50th Anniversary of *Speaker & Gavel*: Special Issue Introduction
Stephen M. Croucher

**Rhetorical Criticism: The Past Fifty Years**
David Zarefsky

**An Incubating Institution: Speaker and Gavel’s Current Criticism Section and the Development of Twentieth Century Rhetorical Criticism**
James F. Klumpp

“Permanent Adaptation”–The NDT’s Last 50 years
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**The Next 50 Years of Forensics:**
**Acknowledging Problems, Preparing Solutions**
Christopher P. Outzen, Lucas J. Youngvorst, & Daniel Cronn-Mills
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Editor’s Note:
S&G went to an entire online format with volume 41/2004 of the journal. The journal will be available online at: www.dsr-tka.org/ The layout and design of the journal will not change in the online format. The journal will be available online as a pdf document. A pdf document is identical to a traditional hardcopy journal. We hope enjoy and utilize the format.
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Acknowledging Problems, Preparing Solutions
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I am honored to be serving as the editor of *Speaker & Gavel* during its 50th year of publishing. When I was discussing this commemoration with the former editor of the journal, Professor Daniel Cronn-Mills, we both thought it would be fitting to invite key figures in forensics to contribute to a special issue. We put our heads together and thought of people we wanted to invite. These figures represent a wealth of knowledge about the diversity of forensics scholarship and activity, which is what *Speaker & Gavel* has, and will continue to represent long into the future. I am honored to have served as an editor for these manuscripts.

The first essay in this collection is by David Zarefsky, Professor Emeritus at Northwestern University. In his essay, “Rhetorical Criticism: The Past Fifty Years,” Zarefsky outlines the development and changes that have taken place in rhetorical criticism over the past 50 years. His analysis offers keen insights into the numerous twists and turns the study of rhetorical criticism has taken.

The second essay is by James F. Klumpp, Professor at the University of Maryland. In his essay, “An Incubating Institution: *Speaker and Gavel’s* Current Criticism Section and the Development of Twentieth Century Rhetorical Criticism,” Klumpp discusses how *Speaker & Gavel* has served as an outlet for rhetorical criticism/critique for 50 years. In the essay, Klumpp describes how the journal has facilitated the growth of the ever-growing and changing field of rhetorical criticism.

The third essay is by Allan Louden, Professor at Wake Forest University. In his essay, “Permanent Adaptation – The NDT’s Last 50 Years,” Louden traces the development of the National Debate Tournament (NDT) over the past 50 years. In this retelling, Louden focuses on how structure, technology, and doctrine of debate have changed over the years.

The fourth essay is a reflective essay by Larry Schnoor, Professor Emeritus at Minnesota State University, Mankato. In his essay, “DSR-TKA: Reflective Thoughts,” Schnoor recalls his experiences with Delta Sigma Rho–Tau Kappa Alpha. He reminisces to 1968 when Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, and he was coaching at a debate tournament. The power of forensics as a unifying and emotional force is evident in Schnoor’s work.

The fifth and final essay is a discussion of the place of forensics in the next 50 years by Christopher P. Outzen, Lucas J. Youngvorst and Daniel Cronn-Mills. In this essay, “The Next 50 Years of Forensics: Acknowledging Problems, Preparing Solutions,” the authors discuss the successes and potential pitfalls of forensics as an activity. They encourage forensics educators and researchers to look forward and avoid stagnation. They propose steps to help forensics continue a legacy of competition and education well into the future.
While these pieces each focus on different area of “forensics,” they collectively share a key quality, that of the adaptive nature of forensics. Rhetorical criticism as an area of study has adapted over the years, changed, developed, whatever you want to call it. This adaptation is well documented in the work of Zarefsky and Klumpp. Debate and individual events have also adapted as activities. Their organizational structures, number of events, use of technology, and doctrine have all adapted, as Schnoor, Louden, and Outzen et al. all described. Scholars in *Speaker & Gavel* asked what forensics would be like in the 1980s. How will forensics adapt, and what will it look like in 2020? This is only seven years away. As this area of research and activity continues to adapt and grow it would not be surprising to see more technology, more doctrinal changes, and more structural changes to the study of rhetorical criticism and forensics as a competitive activity.

I would like to close my introduction with a thank you to all of the contributors of this special issue: David Zarefsky, James Klumpp, Larry Schnoor, Allan Louden, Christopher P. Outzen, Lucas J. Youngvorst, and Daniel Cronn-Mills. I also want to thank the editorial staff of *Speaker & Gavel*, Daniel Cronn-Mills, Marne Austin, the staff at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and the staff at the University of Jyväskylä for their support for this journal. Finally, I must thank Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha for their continued support and dedication to *Speaker & Gavel*. Here’s to another fifty years.
Rhetorical Criticism: The Past Fifty Years

David Zarefsky

Not quite fifty years ago, in its fourth volume, *Speaker and Gavel* launched a feature called “Current Criticism.” Under the editorship of Wayne Brockriede, the journal took on an added mission: offering criticism of very recent cases of public address. Rather than traditional scholarly studies, the critiques were moiré like editorials: brief statements of an author’s point of view, with supporting arguments and evidence, on topics of current interest related to public policy. The best of these essays were collected in a book edited by Robert O. Weiss and Bernard L. Brock and published for DSR-TKA in 1971.¹

**Revolutionary Change of the 1960s**

Read against the then-prevailing trends in studies of public address, the “Current Criticism” essays were little short of revolutionary. First, they were centered on texts, topics, events, and controversies, whereas the typical public address study was biographical and speaker-oriented. Second, they eschewed the prevalent method of criticism, which involved the almost formulaic invocation of categories derived from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and carried the unwieldy if not libelous description of “neo-Aristotelianism” in favor of an argument-based criticism that put forth claims and supporting reasons. ² Third, they were frankly contemporary and unconcerned by the risk that judgments of current issues would lack perspective or that the critic would be unable to escape personal pre-disposition or bias. ³ And fourth, they explicitly positioned the critic as an advocate, espousing and trying to convince others of his or her views about the subject of the criticism. They rejected the view that the critic should be seen as a *tabula rasa* uninfluenced by one’s own beliefs or those of society at large.

If in its time “Current Criticism” had a revolutionary character, read fifty years later it seems to merit that most troublesome of epithets, “traditional.” The essays regarded “public address” as oratory. They concerned politics and public affairs. They primarily focused on arguments as the unit of analysis. And they evaluated speeches in the context of the actual audiences assembled to hear them. They were not primarily interested in the development or application of theory, nor do they appear to have been prompted by a desire to unpack or unmask ideology.

The shift in understanding of the essays in “Current Criticism” can serve as a marker for the dramatic changes in the study of public address and the practice of rhetorical criticism over the past half century. The most common form of analysis until the mid-1960s, as noted, was speaker-centered. The analysis included sections providing his or her (usually his) biography, with special focus on rhetorical education and training. Major speeches were identified and briefly summarized. Then the analysis identified Aristotelian genres of rhetoric (deliberative, forensic, and epideictic), frequently used modes of proof with illustra-
tive examples, characteristic choices of organization and style, and observations about delivery. Finally, there would be discussions of audiences and their reactions to the speech, leading to the critic’s judgment of the speaker’s success or failure. Some of the most successful of these studies appeared in the two-volume *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, edited by William Norwood Brigance and published under the auspices of the National Association of Teachers of Speech in 1943. A third volume, edited by Marie Hochmuth, was added in 1955, by which time the national organization had changed its name to Speech Association of America. When this critical paradigm was applied in almost mechanical fashion, the essays were derided as “cookie-cutter” studies and this adjective sometimes was thought to be inherent in “neo-Aristotelianism.”

To be sure, from the beginning this paradigm was not monolithic. In the late 1940s, S. Judson Crandell initiated what would come to be known as movement studies, focusing on collective discourse rather than individual speakers. Leeland Griffin amplified the nature of movement studies with his brief theoretical essay in 1952 and his own investigations of the antimasonic movement of the 1830s and the “new left” movement of the 1950s and early 1960s. In an influential essay in 1947, Ernest Wrage called for replacing the conventional speaker-centered study with an idea-centered study, focusing on what happened to ideas in the process of their transmission to audiences. His emphasis encouraged the study of controversies, not only formal debates and discussions but also clashes among diverse advocates that often took place across time. For Wrage, the value of studying public address was the contribution it could make to intellectual and social history. A third challenge to conventional wisdom during these years was offered by Wayland Maxfield Parrish, who questioned the primacy of identifying and discussing effects. He was more inclined to emphasize the artistry of a speech than to be concerned with the instrumentalism of its effects.

The occasional challenges to the dominant paradigm before the mid-1960s, however, were nothing compared to changes that have taken place since. In part, this reflected the widespread questioning of norms and customs that characterized the 1960s. In part, it reflected the desire of scholars to explain (and sometimes to participate in) the rhetorical turbulence of their own times, phenomena that conventional approaches to public address did not seem able to explain. In part, too, it reflected a recognition that oratory no longer was the most common or influential form of public communication and hence might not serve as the appropriate paradigm case. Awareness of these anomalies unleashed substantial pent-up energy and encouraged pluralism in both objects and methods of study.

**Trends Over the Past Fifty Years**

To begin with, the scope of “public address” was broadened. Oratory was only one of its forms, not its defining feature. Informal conversations could be seen as public address, as could written documents, pictorial displays, art and music, popular culture, or actions understood symbolically. Even society and culture, some argue, could be seen as texts or representations. Social move-
ments became one of the most often studied rhetorical forms during the 1970s; in later years the focus broadened to campaigns of all different kinds. Recently there has been great interest in studies of visual rhetoric, in studies of the persuasiveness of popular culture, and in analyses of how rhetoric can be used both to buttress and to challenge prevailing ideologies – to cite but a few examples of what today is encompassed by the term “public address. What has happened is that the term “public address” no longer identifies a rhetorical form (oratory) but rather a rhetorical function (evoking a public and addressing it). A definition that might embrace the variety of public address studies is “situated rhetorical practice” and this is the activity rhetorical criticism seeks to explain and assess. This definition emphasizes that anything that instantiates rhetoric can be understood as public address, and that the key feature is that public address is grounded in particular situations and contexts. It resists universal principles and lawlike deductions; it builds to inductive generalizations only by engaging the analysis of particular cases.

At the same time that we have evolved a much broader notion of what counts as public address, the field also has been characterized by a return to its roots with new energy and sophistication. Surprisingly, many of the earlier studies, in focusing so heavily on the speaker, neglected the rhetorical text. This may be why there are precious few studies even of such canonical works as the orations of Daniel Webster and John C. Calhoun, the debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, or the sermons of Jonathan Edwards and Henry Ward Beecher. In contrast, one of the dominant contemporary trends is the close analysis of rhetorical texts, whether delivered by those historical giants or by more contemporary speakers such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Ronald Reagan. The purpose of the textual analyses is to unpack the sometimes subtle rhetorical artistry that a discerning critic can find in the text, and thereby to identify with some precision both the skill of the rhetor and the potential of the text to affect audiences. Usually in such studies the emphasis is on the critic’s relationship with the text. Often no claim is made about the actual intentions of the rhetor or about the reception of the text by its actual audience. When there is information about either of these matters, it is taken into account, but the absence of such information is not regarded as disabling for the criticism. Some scholars have objected to this approach on the grounds that it exalts the critic above the rhetor and the actual audience, but their objection is mitigated by the tendency of textual studies to examine paradigm cases of rhetorical performance, in which the significance of the rhetor and occasion can be stipulated safely and in which the immediate outcome of the discourse is well known.

