BallotBox

Our Team

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Introduction

Value Proposition

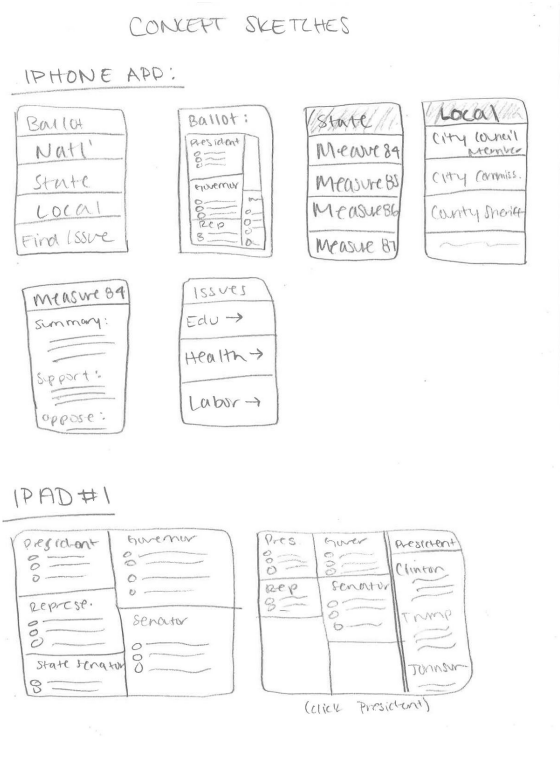
- Know your ballot before you vote

Problem/Solution Overview

- Many young voters know nothing about their local government and have no desire to learn. Our app mocks up a ballot such that you can click on individual issues and learn more about each one. The app is designed such that you could use it in line while waiting to vote and be sufficiently informed by the time you vote.

Sketches

Concept Sketches



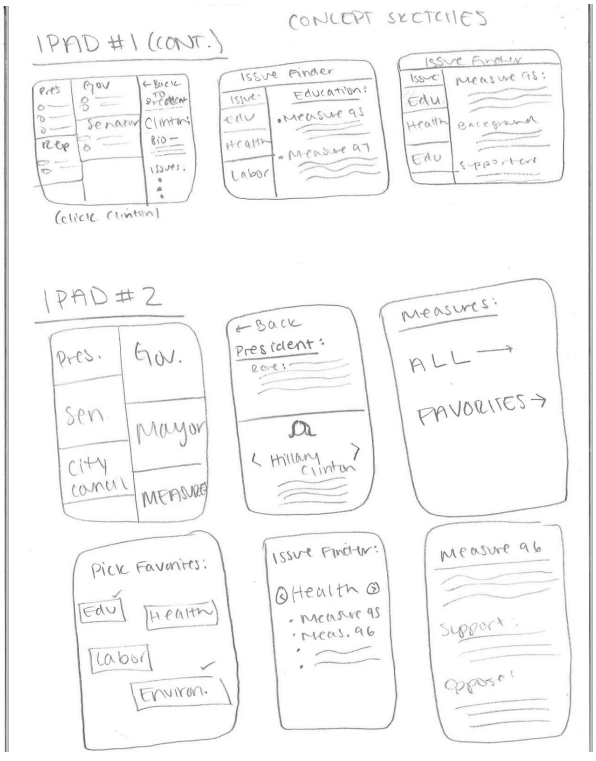


Figure 1: Concept Sketches for ballot app

Top 2 UI Sketches

iPhone App

Users are shown a list of options initially, allowing them to see the ballot in its entirety or simply pick issues they are interested in. Once users select a level of government (national, state, local) and can learn more about candidates at that level. In the case of local governments, they can also learn about ballot issues they are interested in via a list interface.

Figure 2: UI Sketch for iPhone app

iPad App #2

Users are shown the ballot in its entirety upon opening the app, with the sections generalized by topic rather than having every candidate listed. Clicking on each section will bring you to more information about it. The iPad app includes an IssueFinder, in which you can select the issues that are most important to ou and the app will aggregate the ballot measures relevant to those issues.

