

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

Digital media usage during the 2018 midterm elections among Illinois State  
Senate elections

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**Digital media usage during the 2018 midterm elections among Illinois State Senate elections**

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## Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the role that digital media usage plays in elections, specifically the Illinois State Senate Elections during the 2018 midterms. This research argues that the use of multiple digital mediums can affect election percentages at the end of the campaign. Taking into account the fact that the target base of each campaign varies across Illinois, the greater usage of multiple digital mediums to reach voters will correlate with a positive rise in election percentage regardless of target base. This study examines the possibility that if the communication remains consistent in both messaging and frequency across each digital medium used, then more voters are therefore reached and are swayed into voting for that candidate to which the digital mediums are connected to. Analysis showed that there was no statistical significance between the number of digital mediums used and final election percentages within the Illinois State Senate Elections during the 2018 midterms, but that this is due to non-Democratic Party candidates' use of Instagram that fuels the strong negative relationship between this particular form of digital media and election percentage.

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## **Introduction**

Political communication historically has been heavily reliant on interaction between the candidate and the voter. Thanks to technological progress, candidates' priorities have shifted to better include interactive ways for candidates to connect with voters from their devices. Many candidates now use multiple digital mediums to interact with, communicate, and solicit donations from their voter base. It is hypothesized that if communication remains consistent across multiple digital mediums, then candidates are therefore able to interact with and reach more voters and convince them to vote for that candidate to which the digital mediums are connected to. The premise of this study is to examine the possibility of a positive correlation between the number of digital mediums used throughout a candidate's campaign and the resulting election percentage in the 2018 General Election for the Illinois State Senate.

### **Scholarly Opening for this Inquiry**

Members of political institutions have distinct reasons as to the emphasis they place on communicating with constituents and voter bases. Richard Fenno's<sup>1</sup> work on the "home style" of House members is important in understanding the reason behind the member's need to communicate with their constituents. Fenno's perspective and study of how Congress works stems from an overarching examination of how an elected official's view of their constituency affects their political behavior. According to Fenno, there are three targets each Member of Congress must achieve: re-election, power within Congress, and tangible, useful public policy. The title of his book—"Home Style"—is a term he uses to describe how each Congressperson

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in their Home Districts* (New York: Longman Press, 1978)

secures election and how that serves as a base for the attainment of the other two goals. Members therefore see the district in four constituencies: geographic, reelection, primary, and personal.

Analyzing the geographical location of the district is important in appealing to the demographic makeup of that area. The member can therefore cultivate trust and build a loyal base of voters. Fenno states, “if one essential aspect of the ‘geographical constituency’ is seen as its location and boundaries, another is its internal makeup. And House members describe their districts’ internal makeup using political science’s most familiar demographic and political variables: socioeconomic structure, ideology, ethnicity, residential patterns, religion, partisanship, stability, diversity, etc.”<sup>2</sup> In Fenno’s second concentric circle, the reelection constituency is the circle inside the geographic circle. He states, “Members of Congress do have an idea of who votes for them and who does not. And their perceptions are probably more accurate more often than are the perceptions of anyone else in their districts, though we have no way of checking. Our assumption is that because their jobs depend on it, the members will work harder than others to achieve a reasonable level of perceptual accuracy.”<sup>3</sup> Essentially, members have to be much more aware of who their constituency is after election to ensure that they will feel secure when reelection year comes around. The third concentric circle inside of the reelection constituency is that of the “primary constituency.” The member distinguishes their constituency even further by identifying between weak and strong supporters. Fenno states, “For each member, this inner constituency will probably include his earliest supporters—those who recruited him and those who tendered identifiably strong support in his first campaign.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, Fenno details the last constituency in the last and fourth concentric circle. These individuals are

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 19.

what drives the member forward, as their “relationship with the member is so personal and so intimate that their relevance cannot be captured by any description of ‘very strongest supporters.’ Some of them are his closest political advisers and confidants. Others are people from whom he draws emotional sustenance for his political work.”<sup>5</sup>

Building on Fenno’s argument, David Mayhew<sup>6</sup> expands on Fenno’s idea that reelection is the first goal each Member must achieve, and therefore uses the fear of losing reelection as an exclusive motivator for their actions in office. He argues that Members’ activities can be categorized in three basic sets: advertising, credit claiming, and position-taking. However, Mayhew does not explicitly claim that Members are solely driven by these three activities, and in fact points to members such as Senator Frank Graham (D – N.C.) who refused to change their stances for the sake of the election. Yet despite this exception, Mayhew does make a compelling argument, noting that each “incumbent not only has to assure that his own election funds are adequate, he has to try to minimize the probability that actors will bankroll an expensive campaign against him.”<sup>7</sup> Each incumbent must therefore advertise to ensure that the other candidate, whomever that may be, does not outraise them in the election. The Member should not only focus or rely on big donors, but also focus on appealing to regular, every day people who have the potential to make smaller contributions to their eventual campaign, like the previously discussed “small-donor” contribution. Thus, the Member must make “...any effort to disseminate one’s name among constituents in such a fashion as to create a favorable image but in messages having little to no issue content.”<sup>8</sup> The “name brand recognition” of Fenno’s Home Style is therefore imperative to a successful campaign, and therefore is advantageous for the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>6</sup> David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 49.



