

Glitches Mar San Francisco Balloting

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By The New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 4 — San Francisco's new municipal election system, which relies on an optical scan machine and software that ranks the voters' choice of candidate, failed to work as expected because of a software problem, officials said on Thursday.

The city's election department learned of the problem on Wednesday, when the maker of the new software, ES&S, alerted the authorities that the software "didn't tabulate and combine the data as it was supposed to," one election official said. Because of the problem, candidates were not ranked.

The director of elections, John Arntz, said in a statement on Wednesday that no votes had been lost and that the ballots, which were on paper, would be re-

counted if necessary.

Under instant-runoff voting, voters are asked to rank their top three choices for an office. If no candidate wins more than 50 percent of the vote, the second and possibly third choices are counted until one candidate receives a majority. The system eliminates the need for a separate runoff election.

The new system was used in 7 of the 11 districts where members of the board of supervisors were up for re-election. The authorities said that the software problem would cause a delay in reporting results but that the final count would be accurate and available by Nov. 30, as required by law.

The delay of an instant runoff affects four of the seven district races, where no single candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote.
