VOTING SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Quarterly Newsletter

December 2015 **Volume 1, Number 3**

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MESSAGE FROM DEAN

As we approach the end of 2015, we take pride in the accomplishments achieved this year. We are progressing towards the final design of the Ballot Marking Device (BMD) and continue to define the tally system and other voting system components. The final design is a product of a design evolution, born as a result of extensive qualitative research to identify voters' preferences and address the needs of a large and complex electorate.

The final design brings us a step closer to delivering an outstanding public service to Los Angeles County voters. We envision a new and improved voting experience, one that will leave a positive mark on voters no matter how big or small the election. Ultimately, it is our goal to remind every eligible voter that the act of voting is not only a civic duty but also an exercise that effects changes in the community in which they live.

In this issue, we provide you with the VSAP activities and developments that have occurred in this quarter. We have conducted Vote By Mail user testing and a series of meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). We continued to engage stakeholders and the public through presentations and outreach activities. The project continues to gain national recognition. The VSAP was featured in various articles and television media coverage which highlighted project activities and goals.

DEAN C. LOGAN
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
Los Angeles County

VOTE BY MAIL USER TESTING

Vote By Mail (VBM) user testing was conducted to evaluate the proposed VBM ballot and envelope design and to create an experience that will provide usability, satisfaction, and accessibility to users that is similar to the new voting experience being designed for in-person voting. The VSAP envisions a human-centered design that is sensitive to the needs of the Los Angeles County electorate who opt to vote by mail. Approximately 1.5 million voters in the County are currently registered Permanent Vote By Mail voters, and this number is expected to grow in the next few years.

In order to ensure a diverse pool of participants, representative of Los Angeles County's population, specific categories were identified to guide recruitment. These categories included: experienced Vote By Mail voters, new Vote By mail voters, senior citizens, young voters ages 18-25, Spanish speakers, Korean speakers, and people with minimal formal education. We reached out to our partner organizations and non-profit groups to ensure that all communities are well represented in this research. The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County, National Association of Latino Elected Officials Educational Fund (NALEO), United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA), and the Korean Resource Center (KRC) assisted in the recruitment of participants.

Participants received the proposed Vote By Mail packet and were scheduled for a 30-45 minute structured phone interview. Participants were asked to rate their experience on the following points: overall design including layout and font, size and length of the ballot, ease and efficiency (marking the ballot, looking for contests), privacy and anonymity of voting experience, and level of confidence in the new system to successfully record their votes. Participants also gave recommendations on how to improve the proposed design.
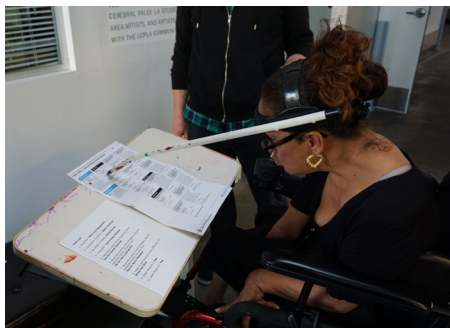

1,525,569 Total Permanent Vote by Mail Voters as of December 15, 2015

Vote By Mail User Testing at UCPLA | November 20, 2015

To further evaluate the VBM ballot design, we requested members of United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA) to test the proposed Vote By Mail design and give their recommendations. Individual interviews were conducted using a set of structured questions, and participants were asked to rate the experience on its usability and accessibility. In addition to the one-on-one interviews, we conducted a focus group with UCPLA members, where we gathered significant feedback.

Members of the UCPLA interacted with the proposed Vote By Mail ballot design

Focus Group Discussion with the members of UCPLA

The Department and IDEO are currently evaluating and analyzing the data gathered from the phone interviews. The data will be used to refine the proposed Vote By Mail design to accommodate the ideas and suggestions from the user testing.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

TAC Meetings

A series of conference calls were held between the VSAP team, members of the Technical Advisory Committee and the IDEO team to further discuss the critical features and functions of the Ballot Marking Device (BMD). Among the topics were: ballot verification, session time-out, write-in candidates and the Interactive Sample Ballot (ISB).

