An Assessment of University Administrators: Do They Value Competitive Debate and Individual Events Programs?

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Although the First and Second Developmental Conferences on Forensics identified the cultivation of administrative support for forensic programs as an important dimension of the forensic director's job, little published research exists to measure the levels of administrative support for such programs. In fact, beyond the survey commissioned by the First Developmental Conference (Pearce, 1974) "to determine what forensics was thought of by groups in the speech communication profession" (p. 134), no study has explored the attitudes of collegiate administrators regarding the values associated with the existence of competitive forensics as a dimension of the college or university's overall academic program.

At the Developmental Conference on Individual Events in 1988, strategies were introduced to build administrative support for competitive forensics. Greenstreet (1988) suggested that a rationale for individual events should be consistent with the mission statement for each institution and steps should be taken to encourage more administrative support. Harris (1988) recommended the creation of annual reports to enable forensic directors to publicize and review their activities in relation to administrative priorities and their own effectiveness in reaching their objectives. Underberg (1988) urged "the collection and dissemination of information about funding levels, activity levels, and instructional demands in forensics" (p. ii). With this information, directors of forensics might be able to better secure support for their forensic programs. Others actually called for a survey of administrative attitudes and institutional support for forensic programs (Littlefield, 1988).

The assumption underlying these suggestions seemingly questions the organizational support for forensic programs among administrators. Discovering some of the prevailing attitudes of administrators regarding the value of forensic programs provides insight into reasons why programs have continued to exist on some campuses while not on others. The present study identifies and interprets some of the attitudes and levels of support that exist on college campuses regarding the value of competitive speech and debate activities.

PROCEDURE

The procedure used in this study consisted of mailing the questionnaire to the chief administrative officer (CEO) at every institution identified in the Speech Communication's 1988 Directory. The survey sought to obtain demographic information about the institution, the status of forensic activities on the campus, and the levels of support for forensic programs.

The cover letter requested the CEO to pass the questionnaire along to any administrator or individual who could comment on the past and present speech and debate activities occurring on that particular campus, should the CEO be unfamiliar with or too busy to respond to the survey.

Subjects

The subjects were nominally defined as chief administrative officers at all institutions listed by department in the 1988 SCA Directory. Eleven hundred surveys were mailed to these institutions in the 50 states and foreign countries where affiliated SCA departments are located. Three hundred and thirty-nine questionnaires were returned, approximating a 31 percent response rate. A 30 percent response rate for mass-mailed questionnaires is considered normal (Pearce, 1974).

TABLE ONE
Respondents by Administrative Level and Size of Institution

Administrative Level*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	TOTAL	
Size of Institution											
0-1999	31	25	5	7	33	8	1	1	4	115	34%
2000-3999	17	11	3	2	16	3	1	0	2	55	16%
4000-5999	11	8	0	1	9	6	1	0	1	37	11%
6000-7999	7	7	0	4	1	3	1	1	3	27	8%
8000-9999	8	5	2	1	8	5	1	0	1	31	9%
10000-plus	12	7	9	7	11	21	4	0	3	74	22%
Totals	86	63	19	22	78	46	9	2	14	339	
	25%	19%	6%	6%	23%	14%	3%	1%	3%	100%	

Administrative Level
1 = Presidents, provosts, chancellors
2 = Vice presidents, vice chancellors
3 = Administrative Assistants to Categories 1 and 2
4 = Directors of college/university offices
5 = Deans
6 = Chairs
7 = Directors of forensics
8 = Faculty members asked to respond
9 = No response

Table One identifies the number of respondents, their administrative levels, and the size of their institutions. The respondents reflected a rather wide distribution. However, the greatest percentage of the total number of responding administrators came from institutions with enrollments under 2,000 students.

Instrument

A questionnaire using both closed and open-ended questions was developed which asked for the following information: The level of the "chief administrative officer" who completed the survey; demographic information about the institution (student enrollment); status of debate and individual events programs at the institution; levels of personal and institutional support for forensic programs; and limited data on levels of budgetary and faculty allocations made during the 1987-88 academic year. The questionnaire was reviewed by several administrators at an upper midwestern university. Following the suggestions of these individuals, minor modifications were made prior to the mailing of the survey.

