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New Technology Plays Growing Role in US Presidential Race

By Robert Raffaele
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The speed with which the world receives information is increasing, thanks to the Internet, cell phones, and other devices. But text and instant messaging, as well as so-called "social networks," are more than luxuries.

As VOA's Robert Raffaele explains, today's instant communication is also helping to shape the race for the U.S. presidency.

Analysts, including Donald Rieck, of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, credit Dean as the first candidate to use the Internet to energize supporters.

"He very effectively utilized the Internet to get his name in front of massive amounts of people, which again in the presidential race, is what you need to do," Rieck said.

YouTube is one website being used by both candidates. Both have uploaded campaign ads of themselves.

Rieck says You Tube messages have a direct appeal that expensive television commercials cannot match.

He adds, "I think the primary thing is that a person clicks on a You Tube video and then it's him and the video, and it's his choice, they can stop it, they can pause it. So I think the intimacy and ownership of the event is better and more connected to the viewer."

Supporters who submitted their wireless phone numbers received the information ahead of the news media, via text message and email.

"This is connecting with them almost viscerally through technology, which is good. But if, especially as the campaign accelerates into the fall, if you're bombarding these people with daily updates, and filling up their mailboxes, there could be a backlash against that," Rieck explained.

The new technology used by the campaigns may impede the public's ability to separate hype from useful information, analysts say. And for that reason, voters may lose as candidates battle across the digital domain.