THE PUBLIC LIBRARY’S ROLE DURING ELECTIONS

An InfoPeople Webinar
August 11, 2020
Presented by Haley Samuelson & Nate Gass
SESSION OBJECTIVES

Be able to...

★ Identify your community’s voter education needs.
★ Curate and design a helpful voter education resource.
★ Identify other voter groups and initiatives.
We decided the best approach would be an **Online** voter education resource specially curated for our service community - a “One-Stop Shop” for all things related to voting and elections.
DEVELOPING GUIDELINES

★ Mission
★ Purpose
★ Target Users
★ Scope
★ Content Guidelines
★ Style Guide
★ Promotion

Be A Voter Guidelines

Mission
To help citizens within the library’s service community navigate the voting process from start (registration) to finish (casting their ballots) by:

- Consolidating and curating easy access to information on national and local elections in a non-partisan and timely manner.
- Guiding users to authoritative information they need about public officials and election candidates in order to vote knowingly.
- Instilling confidence in our district residents that they are knowledgeable of the voting process and voting for candidates and issues that represent their values.

Purpose
The “Be A Voter” page is a logical extension of the library’s mission and purpose statements to connect our diverse community to resources that educate.

In the United States of America, public libraries are a trusted institution and central to the communities they serve. An August 2017 Pew Research study reported that most Americans, and especially Millennials, say the library “helps them find trustworthy, current, and reliable and useful libraries help them learn things. Also, 55% believe libraries help them get information that aids in decisions they have to make.”

About eight-in-ten adults (86%) feel that public libraries help them find information that is trustworthy and reliable and 76% say libraries help them learn new things. Also, 56% believe libraries help them get information that aids in decisions they have to make.

Citizens look to the library and librarians for guidance when seeking reliable information on many facets of their lives (health, parenting, hobbies, technology, leisure, reading, etc.) and voter education is a natural addition directly related to the library’s role and function within a community.

The BAV page was created to provide the public with a central place to easily access information that might otherwise take time to find, about the voting process, their candidates, and to navigate the news landscape.

Target Users
Library district patrons and the communities to which the library offers services.

Scope
Be A Voter will provide information specific to our library district on national, state, and local elections that have been sanctioned and overseen by official governmental. Our service community’s official governmental bodies are the Lake County Clerk’s Office and the Illinois Board of Elections.
VOTER EDUCATION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

LIBRARIES AND VOTER EDUCATION ARE A PERFECT MATCH.
Americans are interested in politics and trust the library.

**Education, politics and health news top the list of subjects that interest people**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not too</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools or education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government and politics</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and medical news</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and technology</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events in their local community</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<td>Foreign affairs or foreign policy</td>
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<td>37%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business and finance</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Arts or entertainment</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey conducted Sept. 29-Nov. 6, 2016. “How People Approach Facts and Information”

**Americans are not fully trusting of information from key sources. Libraries and health providers top the list**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not too much</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local public library or librarians</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care providers</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family or friends</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local news organizations</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government sources</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National news organizations</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial institutions</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram*</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Among social media users


**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

118,537,867

Whoa! That’s a lot of people looking for information!

WHY LIBRARIES?

We’re Trusted

“We’re Trusted

“About eight-in-ten adults (78%) feel that public libraries help them find information that is trustworthy and reliable and 76% say libraries help them learn new things. Also, 56% believe libraries help them get information that aids with decisions they have to make.”

Pew Research 2017

Lack of Exhaustive Resources

There are many single subject resources but no nonpartisan exhaustive resources.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Mail in voting

Voter Registration Services

Many states offer voter registration at local libraries.

Voter Education efforts are a natural extension of an existing library service.

Fake News Epidemic

“Americans struggle to determine what news and information sources they should trust and how to discern reliable information online. They worry that fake news is sowing confusion about current events. And many express a desire to get help.”

Pew Research 2017

Mail in voting
MAIL-IN VOTING MISINFORMATION

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

There is NO WAY (ZERO!) that Mail-In Ballots will be anything less than substantially fraudulent. Mail boxes will be robbed, ballots will be forged & even illegally printed out & fraudulently signed. The Governor of California is sending Ballots to millions of people, anyone.....

Get the facts about mail-in ballots

8:17 AM · May 26, 2020 · Twitter

TRUMP WON'T FINANCE THE US POSTAL SERVICE

YOU CAN'T HAVE MAIL-IN VOTES IF THERE'S NO MAIL!