Member to curate a carefully designed persona and to create as many opportunities for their constituents to recognize their name.

Additionally, Mayhew argues that “acting so as to generate a belief in a relevant political actor (or actors) that one is personally responsible for causing the government, or some unit thereof, to do something that the actor (or actors) considers desirable.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, Mayhew claims the second activity that incumbents must undertake is credit claiming. Substantial resources must be allocated towards this activity, whether it is pork barrel politics that the Member brings home, or casework that their office has completed, so that anything good that happens in the district can be attributed to the Member. Finally, Mayhew argues that the “third activity congressmen engage in may be called position taking, defined here as the public enunciation of a judgmental statement on anything likely to be of interest to political actors.”<sup>10</sup> Mayhew essentially argues that congressmen use roll call votes and speeches to root themselves in a particular position that are more likely to simply be popular than to change policy.

While Mayhew’s arguments are simply theoretical, they are compelling due to the almost formulaic approach to office that most Members undertake. It can therefore be argued that Members are single-minded seekers of reelection, and focus their attentions on three basic activities. Advertising is necessary for Members to build their name brand recognition, especially first-time incumbents, so that when election time rolls around they are able to keep pace with actors that may raise significant contributions against them. Credit claiming is also necessary for congressmen so that constituents do not simply know their name, but also attach it to a positive circumstance within the district. This makes it easier for the incumbent to draw on a more loyal

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 61.

voter base during elections. Finally, position taking is another formative part of a Member's approach—using roll call votes and speeches more to send a message than change policy is also key. On issues that Members have no direct control over, these messages are useful to stake out a position that is most favorable to their constituents' views. Mayhew's writings on Congress and its electoral connection may be theoretical, but is compelling because of its connection to reality.

With the understanding of the necessity and motivation of members of legislative houses to communicate with constituents and with voter bases established, it is essential to then look at how these members communicate with their constituents. Previous research suggests the main reason individuals follow members of Congress on social media and the Internet is to learn their issue positions.<sup>11 12</sup> As covered by Fenno, explaining policy positions to the public is crucially important to the politician/constituent relationship.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, voters are more likely to hold candidates accountable, at election time, for their stated positions than their actual voting record.<sup>14</sup> Members of Congress sharing their issue positions and the reasons for their policy preferences with the public, arguably, has direct bearing on the quality of representation, both in terms of ideological congruence but also in terms of educating and informing the electorate. Daniel Lipinski<sup>15</sup> argues the effort a member of Congress puts into explaining their positions has a significant effect on how well constituents understand and are able to recall those positions. Results from a study done by Dr. Scot Schraufnagel of Northern Illinois University<sup>16</sup> suggests

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<sup>11</sup> Kim Andersen, Rony Medaglia, "The Use of Facebook in National Election Campaigns: Politics as Usual?" *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 5694 (2009): 101-11

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Fenno, *Home Style*

<sup>14</sup> David Jones, "Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(2) (2010): 323-37

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Lipinski, "The Effect of Messages Communicated by Members of Congress: The Impact of Publicizing Votes," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 26(1) (2001): 81-100

<sup>16</sup> Scot Schraufnagel, Quan Li, Adam Schuster, "District Partisan Homogeneity, Communications, and the Electoral Motive: An Analysis of the Facebook Posts of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives. *Social Networking*, 06(02) (2017): 148-163

that it is members of the majority party and electorally safer members who are more willing to do this. Social media communication, adding to an already caustic and antagonistic partisan dialogue, has become a defining characteristic of political conversations in today's politics. It is important to recognize that messages on social media networks such as Facebook or Twitter, unlike press releases or more "ground war" strategies like canvassing or phone banking, have a much greater potential to be seen by a national audience.

Digital media usage on the campaign trail provides Members with a means of expanding past the traditional geographic constituency. Some reports suggest that Members have dedicated staff that handle digital media as part of their messaging and communications strategy, indicating the possibility of a shift in priority to messaging as opposed to other representational functions.<sup>17</sup> Glassman, Straus, and Shogan found that for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2011-2012), a total of 426 of 541 Members of Congress, or 78.7% had an official congressional account registered on Twitter, whereas 472 Members, or 87.2% had an official congressional account registered on Facebook, an increase from 205 Members, or 38%, in 2009 who were registered with Twitter.<sup>18</sup> As the use of digital media platforms has exploded in the past six years, this percentage is undoubtedly higher. The proliferation of digital media usage has not only expanded from just Facebook and Twitter, but other platforms such as Instagram or Snapchat. The challenge with examining digital media usage in the consumption of political information, however, comes with the fact that these technologies are not simply mass communication and a one-way interaction, but has provided a path for interactive consumption. From 1996 to 2002, the rating of the Internet as "very important" to aiding adult Americans in their decision at the polls increased from 14-20

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<sup>17</sup> Eric Glassman, Jacob Straus, Colleen Shogan, "Social Networking and Constituent Communications," *Congressional Research Service*, R43018 (2013).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

percent.<sup>19</sup> In the past 16 years, the reliance on the internet has become impossible to break.

