to include a concern for the people who use them by presenting the business case for usability in product development to colleagues, customers, the public and governmental agencies.
- **Increase the body of knowledge** about usability and user-centered design through professional education, meetings and conventions and other professional interchanges.

Promoting usability concepts and techniques worldwide

www.usabilityprofessionals.org