If textual analysis examines rhetorical performance at the micro-level, a dominant emphasis at the macro-level has been to subject public address to ideology-critique. This approach rests on four key assumptions: first, that the ability to influence others through speech is a source of power; second, that this power is not distributed evenly but is vested in those who also enjoy institutional, economic, and political power and personal privilege; third, that this power is wielded hegemonically so that the disempowered or oppressed may not be aware of their own condition; and fourth, criticism of rhetoric should unmask
this hegemonic power and thereby serve an emancipator function. Not surprisingly, such studies presuppose the existence of intractable conflict. Whereas earlier studies located agency in the individual rhetor and assumed that one person, properly prepared and motivated, could make a difference, studies of this type locate energy in large political systems or societies that extend their reach at the expense of the powerless individual unless they are stopped by the adroit practice of rhetorical criticism. Studies of this type have been dismissed as tautological: if the critic’s ideological position is known in advance, there seems little need to perform the criticism, since it will report what the critic already “knows.” On the other hand, there surely are situations in which the subtle workings of language do minimize very real tensions and conflicts that an ideologically-based criticism can usefully bring to light.

As a counterweight to the rhetorical power wielded by elites, a growing emphasis in rhetorical criticism has been on the discourses of the marginalized and underrepresented. If their voices have been too often silenced, the rationale runs, surely we ought to pay attention to the extant discourse they produced—both to bring to light how they deployed the rhetorical resources they did have and to offer role models. This approach also emphasizes the role of vernacular voices in the public dialogue, paralleling the emphasis on “bottom-up” social history that predominated in the years after the 1960s. Dovetailing with this emphasis has been a focus on the rhetorics of identity—discourses that celebrate difference by drawing attention especially to the speaker’s race, class, gender, or sexual orientation (to mention identity categories that currently loom large). The broader insight offered by these studies is the recognition that public discourse is a means both to express and to constitute one’s identity.

A fourth tendency worth noting in recent studies is to examine social and cultural practices as if they were texts. Topics ranging from commemoration and performance rituals to the quotidian practices of daily life can be examined for the messages they convey, the values they symbolize, and the bonds of community that they fashion, strengthen, or weaken. Whether through the massing of bodies at protest demonstrations, the decisions to purchase or to boycott a particular product or service, the cultural penetration of metaphors of sports or war, the reception of works of art, or a variety of other stimuli, audiences are addressed—even though not in the discursive or linear fashion that characterizes oratory or persuasive writing. In contemporary life, broadcast and electronic media increasingly are the channels of address and topics increasingly blur the line between public affairs and entertainment. Rhetorical criticism accordingly has broadened its scope to encompass these messages and channels.

A final tendency to be mentioned here is the growing interconnection between rhetorical criticism and theory. The motives for early criticism were largely pedagogical (to offer judicious criticisms that would provide role models to students for their own rhetorical performances) or historical (to explain and account for texts that were known or established to be historically important). These motivations for study have not disappeared, although the pedagogical motive especially plays a much less significant role. But joining them as a principal motivation has been the desire to relate practice to theory. Sometimes this
relationship has taken almost a mechanical form: a general theory or principle is stated, a case study is offered to illustrate or apply it, and the unremarkable conclusion is reached that the theory can explain the case. The more general the theory, the less profound the conclusion that the theory fits the case.

More interesting perhaps are case studies that modify, extend, or challenge a theoretical position by examining what initially might seem like an anomalous case or even a counter-example. The astute critic might resolve the seeming puzzle by qualifying the theory, drawing attention to its unexplored ramifications, or reinterpreting its meaning, or alternately might conclude that the theory is questionable or that a different theory better explains the case. Also interesting are critical studies that essentially generate theory by yielding conclusions that not only apply in the context of the specific case but also seem as though they would have more general application. As for the nature of the theory to which criticism relates, it is most commonly thought to be rhetorical theory, a body of knowledge which traces to the precepts of the ancients. Increasingly, however, political theory or social theory can be seen as the point of contact for rhetorical criticism. And, indeed, the boundaries among rhetorical, political, and social theory sometimes seem artificial, since all are concerned with human action in the realm of the contingent.

From the foregoing brief review, it should be apparent that pluralism is the hallmark of contemporary rhetorical criticism. On virtually every dimension – scope of the field, object of study, method, even purpose – the limited range of choices that persisted until the mid-1960s had been replaced by a profusion of possibilities. The past fifty years have been qualitatively different from the preceding period of similar length. Despite the vast range, however, several patterns can be identified.

First, in keeping with the recommendations of the 1970 National Developmental Conference on Rhetoric, there is a decided preference for studying contemporary discourse. A relatively smaller group of scholars are interested in and knowledgeable about earlier periods. Second, despite the growing international community of rhetoric scholars, most studies of rhetorical criticism are nationally circumscribed. Scholars in the United States, for example, tend to concentrate on U.S. public discourse. Third, while studies of religious rhetoric may have declined as a proportion of the total, studies of political rhetoric remain strong. But studies of popular culture and what are traditionally regarded as entertainment media are gaining in frequency and significance. This reflects the fact that popular media supply the common topoi of contemporary culture in the way that, say, the Bible and the classics did in the early 19th century. Fourth, as noted above, there is increasing interest in the relationship between criticism and theory and in the belief that critical attention should focus more on how rhetoric sustains power. Fifth, while article-length studies continue to be published and to sustain journals such as Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Rhetoric & Public Affairs, and Quarterly Journal of Speech, there has been a significantly increased emphasis on book publication. Several university presses have established book series in rhetoric in which there is a place for works of rhetorical criticism. This move toward book publication enables scholars to develop arguments in more
depth and to have more opportunities to reach audiences beyond the boundaries of one’s own discipline.

**Current Challenges**

Pluralism, however, is something of a mixed blessing. It validates the desire of any individual scholar to study whatever he or she wishes, and it recognizes that valuable insight can be derived from a study of almost any type. But the number of scholars working in the vineyards of rhetorical criticism is not very large and the intellectual resources are spread thin. The number devoting themselves to any one critical object or even any one type of critical object can be very small, even for what are widely regarded as paradigm cases of rhetorical performance. This makes it harder to subject studies to rigorous analysis and testing or to develop collaborative relationships among scholars with similar interests that could result in the improvement and greater sophistication of rhetorical studies.

Determining priorities for scholarly attention is a challenge both to individual scholars and to the field as a whole. There are other challenges as well. Among them are: (1) Developing a concept of agency that avoids both the naïve belief that one person or one message can make a significant difference and the cynical view that outcomes are totally determined by large impersonal forces and that no meaningful intervention in the course of events is possible. (2) Understanding how rhetoric has effects, how we know the effects of rhetoric in any given case, and whether the question of rhetoric’s effects is an empirical question or a matter of a discourse’s potential as envisioned and argued by a critic. (3) Determining for any given study the appropriate balance between offering a case study of interest and developing or extending theory. If a given study aims to do both, then the question is about the right mix of these goals and how it can be achieved. (4) Determining what traditions in rhetorical criticism remain viable and what the balance should be between honoring those traditions and striking out on new paths. This challenge applies both to methods of study and to the question of balancing studies of historical and contemporary cases.

When “Current Criticism” was launched, rhetorical criticism received a significant boost. The critical pluralism of the past fifty years has strengthened the subfield immensely. That pluralism should be the platform for the next generation of studies in rhetorical criticism. May they build upon the strong foundation that has been laid, while taking the subfield to new and greater strength.

**Endnotes**


2 These studies anticipated by several years Brockriede’s position that rhetorical criticism should be understood as argument. See Wayne Brockriede, “Rhetorical Criticism as Argument,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 60 (April, 1974), 165-174.
This issue had been raised years earlier by Wayne N. Thompson, “Contemporary Public Address as a Research Area,” Quarterly Journal of Speech, 33 (October, 1947), 274-283, but many still shied away from contemporary studies because of the risks noted above.


This reflects the approach of Thomas Kuhn that new theoretical paradigms are developed when a pattern of anomalies accumulates that conventionally ruling paradigms cannot explain. See Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

This contribution of case studies to theory building was identified almost 50 years ago by John Waite Bowers, but his essay was controversial because it seemed to suggest that criticism’s sole function was to serve the cause of theory-building without also being valuable in its own right. See John Waite Bowers, “The Pre-Scientific Function of Rhetorical Criticism,” Essays in


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An Incubating Institution: Speaker and Gavel’s Current Criticism Section and the Development of Twentieth Century Rhetorical Criticism

James F. Klumpp

Abstract
This essay traces the role of Speaker and Gavel’s Current Criticism section in the development of the dramatic changes that marked rhetorical criticism and public address in the late twentieth century. The essay argues that critics restricted from old line journals found outlets and developed their critical skills through the publication of their works in Speaker and Gavel.

In the spring of 2013, editor Stephen Croucher wrote me asking that I contribute to the anniversary issue of Speaker and Gavel by providing “a retrospective on rhetorical criticism/and or critical rhetoric over the years and how it has developed/changed.” I was delighted to do so. We all know that the scholarly work of a discipline evolves over the years, and we are quite good at recognizing the important people that have contributed to it. But we are less adept at recognizing the institutions that are equally a part of that story of change. I was delighted at the invitation because it would allow me to report the importance of Speaker and Gavel in the history of scholarship in rhetorical criticism in the early years of its publication.

To begin the story let us go back fifty years, to the merger of Delta Sigma Rho and Tau Kappa Alpha. Three streams of history will come together to tell our story. First, the story of the journal. Speaker and Gavel was a new journal, supplanting Delta Sigma Rho’s The Gavel and Tau Kappa Alpha’s The Speaker. Charles Goetzinger of the University of Colorado became the new journal’s first editor. The first issue was dated November 1963. Publication of essays in rhetorical criticism and public address was dominated at the time by two national journals, Quarterly Journal of Speech and Speech Monographs, and four regional journals in the speech discipline. Although QJS published nearly exclusively rhetorical studies, the others published material from throughout the areas of study that occupied the interests of members of the Speech Association of America. Only two outlets offered opportunity to publish book-length monographs: salable textbooks and rare sponsorships by the Speech Association of America. Pages to publish the scholarship of rhetorical critics and public address scholars were very limited indeed.