Without the internet, people would likely be bereft of information and crippled by the inability to receive and interact with their information. Howard notes that “customizing political messages to the degree possible with new media reduces the quality and quantity of shared text in the public sphere...increasingly, an important part of our political participation occurs somewhat beyond our control, co-opted into a highly privatized and often covert sphere, one that trades, channels, and filters our political information, thus denying a forum for its direct, free, and deliberate exchange.”<sup>20</sup>

During the 2008 elections, around 100 million Americans were contacted at the door or over the phone by various political organizations. These practices of personalized political communication – strategies that use people as media for political communications using common methods such as door-to-door campaigning and phone banking – have been shaken up by the advent of digital media. According to Rasmus Kleis Nielsen,<sup>21</sup> “the work done to sort index cards with voter information and to physically cut and paste the walk sheets for a canvass in 1968 or 1988 had little to do with what it took to update detailed Web-accessible voter files, synchronize personal digital assistants, and print turf maps in 2008.” New technology has not replaced these older forms of communication; they have revitalized them. The first emergence of political campaigns utilizing the Internet materialized in the 2004 presidential primaries. Though John McCain fundraised and rallied support in 2000 with the help of the Internet, Howard Dean used the Internet for strategic purposes and for grassroots fundraising and social networking in

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Howard, *Politics in code: Franchise and representation in the age of new media*, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Philip Howard, “Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 597 (2005): 153-170

<sup>21</sup> Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012)

2004. Before the existence of the internet, political communication was conducted through radio and television. Digital media has quickly taken over as an equally, if not more important medium for politicians to consider as a communication strategy in addition to television ads, mail-ins, and e-mail lists. Digital media can include any social media network, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat to connect with voters. It can also include websites that allow voters to donate to their candidate from the comfort of their own homes.

The usage of digital media in political campaigns can also be utilized in a way that allows the campaign to target their digital media usage towards target constituencies. While digital technologies have been utilized in United States political campaigns for more than a decade, computational politics have increasingly utilized digital media platforms to track visitors and engagement in their media posts. Data-driven digital marketing has now become the forefront of American political campaigns, with the growth of firms, services, and technologies to support the use of data-driven digital marketing. A much more robust system of micro-targeting techniques that use a variety of personalized and other data sets and marketing tools to influence individual engagements was evident in political campaigns since 2012.<sup>22</sup> The usage of social media platforms such as Facebook and Google now play a central role in political operations, as exemplified in the 2016 election with Facebook. This platform has been successful in creating a “powerful ‘identify-based’ targeting paradigm, enabling political campaigns to access its more than 162 million US users and to target them individually by age, gender, congressional district, and interests.”<sup>23</sup> With these targeting paradigms in hand, campaigns are able to also use programmatic advertising to reach an individual on all platforms using psychographic,

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<sup>22</sup> Chester, J. & Montgomery, K.C., “The role of digital marketing in political campaigns,” *Internet Policy review*, 6(4) (December 2017)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

neuromarketing, and emotion-based targeting. These tools have allowed political campaigns to significantly improve their voter engagement, enhance ability to solicit “small-donor” fundraising, and generate turnout on election day. While there are many other drawbacks of the usage of digital marketing through digital media, it is clear as to the reasons why political campaigns are increasing their usage of digital media to reach their constituents.

## Data Collection

Most of the data collection decisions were informed by previous efforts to record members social media uses. Notably, Dr. Schraufnagel's work was consulted, as was Glassman, Straus, and Shogan's (2013) examination into their study of Twitter use in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. Comparable and related examinations into the study of campaign members' digital media usage was not found. As a result, data collection was informed by these studies and provide a marker for usage on a national and incumbent level, but as this particular categorization is on a state level with a significant number of challengers, an independent categorization was created for the purpose of this study. I suspect that a positive correlation between the number of digital mediums used by the candidate and their election percentage will occur.

Candidates considered for this study were those who had won their primary races and were in a contested election. For the purpose of consistency, only candidates from the two major parties were considered, with the exception of the 56<sup>th</sup> district, where Hal Patton, a third-party candidate, had generated a large portion of interest and subsequently a fairly large portion of the vote total against Democratic candidate Rachele Aud Crowe. All 39 candidates of 19 contested races were included in this categorization. I focused on one dependent variable, which is the election percentage, and one independent variable, which is labeled as the number of digital mediums used by each Illinois Senate candidate. I focused on four commonly used digital mediums – a website, Facebook page, Instagram page, and a Twitter page. Only profiles that were non-official and were ostensibly used for only campaigning were counted. Therefore, incumbents such as Senator Tom Rooney, who did not have a campaign Facebook page, but did have an official Facebook page for legislative purposes, were counted as not having that particular digital medium. For the most part, each digital medium was easy to code, but there

were some instances where a personal profile also doubled as a campaign page. In the instance of Assistant Majority Leader Terry Link, Senator Link had an official Facebook page for legislative purposes, but no Facebook page. He used his personal profile to post campaign messages instead of a dedicated Facebook page. I considered this to be a Facebook page, as it was public and was used for campaign purposes.