RESULTS

Status of Forensic Programs

To secure information regarding current and past funding of forensic programs, the survey inquired as to whether or not the institution had ever funded a debate or individual events team and whether or not the institution currently funded either or both of these dimensions of a forensic program. Table Two identifies the frequency of the responses for debate and individual events programs.

TABLE TWO
Indication of Past and Current Funding for Debate and Individual Events Programs at Responding Institutions

	Debate		Individual Events	
	Past	*Current*	*Past*	*Current*
Yes	225	149	189	132
No	55	149	83	165
Unsure	26	6	37	8
No Response	33	35	30	34
Total		339		339

The data suggest that the number of debate programs at the responding institutions had declined by 76 (from 225 to 149); while the number of individual events programs had been reduced by 57 (from 189 to 132).

Barriers Precluding Institutional Support

For those institutions not currently funding a debate or individual events program, four barriers were offered from which administrators were asked to prioritize with a "1" reflecting the greatest barrier, "2" next greatest barrier, through "4." If the administrators wished to offer a barrier of their own, the option was provided and then the prioritization could include a rank of "5." The four barriers identified by several independent, university-level administrators when the survey instrument was developed, included lack of monetary resources to sustain a program, lack of student interest in debate or IE programs, lack of faculty/coach interest in debate or IE programs, and lack of an institutional priority.

TABLE THREE
Perceived Barriers to Institutional Support
Resulting in the Discontinuation of Debate and
Individual Events Programs at Responding Schools

Level of Barrier	Barriers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Greatest Barrier	34 (30%)	30 (28%)	21 (21%)	17 (19%)	2 a
(% of Total by Barrier)					
2nd	21	22	27	14	1 b
3rd	21	17	22	14	2 c
4th	11	13	8	13	1 d
5th	0	0	0	2	1 e
Barrier (Unranked)	25	24	22	23	4 f
Total by Barrier	112	106	100	86	11
No Response	227	233	239	253	328

Barriers
1 = Lack of monetary resources to sustain program
2 = Lack of student interest in debate/IE program
3 = Lack of faculty/coach interest in debate/IE program
4 = Not an institutional priority
5 = Other, as specified:
    a = Speech course only; 100% commuter institution
    b = We live in Alaska
    c = Student on/off pattern; too many competing extracurricular activities
    d = Nature of student body, commuter school
    e = Speech not required for graduation
    f = Not popular at 2-year colleges; no opponents because only university on an island; we decided programs do not help students to improve communication skills; need to use faculty for other assignments

The data revealed that a lack of monetary resources was the greatest barrier to the continuation of speech and debate programs.

Benefits Perceived From Forensic Programs

For those administrators from institutions currently funding debate and/or individual events programs, four benefits were offered from which respondents were asked to prioritize using a "1" to reflect the greatest benefit, "2" for the next greatest benefit, through "4." If the administrators provided an additional benefit not listed, the ranking would include a "5." The benefits identified by several independent, university-level administrators when the survey instrument was developed, and generally reflective of the recognized values held by members of the forensic community (Parson, 1984), included that debate and individual events programs enhanced the recruitment of students to the institution, the recruitment of faculty, the attraction of scholarship contributions, and enhanced the education of students.