VOTING BY MAIL IS RIPE FOR FRAUD

NO WONDER THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WANTS IT SO BAD....

WHEN POLITICIANS LET YOU GO OUT FOR GROCERIES AND HARDWARE, BUT DEMAND A MAIL-IN-VOTE, YOU CAN BE CERTAIN THEY'RE NOT REALLY CONCERNED WITH KEEPING YOU SAFE FROM A VIRUS.
MAIL-IN VOTING FACT CHECK

It is more likely that an American will be struck by lightning than that they will impersonate another voter at the polls.
-Brennan Center

Debunking the Voter Fraud Myth

In the recent California primary the bigger risk was not being counted. 102,428 ballots were disqualified. The most common problem was missing ballot deadlines.
-PBS NewsHour

“The Postal Service has ample capacity to deliver all election mail securely and on-time in accordance with our delivery standards, and we will do so,”
-Postmaster General Louis DeJoy
2. MEETING YOUR COMMUNITY’S VOTER EDUCATION NEEDS
WHERE TO START

Who administers Elections in your state?

Secretary of State
Board of Elections
Other Statewide Elected Official

And your county?

County Clerk
County Auditor
Other Countywide Elected Official

Don’t know? Start here: State Election Centers

What you’ll find:

Voter Registration Guidelines
Election Calendar
Sample Ballots
Absentee Ballot Information
Guidelines for Candidates
Election Laws
Information translated into other languages

Don't know? Start here: State Election Centers
WHAT INFORMATION DOES YOUR COMMUNITY NEED?

★ Educating voters: date, time, place of election
★ Voter Registration (including verifying registration status)
★ Important dates leading up to the election
★ Vote By Mail or other Covid-19 impacts especially deadlines
★ Government Sites (highlight unique voting circumstances)
★ Reliable candidate information (especially offices like judges. Local and State Bar associations have rankings)
★ Campaign finance disclosure
★ Fact Checking Resources
★ Reliable news sources
★ Educational resources (basic definitions, etc)
COLLECTING INFORMATION

★ Determine the main purpose of your site. Don’t lose focus.
★ Beware of repetitive information.
★ Can a site do double duty? (e.g. campaign websites will cover specific topics and highlight local events)
★ Who are today’s voters? What information will they need to confidently cast their vote? Pay special attention to Voter ID laws in your state which disproportionately impact BIPOC, low income, and young voters.
★ What are questions that come up again and again from your library users? Your resource will help staff too!
★ What type of coverage are your local papers providing?
★ Link to the page with specific information rather than general site. Especially if the site is particularly dense.
STAYING NEUTRAL

★ Our job is to provide sources that educate not try to change minds.

★ You know your community and library users: If you live in a deep blue district or a ruby red district your resource can reflect that reality. If you live in a purple district you’ll need to tread more lightly.

★ The amount of quality sites with varying focus are abundant but don’t discount government sites as the information provided is curated by the administrators of elections. (National Association of Secretary of States’ #TrustedInfo2020 campaign highlighting election officials.)

★ When considering sites be aware of buzz words that subtly indicate political leanings.
Impact of Covid-19 on Elections

- Library messaging and communication methods
- Location of the polls (combined or relocated?)
- Expanded Vote by Mail
  - Deadlines
  - Procedures (How to request, fill out, return, etc.)
  - Eligibility (33 states currently have no excuse absentee ballots)
  - Postal Service changes like hours or delays
SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Identify your community’s voter education needs.
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- Identify other voter groups and initiatives.
3. DESIGNING YOUR ONLINE RESOURCE.
WHAT CMS/PLATFORM TO USE?

Can your voter guide be designed on your current website?
★ Do you have editing capabilities?
★ Is your website mobile-friendly?

Other considerations?
★ Budget
★ Ease-of-use
★ Accessibility (language translation/text resize)
★ Is it consistent w/ library branding?
FINDING A HOME ON THE WEBSITE

Memorial Public Library District

Search Catalog

Quick Links
- Get a Library Card
- Reserve a Study Room
- Print From Your Phone/Computer
- Fall Fling & Doox Newsletter
- Digital Studies

Upcoming Events

Home / Research

Research

Filter by Subject
- Government & Law (12)

Government & Law
Affordable Care Act Registration in Lake County

Be A Voter
Nonpartisan resource guide to the November 6, 2018 midterm general election.

DrivingTests.org
Practice for the Illinois drivers license, permit, and senior citizens' refresher tests. Also includes motorcycle and CDL practice tests.