The second story is the social context of the 1960s, the decade of greatest social upheaval of the last half of the century, a time of great turmoil in the United States and the world. The civil rights movement that had begun in the 1950s began an era of activism that spread through the crucible of the anti-Vietnam War movement, the so-called counter-culture, the free speech movement, and finally the women’s movement. The air was full of rhetoric. It came
from Presidents, from leaders in Congress, from the pulpit, from the college campuses, from bullhorns on malls and lawns, from music venues, phonographs, and radio speakers, from those – quiet and noisy – engaged with neighbors and strangers in circles of consciousness. All sought to understand their times and change their world through their voices. To breathe the air of this world was to attend to varied voices and orient to their complicated tones. The exigence of the day was to come to terms with the cacophony of this disrupted social fabric.

The third story, developments in rhetorical criticism, requires expanded treatment. The dominant practice of criticism of the day was governed by Thonssen and Baird’s (1948) _Speech Criticism, the Development of Standards for Rhetorical Appraisal_. As their title indicated the objective of criticism was (1) to develop standards for good practice, and (2) assess performance using those standards. This normative sensibility was later termed neo-Aristotelian criticism because of the importance of Aristotle’s _Rhetorica_ in the standards articulated by these two authors (Black, 1965, 27-35).

Mostly, however, the debt to Aristotle was the model of rhetoric in which the calculating rhetor was at the center. In the Thonssen and Baird system rhetoric was an instrumental art managed more or less successfully by a rhetor who had a purpose foremost in mind and a fixed catalog of techniques at his disposal. To meet the purpose, the rhetor calculated the strategic choices which produced the rhetorical message. Thus, the focus was on the leadership that fell to effective rhetors. Criticism judged rhetors on their mastery of the rhetorical art.

Implied in this neo-Aristotelian system was a second scholarship: the development of a studied canon of effective rhetors and messages. Stimulated by the two volume series, _History and Criticism of American Public Address_, edited by William Norwood Brigance (1943) under the auspices of the Speech Association of America, this scholarship identified the key speakers and speeches in the history of the United States and provided assessments of them. In the process it contributed to the development of standards for effective speech, but also made the case for the importance of rhetoric in the history of the country.

Such was the dominate scholarship in rhetorical studies as the 1960s dawned. The focus of the study was a normative effort toward developing standards and judging speakers and speeches. But the history of the 1960s seemed to suggest that a broader range of rhetorical activity and a broader range of critical purpose was required. In response, a critique of the dominate tradition emerged during the decade. Edwin Black is usually acknowledged to have been the key voice in energizing this critique. Black’s dissertation from Cornell University in 1962 lodged the critique of neo-Aristotelianism. His book _Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method_ drew on the dissertation when it followed in 1965.

In the midst of the exciting, frenetic, perhaps even chaotic 1960s, the demands for the assistance of rhetorical scholars in interpreting the upheaval opened new opportunities for critics. But the notion that neo-Aristotelianism seemed too limited for these new purposes and the opportunities that sprang from them motivated the emerging scholarship in rhetoric and public address. Like Black, critics went looking for new ways to approach rhetorical moments and their artifacts. Black had pointed the way to genre criticism. New excite-
ment in the theory of Kenneth Burke was also ripening. But theorists in the discipline were multiplying other possibilities. And, part of the change was critics torn free from any set theory or method as a guiding constraint. The result was a blossoming of new critical experiments following the pattern (or resistance to pattern) that Scott and Brock (1972) called “eclectic” and “experiential” (pp. 123-127). In the phrasing of the day, “Let a hundred flowers bloom.”

The publication stream of the time was not prepared to accommodate this expansion of critical scholarship. The limited number of outlets created two problems. First, the lack of pages simply meant that the expanded activity fostered by the excitement of the times met limits. The old criticism put no special emphasis on criticism of contemporary events, so work on the corpus and on historical speakers competed in scarce space, restricting efforts to understand the times. The sheer volume of criticism from the expansion produced its own bottleneck.

But in addition, the scarcity of pages emphasized high standards for reaching publication. Encased in an orthodoxy that over decades had developed common notions of quality and thus now defined acceptable critical practice, the gatekeepers of scholarship tended to do what such gatekeepers often do and privilege the familiar. For example, if one approached a criticism from a Burkean view, editors often challenged the critic to “name and justify your method.” No such justification would be needed for a neo-Aristotelian view, but the newness of Burkean theory would itself require such delineation. Thus, the structure provided natural and obvious barriers to the new critics.

To be fair, however, these new approaches to criticism did not come fully developed and perfected in the critic’s first try. Critics needed to develop their acuity and skill as scholars and as critics. In a condition of limited pages, such development could be frustrated by high rates of rejection. But perhaps more importantly, limited outlets isolated developing critics, robbing them of the benefits which reading the work of others and having others read your work offered. In short, for many reasons, the structure of publication created limits that could potentially bind up this explosion of work.

Into this moment stepped Speaker and Gavel. The very first issue of the journal carried an article by Harold Zelko (1963), “President Kennedy’s Press Conferences: Some Observations.” But criticism was not fully established until Wayne Brockriede assumed the editorship of the journal in November 1966. Brockriede and his editorial board of Robert L. Scott, Donald Torrence, and Robert O. Weiss opened the pages of the journal to criticism with a section entitled, “Current Criticism.” Donald Torrence (1966), who became editor of this section within the journal, introduced the premier article by declaring, “With the essay below Speaker and Gavel begins what hopefully will become a regular series of brief critical essays on contemporary public speeches and debates. Such critical analysis ought to appear in print shortly after the event without the long wait for extensive research and development.” Here was a license shaped for the time. First of all, contemporary events were privileged. No dead orators here! And, no mention was made of any purpose or method for the criticism. The door was open. All that was needed was insight or “critical analysis” and an event to
understand. Finally, the release from “extensive research and development” was an explicit release from the notions of debt to canon and explication and justification of particular methods.

The first essay published in the section was Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede’s (1966) “Hubert Humphrey Faces the ‘Black Power’ Issue.” The essay was in the spirit of the new criticism. It was extensively researched and developed, seventeen notes in seven pages, but those notes were not to fit the analysis into the history of public address nor the confines of thinking on critical methods or rhetorical theory, but rather to document the linkages to the day and time. It was a quality essay and in every sense current criticism. It eventually found its way into Scott and Brockriede’s (1969) book The Rhetoric of Black Power.

Criticism of various lengths continued in subsequent issues. Torrence’s declared limit of one critical essay an issue lasted for only two years before the section expanded with two essays more typical. Approaches varied including classical approaches such as L. Dean Fadely’s (1969) “Dispositio in the Rhetoric of a Former Debater: George Corley Wallace,” generic criticism such as Bernard L. Brock’s (1969) “Richard M. Nixon’s Inaugural Address: A Critical Moment in History,” or Burkean approaches such as F. Michael Smith’s (1972) “Agnew’s Media Speeches: The Creation of a Scapegoat.” But insights came from additional and new sources. The current author’s essay, “Nonviolence and Black Power: Civil Rights as a Mass Movement” (Klumpp, 1969), borrowed from the writings of longshoreman-sociologist Eric Hoffer, and Judith S. Trent’s (1973) “Image Building Strategies in the 1972 Presidential Campaign” borrowed from the developing perspective of politics as image management. Ronald H. Carpenter and Robert V. Seltzer (1970) employed the analogue method developed by Lawrence W. Rosenfeld (1968), comparing John Kennedy’s rhetorical style to Richard Nixon’s adaptation of it.

But developing the usefulness of eclectic methods was not the central advance of the era. That advance was the shift of the generating insight for criticism from the method with its canonical questions to the inquiring insight of the critic. The energy of this criticism emerged from the critic’s unique encounter with the object of his/her gaze. Robert L. Scott’s (1968) “Black Power Bends Martin Luther King” illustrated the power of what he and Bernard L. Brock (1972) called “experiential criticism” (pp. 123-27). Scott differentiated the themes of the civil rights and black power movements, and then read Martin Luther King’s rhetoric to illustrate for the reader the evolution in King’s discourse in response to the radical critique. Scott’s contribution was not a product of any particular method but of his insight into how to array the flow of history through which he was living to add understanding to the events. He textured King’s relationship to Black Power in a way that deepened the appreciation for how the historical moment was shaped.

This turn to insightful interpretation to deepen appreciation for the discourse of the society was so important because it marked criticism’s participation in a primary intellectual movement of the twentieth century: contextualism. Contextualism highlighted the power unique to humans to construct the
meaning of their environment, and then enter and shape their world, using their
capacity for language. Scholars driven by the precepts of this movement shaped
what became known as “the linguistic turn.” Obviously, such a perspective puts
a premium on rhetoric. Persuasion recedes from the foreground and rhetoric’s
power is relocated to the assembling of elements of environment into relevant
context to develop the shared meaning with which people create their world
through interaction. Thus, the critic obtains a role in the ongoing meaning-
giving (Klumpp & Hollihan, 1989). Through the final half of the twentieth cen-
tury the linguistic turn with its elevation of the critic and his/her project came to
dominate criticism.

The turn from the focus on the speaker and the speech to the critic as a lo-
cus of insight also impacted the artifacts that were treated in the Current Criti-
cism section. To be sure, the discourse of such leaders as Richard Nixon, Hubert
Humphrey, and Martin Luther King remained a primary concern. But other arti-
facts became the object of the critic’s gaze as well. David H. Smith (1970) ex-
amined the rhetoric of the anti-war movement and its impact on the Paris peace
talks to end the Vietnam War. Wayne Eubank (1969) added to the section’s pri-
mary interest in politics by examining the 1968 Nixon election campaign as a
complex campaign. Frank Venturo (1971) diffused the notion of leadership to
the rhetoric of the Nixon administration, rather than just that of the president, to
capture what he called “the rhetoric of illusion.” Ray Lynn Anderson (1972)
examined science and its relationship to modern policy deliberation. Fern John-
son (1972) turned her critical eye on Ms. magazine. Larry Goodson (1979)
examined the self-immolation of Vietnamese monk, Thich Quang Duc.

The centrality of the artifact as a focus of the critic, in fact, elevated the
study of public address, but without the constraints of proving the canonical
status of the discourse. As a result, events that traditional study of public address
might have overlooked attracted attention, not so much for their intrinsic worth
as for what they told us about something greater than themselves. Michael R.
Hagan’s (1968) “A Debate on the ‘Death of God’” highlighted a seemingly in-
consequential campus debate for its lessons about how humans dealt with issues
of this character. Although one of the stated purposes of the Current Criticism
section was to build the understanding of discourse in the contemporary mo-
ment, before the influence of the journal had ebb’d even historical subjects were
being published, such as Robert V. Friedenberg’s (1975) “Men of Wisdom or
Builders of Babel: A Study of the Decision Making Process in the Constitu-
tional Convention of 1787.”

By the early 1980s the strategies of criticism incubated in the pages of
_Speaker and Gavel_ had entered the mainstream of rhetorical studies. Several
critics whose voices developed with the help of the smaller journal had now
edited the old line journals such as the _Quarterly Journal of Speech_. And new
journals such as _Philosophy and Rhetoric, Critical Inquiry_, and _Critical Studies
in Mass Communication_ had appeared. And opportunities for critical books had
begun to emerge in series at the University of South Carolina Press and the Uni-
versity of Alabama Press. To be sure, _Speaker and Gavel_ continued its publica-
tion of criticism of contemporary events, but it was in the context of a more ma-
ture criticism. It had served a key role in developing the changes that became evident in these key decades.

