



Office of the County Clerk

David Orr, Cook County Clerk

IT'S THAT SIMPLE! – A VIDEO

Using the Internet and Video Technology for Voter Education in Cook County, Illinois
Cook County Clerk David Orr

Our Challenge

Since March 2006 and the implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), Cook County, Illinois¹ has used a dual voting system. That is, every precinct has two distinct types of voting equipment: touch screens and an optical scan paper ballot system.

Because Cook County used a punch card system prior to March, 2006, these systems are fairly new to voters. Our challenge was to ensure that voters using either system felt comfortable and confident casting their ballots. We wanted to reach as many people as possible with a simple teaching tool.

Our Strategy

The Cook County Clerk's office has an award-winning website (www.voterinfonet.com) that many voters have visited for years to check their registration, their polling place, and to use non-election services provided by our office. The press also frequents our website regularly for election results and candidate information. In fact, media websites often provide links to our home page. We believed that a teaching tool accessible through our website would gain optimal exposure at minimum cost.

We decided to script and film a video, IT'S THAT SIMPLE!, to demonstrate, in a friendly and clear manner, how to vote on both optical scan ballots and the touch screen. We planned to post this video on voterinfonet's home page, and to take advantage of the electronic format to disseminate it as broadly as possible via email links and DVDs.

We knew that posting IT'S THAT SIMPLE! on voterinfonet would encourage links to newspaper, television and radio websites. Also, we could email the video link to a variety of lists including community organizations, public officials and other interested parties. We could inexpensively produce DVD copies of the video for our own staff and local organizations to take to community meetings. What's more, we knew that individuals and groups could then post the link—or the video itself—on their own websites, and email the link to their own memberships.

The Product: IT'S THAT SIMPLE!

We ultimately wrote a script for a 3 minute video—IT'S THAT SIMPLE!—to be moderated by a popular former local television newsman named Bob Wallace, who had produced videos for our judge trainings. The video “starred” Mr. Wallace and one of our key training staff, and features Mr. Wallace learning to use both forms of equipment. After an engaging musical introduction, the video covers all of the basics.

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For optical scan it covers:

- The required paper ballot, pen and privacy shield
- How to cast a ballot by drawing a line to complete an arrow
- How to choose a write-in
- Inserting the ballot into the scanner
- Overvotes
- Returning supplies to the judge

For the touch screen it covers:

- Obtaining and inserting the activation card
- Choosing a language
- Selecting a candidate by pressing their name or a check mark
- How to advance pages
- Deselecting candidates
- Undervotes
- The review screen
- The paper trail

All of these demonstrations use an easily read ballot with contests such as favorite Chicago landmark, favorite Chicago building, favorite actor and favorite actress.

Moreover, the video script benefited from past research. The ballot graphics and instructional language had been developed and refined in usability testing that the Clerk's office conducted during the transition to new election equipment to comply with HAVA.

Video Premiere and Voter Education: A Five Star Open Run

IT'S THAT SIMPLE! was released to the media at a press conference on March 26, 2007 in preparation for the April 17, 2007 consolidated local elections. As we had hoped, press outlets expressed widespread interest. In addition to printing and broadcasting stories about IT'S THAT SIMPLE!, they posted the video, or links to it, on their own websites.

We also distributed DVDs to County Commissioners. We provided copies to our trainers to train election workers, and to our outreach staff, to use with the public. We emailed links to hundreds of organizations and, as intended, posted it at www.voterinfonet.com, where it can still be viewed.

IT'S THAT SIMPLE! was a tremendous success. We were thrilled with its reception and use. Media outlets, public officials and organizations posted it on their own websites, and every voter who visited voterinfonet had a chance to watch it. Plus, it was consumer-friendly—and not only because it was brief and easy to understand. Unlike advertising, it adapted to voters' schedules. It reached them via email or during their own web-surfing. They watched it on their own time and at their own convenience. Not to be forgotten, dissemination was free. We consider IT'S THAT SIMPLE! a perfect marriage of internet and video technology.

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¹ Our jurisdiction is the Chicago suburbs and does not include the city of Chicago itself.



Office of the County Clerk

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March 26, 2007

Orr announces new voting tool kit, Early Voting sites **Clerk also seeks 2,000 judges for April 17 election**

Chicago, IL – With 2,400 candidates and 769 unique ballots, the April 17th Consolidated Election in suburban Cook County will be the most complex election held anywhere in the United States this year. To prepare voters and the system for the upcoming election, Cook County Clerk David Orr has initiated a series of election improvements. At a press conference Monday, Orr unveiled a new online voter tool kit. He also announced this election's early voting sites and issued a call for election judges as the County faces a significant shortfall.

To prepare voters for a smooth election day, Orr's office has redesigned its web site – www.voterinfonet.com. The site now includes "It's That Easy!" a new, three-minute instructional voting video showing voters how to use the county's new dual-system voting equipment as well as a comprehensive "Voter's Tool Kit."

"For some voters, this election will mark the first time they have used the new touch screen voting screens," Orr said. "By watching the short online video, they will see just how simple it is to vote. They will also be able to see the voter-verifiable paper trail that we hear so much about in today's debate over electronic voting. Fortunately, in Illinois we have this important security provision."

The site's "Voter's Tool Kit" is an interactive package for voters with easy-to-use functions such as:

- Registration look-up
- Virtual, customized ballot
- Personalized polling place information and map,
- Voter's guide (if the candidate submitted a statement)

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The tool kit also includes a list of the Clerk's 32 Early Voting locations. Orr reminded voters that they can vote at any of the sites – even though there are nearly 800 different ballot styles in the upcoming election.

“That’s the good part about using just touch screens for Early Voting,” Orr said. “They have the capability to hold every different ballot style imaginable. If we used paper ballots, it would be virtually impossible to have every style at each location.”

Orr’s office switched to all-touch screen Early Voting for the November 2007 General Election. More than 33,000 people cast ballots during the three-week Early Voting period, and surveys showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the Early Voting experience.

Early Voting runs from Monday through April 12 at 26 temporary locations throughout the county, as well as at the five suburban courthouses and the Clerk’s downtown office, located at 69 W. Washington St.

Orr also announced Monday that his office is seeking more than 2,000 people to work as Election Judges on April 17th.

“Last week, my office mailed letters to each of the 2,400 candidates running in this election,” Orr said. “We asked them each to recruit two people to work as election judges. We are calling on community groups, religious organizations, and residents to assist.”

Election judges open polling places, certify that voters are registered and qualified to vote, explain election procedures, issue ballots and activate cards for the touch screens, operate election equipment, and transmit votes at the end of the day.

Election judges receive \$150 for their work. That includes \$100 for working on Election Day and \$50 for attending a 2-1/2 hour training session prior to the election. Judges begin work at 5:15 a.m. and work until the votes are transmitted after the polls close at 7 p.m.

To qualify as an election judge, you must be a registered voter and live in Cook County.

High school seniors are also eligible to be election judges. To qualify, they must have at least a 3.0 GPA, have written permission from a parent, and a letter of recommendation from the principal.

People interested in serving on Election Day can call (312) 603-0970 or download an application online at www.voterinfonet.com. The completed application can be faxed to (312) 603-9779 or dropped off at the Clerk’s office, located at 69 W. Washington St., fifth floor, Chicago.

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vote!

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DAVID ORR, COOK COUNTY CLERK

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It's That Simple!

Check out the Clerk's new voting equipment – the only dual system used in the United States. This 3-minute video highlights:

- How to vote on a paper ballot.
- How to vote on a touch screen.
- The voter-verifiable paper audit trail.