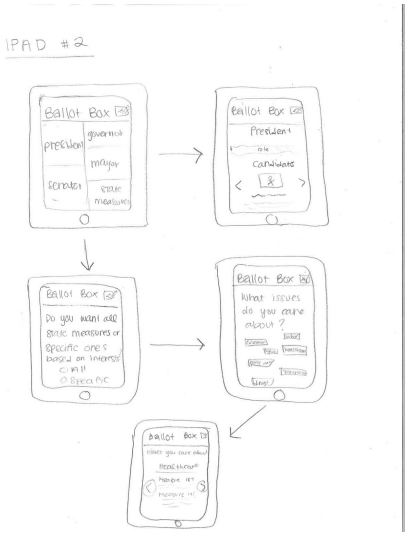


Figure 3: UI Sketch for iPad App

Selected Interface Design

Pros for iPad

- Lots of screen space
- Not cluttered
- Can see the ballot as it is
- Portrait/Landscape options

Cons for iPad

- Less common
- Have to deal with portrait/landscape
- Target users probably don't carry iPads

Pros for iPhone

- Everyone has one
- Fits in hand easily
- Easy to swipe and use with just one hand

Cons for iPhone

- Portrait/Landscape not really an option
- Not enough screen space for a full ballot
- Lots of texts makes it very cluttered

We ultimately chose the iPad app because it best accomplishes our tasks. We want to show users the ballot as they would see it, which only works as an iPad app. iPad apps are also less cluttered, which makes it more user friendly and easier on the eyes. It is also easier to switch views from portrait to landscape, while still fitting the same amount of information.