When the needs of the discipline emerged, Speaker and Gavel was there. Roles such as that served by the journal are not always appreciated by those participating in the scholarly dialogue that they foster. But a great debt is owed to them by all critics. All of us who today feel the freedom to employ our critical faculties in the variety of ways that fill out our rhetorical understanding owe a debt of gratitude to Wayne Brockriede, Robert Weiss, Bernard Brock, and other editors of the Current Criticism section, and to the then young institution so vital to the developing criticism: Speaker and Gavel.

References
Johnson, F. (1972) Ms., in search of a new image. Speaker and Gavel, 10(1), 4-8.


**Notes**

1 The best source for capturing the explosion of thinking on rhetoric is the 1970 National Developmental Conference on Rhetoric, particularly the reports of its working committees. Bitzer & Black (1971).

2 The most thorough explanation of the intellectual frame of contextualism is Stephen Pepper’s (1942). For comment on its importance in communication see Ford and Klumpp (1985). See also Georgoudi & Rosnow (1985).

3 The term has become the dominant descriptive identifier of the movement. The most important work in focusing this attention and pulling the intellectual movement into coherence was Richard Rorty’s (1967) collection by this name.

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“Permanent Adaptation” – The NDT’s Last 50 years

Allan Louden

It remains a surprise I have been involved with competitive debate for five decades, a sobering self-reflection. Viewed more charitably, participating in history imparts a certain authority, a wisdom reserved to longevity, even as one’s memory reconstructs. This essay purports to provide a history of the National Debate Tournament for roughly the last 50 years. Doing justice to the historical sweep would be a book-length project, this summary much more modest.\(^1\) The essay is inevitably selective, recounted from a particular point of view. History never allows more.

It has been my experience that there are enduring prospects for organizations across time, especially those defined by competition. A historic lens discloses how the NDT has changed and what that may suggest for the future. This short history recounts the changes in debate through the lens of three core trends: structure, technology, and doctrine. The aim is to contextualize the NDT’s history as a series of recurrent downsides and opportunities, often inherent in organization’s purpose and function.

**Structure**

Organizational structures inevitably change yet the ebb and flow has a rhythm. It has been nearly forty years since the first National Developmental Conference on Forensics (McBath, 1975) and nearly thirty years since the Second National Developmental Conference on Forensics (Parsons, 1984). A major concern expressed in both conferences was the threat posed by the increasing fragmentation of the forensics community.\(^2\) Correspondingly, a special issue of *Speaker and Gavel* conjectured on what debate and forensics would be like in the 1980s. The articles in the 1980 *Speaker and Gavel* repeatedly warned that fragmentation in forensics was threatening the viability of our activity.\(^3\) The arguments held that many forensics groups all speaking as the voice of excellence threatened to leave little more than impotent fiefdoms. Of course the voices that expressed in these conferences were those of the NDT, established voices arguing from what they “knew” to be valuable.

The third Developmental Conference was convened in 2009 (Louden, 2010), a tenant of an Internet age in which connection and fragmentation were not only possible but the very nature of survival. The conference worried about debate and its promotion, reflecting on diversity, worldwide enactment, and technological implications for practice and purpose. For the National Debate Tournament the question of viability in a dispersed world of debate is ever present. The central speculation is now less about objections to competing debate forums and more one of highlighting value. The balkanization train has left the station.\(^4\)
The most significant organizational development was the separatist growth of the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) and the associate decrease in NDT participation. In the 1970s and early 1980s “debate was debate,” with vague reflections of the honorary organizations Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha (DSR-TKA) and Pi Kappa Delta, which no longer provided the stability or the central competitive focus for debate. The honorary organizations’ fracture was itself a split of “foremost” schools set against the rest of the debate universe, largely made up of state-sponsored universities. Pi Kappa Delta’s high point came in the late 1960s-early 1970s with the 26th biennial convention held at Arizona State University in 1969. One hundred eighty-seven schools sent nearly 1000 debaters to the desert competition (Norton, 1982).

The National Debate Tournament presence, at the honoraries high-water mark, resided as a singular tournament hosted by the United States Military Academy. Almost an auxiliary to the honorary organizations, schools vied to be rewarded with an invitation, but resided (organizationally) in larger communities. For the first twenty-five years the NDT convened at West Point. In 1966, the tournament, another victim of the Viet Nam war, was discontinued by West Point and associated with the American Forensics Association (AFA), hosted at rotating collegiate venues. The NDT, after its inception in 1947, increasing became the defining competitive quest, displacing the relative importance of other national championships. Organizational structure resided with the AFA. At the National Communication Association convention in Chicago the still singular tournament become known as the “NDT” complete with an organization structure with charters, standing rules, codes, and committees (Ziegelmueller, 1996). The NDT, to this day part of the AFA, became in reality self-governing when the Charter was amended the 1980s, divesting rule-making authority to the NDT Committee.

The NDT grew from an initial 24 teams invited until Post-district at-large bids were initiated in 1968 and pre-district bids in 1971 growing in stages to sixty-four teams. Since 1970, it became possible for a school to qualify two teams. The size was increased to seventy-four teams. Beginning in 1992, up to six schools can qualify a third team, and the tournament moved to the present size of 78 teams (Parsons, 1995).

Breakaway and Merger

As these developmental conferences were convened, competition with CEDA for membership began to accelerate. The NDT was still the center of the debate universe, but the disenfranchised were leaving for a climate where competitive success seemed more feasible and philosophical beliefs seemed more welcome. The world of team debate settled into rival camps each reinforced with the self-assurance that they were finer, greater, larger, healthier, or at least “somehow” better.

Debate competition in the 1960s and 1970s experienced an institutional high point with more schools fielding traveling teams than in the present decades. The swell of participation was the confluence of a number of factors, including the coming of age of Communication departments, whose influential
faculty emerged from forensic backgrounds, departments did what they knew and what drew attention to their roots in oral communication. It was also a political backdrop geared to oppose dictatorial regimes and ideologies, best contested by reason. Critical thinking training was rewarded, critical stances were not.

In the 1980s the absolute number of programs contracted, perhaps by half. Costs began to compete with more mature departmental needs, constrained administrations, and a culture of inquiry more concerned with published research than an education steeped in activity-based learning. In the last twenty years debate has not contracted significantly as much as it has migrated.

Moves toward division are not inevitable, however, and the merger of CEDA and NDT in 1996 was seismic in NDT’s and policy debate’s evolution. The pressures associated with a smaller community were a major factor in the redefinition of the debate world. NDT and CEDA split and merger speak to the "natural rhythms" of organizations for perpetuation and attenuation.

CEDA had basked in the self-assurance of two decades of steady growth but was beginning to experience the same competitive dynamics that produced an elite core in NDT. Many in CEDA, especially the competitively strong, reasoned why not compete with those of like mind. Also, CEDA was faced with defections to Parliamentary and National Education Debate Association (NEDA) debate formats, and a travel schedule nearly as insane as that practiced in NDT.

NDT, on the other hand, over the 1980s and 1990s, remained fairly stable in participation. This “stability” of that period was achieved less by the introduction of new programs or retention of “marginal” programs, than by the expansion of the number of teams from a shrinking pool of institutions. While major tournaments remained viable, the community was feeling the pressures of becoming increasingly insular. Regional competitive outlets shrank, restricting affordable travel. The celebration of depth (translation: “quality”) over breadth (translation: “mediocrity”) sufficed for a rationalization in the short term, but the collective community was beginning to feel the pinch. The NDT community was ready to “welcome back” its CEDA friends.

Simply stated, the merger happened because it served most programs’ interests. It was jump started by some wily politics that "surrendered" the topic selection process, but the underlying currents were in place.

**Technology**

The Internet revolution is fifty years old, the span of debate considered in this essay. It was not until 1992 that the World Wide Web became reality, and it would be another few years before general use became available. Nearly everything in our lives has been impacted by this revolution so it is not surprising that Debate has also been transformed. The most obvious impact is mechanical, moving from “cards” fifty years ago, to “blocks,” to jump drives shared during debates. The quantity and variety of evidentiary support similarly have burgeoned.

Technical transformation in debate owes much to the work of Rich Edwards (Baylor University), Gary Larson (Wheaton College), and Jon Bruschke (Cal
State Fullerton), who among others have led the technological revolution in tournament practice. Real time tournament transparency, results and procedures, on-line broadcast of debates, ballot entry from mobile devices are some of the applications. Brent Hinkle who manages Joy of Tournaments, a tournament management web site, commented on how technology has fundamentally changed the way tournaments are run, “compacting schedules, making them healthier via the magic of the computer.” He talked about how small items like “self-check-in” further compress tournaments.

Computerization has also made Mutual Preference Judging (MPJ) a practical reality. MPJ produced fairness, evaluator predictability, and control resting with the participants, who pressed for and sustain the reforms. There is almost no tournament under the CEDA/NDT auspices without MPJ. Research and technical advances allow narrower and narrower margins of agreement among the judges teams have preapproved. While satisfying constituent demands, MPJ has also been greatly criticized, a topic I return to later.

Karla Leeper (2010) articulates the hopeful standpoint regarding change, “Technology will allow debate practices to become more effective. Current innovations such as social networking, paperless debate, and virtual debating, as well as near-future possibilities such as online debating or open-source evidence production hold tremendous advantages for the community.”

Innovations affecting NDT’s practice include a plethora of advances, the most visible being the move to paperless debate in the last five years (where are the Tubs) led by Aaron Hardy, Whitman College, Jeff Jarmans work with CEDA Forum, Wiki scouting allowing case sharing, started by JP Lacy at Wake Forest all have changed the landscape. Much like the Wikipedia format, every debater potentially is the “author” of evidence and arguments; and, participants collectively are scouts, judge evaluators, theory and topic experts; turning traditional theories of pedagogy on their head. Also, “Open Source,” the sharing of a team’s research with the entire community, initiated by Georgetown and Wake Forest (Atchison & Miller, in Press) is gaining ground as the ease of distribution and access break down competitive interests.

Topic selection now takes place with the committee operating in open online meetings, with the commentary of debaters and coaches offered from around the country in real time. Communication allows lobbying and research throughout the night, mirroring the 24/7 research cycle at tournaments, mining the Internet for the next best update. Debate rounds are live-broadcast through the inventive work of Ricardo Saenz, an enterprising Georgia Tech debater.