I collected data on a 0 or 1 basis. 0 meant that the candidate did not fulfill that data collection point, and 1 meant that the candidate did. I also collected the links of each digital medium used and inputted it into the master data sheet. Using this master data sheet, I was able to periodically update and observe the usages of these digital mediums as election day approached. Interestingly, when results came in, some candidates who lost their election in particularly bitter races were quick to take down their digital mediums. Election percentages and vote totals were collected from the certified results released by the Illinois Board of Elections, although preliminary numbers were initially inputted from election day vote totals that were posted online by ABC7 Chicago's news site. As several of these elections were too close to call immediately, I could not move forward with data analysis until the certified results were released by the Illinois Board of Elections. Races such as the one for the 21<sup>st</sup> District between Republican incumbent Michael Connelly and Democratic challenger Laura Ellman were at first at a difference of 12 votes in favor of Senator Connelly by the end of November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, but Laura Ellman was eventually declared the winner after pulling ahead by 1,179 votes with the certified results from the Illinois Board of Elections.

Data was coded by the following categories: last name; first name; district; incumbent (0/1); Democrat (0/1); Republican (0/1); Other Party (0/1); Digital Media 2 (Facebook; 0/1);



Digital Media 3 (Instagram; 0/1); Digital Media 4 (Twitter; 0/1); Digital Media Total; and Votes Received; Vote Total; and Election Percentage.

## Findings

Turning to Table 1, which reports the data values used in the correlation coefficient between the dependent variable of election percentages and the independent variable of the total digital mediums, the testing has returned statistically insignificant correlations between election percentages and total digital mediums used by the candidate, with a weak negative correlation, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 1.**

### Digital Media Usage in the Illinois State Senate Elections: 2018 General Election

Last Name	First Name	Party	I/C*	District	DM Total	Election %
Fine	Laura	D	C	9	3	71.84%
Lasonde McCarthy	Joan	R	C	9	4	28.16%
Ellman	Laura	D	C	21	4	50.60%
Connelly	Michael	R	I	21	2	49.40%
Cullerton	Tom	D	I	23	3	54.86%
Lewis	Seth	R	C	23	3	45.14%
Glowiak	Suzanne	D	C	24	3	50.80%
Nybo	Chris	R	I	24	3	49.20%
Georges	Tom	D	C	26	2	45.34%
McConchie	Dan	R	I	26	3	54.66%
Gillespie	Ann	D	C	27	4	52.00%
Rooney	Tom	R	I	27	1	48.00%
Morrison	Julie	D	I	29	4	63.20%
Davie	Barrett	R	C	29	4	36.80%
Link	Terry	D	I	30	1	68.03%
Lee	Soojae	R	C	30	3	31.97%
Mahady	Mary	D	C	32	3	45.29%
Wilcox	Craig	R	I	32	2	54.71%
Zettler	Nancy	D	C	33	4	49.41%
DeWitte	Don	R	I	33	3	50.59%
Johnson	Gregg	D	C	36	3	49.16%
Anderson	Neil	R	I	36	2	50.84%

Henry	Heidi	D	C	38	3	40.60%
Rezin	Sue	R	I	38	3	59.40%
Fitzgerald	Bridget	D	C	41	4	49.16%
Curran	John	R	I	41	1	50.84%
Simpson	David	D	C	45	3	37.36%
Stewart	Brian	R	C	45	3	62.64%
Manar	Andy	D	I	48	4	56.78%
McMillan	Seth	R	C	48	3	43.22%
Stout	Brian	D	C	54	2	30.02%
Plummer	Jason	R	C	54	2	69.98%
Aud Crowe	Rachelle	D	C	56	3	58.42%
Patton	Hal	3 <sup>rd</sup>	C	56	2	41.58%
Belt	Christopher	D	C	57	4	59.20%
Hildenbrand	Tanya	R	C	57	3	40.80%
Webb	Steve	D	C	59	3	38.89%
Fowler	Dale	R	I	59	3	61.11%

\*I = incumbent; C = Challenger

**Table 2.**

**Bivariate Correlations between the use of Select Digital Media (DM) Platforms and Election Margins  
Illinois State Senate Races 2018**

	Election %	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Total DM
Election %	1					
Website	-.09	1				
Facebook	.12	-.07	1			
Instagram	-.15	-.01	.16	1		
Twitter	-.02	.24	.11	.18	1	
Total DM	-.09	.42 *	.39 *	.68 *	.74 *	1

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed test)

From these results, we learn that there is no statistically significant correlation between the number of digital mediums used during the course of the campaign and a candidate's election percentage, and in fact the results indicate a weak negative correlation between the more prolific use of digital platforms and election percentages. Driving the overall negative relationship between digital media use and election performance is the fact that candidates who used

Instagram were particularly less likely to be successful. However, when looking at the bivariate correlation between the use of a particular digital media and the candidate’s election performance, the results return statistically significant correlations. If a candidate commits to a website or Facebook, then they also commit to a higher usage of digital media. These correlations indicate even stronger statistical significance when a candidate commits to Instagram or Twitter, showing that they commit to a higher usage of digital media if a candidate uses one or both of those digital mediums.

However, by looking at the candidates from the two major political parties separately, more information can be obtained. Particularly, in Table 4, it is non-Democratic Party candidates’ use of Instagram that is fueling the strong negative relationship between this particular form of digital media and election percentage. Of note, in Table 3, each Democratic candidate used a Facebook page, so there was no statistical analysis that could be conducted regarding this particular bivariate correlation. Similar to the results from the bivariate correlation tests in Table 2, the bivariate correlation between the use of certain digital mediums and election margins were statistically significant for Democratic candidates.