Task Storyboards

1. Familiarize yourself with ballot

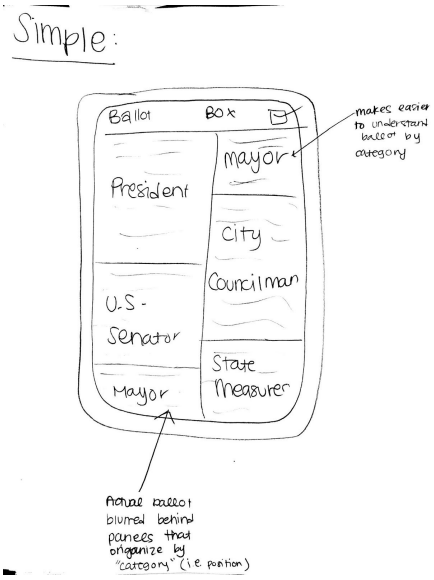


Figure 4:Task 1 IPAD app

2. Learn more about candidates

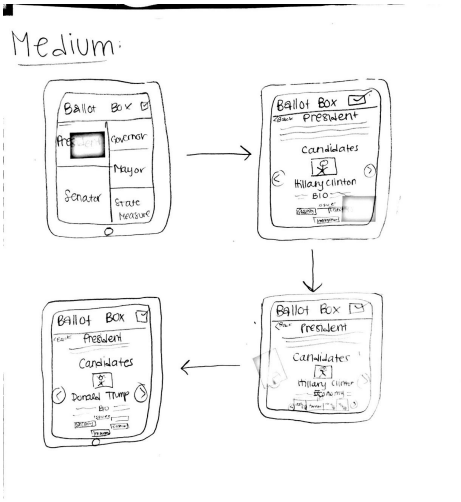


Figure 5:Task 2 IPAD app

3. Find measures that apply to you

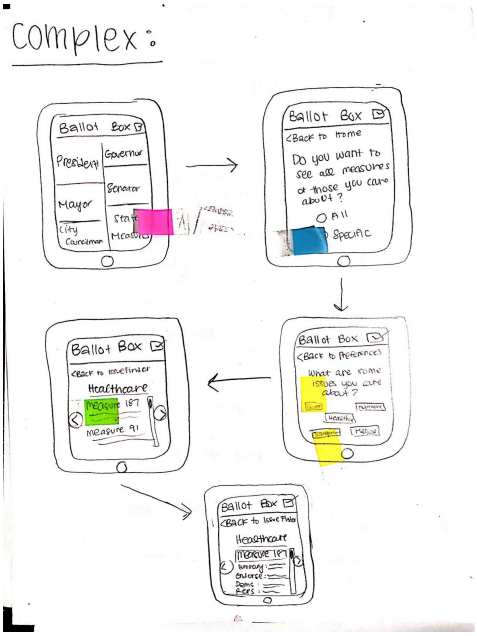


Figure 6:Task 3 IPAD app

Prototype Description

Our prototype was made to simulate an iPad app, so we used full sized sheets of paper for each screen. We drew an iPad, life size.

Initial Screen (Ballot Interface)

Upon opening the app, you are presented with the ballot as you would see it in real life, without the detail in each section.

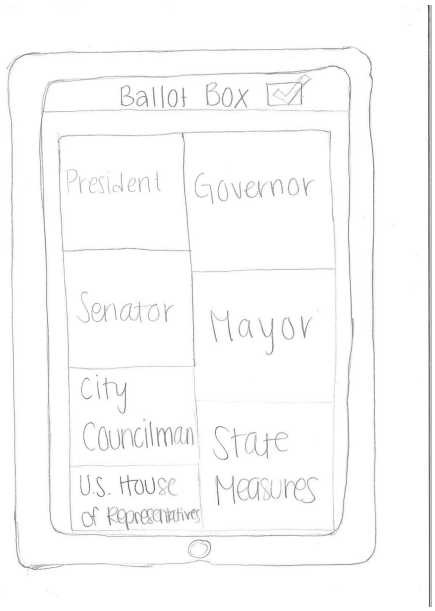


Figure 7: Initial Screen

Selected section on ballot

Upon selecting a particular section on the ballot, you are brought to a screen with information about candidates for that position and information about the position.

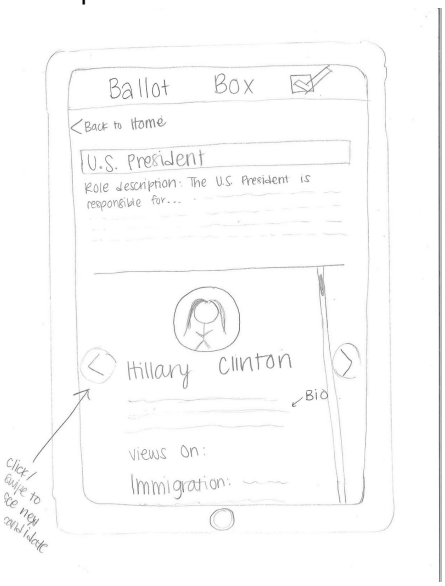


Figure 8: Info about a particular position being voted on

IssueFinder

Users who select “State Measures” are able to choose whether they want to see all measures or just measures they’re interested in. If they choose measures they’re interested in, the app asks them for their interests and then displays the relevant measures.