In the debate world of the last fifteen years, research can proceed all night, supplemented by shadow squads back home. The national tournament is a week-long 24-hour operation, with sleep found in shifts. When the world is at your fingertips the research burden often sacrifices social times among competitors and coaches. The debate community, like most, more easily recognizes changes in other fields. Entire industries go away almost overnight. We remember when coaching in the morning meant trying to locate and mark up the front page of the New York Times, yet fail to see ourselves in the demise of newspapers and journalism.
Debate is changing at a pace that excites but spawns lingering feelings that in the not-too-distant future the activity may be unrecognizable. There are real questions if tournament debate will survive when multiple ways to communicate are easier\textsuperscript{17} and cheaper than getting past airport security. We are familiar with struggles for budgets and recognition, yet find the technological shifts, at once exhilarating and disquieting. Carly Woods et al. (2006) consider the implications of the integration of a single new technology of a “Digital Debate Archive” for the practice of debate. “These changes hold promises in efficiency, argumentation, and beyond. However, these resources may also negatively impact the community, eliminating some key skills, fragmenting the community, increasing resource disparities, or reducing spaces for innovation.”

It remains unclear whether debate is managing technology or technology is managing debate. Ross Smith, Wake Forest University, noted for example, “the ability to rank judges has created a procedure of assigning judges that we use because we can. . . how does the ability to do something drive its use?”

**Doctrine**

Organizations can be viewed as oscillations: structures weaken and strengthen, technology controls and is controlled, and consensus wavers. Debate’s most central principles celebrate openness and engagement, inviting discord and resolution. A never-ending characteristic is the “debate about debate,” continually charged and forged via competitive clash. Debate theory, or the “what, why, and how” of practice, has always been forged with much contradiction.

Often theory is a way of leveling the playing field. Comparative advantage advanced the Affirmative, the PIC counterplan regained ground for the Negative. The major trends for the late 1960s to the early 1990s quibbled over argument ground (e.g., topicality) or situated the judge’s decision (e.g. hypothesis testing), but these disagreements were largely undertaken through shared assumptions about debate. In the last twenty years, new theory has flattened the competitive frames, often by redefining the very enterprise.

Those familiar with NDT debate in the 1960s-mid 1980s will remember stock issues, an orientation more rhetorically accessible to the general public. As speed rapidly increased and policy making replaced the public model, debate became more analytical, geared to expert audiences. In the 1970s and early 1980s hypothesis testing emerged as a challenge to the prevailing policy making orthodoxy, and in spurts and starts, gaming and tabula rasa perspectives mixed and followed. The term paradigms was tossed about to capture argumentative strains, but consensus remained that one needed to debate at least a "reasonable" version of the topic.

In 1991 "the kritik" recast debate. The approach moved through various stages for the following years, producing a split in debate between critical and policy approaches which, as Roger Solt (2004) observes, “. . . has gone beyond culture war to full-blown clash of civilizations.”

Kritiks fundamentally indict something about the way in which actions are justified. They have evolved from linguistic-turns questioning meaning and as-
assumptions, often with suggestions of real world effect. Tracks have included questions of overarching political ideology; kritiks of capitalism, realism, rights, the law, the border, and the state launched by radical environmentalists, feminists, and critical theorists of all stripes. They echoed the academy’s turn to postmodernist, post-structuralist, and critical theories; Martin Heidegger to Slavoj Žižek, Neo-Marxism to Critical Race Theory, debaters in the last two decades are exposed to wider literatures than previous generation of debaters.

"Methodological" kritiks (Solt, 2004) were in fashion in the early 1990s, arguing that traditional methods of proof (science, empiricism, expert testimony) are flawed, offering instead alternate modes of argument (personal narratives, irony, poetry, music and film). The result was a shift in argumentative ground from policy conclusions to assumptions, ideologies, discourses, ethics, activism, performance, methodology, and representations.

The latest trends focus on debate as "performance" where debates are less about policy than about identity, narrative understandings, and confrontation of life’s disparities. Tournaments are contested on Debate’s exclusionary posture toward a variety of minority groups, evidenced in poetry, music, and text; as one tournament winner boasted, their “performance and narrative was based on Lady Gaga.”

These strains, ideological in some instances, have attempted to demarcate the focus of debates and the activity’s purpose. Increasingly, the resolution is not advisory, instead focusing the locus of discussion on the venality of debate, which institutionally, it is argued, is unable to welcome contrasting voice. Discussion of race, identity, and dignity characterize engagement, in and out of contest locations. Pressures to comprehend are also accompanied by reactions aimed at maintaining “policy” as the heart of debate pedagogy.

The new stresses of coming together and coming apart pattern former division and merger but also have a personalization and championing of societal and individual causes, less amenable to concession. The future of the NDT self-definition remains uncertain when this article was penned.

**Welcomed Demographics**

The current doctrinal debate is associated with one of the most important trends in NDT participation. As the activity shrunk, participating schools proportionally have greater representation of elite institutions as smaller state institutions absorb budget cuts. Participation reflected even more accelerated trends of exclusiveness in the high school ranks; policy debate was often the custody of resourced, frequently private, institutions. Minority and lower socio-economic participants were present throughout the last 50 years but in familiar nominal levels. The last ten years have witnessed minority and less privileged in increasing numbers, in part the maturing of the Urban Debate League movement.

There are now over twenty-fine Urban Debate League organizations, spanning cities from New York to San Francisco. Numbers of secondary schools participating in debate have steadily expanded, having real effects on the demographic makeup of collegiate debate squads (Baker, 2010), as well as impacting the nature of acceptable argumentation. Performance born in education/social
movements has moved to competitive debate and, depending on who is consulted, is nearing majority status. The cultural shift in argument, growing out of “new” participant’s voice, has changed the playing field of policy debate. While this is breaking elite singularity, the influx, long overdue and welcome, nonetheless also changes culture (Moss, 2001).

That doctrinal issues tie back to the revolution wrought by technology should surprise no one. The riddle of how best to guarantee judging fairness and expertise has existed since debates were contested. Each debate generation has worked to “improve” judging to better adjudicate eminence. Development of computer programs made it possible to move judge assignment away from tabroom discretion. The default has been to reflect the wishes of coaches and debaters, seeking, as much as possible, mutuality. The practice, around since the mid-90s has become known as Mutually Preferred Judging (MPJ).

Of course, any logarithm for judge placement is based on assumptions, permitting almost infinite variations on judge selection. MPJ is often the model for transparency but as Edwards and Jon Bruchke observe, “the downside is judge compression where the natural tendencies to balkanize, driven by competitive advantage and ideological friends, is entrenched. The judging pool is more preferred, better versed, but also more insular and overused (2010).

MPJ is also critiqued as dismembering the judging pool, thereby entrenching doctrinal splits in the community. Responsive judging, valued by debaters and coaches, becomes polarized, encouraging and rewarding argument departure. One irony of contemporary NDT debate is that tech’s laudable goals have the side effect of increased polarization, including charges that MPJ underrepresents minority, women, and judges with a few years on their resume. It is also fair to note that MPJ also allowed argument innovation, creating voice for women and minority participants. As factors are addressed, other divisions and opportunities are produced.

Conclusion

In constructing this essay the content transformed into more an interpretation than a detailed unfolding of historical events. The major changes that have transformed the NDT in the last 50 years—structural change, technological makeover, and doctrinal divergence—interconnect in ways that conjoin and divide. One is drawn to ask, “Will the NDT survive (or survive in a recognizable form or an improved version)?” One conclusion from this fifty-year retrospective is that debate, as an activity, is likely to survive challenges, and will strengthen, the solutions emanating from debates about and within the debate community.

Regardless of the tumult of any given moment, the National Debate Tournament merits acclaim for valuing excellence and training generations of the Nation’s top thinkers. Tim O’Donnell communicated debate’s value, likely endorsed by all:

Intercollegiate debate, positioned at the nexus of liberal learning, is uniquely located to rejoin the call to renew the promise of the American experiment. Debate is a technology that connects the explosion of political speech
with a civic-oriented vision for the future as well as a mode of speech and inquiry that is constitutive of citizenship; people (students) become citizens both in and through their participation in debate” (2010).

References
Nabors, D. J. (1963). The history of Pi Kappa Delta. Central States Speech Journal, 14, 125-.
Endnotes

1 Previous Histories of the NDT are available at a variety of locations, including articles summarizing NDT history in the 1930s and 1980s (http://groups.wfu.edu/NDT/Articles/perspec.html) and articles speculating on the future of the NDT in 1997 (http://groups.wfu.edu/NDT/Articles/future.html). Concise history of the NDT’s move from West Point to the modern tournament is provided by George Ziegelmueller (1995), a founding eyewitness, and a later organizational history (Ziegelmueller & Baren, 2000). Donn Parson, long-term Director of the NDT, provides summaries of NDT decades from 1950 to the early 1990s (1995). Bill Southworth, Redlands University, publishes a frequently updated book, The History of the N.D.T. 1947-lastest. Some of the information in his book at the official records of results, hosts, awards, etc. at http://wfu.edu/NDT.

2 The first conference endorsed diversity as well, leading eventually to AFA’s creation of the National Individual Events Tournament (NIET). (Parson, 1995). For an early history of debate in America see Cowperthwaite & Baird (1954).

3 Speaker and Gavel, 17.

4 In 2010, as reported in the book Navigating Opportunity: Policy Debate in the 21st Century, Anjali Vats (2010) annotated debate web sites that were organizations that serve primarily debate. The list did not include state associations, individual programs, forensics organization focusing on individual events, Facebook and other social networks (now significant outreach for programs). She found well over one hundred organization or specialty sites that offer purposeful content for significant communities.

5 DSR-TKA is itself a product of merger in 1968. H. T. Ross, The story of the merger. In Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha Chapters Sponsor’s Handbook. DSR-TKA and Pi Kappa Delta remain active organizations, their primary emphasis on individual competitions. DAR-TKA sponsors this journal; Pi Kappa Delta publishes The Forensic. (Also see histories for PKD, Nabors, 1963; Nichols, 1999).


7 http://groups.wfu.edu/NDT/HistoricalLists/Sites1.htm

8 A rule adopted in 2013 will allow a 79th team from the host institution if they did not have a regularly qualifying team.

9 And there was yet a multitude of forensics organizations to be founded. Five Principal organizations were founded between 1981 and 1994. Two by avowed purpose did not affect participation in NDT and CEDA. The American Parliamentary Debate Association (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Parliamentary_Debate_Association#Relationship_to_Other_Tournaments_and_Organizations) founded in 1981, comprised primarily New England schools not formerly associated with the NDT. The National Education Debate Association (NEDA) (http://www.neda.us/) was founded in 1994 as a rule-based invitation-only association, primarily located in the Upper Midwest. NEDA by design does not
competitively cross-over with other organizations. Another offspring, the American Debate Association (ADA) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Debate_Association#History) founded in 1985 in the Mid-Atlantic region detached but membership continues to largely overlap with NDT. CEDA and NDT were increasingly pressured with the founding of National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Parliamentary_Debate_Association#Relationship_to_Other_Tournaments_and_Organizations) in 1993, finding initial strength, like CEDA, in Western states. Membership consisted largely of migration from mainstream debate organizations.

The NPDA is experiencing similar membership pressures as CEDA and NDT experienced. It also feels competitive pressures rendering debates more similar than dissimilar to CEDA/NDT (Buescher, 2010).