TABLE FOUR
Perceived Benefits to Institutions having Debate and/or
Individual Events Programs

Level of Benefit	Benefits				
	1	2	3	4	5
Greatest Benefit	18 (10%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	101 (49%)	3 a
(% of Total by Benefit)					
2nd	74	3	9	17	12 b
3rd	19	34	29	3	7 c
4th	4	27	35	3	2 d
5th	1	8	3	0	2 e
Benefit (Unranked)	54	11	14	82	13 f
Total by Benefit	170	85	90	206	39
No Response	169	254	249	133	300

Benefits

1 = Enhances recruitment of students
2 = Enhances recruitment of faculty
3 = Attracts scholarship contributions
4 = Enhances education of students
5 = Other, as specified:

    a = Enhances public image; provides opportunity for student performance and recognition; application of theory brings together the value of a liberal arts

    b = Institutional recognition and visibility; improves retention and student satisfaction; provides major interest activity for these students who wish this sort of student participation; alumni involvement; increases their understanding of significant issues, both national and international; enhances ethos of institution (2); enhances school/community relations; helps maintain an academic campus atmosphere; PR (2)

    c = Institutional visibility (3); enhances institution's reputation (2); encourages nonuniversity attendance at international debates; excellent for job hunting

    d = Gives program visibility with administration and public; enhances university image

    e = Enhances image of college; concentrates attention on a rigorous *academical-*ly-oriented program

    f = Favorable publicity (5); we have an outstanding coach who has earned support; adds a dimension of educational quality and opportunity; improves communication skills of students; aids in building networks; assists with public image of institution through news media and service projects; integral part of communication studies department curriculum; enhances academic reputation; supplementary experience; institutional prestige

The data suggest that enhancing a student's education and recruiting students were the greatest benefits to be gained from having debate or individual events programs.

Personal Assessment of Value of Forensic Experience

Aside from institutional support or lack thereof, administrators were asked to provide their personal assessment of a debate or individual events team as an activity for students at their institutions. Using a Likert Scale (5 to 1) with "5" indicating that the administrator valued the team(s) as very important, "3" indicating moderate importance, and "1" as very unimportant, the following results were compiled in Table Five.

TABLE FIVE
Personal Assessments of a Debate or Individual
Events Team as an Activity for Students

Administrative Level*

Level of Importance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Very Important	27	17	5	8	23	22	7	1	3	113(34%)
4	27	21	9	5	28	10	0	1	3	104 (31%)
3	23	18	2	5	23	7	1	0	3	82 (25%)
2	7	6	2	3	3	3	1	0	0	25 (8%)
Very Unimportant	1	1	0	0		3	0	0	1	8 (2%)
No Response	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3	7

*Administrative Level
1 = President, provosts, chancellors
2 = Vice presidents, vice chancellor
3 = Administrative assistants to categories 1 and 2
4 = Directors of college/university officers
5 = Deans
6 = Chairs
7 = Directors of forensics
8 = Faculty members
9 = No response

Sixty-five percent of those responding valued the forensic experience as "very important" or "important" as an activity for students.

Institutional Support of Debate and IE Teams

To gather some limited data on levels of institutional support, in terms of coaching staff, administrators were asked to use 1987-88 figures and indicate the number of full-time, tenure track and full-time, non-tenure track positions. If they were unsure, they were to leave the

blanks unfilled. The number of part-time faculty and graduate assistants used as coaches for debate and IE teams was also solicited.

TABLE SIX
Selected 1987-88 Number of Coaching Positions
for Debate and IE Teams at Responding Institutions

Type of Positions	Number of Positions							No Response
	1	2	3	4	5 +	Total		
Full-time, tenure track	76	17	1	-	-	91	26%	248
Full-time, nontenure	17	7	-	-	-	24	7%	215
Part-time faculty	52	12	3	-	-	67	19%	272
Graduate Assistants	16	9	4	4	2	35	10%	304

Funding levels, as well as from where the funds used to support the programs were drawn, were requested. While some programs had separate funds to support team and coaching staff travel, other institutions allocated funds for general use by both team and coaching staff. Table Seven identifies levels of funding for the 1987-88 academic year.

TABLE SEVEN
Selected 1987-88 Levels of Travel Support
for Team and Coaching Staff

Level of Funding	Team Travel		Coaching Staff Travel
$ 0- 2999	32	18%	33
$ 3999- 5999	40	23%	6
$ 6000- 8999	25	14%	*
$9000-11999	22	13%	*
$12000-14999	12	7%	*
$15000-above	38	22%	1
			*Included with team
			(101)
No response	170	50%	198

The source of the funding for the team travel and coaching staff travel was also requested from the administrators. Respondents were asked to provide the name of the source of the funding.