**Table 3.**

**Bivariate Correlations between the use of Select Digital Media (DM) Platforms and Election Margins for Democratic Candidates Illinois State Senate Races 2018**

	Election %	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Total DM
Election	1					
Website	-.39	1				
Facebook	-	-	1			
Instagram	.27	.2	-	1		
Twitter	.08	.46	-	.18	1	
Total DM	.1	.62	-	.75	.74	1

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed test)

**Table 4.**

**Bivariate Correlations between the use of Select Digital Media (DM) Platforms and Election Margins for Non-Democratic Candidates Illinois State Senate Races 2018**

	Election %	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Total DM
Election	1					
Website	.10	1				
Facebook	.14	-.12	1			
Instagram	-.73	-.24	.18	1		
Twitter	-.14	.09	.09	.13	1	
Total DM	-.36	.27	.48	.55	.73	1

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed test)

**Discussion**

As political campaigns become inevitably more reliant on the use of digital media platforms to get a candidate’s message across, digital media will become ever more crucial in determining the outcome of an election. In the results from this study, it is clear from these specific parameters set forth in this study that there is no statistical significance to a correlation between the number of digital media platforms used and a candidate’s eventual election percentage. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the sample set is not representative of the entire pool of candidates available to us from Illinois, let alone the rest of the nation. Second, Illinois is a historically Democratic state. The districts are relatively homogenous from a party perspective, and that homogeneity from the party districts determines election performance more than any other factors. Therefore, the sample set used that contributes to the recorded election percentages is again not representative of all of Illinois or the rest of the nation. The 2018 midterm election resulted in a Democratic wave that swept the nation as a whole, ostensibly as a response to the mostly GOP-held nation. This could have been one of the reasons why voting numbers for 2018, for example, surpassed another midterm year in 2014 and

was close to presidential election numbers in 2016. Uncontested elections were not considered in this study, which could skew the statistical significance of the results either way. Finally, factors such as incumbency, age, gender, and previous involvement in politics could also sway an election percentage one way or another. In a further analysis of the data collected, however, there were a number of statistically significant results from the bivariate correlation that should be noted. First, the reason for the weak negative correlation between the number of digital mediums used and election percentage could largely in part be attributed to non-Democratic Party candidate's use of Instagram. Second, the difference in results from the Democratic Party and non-Democratic party bivariate correlations was that each candidate from the Democratic Party had a Facebook page, but two non-Democratic party candidates did not have a Facebook page. Republican Tom Rooney and third-party candidate Hal Patton did not have a Facebook page, which allowed a bivariate correlation to be calculated. Both candidates lost their elections.

It should be further noted that the richness of data that can be gathered from digital media contributes to a wealth of research in this area that is only just beginning in the field of political science. For example, other factors that can be analyzed from the lens of digital media are ideologies. The use of digital media platforms, especially social media, allow not only candidates to express their political views, but also ordinary citizens. Voters can endorse, communicate, and follow political figures and elites. A user can display their demographic, education, and professional information in their profiles, which can allow ideology to be accounted for as a factor through data collected through digital media.<sup>24</sup> Facebook, for example, does allow for users to tailor their news feeds to information that they would most like to see, which would

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Bond, Solomon Messing, "Quantifying Social Media's Political Space: Estimating Ideology from Publicly Revealed Preferences on Facebook," *American Political Science Association*, 109 (February 2015): 62-78

allow further siloing of ideological views by presenting the user with news from their algorithm. Traditional survey methods for ideology are unreliable, as the connotation associated with labels such as “liberal” may make those who truly are liberals unwilling to label themselves as a liberal. Bond and Messing emphasize that “possibilities for future research on large data sets that contain previously unstudied types of information about people such as Facebook and Twitter should not be underestimated.”<sup>25</sup> The provision of large data sets would allow researchers to more accurately explore concepts like the previously discussed ideology, but also explore concepts such as polarized messaging or position-taking messages through digital media.

Even on a global scale, such as Chen’s study of the 2010 Australian election and the usage of “new media” (at the time of the study), “new media has become an established, if not major, element of [parties’ and candidates’] marketing strategies.”<sup>26</sup> However, it should be noted that despite the advantages of utilizing digital media in political campaigns, there are also issues related to digital media in the political sphere. Ralph Schroeder notes that “digital media no longer fits the models of mass versus interpersonal communication...[and] studies to date have failed to contrast traditional and digital media in a holistic way.”<sup>27</sup> Rather, it seems as though political communication has moved to a hybrid transition stage, where the balance is skewed towards older forms of communication such as established presses and reputable journals. There is also a possible shift when considering agenda-setting theory, where some studies have begun to examine how the agenda changes with the shift from old to new media. One of the clearest signs of digital media takeover in the United States is the idea of polarization and its relation to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Chen, “The New Media and the Campaign,” *Julia 2010: The Caretaker Election*, (2012): 65-84

<sup>27</sup> Ralph Schroeder, *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*, (London: UCL Press, 2018).

the media system. From the 1970s onward, cable TV and later, the internet, viewer choice allowed the audience to turn from news to entertainment. As such, media outlets adjusted to keep their viewership, contributing to a rising inequality in political involvement as a result of voluntary consumption decisions.<sup>28</sup> This can be laid at the feet of technological progress, but ultimately, digital media and its impact on the political sphere is in its early stages of study.