The 2000s have witnessed a slight uptick in participation as schools add, and programs field more teams.

Several online forms of debate are now available, including tournaments, for example the University of Southern California’s “Annenberg Digital Debate Initiative” (http://www.usctrojandebate.com/page/annenberg-digital-debate-initiative-addi) and World-wide hookups through the support of the University of Vermont (Snider, 2010).

The Urban Debate League movement was founded in Atlanta Schools via the auspices of Emory University in 1985 (Breger, 2010; Wade, 2010). Levels of participation continue to expand with many league debaters making their way into the collegiate ranks (Baker, 2010). The UDL movement is increasing showing evidence of significant educational impact among participating populations (Anderson & Mezuk, 2012; Wade, Wade, & Hailmayr, 2009; Winkler, 2011).

http://urbandebate.org
DSR-TKA: Reflective Thoughts
Larry Schnoor

When I was asked to write a short article about Delta Sigma Rho – Tau Kappa Alpha for the 50th anniversary issue of the Speaker and Gavel, I had no idea of how the project would bring so many memories. As with many former directors of forensic programs that were involved with DSR-TKA, I realized that when I had the opportunity to visit with some of them, we would have some memories we shared about a specific DSR-TKA national tournament. In doing some research for this article however, many additional memories came floating back into my mind.

My first contact with DSR-TKA happened when I was an undergraduate at Mankato State College in the late 1950’s. I had returned to college from a 4-year period of service in the U.S. Navy and while a student in an argumentation class where I had to take part in a debate, I was asked if I would consider joining the debate team. Little did I know then how this would affect my future. I did so and in my senior year I attended my first DSR-TKA debate tournament.

In the 1950’s and early 1960’s, the tournaments were focused on debate. If there were any individual events at all, they were limited to extemporaneous speaking and original oratory. Trophy awards were presented in debate, but individual event recognition was limited to certificates.

In 1966 the DSR-TKA Tournament was hosted by the University of Nevada in Reno. A total of 52 schools attended. A unique feature of this tournament was that everyone attending the tournament was invited to attend an evening social at the home of one of the members of the Reno debate team. His father had discovered uranium in Nevada and the home was one of the largest many of us had ever seen and located in a mountain area that was quite beautiful. My students and I would later talk about that experience and when we saw each other in later years, it would often enter into our conversations.

When it comes to memories, there is one tournament that is clearly ranked by many others and myself that attended, as perhaps the most memorable. In 1968 the tournament was hosted by George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The tournament hotel was the famous historic Willard Hotel, located just a few blocks from the White House. The term “lobbyist” has been credited to have come about because it was the lobby of the Willard where many individuals tried to make contact with members of the government to push their various agendas. The Battle Hymn of the Republic was written in one of the suites at the Willard Hotel, and many Presidents stayed at the Willard on the eve of their inauguration.

I can remember leaving Mankato with 5 students and driving to Washington, D.C. On our way we had to stop for an evening in Illinois and that evening, we listened to Dr. Martin Luther King give his speech to the striking garbage collectors in Memphis, TN. The next morning, we had breakfast at the motel and heard some individuals talking about Memphis – but did not hear exactly what
their drive to continue on to Washington, we heard on the radio about Dr. King being shot and as we continued to listen, we started to hear about riots breaking out in many locations around the country and most certainly, in Washington, D.C.

We did not know what we should do as the reports were coming in on the radio that there were fires in Washington, and the military had been called in to help deal with the situation. Our discussion centered around the question – should we return to Mankato or should we continue on to the tournament, not knowing what might happen. We elected to continue and arrived in Gettysburg, PA and attempted to find a motel where we could stay and call ahead to find out about the tournament. Finding a motel was difficult as they were filled with individuals that had left Washington to escape the riots. We finally found rooms when a desk clerk at a motel saw the fraternity markings on my jacket and said he would find us a place as he was a member of the same fraternity.

We called ahead to the tournament to find out exactly what might be happening. We were told that the tournament was going to continue, and that we would have a “reasonable” amount of safety. I wondered just what was meant by “reasonable.” We were also told what to expect. We would be met at the city limits by a military unit, where our car would be searched to make sure we were not bringing any possible weapons into the city. This unit would also escort us to the Willard Hotel. On our way to the hotel, we began to notice smoke from various locations where fires had been set, windows covered or taped to avoid breakage, and at times, could even hear gun shots.

Upon arrival at the Willard, we parked our car in the underground garage and were told we would not be allowed to leave the hotel for any reason except to attend the tournament. We would be taken to the campus of George Washington University by bus and returned to the hotel in the evening. Since most of the staff at the hotel lived outside of the city, the hotel was short of personnel to provide basic services, and I can remember that at one point, they just opened the doors to their kitchen and said we could go in to help ourselves to food that they had available.

The tournament proceeded and everything went well on the campus. However, in the evenings back at the hotel, we would still hear gunfire from time to time, see fires and smoke from time to time, and one evening even had to stay in our rooms as there was a report of snipers in the hotel. As far as I know, none were found but it did cause us to be concerned. Seeing troops in the streets, the White House being surrounded by barriers and troops, and hearing reports of riots not only in Washington, but in other cities across the nation, certainly gave us concern and our discussions centered around how they made us feel.

By the last day of the tournament, things had been brought under control, and we were starting to return to normal. The hotel staff was able to return and arrangements were made to hold the banquet on the final evening of the tournament. The banquet speaker was the famous CBS news commentator and analysis Eric Sevareid. In his address, he commented how the events of the past several days should remind us of how this should be a time to work for a better understanding of how important it was to maintain our ideals of freedom, of clear
recognition of how we needed to work together as individuals of all colors and ethnic backgrounds in order to maintain our individual rights and freedoms. On our return trip back to Minnesota, the car was filled with such discussion and made a lasting impression upon all of us.

The tournament of 1968 is perhaps the one I remember the most in regard to the overall impact it made upon me and those students that attended. However, there was another tournament that also had an impact upon me and one that basically framed the rest of my career as a forensic educator and involvement with forensic organizations.

In 1987, the University of Mississippi hosted the DSR-TKA tournament. It was at that tournament that I received the Distinguished Service Award. It is written that the Service Award was based on a member’s long term accomplishments and contributions to the field of speech, including publishing, achievements of one’s own speech team and national offices. Yes, I had been involved in a number of forensic related activities up to that time but did not expect to be honored as I was in receiving the award. However, it did serve to strengthen my belief and desire to continue doing what I could to keep working with my forensic colleagues across the nation to provide the best that could be achieved for students to increase their reasoning and analytical skills along with communication skills, to better enhance their lives.

Many things have changed in forensics since I first became a coach in the early 1960’s. Depending upon one’s opinion, some have been good and some have been not so good. As was stated earlier, DSR-TKA in the early 60’s was primarily debate and just a few individual events: extemp and oratory, with oral interp being added in the early 70’s but not divided into the various interp events we know today. That did not happen until the development of the National Forensic Association’s tournament, and later, the addition of the American Forensic Association’s National Individual Events Tournament. As those two tournaments grew in popularity and acceptance by schools across the nation, I believe interest in organizations such as DSR-TKA began to decrease.

This decrease in interest may have been due to it becoming harder and harder for schools to gain budget increases to attend not just one, but now maybe two or even three, national tournament events. Choices had to be made and in that process, schools had to select which to attend. In the 60’s and 70’s, DSR-TKA national tournaments often had from 50 to over 75 schools attending. In the 1980’s and 90’s that number became less and less.

The importance of being ranked within the top 10 or 20 of schools in the nation has also become more of a growing pressure for schools participating in forensics. Competition at the DSR-TKA tournament, as with some of the other fraternity related forensic organizations was competitive in part, but a great deal of emphasis was on the development of the community relationships between the schools and the goals of forensic education.

There has been an effort to attempt to create more of the attention on the development of forensics in recent years. Several developmental conferences have been held but many feel that often the discussion at those conferences centered more on what needed to be changed at one or the other of the largest na-
tional tournaments, many times related to the method of qualification and how to determine the rankings of the results, then to the process of forensic education that could be housed within departments of communication at colleges and universities.

The traditional forensic tournaments in the 60’s and 70’s usually consisted of 3 preliminary rounds in individual events, and if the number of entries warranted, possibly semi and final round. In a very few cases quarter finals may have been held as well. This tournament format was usually held on a Friday and Saturday and may have left time in the schedule for some social gatherings such as a party for the students and coaches. When the AFA-NIET was formulated, a qualification system was developed to make sure that in order to get to the national tournament, a student would have had to establish a record of achievement at several tournaments. At the time no one had any concept of what has become to be called the “leg” system. It did not take long for schools to recognize that if they wanted to get as many of their students to qualify, more tournaments they could attend would be helpful. Thus began the development of what we now know as “swing” tournaments. This is led to one tournament on Saturday and another on Sunday, with just 2 preliminary rounds, semi’s and finals if necessary on each day, with no time in the schedule for any time of social gathering. This system clearly enables the opportunity to gain more “legs.” Depending upon whom one may talk to about this system, different results will be gained. Many like this method, while others say they would like to return to the more traditional schedule of 3 round tournaments with less emphasis on “leg” qualification.

Within the past two years, there has been a great deal of discussion about changes that could be made to the description of the various events presently most common at forensic tournaments. Some of those changes have been adopted and others are still being considered. Whatever changes are made by one of the two largest national tournaments, they will ultimately affect all other forensic organizations in the country. DSR-TKA, while no longer having a national tournament, is in the position of still playing a strong role in the development of forensic activity and forensic education. There are discussions and developments presently taking place that will allow DSR-TKA to continue its historical legacy.

In checking on Honor Societies and Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha, I discovered that the society is to provide a trophy to the winner of the annual National Forensic League tournament for high school public speakers. It states that the society awards a Student Speaker of the Year trophy to a college member who is chosen for the honor by the vote of the entire national membership. Another Speaker of the Year trophy is awarded to a nonmember who, in the view of the society, epitomizes effective, intelligent, and responsible public speaking. If these awards have not continued, then I urge the society to return to this practice of recognition of individuals and programs that demonstrate outstanding public speaking skills. There is still a role that can be played by this outstanding organization.

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The Next 50 Years of Forensics: Acknowledging Problems, Preparing Solutions

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Introduction

In previous decades, forensics was a well-respected co-curricular activity, with students becoming involved as early as middle school and moving into colleges across the country. The activity provides a multitude of meanings for individuals, teams, and colleges across the nation conjuring feelings of friendship, community, education, leadership, and competition. Many within the forensic community know the reputation of this activity can be attributed to influential individuals such as Grace Walsh, L. E. Norton, and Larry Schnoor, among others. Despite the great past and present of this activity, the future is looming with potential pitfalls that could damage the activity. We propose the next 50 years of forensics are fraught with potential struggles, but through discussion and action, the community can remain as strong for future generations as when it began.