TABLE EIGHT
Sources of Funding for Team Travel at Responding Schools

Source of Funding	Team Travel		Coaching Staff Travel
College Academic Dean's Budget	20	12%	9
General University Fund	63	38%	16
Student Government	36	22%	3
Departmental General Budget	10	6%	9
Departmental Instructional Budget	6	3%	1
Combination of Above	23	14%	2
Fundraising	3	1%	-
Private Sources	1	1%	-
Included with Team	1	1%	102
No Response	177		197

In brief, the results of the survey provided data corresponding to past and current funding of debate and IE teams, barriers precluding institutional support for forensic programs, benefits of debate and IE teams, personal assessments regarding the value of these teams, and limited data regarding 1987-88 levels of support for debate and IE teams in terms of coaching positions and funding levels.

DISCUSSION

For the institutions responding, the data suggest that over the years, the number of debate and individual events programs dropped. The data explaining this decline indicate that a lack of monetary resources to sustain the programs, followed by a lack of student interest, a lack of faculty/coach interest, and the absence of an institutional priority all affected the programs no longer in existence.

Despite the reduction in debate and IE programs, for those institutions with forensic teams, the vast majority indicated that the greatest benefit to institutions was the enhanced education of their students. This was followed by the enhanced recruitment of students for their institutions. By and large, administrators personally valued having debate and individual events teams as an activity for students at their institutions. Sixty-five percent considered the presence of these teams as either very important or important compared with 10 percent who valued debate and individual events as unimportant or very unimportant. The fact that 97 percent of those responding to the survey answered this particular question, reflects the relatively high level of

support found among administrators for debate and individual events activities. In Table Five, four groups of administrators at different levels of budgetary control (presidents, provosts, chancellors, vice presidents, vice chancellors, deans, and department chairs) indicated the high value they placed on debate and IE as activities for students. Seventy-eight percent of the 113 respondents who ranked debated and IE teams as very important fell into these categories.

Institutional support varied. Eighty-one percent of the responding administrators with one full-time faculty forensic coach indicated that the position was a tenure track. For the most part, administrators responding had either one or two coaches at their institutions. Levels of funding for debate and IE teams would suggest that the most common budget range was between $3,000 and $5,999 during the 1987-88 academic year. A majority of the programs reviewed (78 percent) included funds to support the coaching staff within the team's travel budget. Based upon the data, the reliance upon institutional budgets was greater than reliance upon student government funds or departmental/institutional budgets.

The many "no responses" in Tables Six, Seven, and Eight also reflect the values or attitudes of the administrators who answered the survey. Clearly, many respondents were able and willing to share their attitudes on value questions in the survey. However, when asked for more specific information about budgets and institutional support, there may have been some reluctance, or at least an indifference to finding out this information and providing it to the researcher. Organizationally, if the survey were passed along to individuals without specific knowledge of the programs involved, this might reflect the general attitude of the highest administrator toward this project or its area of focus. Despite the no response rates, the information collected provides insight into some programs on a national level.

CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The assumption underlying this study questioned the levels of support for forensic programs among administrators who tend to control the funding for these programs. Despite the identification of benefits for those institutions having debate and IE teams, the data suggest that there are fewer programs in the responding schools now than in the past. Although a majority of the administrators personally viewed having forensic teams as very important or important, the data are not conclusive as to whether these personal "feelings of value" translate into faculty positions or funding.

The large "no response" rate for the questions requesting information about faculty positions and budget sources and levels makes the

development of generalizable conclusions in this area difficult. However, there is a value in exploring attitudes and levels of support at various institutions. While this study cannot claim to provide reasons why some programs continue to exist while others cease, the collection of the kinds of information included here is useful for the forensic director seeking to provide information about other programs to local administrators. Administrators may find this study interesting as they compare their levels of support for debate and IE Programs with the others across the country. Simply being aware that travel funds can be acquired from varying sources may spark an administrator to review her or his method of supporting forensic programs.