### **Conclusion**

The reliance on voter interaction with the candidate has been increased due to technological process. Reports have shown that due to technological progress, candidates now expend more energy attempting to connect with voters through digital mediums such as Facebook and Twitter. There was clearly an emphasis on the use of at least one digital medium during the 2018 Illinois State Senate Elections, and more often than not candidates utilized at least two digital mediums. Though I expected at least a weak positive correlation between the number of digital mediums used throughout a candidate's campaign and the resulting election percentage, a weak negative correlation was found during analysis and there was no statistical significance between the number of digital mediums used and final election percentages. Statistical significance was found in when examining select digital mediums and their election performance, notably that if a candidate had a specific digital medium, that candidate was also very likely to utilize more digital mediums. Despite the limitations of this study, this research resulted in an overall non statistically significant finding, but has raised multiple question. Further exploration into a wider sample is possible and may produce different results than those shown in this study.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

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## Appendix A

### Digital Media Usage in the Illinois State Senate Elections: 2018 General Election Digital Media 1: Website

Last	First	Party	I/C*	District	Website Link
Fine	Laura	D	C	9	<a href="http://www.lauraforillinois.com">www.lauraforillinois.com</a>
Lasonde McCarthy	Joan	R	C	9	<a href="http://joanforillinois.com">joanforillinois.com</a>
Ellman	Laura	D	C	21	<a href="http://ellmanforillinois.com">ellmanforillinois.com</a>
Connelly	Michael	R	I	21	<a href="http://www.connellyforillinois.com">www.connellyforillinois.com</a>
Cullerton	Tom	D	I	23	<a href="http://cullertonfor23.com">cullertonfor23.com</a>
Lewis	Seth	R	C	23	<a href="http://votesethlewis.com">votesethlewis.com</a>
Glowiak	Suzanne	D	C	24	<a href="http://suzyforsenate.com">suzyforsenate.com</a>
Nybo	Chris	R	I	24	<a href="http://chrisnybo.com">chrisnybo.com</a>
Georges	Tom	D	C	26	<a href="http://tomgeorgesforillinois.com">tomgeorgesforillinois.com</a>
McConchie	Dan	R	I	26	<a href="http://danmconchie.com">danmconchie.com</a>
Gillespie	Ann	D	C	27	<a href="http://annfor27.org">annfor27.org</a>
Rooney	Tom	R	I	27	<a href="http://rationallyconservative.com">rationallyconservative.com</a>
Morrison	Julie	D	I	29	<a href="http://www.juliemorrisonforstatesenate.com">www.juliemorrisonforstatesenate.com</a>
Davie	Barrett	R	C	29	<a href="http://www.barrettdavie.com">www.barrettdavie.com</a>
Link	Terry	D	I	30	none
Lee	Soojae	R	C	30	<a href="http://www.lee4senate.com">www.lee4senate.com</a>
Mahady	Mary	D	C	32	<a href="http://marymahady.com">marymahady.com</a>
Wilcox	Craig	R	I	32	<a href="http://electcolonelcraigwilcox.com">electcolonelcraigwilcox.com</a>
Zettler	Nancy	D	C	33	<a href="http://www.nancyzettler.com">www.nancyzettler.com</a>
DeWitte	Don	R	I	33	<a href="http://www.dewitteforilsenate.com">www.dewitteforilsenate.com</a>
Johnson	Gregg	D	C	36	<a href="http://greggfor36.com">greggfor36.com</a>
Anderson	Neil	R	I	36	<a href="http://www.electneil.com">www.electneil.com</a>
Henry	Heidi	D	C	38	<a href="http://electheidihenry.com">electheidihenry.com</a>
Rezin	Sue	R	I	38	<a href="http://www.electsuezin.com">www.electsuezin.com</a>
Fitzgerald	Bridget	D	C	41	<a href="http://votebridgetfitzgerald.com">votebridgetfitzgerald.com</a>
Curran	John	R	I	41	none
Simpson	David	D	C	45	<a href="http://www.simpsonforillinois.com">www.simpsonforillinois.com</a>
Stewart	Brian	R	C	45	<a href="http://www.electstewart.com">www.electstewart.com</a>
Manar	Andy	D	I	48	<a href="http://andyforsenate.com">andyforsenate.com</a>
McMillan	Seth	R	C	48	<a href="http://www.sethmcmillan.com">www.sethmcmillan.com</a>
Stout	Brian	D	C	54	<a href="http://stout4senate.com">stout4senate.com</a>
Plummer	Jason	R	C	54	<a href="http://www.jasonplummer.com">www.jasonplummer.com</a>
Aud Crowe	Rachelle	D	C	56	<a href="http://rachelleforsenate.com">rachelleforsenate.com</a>
Patton	Hal	3 <sup>rd</sup>	C	56	<a href="http://www.halpattonforsenate.com">www.halpattonforsenate.com</a>
Belt	Christopher	D	C	57	<a href="http://christopherbeltforsenate.com">christopherbeltforsenate.com</a>
Hildenbrand	Tanya	R	C	57	none
Webb	Steve	D	C	59	<a href="http://webbfor59.com">webbfor59.com</a>
Fowler	Dale	R	I	59	<a href="http://www.dalefowler.org">www.dalefowler.org</a>