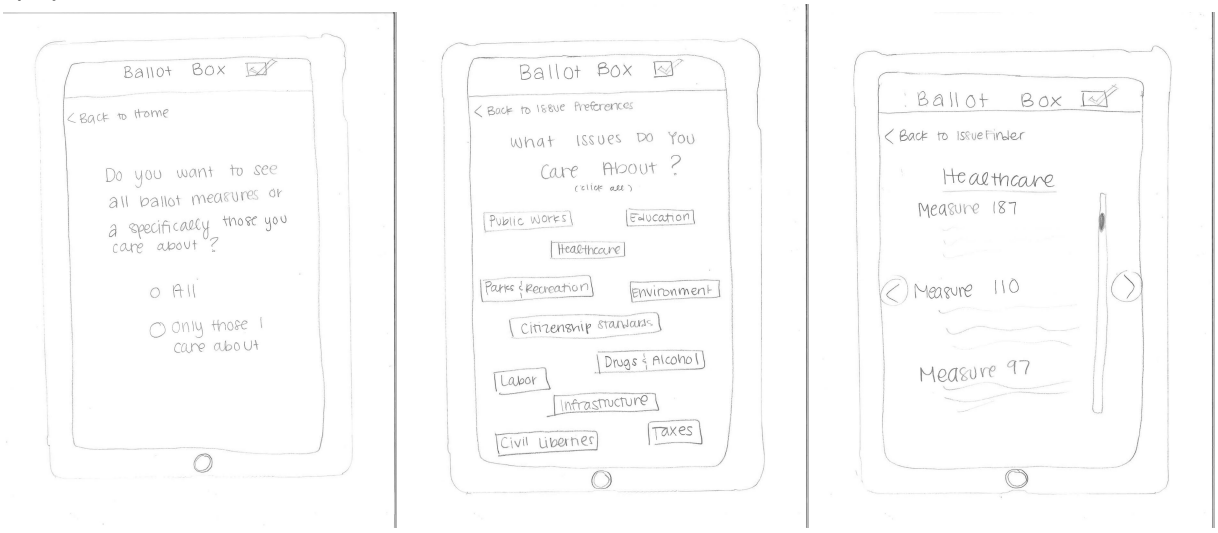


Figure 9: IssueFinder interface

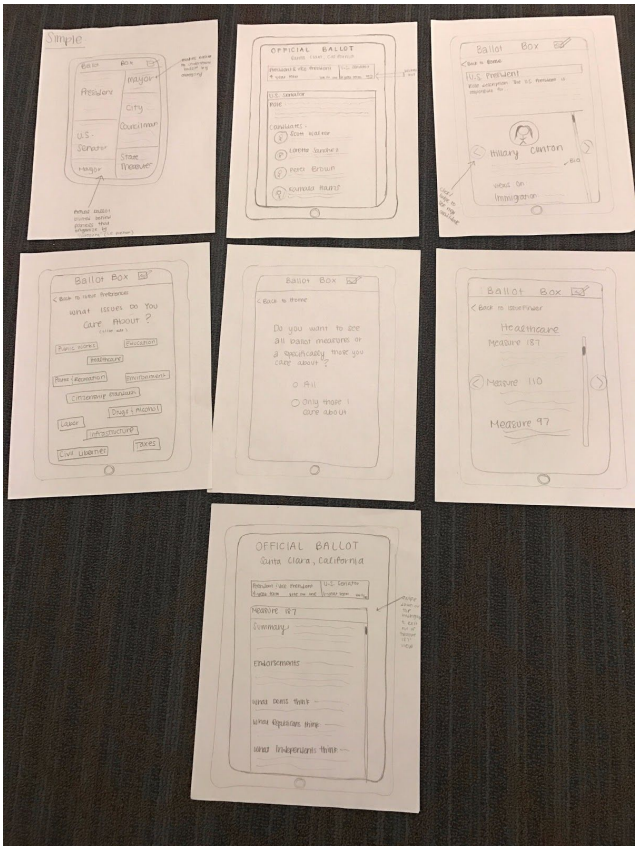


Figure 10: Entire Low-Fi Prototype

Method

Environment

We tested in the lounges of dorms, which tend to be a comfortable place for the user. It mimics the space where someone would actually prepare to vote or fill out their absentee ballot.