Comparing the level of institutional commitment, in the form of tenure track/tenured faculty versus part-time faculty, may also suggest variations in terms of funding options that are available. If a forensic director at one school can justify to local administrators that other schools have already made tenure-track commitments to their debate and IE programs, an argument may be made to increase funding or positions at his or her home institution.

If members of the forensic community are going to continue to seek support for their speech and debate programs, an understanding of how some administrators view forensics may prove useful. The more information that is available on levels of support and reasons why programs were discontinued, the more able forensic directors will be to shape their arguments in the justification of their programs.

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Reconsidering the Laboratory Metaphor:
Forensics as a Liberal Art

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"We who teach and do research desperately need a Utopian vision—a vision of the kind of society we want ours to be. We also need a vision of the role communication teachers and scholars can play in creating that Utopia," urged Samuel L. Becker in his keynote address to the 1991 annual conference of the Central States Communication Association (Becker 4). Such a vision is what participants at the First National Developmental Conference on Forensics attempted to create in 1974. As members of a field struggling for cohesion and coherency, conferees formulated a statement intended to unify and legitimatize forensics activities. The statement, in part, read: "forensics activities, including debate and individual events, are laboratories for helping students to understand and communicate various forms of argument more effectively in a variety of contexts with a variety of audiences" (McBath, *Forensics* 11).

From this statement emerged a hardy metaphor—the laboratory—that many forensics professionals have used to guide their efforts in the years since that conference at Sedalia. Five years after Sedalia, at the first Alta conference on argumentation, David Thomas explored the implications of the laboratory metaphor for forensics and offered suggestions to enhance the laboratory experience. In 1981, Michael D. Bartanen offered event revisions designed to enhance the laboratory experience as did Jack Kay ("Individual") in 1984. At the 1984 developmental conference in Evanston, the laboratory metaphor is employed in the "Rationale for Forensics" chapter of the conference Proceedings (McBath, "Rationale" 9-10). Finally, in a 1990 issue of the *National Forensic Journal,* Herbeck as well as Kay ("Research") indicted the forensic community's lack of work with the metaphor.

At the risk of mitigating one-half of the indictment offered by Herbeck and Kay (the claim that forensics scholarship requires improvement—a claim with which I agree), I maintain that the laboratory metaphor is not as valuable as its longevity may imply. In fact, the metaphor is *counterproductive* if its aims are to provide a defining theoretical groundwork for forensics which enhances the activity and establishes its credibility among other disciplines. In the following pages, I expose the unwanted baggage the laboratory metaphor brings to foren-

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sics. I then offer an alternative conception of forensics, that of a traditional liberal art.

Implications of the Laboratory Metaphor

The literature establishing and perpetuating the metaphor of forensics as a laboratory offers a number of beneficial implications of the metaphor. Thomas, for instance, calls the metaphor "a happy one, for it provided a marketable rationale almost poetic in its rich ambiguities" (245). The "marketability" envisioned by Thomas seems to stem from the communication discipline's relatively newfound (at the time of the birth of the metaphor) interest in the social scientific approach. Plus, the whole of academe seems to place more weight on knowledge generated by the scientific method. The "rich ambiguities" of which Thomas writes are rooted in the breadth of meanings available from the metaphor. Working from the Sedalia conference recommendations for forensics, Thomas identifies three meanings for the laboratory metaphor: "workshop for service, learning environment, and research setting" (246). In the workshop meaning, forensics is considered a laboratory where "argumentative communication can be created and/or analyzed for world uses" (Thomas 246). The learning environment meaning suggests that forensics activities are "learning laboratories where students could be provided with experience in learning to communicate with people" (Thomas 247). And the research setting meaning implies "that new knowledge could be generated by experimentation by students and forensics educators" (Thomas 249). Kay ("Individual"), in a synthesis of each of the three potential meanings identified by Thomas, proposed new limited preparation events designed to parallel communication activities in the world outside of forensics.