Forensics is Not Prepared for Change

In forensics, degrees of change have occurred in past decades, but change may not have happened in the places where most needed. Although suit styles and topics have kept up with the times, much about the activity has remained relatively unchanged. Stability can be a double-edged sword. On one side, the activity enjoys a level of consistency which can increase its staying power. On the other side, forensics may be experiencing static momentum, and thus an inability to progress and grow. With the livelihood of the community and activity in turmoil, discussion and action must focus on progress in order to keep the program alive. Unfortunately, forensics is ill prepared for looming changes, and therefore threatening the activity as a whole.

A Community Divided

First, the community, although generally unified in the goals of forensics, is divided by the presence of several different forensic organizations. As noted in Outzen and Cronn-Mills (2012), hundreds of organizations in the United States are working for the activity we call forensics. At the national collegiate level alone, teams can be involved with the National Forensics Association (NFA), the American Forensics Association (AFA), the International Forensic Association (IFA), the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA), the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA), the National Christian College Forensics Association (NCCFA), Pi Kappa Delta (PKD), and Phi Rho Pi. This does not take into account the vast array of state and regional organizations,
including the Nebraska Intercollegiate Forensics Organization, the Twin Cities Forensic League (TCFL), or Mid-American Forensic League (MAFL). While these organizations are each important in their own right, a unified community does not necessarily mean a unified practice. The community does not exist beneath one umbrella organization. Change can be difficult to institute because any change does not necessarily apply to all organizations and, therefore, all tournaments. This leaves suggested changes to be accepted by some, modified by others and rejected by the rest, allowing the entire activity to suffer due to the lack of structural change.

One such situation happened in 2012 with recommended changes to the NFA events Prose Interpretation and Dramatic Interpretation. A proposal to change the events to single-voice and multiple-voice interpretation categories was discussed at the 2012 business meetings and formally discussed at the April 2013 business meeting. While many issues were addressed, one of the biggest problems with the suggested changes was how the proposed changes would be instituted across tournaments and forensic organizations. National qualification standards for AFA-NIET and NFA was one point of controversy. Eventually a counter-proposal was adopted calling for keeping the events as they stand with slight wording changes in the event descriptions.

The suggested changes and the complicated discussion therein, is a prime example of the divided forensic community. Our example is not used to suggest no progress has been made. However, the example showcases how significant change is almost impossible to accept across all organizations and tournaments.

Lack of Forensic Scholarship

The forensic community is currently facing a void for effective progress. One challenging area is the lack of forensic scholarship. Forensic scholarship is critical for its scholars to be accepted by the larger academic community. Scholarship is the lifeblood of higher education. Scholarship provides the content for what we teach and how we teach it. With less forensics scholarship, individuals outside the activity may view it as less credible. While everyone within the community understands the benefits of forensics, those outside rely on scholarship to showcase the activity’s worth. Therefore, with less forensic scholarship, the credibility of the activity itself is devalued.

Bartanen (2006) noted few rewards exist for forensic scholarship in the communication discipline at large; therefore, forensic scholarship tends to be put on the backburner. Although several forensic journals are in existence, research is often slow to develop. Instead, publications often consist of discussion pieces, which entertain an idealized forensic world, a sentiment echoed by Brand (2000). Brand noted the journals are not easily accessible to all. The Online Index for Forensic Scholarship operated through Minnesota State University, Mankato is often one’s best hope to find forensic research, but this one resource cannot counter the isolation of forensic research in its entirety. Because forensic research tends to exist in lesser-known journals and the backchannels of online databases, the creation and use of forensic research may be viewed as an unproductive endeavor.
Crisis of Future Leadership

Forensics may soon be facing a leadership void as long-time coaches and national leaders leave the community for retirement or other positions. Although forensics has been around for quite some time, many of its leading figures have been involved since the early years of the activity. However, Richardson (2005) explained, as time commitments and competitive demands of forensics continue to increase, conditions are ripe for high levels of coaching burnout. Rogers and Rennels (2008) argued many forensic educators leave because of family commitments. Thus, we expect many of our current leaders will soon be ready to move on and leave forensics to the next generation of forensic educators.

The question, however, is whether the next generation of forensic educators is ready for the challenge. Littlefield and Hinderaker (2012) noted leaders in forensics are perceived as having certain qualities and actions, such as longevity and commitment to the community, and have “affected the rules or nature of the activity in some direct way” (p. 17). However, with the groundwork of forensics already established and few options for a forensics-specific education available, Littlefield and Hinderaker’s characteristics of forensic leadership may become a secondary part of their professional lives.

Current options for forensic education are dwindling, which, as Compton (2012) noted, is one of the biggest issues facing the forensic community, especially graduate students. Students may go on to any number of colleges to coach while working toward a master’s degree or, in some cases, a doctorate. However, this means matters of research and leadership outside of forensics often take precedence; coaching students is the primary forensics-related duty for many of these graduate coaches. Nelson (2010) reflected on how his expectations for a job in forensics did not meet reality. He explained “little things such as budgets, creating a team, dealing with seniors, and all the paperwork was what I was not familiar with” (Nelson, 2010, p. 29). Although coaching is often a key task for graduate students, a holistic education in forensics is often missing. The holistic education can be difficult because, as Bartanen explained, forensic educators must be a “jack of all trade” teacher (as cited in Williams & Gantt, 2005, p. 54). Bartanen noted very few forensic-related classes are available to learn these skills. The MFA-Forensics, a graduate program specifically designed to train future forensic coaches, is one exception to this rule; however, the degree is currently offered only at Minnesota State University, Mankato (“Communication studies graduate,” 2013). With limited education options specifically for forensics, it is difficult to say if the next generation is prepared to maintain the activity, or to keep the activity alive and adaptable.

Judging Enforces the Past

Many former competitors may not enter coaching but instead return as alumni-judges. However, similar to coaches, judges may fall into forensic norms learned during their years competing. Nelson (2010) argued the competitive nature of the activity helps breed these norms and conformity; it is easier for students to speak and judges to critique based on a well-known “blueprint” of forensics. The blueprint is important considering judges dole out rewards and
punishment for performance choices. Even if students and coaches were to take a risk and attempt a new style or make decisions outside of the mainstream, the deciding factor over whether it is a good or a bad choice is decided by each individual judge. Cronn-Mills and Golden (1997), in their seminal study on the unwritten rules in forensics, documented the haphazard way new styles/approaches are rewarded in forensics.

Swift (2013) noted students tend to fall into a mindset of meeting the standards for one specific audience, the judge and norms of forensics. This mindset is passed on through generations of competitors as students become coaches and judges. Morris (2005) narrowed this scope to those who have recently finished competing, explaining how they often fall into a habit of evaluating students based on their familiarity with forensics as opposed to critiquing students based on standards of rules and good practice. Thus, forensic norms are held above the practice of the activity, continuing to be perpetuated as judging criteria without questions.

Current forensic coaches and judges are the ultimate enforcers of the activity, whether in rules or norms. Little prevents judges from falling back onto previously held beliefs about the activity and, thus, forensics will remain static. Essentially, without a focus on training and education for the next generation, forensics will not have the tools to grow and evolve. The next generation of forensic leaders will maintain the version of forensics they have always known, making the activity a thing of the past.

**Battle of the Budget**

During the next 50 years, the forensic community must consider internal struggles, and recognize and act against external forces. Given the country’s economic hardships over the past several years, universities have taken a considerable blow. Shaw (2011) explained the demand for a college education started to show signs of weakening through a decline in enrollment, which hurt both tuition-dependent private colleges and public universities dependent on enrollment for state funding. As colleges struggle to maintain a functioning budget, forensics teams are at the forefront of budgetary concerns, through budget cuts or department “streamlining.” Although university funding may not necessarily disappear, funds for forensics will likely reduce as money is diverted to keep other programs alive. As the changing realities of funding forensics take shape, there will be implications for programs and tournaments of all sizes.

**Running a Team on Limited Funds**

First, funding has always been an essential part of running a team; however, as budget concerns take hold, programs without a network of funding options are more likely to disappear. Bartanen (2006) explained forensic assessment tends to be more process-based than outcome based. As a result, justifying the value of forensics to administrators can be difficult because the activity does not fit within standard assessment. This is a threat to all programs, but particularly small schools which may already have limited funding due to school size or the tenure of the program. Forensic teams are unlikely to come into existence under
these conditions. Schnoor and Kozinski (2005) explained starting a team is already a difficult prospect and without support by the department or college, the difficulty is increased. Even if students take matters into their own hands and start a team, these teams are unlikely to flourish. As Holm and Miller (2004) argued, forensics teams need to work within a variety of systems and subsystems within on-campus, off-campus, and forensic communities to gain the support necessary to keep a program afloat.

The struggle for funding is complicated because competitive success is often a key marketing tool for teams. However, having a competitively successful team may require resources impacted by funding. Transportation costs have been the most well-known indicator of troubling economic times. In order to save on transportation costs, forensic programs will have to begin making choices about the number of tournaments attended, the distance traveled to tournaments, and the number of students they can bring. As Kirch (2005) explained, directors already make decisions about travel in terms of numbers of students against number of tournaments; budgetary concerns can only create added pressures. Programs existing where the density of tournaments is low will likely find this troubling; although we market ourselves as an educational activity, competition is the tangible marker of success. Being able to attend fewer tournaments means less recognition and competitive success in terms of numbers, thus reducing the appeal of the program to administrators. Although students may have individual success, earning team recognition may be difficult simply because other teams may bring more students to contribute to team points. This only perpetuates the lack of change within the forensics activity, as few new organizations are joining the community and ultimately damages the future of the activity. Thus any disparity between large and small, funded and unfunded forensics teams will continue to expand.

**Tournaments and Limited Budgets**

Concerns over budget and increasing costs will have an impact on tournaments. In the past, concerns over cost were responsible for the rise of swing and double-up tournaments. Alexander and Schnoor (1997) explained swing tournaments provide a great advantage of condensing two tournaments into one, saving both time and budget for hosts and attending schools. As costs continue to rise and funding becomes a problem for more and more schools, the need for these tournaments will only increase; hosting one tournament in a weekend may soon become an outdated practice. The issues continue when the entry requirement to make a tournament nationally recognized is considered. As an example, the AFA-NIET bylaws (2011) require at least nine schools be represented at a tournament for national qualifications to count. The bylaws dictate fewer entries equal fewer opportunities for national qualifications. Unfortunately, with less schools traveling to tournaments due to transportation costs and budget concerns, fewer tournaments across the nation may qualify for national-level competition.

As fewer schools attend a tournament, the nature of the competition will shift. As previously noted, the competitive disparity between programs with
more funding and those with less funding may become obvious. Teams which can afford to bring more students are more likely to receive team sweepstakes and recognition. This may prove detrimental to larger programs, as the smaller pool of students force tournaments to schedule teammates against each other. Further, in many cases, tournament hosts may struggle to find places for school judges which cannot have them judging their own students (American Forensics Association, 2009). The events seen at tournaments will become homogenous as a few large schools begin to take up the majority of slots in every round. Essentially, funding issues will affect numbers and travel, and the educational and competitive nature of the tournaments which are the cornerstone of the activity.

