

PIIM CASE STUDY

PUBLIC OPINION TOOL

SINGLE-SOURCE TOOLSET FOR UNDERSTANDING
AMERICA'S ELECTORAL VOTING HISTORY

THE NEW SCHOOL

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The Public Opinion Tool provides a unique, advanced visualization, and interactive experience to explore U.S. election results and simulate outcomes based on public opinion, sentiment, and party-independent factors.

Through an intensive coordination with The New School for Social Research, PIIM conducted analysis and gathered data from all US elections from 1776 to 2004 to identify the key issues surrounding each election and how those issues influenced the election's outcome.

While traditional election result visualizations focus on the outcome, by geographic distribution, or on party lines, PIIM's Public Opinion Tool focused on the underlying issues surrounding each election. Via the tool, the user can gain insight into the social, economic, and political issues at each election, and through a simple – but powerful – system, recalculate the results of each election assuming the public voted strictly on those issues.

The Public Opinion tool serves as an educational facility on the history of the United States, but it also provides a deep understanding to the various and highly influential factors that affect each election.

This research was utilized to develop an interactive, web-based application with the following features and functionality:

1. Ability to visualize how each state voted in each US election from 1776 to 2004
2. Ability to view how election outcomes may have changed if voters had voted simply based on issues instead of candidates
3. Ability to weigh and re-weigh electoral votes to see the effect voters and electoral voting has on election outcome
4. Integration of multiple visualization mechanisms to view election results in geographic, bar and pie chart, and temporal manners
5. In-depth, week-by-week analysis of primary and election results in the months preceding the 2004 election

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The Parsons Institute for Information Mapping (PIIM) is a Research, Development, and Professional Services facility within The New School and located in New York City. PIIM's mission is to advance the field of Knowledge Visualization through academic and commercial pursuits.