The feedback from these discussions will significantly impact the decision making on the software and engineering aspects of the design. The members of the Technical Advisory Committee shared their expertise in election administration, election technology, and accessibility requirements. These discussions provided guidance to the VSAP team as we work towards the final voting system design.

New Advisory Committee Members

The VSAP team is pleased to welcome two new members to the VSAP Advisory Committee. Both individuals have expertise and knowledge in election law and administration. They will provide input and guidance to ensure that the final system design adheres to the voting system principles.

Maria de la Luz Garcia
City Clerk
City of Long Beach

Maria has been a voter engagement advocate and elections administrator for the past fifteen years. Under her leadership as Senior Project Coordinator at the City of Los Angeles City Clerk's Office, she supervised several election operations, co-chaired the Department's Los Angeles Votes committee, and created and launched a comprehensive voter outreach and education campaign known as "L.A. City Votes!" in partnership with community organizations. Working for NALEO Educational Fund, she oversaw the Voces del Pueblo voter engagement program. Maria graduated from Vassar College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Anthropology, and is currently a Dean's Merit Scholar and candidate for Master of Public Administration at the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy.

Richard L. Hasen
Chancellor's Professor of Law and Political Science
University of California, Irvine

Rick is a nationally recognized expert in election law and campaign finance regulation. He is the author of more than 80 articles on election law issues, co-author of a leading casebook on election law, published in numerous journals including the Harvard Law Review, Stanford Law Review and Supreme Court Review. From 2001-2010, he served as founding co-editor of the quarterly peer-reviewed publication, Election Law Journal. He was elected to The American Law Institute in 2009 and serves as an Adviser on ALI's ongoing law reform project, Principles of Election Law: Resolution of Election Disputes. In 2013, he was named one of the 100 most influential lawyers in America by The National Law Journal. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (with highest honors) from UC Berkeley, and a J.D., M.A., and Ph.D. (Political Science) from UCLA.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community and Voter Outreach Committee (CVOC) Meeting | September 16, 2015

The VSAP team updated the committee on the status of the project. Updates included a presentation of the latest BMD prototype, the findings from the May user testing sessions, and other project activities. The members were informed that the most recent reports are available on the VSAP website.

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) Meeting | September 29, 2015

The VSAP team presented the updated BMD prototype and discussed the results of the May user testing sessions. The members were also informed that the most recent reports may be accessed on the VSAP website. Requests from committee members for prototype demonstrations were noted and will be followed-up when the final design prototype is available.

SXSW Eco in Austin, TX | October 5, 2015

In a session titled "Creating the Voting Experience of the Future," the RR/CC and IDEO showed the collaboration between the two organizations and how technology and innovation is used to design the new voting system that will serve the large and complex LA County electorate.

Matt Adams (IDEO) and Dean Logan at the SXSW Eco.

California Council of the Blind Prototype Demonstration | October 10, 2015

The VSAP team presented the current state of the project and conducted a demonstration of the audio features of the latest prototype model. The members of the organization interacted with the BMD prototype and provided their feedback.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

National Conference of State Legislatures Forum (NCSL) in Boulder, CO | October 22-24, 2015

The VSAP was invited to a meeting hosted by the NCSL to discuss election funding specifically for election-related technology. The RR/CC was represented by Monica Flores who shared the Department's experiences, challenges, and recommendations. The meeting was attended by approximately 15 legislators, professionals and experts in the field of election administration who all played an instrumental role in helping the NCSL shape a two-year program to address election funding concerns.

Civic Tech Showcase in San Mateo, CA | October 28, 2015

The VSAP was invited to conduct a presentation at the Civic Tech Showcase at Draper University. The showcase was coordinated by "Innovate Your State", a non-profit organization that is dedicated to educating and encouraging public participation to fundamentally improve government. The presentation's focus was on the unique partnership between the public and private sector.

Blaise Bertrand (IDEO) and Dean Logan at the Civic Tech Showcase.