Struggles in Debate

Although we write from a position of primarily individual events experience, we argue debate programs will face similar struggles. In fact, the problems may be intensified for debate because the nature of the activity already has a sense of separation and fragmentation. First, debate is often seen as an entirely separate endeavor from individual events, despite both being forms of forensics. Although national organizations may recognize the importance of both, a sense of separation still exists in the community at large. Many organizations, such as the American Forensics Association, institutionalize the division in the creation of separate charters (American Forensics Association, 1995; American Forensics Association, 2005). Finding both debate and individual events offered at the same college-level tournament is unusual. Where the two do exist at the same tournament, such as at the NFA national tournament (National Forensic Association, 2012), scheduling becomes a struggle, which only further entrenches the divide.

Debate as a forensic activity is fragmented by the multiple forms of debate which have come to exist over decades of competition. Policy debate, Lincoln-Douglas (LD) debate, public forum debate, and parliamentary debate have all found their place at the high school and college levels. Creation of these formats was primarily reactionary to problems within other formats. For example, Cirlin (1986) noted the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) wished to focus on debate as a communicative event. Similarly, Williams (1996) argued the addition of Lincoln-Douglas debate would create an ideal bridge between debate and individual events competition. On one hand, the formats are distinct. On the other hand, with differences between the formats, understanding what debate is becomes a much more difficult endeavor. Tomlinson (1986) noted one of the primary struggles faced by CEDA was differences between the philosophical goals of the association and the evaluative and competitive practices of those participating in the tournaments.

Those outside of the immediate debate community, especially administrators, may find the fragmentation inaccessible. This is problematic because debate is often viewed as less accessible than speech. Butler (2002) noted debate, especially policy, is generally not understood by those in other academic disciplines due to exclusive community language and standards. Minch (2002) observed Lincoln-Douglas debate is similarly misunderstood, even by the individ-
ual events community, because the intent of this particular format of debate became lost. Without ease of understanding and complicated by the multiple formats, debate programs risk losing funding to travel or having a program at all.

**Moving Forward for the Forensic Future**

The forensic community of the present is durable; however, current trends and practices could potentially lead forensics down a dismal path. Forensics is a community of leaders, educators, and activists, a pool of talent which can be tapped to make great change in the world. The time has come to turn this talent back on ourselves. If forensics is to continue to thrive, as we feel it can and should, it is time to set goals for growth.

**Elevating Scholarship**

First, we as a community must elevate the status of scholarship and theory in forensics to a new level. This work has already begun but members within the community must act to increase the academic standing of the discipline. Scholarship must continue to be produced within and about forensics as an activity. However, scholars must find ways to link forensics back to communication theory outside of the competitive realm. Brand (2000) noted the importance of research beyond competitive forensic practice in order to broaden forensics’ territory and reconnect our scholarship to the communication discipline. The activity cannot exist in a vacuum. The activity emerged from communication theory and must reconnect with theory if it is going to continue to grow. Forensic journals cannot be the sole publication point for forensic scholarship. Reconnecting with the academic community requires showing our work to the discipline as a whole, publishing in journals and presenting in conference divisions which are not forensics-specific. Brand argued forensic organizations should be fighting to add forensic journals to mainstream communication research databases. Forensics can be a strong part of the communication discipline and our scholarship should reflect this potential.

Updated research and theory on forensics provides a strong grounding for future generations of forensic educators. Rogers (2002) explained a rigorous program of research and publication is imperative for present and future forensic educators and will establish a culture of professionalism and credibility which can hold up to the standards of academia. Rather than falling back on norms of the past, educators can use theory and research to elevate forensics and move it to the next level.

The link back to academics and the communication discipline bodes well for justifying the educational purpose of forensics. Competition is often the central focus of the activity to administrators when it comes to issues of funding. However, Goodnight and Mitchell (2008) argued forensics itself can constitute knowledge generation based on argument, criticism, and pedagogy. Mitchell, Woods, Brigham, English, Morrison, and Rief (2010) noted forensics, and debate in particular, fosters skills which are important for research and forensics students are often far stronger at generating scholarship, particularly in a collaborative environment. Through widespread visible scholarship by forensic educa-
tors and students, the link between academics and forensics is underscored, emphasizing the importance of a forensic program for educational purposes. This helps to counter critics of the competitive nature of forensics. Millsap (1998) suggested the wisdom of forensic professionals needs to be shared to faculty in their university across disciplines, highlighting the educational utility of forensic knowledge. Forensics may be competitive in its actions, but the educational and scholastic opportunities afforded through competition can be highlighted for the sake of scholarship and to the benefit of the community.

**Bring Debate Back into Focus**

Second, debate may be at a higher risk than speech because it is perceived as inaccessible to those outside of forensics. However, debate is an important part of forensics and offers clear educational value. Thus, steps must be taken to help debate. Of particular importance is restraining reactionary forms of debate. As debate has grown and changed over time, more formats of debate have popped up due to a particular demand of the community or because an aspect of debate was problematized. However, this has made understanding and supporting debate as a whole very difficult. Further fragmentation of debate must be prevented to make debate accessible and to consolidate efforts to keep debate alive. Butler (2002) suggested in order to foster an understanding and connection between debate and outside disciplines, the debate community needs to begin using more lay judges to bridge the gap and to bolster the educational value of the activity. If a clear focus on a particular format(s) of debate could be defined and current divisions overcome, then schools, tournaments, and national organizations might be able to find a unified approach to help debate programs stay afloat and make debate more accessible to the community outside forensics. Herbeck (1990) advocated for more scholarship for debate in a variety of arenas, such as pedagogy and argumentation theory. Herbeck noted educational goals must be reconnected with debate practice. Herbeck’s suggestions would serve to underscore the value of debate beyond competition, thus creating common ground between forensic practitioners and other educators and administrators.

**Consider Virtual Forensic Opportunities**

Transportation and hotel expenses are among the highest costs for most forensic programs and therefore represent the greatest threat in the battle with limited funding. Solving this problem at the economic level is difficult. Therefore, forensics must consider ways of adapting tournaments to meet budgetary shortfalls. Hinck (2002) wrote, although the forensic community should be cautious about virtualizing forensics, it is time to acknowledge the possibility and to study its effects and implementation. One such option is to consider technological advancements in tournaments.

The idea of running tournaments completely online via video programs has been discussed and, despite a couple of attempts, has never been considered a serious option. Although we recognize this situation would be far from ideal, the possibility should be seriously discussed. As technology advances and costs shrink, online tournaments may become a viable option. Robinson and Reese
(2012) noted even familiar social media, such as Facebook and Skype, have enormous untapped potential for saving money and for pedagogical benefits. For example, when holding a debate via Facebook’s chat feature, they found their ability to go back and examine archived chat from the debate was a bonus for both coaching and judging purposes. Of course, an online tournament is just one option among many potential technological developments in forensics. Although budget issues have not yet reached dire levels for many teams, the survival of the activity may one day depend on finding ways to overcome the limits of funding and transportation.

**Training the Future of Forensics**

Finally, we have to develop more formal ways to train coaches and judges. The individuals involved in forensics are constantly shifting, whether because of graduation, burnout, retirement, or any other number of causes. Therefore, a strong training infrastructure to educate our educators is important for those who will be coaching and judging students to be strong communicators.

**Coaches**

First, coaches need more formal training to be strong forensic educators. Up and coming coaches may be aware of forensic norms and practices. They may know how to find literature and make events “competition ready.” However, if the link back to scholarship and theory is not present, then the educational value is lost. Kelly and Richardson (2010) explained linking back to scholarship not only maintains the history of education forensics is proud of; it also helps to justify forensic programs to administration by linking to the institution’s academic goals. Workman (1997) stated future directors of forensics must be trained to deal with administrative tasks, a long-neglected area of education for upcoming forensic professionals. A coach can only do so much to help their students if the program cannot be maintained from an administrative perspective. Kuypers (2011) explained, although appealing to administrators is an important part of coaching, it is time to re-examine what administrators are looking for when making funding decisions. As future generations come into forensic leaderships, a new generation of college administrators also appear, leaving us to forge new relationships and connections. While experiences is a good teacher, providing a strong foundation in the administrative practices necessary to lead a team is fundamental to keeping programs alive.

Theoretical and administrative knowledge could be imparted in many ways; however, formal degrees and training programs are the strongest option. Compton (2012) suggested educational degrees, forensic workshops, or even mentorship programs across the circuit would be a strong step toward effectively bringing young coaches into forensic leadership. These programs help to train new forensic educators and help to lend forensics a new level of credibility. At this time, such programs do not widely exist. However, the MFA-Forensics at Minnesota State University, Mankato provides one option for what a program might look like. The program blends a traditional communication education with specific courses related to forensic education. The MFA-Forensics has gained na-
tional recognition for its approach to forensics, winning the Most Innovative Program by the Masters Education Section of the National Communication Association (“Communication studies graduate,” 2013). The degree, which provides a blend of traditional communication education with specific courses related to forensic education, is by no means a universal answer to the problem, but may provide a springboard for new ideas, degrees, and programs which could bring training our educators to a new level of formality and credibility.

Judges

However, coaches are not the only forensic educators. Judges at tournaments play an important role in the education of students. Coaches and students can work as hard as they want and make clear choices about their performances, but judge scores are the competitive “carrot.” However, the role of judges often goes under-recognized and unappreciated. Therefore, elevating the status of forensic judges is an important step toward keeping our activity alive and well. Ross (1984) noted the role of judges is often misunderstood, even by judges themselves, as primarily observers and not as educators. However, judges need to be judging on good communication practice and with a pedagogical emphasis. If the academic integrity of forensics is to be maintained, judges must be, as Morris (2005) lamented, true critics, not just evaluators.

Ross (1984) made several suggestions for improving the state of judging in forensics. First, a judge’s competencies in particular events should be honored. Second, there must be more commitment to professional research for self-education. Finally, more discussion on judging philosophies and paradigms should be held in conjunction with speech tournaments. Despite the fact Ross made these suggestions nearly three decades ago, the state of forensic judging is still problematic and without clear efforts toward improvement. We believe judging seminars would be especially important for the community, including emphasis on both judging philosophies and discussions on effective ballot writing. If forensics is to remain educative through competition, then judges must be able to judge on good communication practices and communicate their decisions in a way which is educational for the students.

Conclusion

The next 50 years of forensics is fraught with potential, both positive and negative. Forensics is currently in a relatively strong state of being; however, we foresee problems in the future if the status quo is maintained. Therefore, we suggest it is time to take action and begin to make changes in the community to prevent forensics from falling into our predicted pitfalls. As this activity has had a major impact on generations of students and educators, it has the potential to continue to do so. If we as a community are willing to put in the time and effort to shoring up the activity, then in another 50 years we may be able to say “Where will the next 50 take us?”
References


http://www.nationalforensics.org/home/about-the-national-forensic-association


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