## Appendix B

### Digital Media Usage in the Illinois State Senate Elections: 2018 General Election

#### Digital Media 2: Facebook

Last	First	Party	I/C*	District	Facebook Handle
Fine	Laura	D	C	9	@lauraforillinois
Lasonde McCarthy	Joan	R	C	9	@JoanForIllinois
Ellman	Laura	D	C	21	@EllmanforIL
Connelly	Michael	R	I	21	@connellyforillinois
Cullerton	Tom	D	I	23	@Cullertonfor23
Lewis	Seth	R	C	23	@VoteSethLewis
Glowiak	Suzanne	D	C	24	@suzyglowiak
Nybo	Chris	R	I	24	@chrisnybo
Georges	Tom	D	C	26	@TomGeorgesForIllinois
McConchie	Dan	R	I	26	@DanMcConchie
Gillespie	Ann	D	C	27	@anngillespieforillinoisenate
Rooney	Tom	R	I	27	none
Morrison	Julie	D	I	29	@JulieForSenate
Davie	Barrett	R	C	29	@BarrettDavieForSenate
Link	Terry	D	I	30	@linkforillinois
Lee	Soojae	R	C	30	@SoojaeIL30
Mahady	Mary	D	C	32	@MahadyforSenate
Wilcox	Craig	R	I	32	@Elect-Colonel-Craig-Wilcox
Zettler	Nancy	D	C	33	@Zettler2018/
DeWitte	Don	R	I	33	@DeWitteDon33/
Johnson	Gregg	D	C	36	@greggjohnsonforillinois
Anderson	Neil	R	I	36	@neil4illinois/
Henry	Heidi	D	C	38	@CommitteetoElectHeidiHenry
Rezin	Sue	R	I	38	@suezin
Fitzgerald	Bridget	D	C	41	@VoteBridgetFitzgerald
Curran	John	R	I	41	@elect.john.curran
Simpson	David	D	C	45	@simpsonfor45thdistrict
Stewart	Brian	R	C	45	@BrianStewart45
Manar	Andy	D	I	48	@AndyForIL
McMillan	Seth	R	C	48	@mcmillan4senate
Stout	Brian	D	C	54	@stoutforsenate
Plummer	Jason	R	C	54	@Jason.Plummer.IL
Aud Crowe	Rachelle	D	C	56	@rachelleforsenate
Patton	Hal	3 <sup>rd</sup>	C	56	none
Belt	Christopher	D	C	57	@christopherbeltforsenate
Hildenbrand	Tanya	R	C	57	@Hildenbrand4Senate
Webb	Steve	D	C	59	@SteveWebbForSenate
Fowler	Dale	R	I	59	@DaleFowlerIL

## Appendix C

### Digital Media Usage in the Illinois State Senate Elections: 2018 General Election

#### Digital Media 3: Instagram

Last	First	Party	I/C*	District	Instagram Handle
Fine	Laura	D	C	9	none
Lasonde McCarthy	Joan	R	C	9	@joanforillinois
Ellman	Laura	D	C	21	@lauraellmanforilsenate
Connelly	Michael	R	I	21	none
Cullerton	Tom	D	I	23	@vptommy
Lewis	Seth	R	C	23	none
Glowiak	Suzanne	D	C	24	none
Nybo	Chris	R	I	24	none
Georges	Tom	D	C	26	none
McConchie	Dan	R	I	26	none
Gillespie	Ann	D	C	27	@annforillinois
Rooney	Tom	R	I	27	none
Morrison	Julie	D	I	29	@juliemorrison4senate
Davie	Barrett	R	C	29	@barrettdavieforsenate
Link	Terry	D	I	30	none
Lee	Soojae	R	C	30	@soojaeleeeforsenate
Mahady	Mary	D	C	32	none
Wilcox	Craig	R	I	32	none
Zettler	Nancy	D	C	33	@nancy4statesenate
DeWitte	Don	R	I	33	none
Johnson	Gregg	D	C	36	none
Anderson	Neil	R	I	36	none
Henry	Heidi	D	C	38	none
Rezin	Sue	R	I	38	none
Fitzgerald	Bridget	D	C	41	@bridget.m.fitzgerald
Curran	John	R	I	41	none
Simpson	David	D	C	45	none
Stewart	Brian	R	C	45	none
Manar	Andy	D	I	48	@andymanar
McMillan	Seth	R	C	48	none
Stout	Brian	D	C	54	none
Plummer	Jason	R	C	54	none
Aud Crowe	Rachelle	D	C	56	none
Patton	Hal	3 <sup>rd</sup>	C	56	none
Belt	Christopher	D	C	57	@christophbeltforilsenate
Hildenbrand	Tanya	R	C	57	@tanya4senate
Webb	Steve	D	C	59	none
Fowler	Dale	R	I	59	none