The breadth of the laboratory metaphor as illustrated by Thomas, and its potential applications as illustrated by Kay, suggest that the metaphor possesses merit. But as Thomas demonstrates and numerous scholars of metaphor indicate in theoretical works, metaphors call to mind a number of associations. Unfortunately, no scholar among those passing the torch of the laboratory metaphor examines its full implications. The most important association overlooked is the connection between laboratory and science.

Laboratories are places where scientific experimentation occurs. This "extra" connotation of the laboratory metaphor imbues forensics with the qualities of science. Rather than serving only as a workshop for students and faculty, then, the laboratory metaphor also suggests that forensics participants engage in scientific work. The type of results produced by science are generally agreed upon within the academic

community. "Ideally, the knowledge science produces is certain, universal, and non-judgmental" (Condit 323). Science seeks to represent reality, generates covering laws that explain recurring relationships among variables, and is linear and cumulative (Bochner 28-29). In short, "the scientist would say the most important thing is the discovery and testing of truth..." (Campbell 3). Working in laboratories, scientists discover new truths to add to the cumulative knowledge of the discipline. The progressive nature of the scientific method, a constant moving from the known to the unknown, imbues the process with a strong sense of legitimacy. Not surprisingly, then, the method of the physical sciences has served as "a paradigm of knowledge to which the rest of culture had to measure up" (Rorty 322).

When this metaphor is applied to forensics, it is even easier to understand why Thomas terms it "marketable" (245), it becomes imbued with centuries of positive perceptions. Such a metaphor is inappropriate for forensics, however, precisely because it is "positive"; the positivist nature of the scientific method suggests that those involved in forensics can find "Truth" and compile cumulative knowledge. First, forensics is hardly a natural science. Second, even assuming that social science can be squeezed into a laboratory metaphor, Roth notes that social science generally suffers from a belief in what he calls the "unity-of-method" thesis. This tenet asserts that there is, in principle, no methodological distinction to be made between the natural sciences and the social sciences" (1). Thus, remnants of thought mistakenly persist in the social sciences that Platonic Truth is knowable (Rorty 377) and that knowledge is always cumulative (Roth 118). Even social scientists who modify their claims still frequently imply universality and near certainty for their findings (Condit 324-325).

These remnants, in turn, color the laboratory metaphor in forensics. The detrimental implications of assuming a knowable Truth and a cumulation of knowledge in forensics are several.

First, a myth that "real" research precludes anything but empirical investigations is perpetuated. Given the dearth of such research in forensics, this privileging of a particular method hurts forensics. Administrators evaluating directors of forensics for tenure likely expect such empirical research if they believe in the implied standards for research set by forensics professionals who adhere to the laboratory metaphor. As Forter writes: "The forensic community is most deficient in experimental research, which sadly is the type of research that carries the most credibility in the academic community" (99).

Second, judge/critics and students may mistakenly assume that there are "right" and "wrong" approaches to the various forensic activities rather than avenues that are more or less educational depending

upon the perspective of the evaluator. For example, Reynolds notes the existence of unstated norms for evaluation held by judge/critics while I have argued elsewhere that students imitate practices they see succeeding *competitively* without questioning the educational value of such practices ("Imitation"). That such imitation occurs is not surprising, for repetition is a hallmark of science. Scientific norms dictate that a correct repetition of the procedure guarantees the same result (Scott 32). In forensic terms, if the national impromptu champion uses an historical, literary, and political example for each "point," then countless students and instructors will repeat that magical formula for success (neglecting the fact that any public speaking textbook suggests that examples are *support* for points rather than points themselves).

Third, the humanistic aspects of forensics are marginalized in the laboratory, causing stagnation. Viewing forensic activities as arenas to test arguments and produce cumulative knowledge limits innovation while encouraging specialization. For years, forensics scholars have bemoaned the increased emphasis on information processing in debate (e.g., Friedman; Rowland & Deatherage; Zeuschner), yet the laboratory metaphor favors this trend because of it emphasizes producing knowledge in a controlled environment.