Kiwanis Club of Downey Presentation | November 18, 2015

The VSAP team was invited by the Downey City Clerk's Office to give a project overview to the members of the Kiwanis Club of Downey. The VSAP team presented the appearance model and explained the process of the proposed new voting experience.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN THE PROCESS

The VSAP seeks to create a human-centered design which will provide an improved voting experience for Los Angeles County. Extensive qualitative research has been conducted throughout the course of the project to identify the needs and preferences of the diverse Los Angeles County electorate. To date, we have engaged over 3,000 voters, poll workers, and election administrators through surveys, focus groups, workshops, community discussions, and user testing to gather their feedback and input into the voting system design.

DATE	ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
March 11-29, 2010	Countywide Voter Survey - Phone	651
March 16-28, 2010	Countywide Voter Survey - Online	500
March 31 - April 2, 2010	Focus Groups - RR/CC Staff	64
April 5-6, 2010; April 29 - May 3, 2010	Focus Groups - Registered Voters	100
April 29 - June 8, 2010	Pollworker Survey - Online	1,100
May 7-11, 2010	Focus Groups - Local Election Officials, City Clerks	26
July 21, 2010	Community Discussion - Language Groups	9
August 11, 2010	Community Discussion - Voter Integrity Groups	9
September 20, 2010	Community Discussion - Disability Groups	6
January 24 - March 28, 2012	Open Innovation Challenge	154
January 25 - February 23, 2012	Brainstorming Workshops - AVTI	32
March 30, 2012	Election Verification Network (EVN) Conference Session	24
April 5-6, 2012	Brainstorming Workshops - RR/CC Staff	25
October 1-2, 2013	Atkins Research User Testing	40
November 4-5, 2013	User Testing	8
November 7, 2013	User Testing - United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA)	15
January 27 - February 1, 2014	Atkins Research Focus Groups	95
February 5, 2015	User Testing - General Population	5
February 27, 2015	User Testing - Spanish Speakers, Seniors	57
March 3 and 26, 2015	User Testing - Visually Impaired	5
April 29, 2015	User Testing - Election Workers	22
May 26-30, 2015	Polling Place Experience User Testing	184
November 9-20, 2015	Vote By Mail User Testing	76
November 20, 2015	Vote By Mail Focus Group - United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles (UCPLA)	10
TOTAL		**3217**

IN THE NEWS

November 9, 2015 - Election Administration Reports – Vol. 45, No. 22
http://www.lavote.net/Documents/vsap/press_room/_11092015_november%209-final.pdf

November 3, 2015 - Democracy for Everyone: Designing a Better Voting Machine
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2015-11-03/democracy-for-everyone-designing-a-better-voting-machine

October 12, 2015 - America's Aging Voting Machines
http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/10/12/opinion/americas-aging-voting-machines.html?_r=3

October 12, 2015 - LA County's $13M touch-screen voting system gets previewed at Austin's SXSW
http://www.scpr.org/news/2015/10/09/54919/la-county-s-voting-overhaul-gets-a-preview-in-aust/

October 2, 2015 - L.A. County reboot of voting machine tech makes progress
http://www.cafwd.org/reporting/entry-new/l.a.-county-project-to-reboot-voting-machine-tech-making-progress

September 15, 2015 - Group in Los Angeles working to develop new high-tech ballots
http://www.wwmt.com/news/features/national/stories/Group-in-Los-Angeles-working-to-develop-new-high-tech-ballots-205340.shtml#.Vl82idKrR9O

September 15, 2015 - The Dismal State of America's Decade-Old Voting Machines
http://www.wired.com/2015/09/dismal-state-americas-decade-old-voting-machines/

September 15, 2015 - Report: America's Aging Voting Machines Could Present Election Problems
http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/15/440255752/report-americas-aging-voting-machines-could-present-election-problems

September 15, 2015 - America's Voting Technology Crisis
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/americas-voting-technology-crisis/405262/

September 15, 2015 - America's Voting Machines at Risk
https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Americas_Voting_Machines_At_Risk.pdf

September 15, 2015 - Design firm tackles aging voting machines
http://www.cbsnews.com/news/design-firm-tackles-aging-voting-machines/

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Get the latest updates and project developments by visiting the Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP) website at www.lavote.net /vsap. We strongly encourage public input throughout the process and look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical project.