Encyclopedia of the American Presidency
Guide to the role of the President. Spans relationship between the executive and other branches of government, court cases, elections, political opponents, scandals, and more.
How we organized our resource

Looking for other ways to engage voters? Check out ALA's Voter Engagement Guide
Incorporating the resource into our library’s website maintains library branding.
COUNTERING PERCEIVED BIAS

VERNON HILLS

Village Board of Trustees
- Karimar Brown*
- Michael Marquardt*
- David Oppenheim*
- Stacey Pristas

Hawthorn School District 73
- Robin Cleek*
- George Fievet
- Joel Finfer
- Victoria Helander-Heiser*
- Michael Murphy
- Lenny Nieves
- Sonali Patil*

Community High School District 128
- James Batson*
- Elizabeth Bruckner
- Don Carmichael
- Lisa Hessel*
- Loubna Kilouine
- Katherine "Casey" Rooney*

Vernon Hills Park District Commissioner
- Cynthia Kessler*

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

In alphabetical order
- Michael Bennet [Campaign Website]
- Joe Biden [Campaign Website]
- Cory Booker [Campaign Website]
- Pete Buttigieg [Campaign Website]
- Julian Castro [Campaign Website]
- John Delaney [Campaign Website]
- Tulsi Gabbard [Campaign Website]
- Kirsten Gillibrand [Campaign Website]
- Mike Gravel [Campaign Website]
- Kamala Harris [Campaign Website]
- John Hickenlooper [Campaign Website]
- Jay Robert Inslee [Campaign Website]
- Amy Klobuchar [Campaign Website]
AFTER THE ELECTION

A Nonpartisan Resource for the November 6, 2018 Midterm General Election

Government Sites | Campaign Finance | Local News Election Coverage | Fact Checking | General Resources | Political Parties

ELECTION RESULTS

Lake County Clerk’s Office

Chicago Sun-Times

Chicago Tribune
WHAT ARE OTHER LIBRARIES DOING?
The Indiana Primary Election was held on June 2, 2020!
Follow local election results at this Journal and Courier page.
Follow state election results at this Indianapolis Star page.
Do you hate waiting in long lines on Election Day? We do, too! To help voters navigate Election Day successfully, Vigo County Public Library is collaborating with the Vigo County Clerk’s Office to launch Vote Vigo.

Vote Vigo, a non-partisan organization which seeks to make voting easier for Vigo County residents, will be providing regular updates on the lines and wait times at all voting centers. To
SESSION OBJECTIVES

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4. WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING?
National Voter Registration Day

Celebrated on the fourth Tuesday of September, National Voter Registration Day will next take place on September 22, 2020. The holiday has been endorsed by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED), the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), and the National Association of Election Officials (The Election Center). Free posters, stickers, and planning guides.

Democracy Class - Civic Education

Democracy Class is a free, nonpartisan curriculum that educates high school students about the importance and history of voting and pre-registers and registers them to vote. ALA is a sponsor.

Vote Early Day | October 24th | Vote Early Day

Vote Early Day is a movement of nonprofits, businesses, election administrators, and creatives working to ensure all Americans know their options to vote early. Like National Voter Registration Day it is an one day event with free resources.
New American Voters 2020: Home

NewAmericanVoters 2020 is a digital campaign that encourages the millions of newly naturalized citizens to vote in upcoming elections. The National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) is a national multiethnic, multiracial partnership. Who represent the collective power and resources of the country’s 37 largest regional immigrant and refugee rights organizations in 31 states.

Restore Your Vote: I have a felony conviction. Can I vote?

Many people wonder “can I vote with a felony conviction?” and assume the laws have restricted their rights. But that’s not true! While many states have some restriction on felon voting rights, most states restore the right to vote to citizens after they complete their sentences. Completely anonymous.

You Don't Need a Home to Vote - National Coalition for the Homeless

The You Don't Need a Home to Vote Campaign seeks to promote voting access for low income and homeless persons to ensure that people who are economically disadvantaged maintain an active role and voice in shaping their future. The National Low Income Housing Coalition has developed a series of webinars including one on the barriers of voting while experiencing homelessness.

Voter ID In Your State

VoteRiders offers free assistance for any eligible voter who encounter barriers to securing their ID to vote, including financial and legal help to obtain underlying documents like birth certificates, change-of-name documentation, etc.
VOTER EDUCATION GOALS

- Identify your community’s voter education needs.
- Curate and design a helpful online resource.
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5. QUESTIONS
THANKS!

Any questions?

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Photo by Bob Schatz, Nashville