

# Voters confused by e-voting technologies

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A study led by the University of Maryland suggested that electronic U.S. voting technologies are efficient but too many voters ask for help too often.

The researchers, including scientists from the universities of Rochester and Michigan, found any problems associated with e-voting systems -- especially touch-screen technologies -- cannot be addressed by just adding paper trails.

"Recent history is clear: The election problem most likely to tilt a close race is not security but the inability of voters to cast their ballots the way they intended," said Paul Herrnson, principal investigator and a University of Maryland political scientist.

"The hazards of poor ballot design didn't end with Florida's hanging, pregnant and dimpled chads in 2000," he said. "But tremendous improvement in voters' abilities to cast their votes accurately and without assistance can be accomplished simply by improving the way ballots are laid out on touch screen and paper-based systems."

The five-year study focused on usability issues and relied on data from field tests with more than 1,500 subjects, laboratory tests and expert reviews.

The study's results and recommendations are reported in a new book, "Voting Technology: The Not-So-Simple Act of Casting a Ballot," published by the Brookings Press.

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