

Oscars to introduce electronic voting

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Oscar statuettes on display. Oscars organizers said Wednesday they would introduce electronic voting to select Hollywood's top films and stars from next year, in the latest reform of the elite awards show system.

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The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has struck a deal on the voting system with a firm whose clients include the US Department of Defense and Britain's Ministry of Justice, it said.

"This is the first of many steps that we'll be taking toward developing a secure and convenient electronic voting system, beginning with next year's ballot," said Academy Chief Operating Officer Ric Robertson.

"We're excited to have found great partners in the people who do this best," he said, announcing the deal with Everyone Counts Inc, whose clients also include the Australian state of New South Wales.

The Academy -- which unveiled this year's nominees on Tuesday -- has nearly 6,000 voting members who are all respected movie industry figures, in contrast to the Golden Globes, whose winners are picked by about 80 foreign journalists.

Accounting firm PwC will retain its traditional role in the Oscars voting process.

"Everyone Counts will work with PwC, the Academy's accounting firm of record, whose role in tabulating Academy members' votes will remain unchanged," said the Academy.

"Over the next year, the Academy will undertake a rigorous security and user-acceptance testing process," it added, saying the process of choosing which company to use had taken 18 months.

The Academy tinkers with its rules from time to time -- for the last few years they increased the number of Best Picture nominees from five to 10, but this year they introduced a flexible system which resulted in nine nominees.

"We are honored to have earned the trust of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in bringing online voting to the Oscars starting next year," said Lori Steele, head of Everyone Counts Inc.

Martin Scorsese's 3D adventure "Hugo" and silent film "The Artist" emerged as the top nominees Tuesday for this year's annual awards show, to take place on February 26.

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