## Appendix D

### Digital Media Usage in the Illinois State Senate Elections: 2018 General Election

#### Digital Media 4: Twitter

Last	First	Party	I/C*	District	Twitter Handle
Fine	Laura	D	C	9	@Laura4Illinois
Lasonde McCarthy	Joan	R	C	9	@Save_Illinois
Ellman	Laura	D	C	21	@EllmanForIL
Connelly	Michael	R	I	21	none
Cullerton	Tom	D	I	23	none
Lewis	Seth	R	C	23	@votesethlewis
Glowiak	Suzanne	D	C	24	@SuzyGlowiak
Nybo	Chris	R	I	24	@chrisnybo
Georges	Tom	D	C	26	none
McConchie	Dan	R	I	26	@DanMcConchie
Gillespie	Ann	D	C	27	@AnnforILSenate
Rooney	Tom	R	I	27	none
Morrison	Julie	D	I	29	@julieforsenate
Davie	Barrett	R	C	29	@bdavieilsenate
Link	Terry	D	I	30	none
Lee	Soojae	R	C	30	none
Mahady	Mary	D	C	32	@mahadymary
Wilcox	Craig	R	I	32	none
Zettler	Nancy	D	C	33	@zettler4senate
DeWitte	Don	R	I	33	@DeWitteDon33
Johnson	Gregg	D	C	36	@greggfor36
Anderson	Neil	R	I	36	none
Henry	Heidi	D	C	38	@ElectHeidiHenry
Rezin	Sue	R	I	38	@staterezin
Fitzgerald	Bridget	D	C	41	@votebridgetfitz
Curran	John	R	I	41	none
Simpson	David	D	C	45	@simpsonil45
Stewart	Brian	R	C	45	@BrianWStewart
Manar	Andy	D	I	48	@andymanar
McMillan	Seth	R	C	48	@SethMcMillan48
Stout	Brian	D	C	54	none
Plummer	Jason	R	C	54	none
Aud Crowe	Rachelle	D	C	56	@rachelle4senate
Patton	Hal	3 <sup>rd</sup>	C	56	@halsenate
Belt	Christopher	D	C	57	@CBelt4Senate
Hildenbrand	Tanya	R	C	57	@tanya4senate
Webb	Steve	D	C	59	@sdwebb12
Fowler	Dale	R	I	59	@dalefowleril

## Appendix E

### Digital Media Usage in the Illinois State Senate Elections: 2018 General Election Bivariate Correlation (R-Value) Data Calculations

DMT (X)	E% (Y)	X-M <sub>x</sub>	Y-M <sub>y</sub>	(X-M <sub>x</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	(Y-M <sub>y</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	(X-M <sub>x</sub> )(Y-M <sub>y</sub> )
3	0.72	0.1053	0.2200	0.0111	0.0484	0.0232
4	0.28	1.1053	-0.2200	1.2216	0.0484	-0.2432
4	0.51	1.1053	0.0100	1.2216	0.0001	0.0111
2	0.49	-0.8947	-0.0100	0.8006	0.0001	0.0089
3	0.55	0.1053	0.0500	0.0111	0.0025	0.0053
3	0.45	0.1053	-0.0500	0.0111	0.0025	-0.0053
3	0.51	0.1053	0.0100	0.0111	0.0001	0.0011
3	0.49	0.1053	-0.0100	0.0111	0.0001	-0.0011
2	0.45	-0.8947	-0.0500	0.8006	0.0025	0.0447
3	0.55	0.1053	0.0500	0.0111	0.0025	0.0053
4	0.52	1.1053	0.0200	1.2216	0.0004	0.0221
1	0.48	-1.8947	-0.0200	3.5900	0.0004	0.0379
4	0.63	1.1053	0.1300	1.2216	0.0169	0.1437
4	0.37	1.1053	-0.1300	1.2216	0.0169	-0.1437
1	0.68	-1.8947	0.1800	3.5900	0.0324	-0.3411
3	0.32	0.1053	-0.1800	0.0111	0.0324	-0.0189
3	0.45	0.1053	-0.0500	0.0111	0.0025	-0.0053
2	0.55	-0.8947	0.0500	0.8006	0.0025	-0.0447
4	0.49	1.1053	-0.0100	1.2216	0.0001	-0.0111
3	0.51	0.1053	0.0100	0.0111	0.0001	0.0011
3	0.49	0.1053	-0.0100	0.0111	0.0001	-0.0011
2	0.51	-0.8947	0.0100	0.8006	0.0001	-0.0089
3	0.41	0.1053	-0.0900	0.0111	0.0081	-0.0095
3	0.59	0.1053	0.0900	0.0111	0.0081	0.0095
4	0.49	1.1053	-0.0100	1.2216	0.0001	-0.0111
1	0.51	-1.8947	0.0100	3.5900	0.0001	-0.0189
3	0.37	0.1053	-0.1300	0.0111	0.0169	-0.0137
3	0.63	0.1053	0.1300	0.0111	0.0169	0.0137
4	0.57	1.1053	0.0700	1.2216	0.0049	0.0774
3	0.43	0.1053	-0.0700	0.0111	0.0049	-0.0074
2	0.3	-0.8947	-0.2000	0.8006	0.0400	0.1789
2	0.7	-0.8947	0.2000	0.8006	0.0400	-0.1789
3	0.58	0.1053	0.0800	0.0111	0.0064	0.0084
2	0.42	-0.8947	-0.0800	0.8006	0.0064	0.0716
4	0.59	1.1053	0.0900	1.2216	0.0081	0.0995
3	0.41	0.1053	-0.0900	0.0111	0.0081	-0.0095
3	0.39	0.1053	-0.1100	0.0111	0.0121	-0.0116
3	0.61	0.1053	0.1100	0.0111	0.0121	0.0116