Participants

We looked for participants around Caro's dorm, resulting in finding a Stanford student and two non-Stanford students, one of which was still a college student. We needed people who were interested in voting or planned on voting. We also wanted various genders, ages, and ethnicities. They didn't necessarily have to be voting absentee. We did not offer to compensate voters for their time, since this app really doesn't require much time. This resulted in Participant 1, a 50 year old man, who works as a chef. He is an experienced voter. Participant 2 is a 20 year old female college student at Menlo College visiting Stanford. She is a new voter. Finally, we had Participant 3, a 21 year old male college student at Stanford, also a new voter.

Procedure

For all users, we used our paper iPad prototypes. Alex explained the app to users using the script we wrote. Katy handed them the corresponding pages of the app when they clicked on particular sections. Caro and Trina took notes on what users said. After completing all tasks, we asked for general feedback/feelings/opinions.
Our script involved telling participants it was an app to help with voting and was an easy way to learn more about issues they will be voting on in their home state.
We had them interact with the paper as you would an iPad and explain their actions as they went.

Test Measures

1. number of errors users had (eg clicking wrong thing)
    a. There's a chance a user will try to click on something that's not a button - make it clear which areas are clickable and which aren't
2. clear procedure of tasks (did they easily know how to go to next step)
    a. how can we make sure the app flows at it should? Task flow should be clear
3. tell user if something they clicked is limited by paper prototype
    a. IssueFinder will be a lot more clear in real life (that you can select multiple interests, etc)
4. ask for users' verbal explanation of what they are thinking/intending to do while they do it
    a. If they are thinking the wrong thing, then we've messed up and need to make the app more clear.

Results

All of our participants thought the app was simple and straightforward to use. As we predicted, the fact that the ballot was laid out for you was unique and well received. Participant 3 expressed that simply having the name of the section was a bit too simplistic and made it look significantly less like an actual ballot.
A criticism that Participant 1 mentioned was that the homepage was a bit startling to start with. To be immediately shown the ballot was very intimidating. They said that they would prefer to start with a home screen and go from there, which was somewhat similar to what we had in our iPhone UI sketch.
Something that Participant 2 suggested was putting the IssueFinder at the start of the app - essentially, when you open the app, you see the IssueFinder. It would make it similar to Medium in that you choose the types of issues you want to see, and then from then on, the app will be tailored to you.

Discussion

Based on our user testing, we had some key takeaways from the low-fi prototype:

- The layout of the ballot was a good idea, but it's too abrupt to show as the start screen
- Simply showing the names of the sections on the ballot is a bit too dumbed-down and makes it look much less like an actual ballot
- The IssueFinder is a good idea, but could be more effective with better placement within the app or being modified into a quiz to find which ballot issues would be most relevant (or both)

Moving forward with our medium-fi prototype, we plan on keeping most of our UI the same. The layout of the ballot was universally liked. The only thing we plan on modifying with that is adding all the information on the ballot (similar to iPad App #1 in the sketches), but have that information blurred out and have the title of the section in focus. That way, it resembles the ballot more while keeping it simplistic and easy to read.

Something we need to improve on is the home screen. User testing showed that immediately showing the ballot was just too abrupt, and it would be better to either have the option to view the ballot, or have a welcome screen/IssueFinder first. In the same vein, we need more clear transitions between screens (like the one in the left of Figure 9) so that users aren't confused by what exactly they're going to when they click on a button.

We also could add more features going forward, such as a quiz to find your interests. The idea of an IssueFinder is good if you know what you're interested in - but the problem with that is that some users may not be explicitly interested in anything. By creating a quiz interface, we are able to ask more relevant questions (like "Do you care about the public schools in your hometown?") which are much more personal than having to simply choose from a list of issues ("Education", "Healthcare") which sound like buzzwords.

Finally, we have to think about gestures other than tapping. We implemented some swiping gestures, like on the specific candidates, but it would be good to think about other gestures to use in transitioning between screens. However, the more features we add, the more complicated the app gets and the more explaining that would have to be done in order to teach new users how to use the app. That is a tradeoff we need to evaluate and will do in our medium-fi prototype.