In addition to granting favored status to the quests for Platonic Truth and cumulative knowledge, the laboratory metaphor contains characteristics that, if continued, limit the educational value of forensics. Specifically, laboratories are: controlled, secretive, run by elites, sterile, and involve the manipulation of variables. All of these characteristics are not inherently negative. In fact, in the investigation of natural science phenomena they are desirable. For example, scientists working to discover a cure for AIDS should probably toil in a laboratory that is controlled, secretive, run by elites, etc. In forensics, however, these characteristics are not desirable. The aura of mystery and specialization surrounding the forensics laboratory may foster community identification, but identification without questioning produces negative effects within a community (Burke 294). As Bullis and Tompkins warn in their discussion of the organizational culture of the U.S. Forest Service: a "'strong' culture made the organization less flexible and adaptive to changes in it: environment" (304). Evidence for the forensic community's inflexibility appears on several fronts: repeated concerns voiced, but not acted upon, regarding the style of debate; frequent worries about the lack of inclusivity in all forensics activities; a hesitancy to articulate broad standards for students despite many unwritten norms; little crossover between debate and individual events because of time commitments and disparate practices in the two activities. These problems, while not directly caused by the laboratory metaphor, likely

linger because of the closed nature of the forensics community—a characteristic of a laboratory.

A larger implication of the laboratory metaphor is its indirect association with the argumentative perspective on forensics articulated at the Sedalia conference and propagated in the nearly two decades since. Of the two sections of the Sedalia definitional statement printed in italics, the second is the laboratory metaphor excerpt referred to earlier in this essay; the other section of the definitional statement reads: "forensics is an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people" (McBath, *Forensics* 11). As the Sedalia definition read as a whole suggests, forensics is an argumentative activity occurring in a laboratory setting; argument and laboratory are intertwined. Despite a few initial complaints from the then developing individual events community (e.g., Rhodes), the Sedalia definition of forensics has informed forensics scholarship in the years since. Much scholarship in forensics focuses on how to improve the argumentative aspects of the activity, individual events included (e.g., Aden & Kay; Dreibelbis & Redmon; Kay & Aden; Manchester & Friedley; Murphy, "Theory"; Reynolds & Fay; VerLinden). Within the individual events community as a whole, however, "the argumentation philosophy [has] failed to generate lasting enthusiasm" (Aden 8). Thus, a second chief goal of the developmental conference definitions—unifying the various forensic activities—seems to have also fallen short of its goal.

Since forensics scholars are still wondering why the laboratory is underemployed, since the metaphor itself conjures up negative associations, and since its counterpart—the argumentative perspective—has not captured the imagination of the forensics community, it appears that forensics is in need of a new definition. The next section offers both a definition and a perspective in which to interpret the definition, then outlines the implications of both moves.

Redefining Forensics as a Liberal Art

The failures of the laboratory metaphor to invigorate forensics scholarship and to unify forensic activities seem, in hindsight, inevitable. Forensics has never been either a natural or social science. In fact, all of the previous attempts to "scientificize" forensics kinds of activities, from sophistry to elocution to hypothesis testing, have led to routines that hurt the perception and practice of forensics. Forensics is most educational, I argue, when it is viewed as a liberal art.

At its core, a liberal arts education is designed to produce individuals who are able to think independently rather than relying solely on existing knowledge. To a degree, a liberal education is the antithesis of a

science education. The former emphasizes the discovery of answers within a person and thus, the answers vary. The latter suggests that answers are "out there" waiting to be found. A liberal education empowers the individual; a "science" education empowers information. As Cambridge education professor Charles Bailey writes:

> What the liberally educated person is released *for* is a kind of intellectual and moral autonomy, the capacity to become a free chooser of what is to be believed and what is to be done …. Scientific "truths, especially in our age, often are accepted as unquestionable once the "truth" is allegedly demonstrated by duly qualified scientists (21 and 140. emphasis original).

Metaphorically, a liberal education liberates an individual while a "science" education holds a person hostage to existing information.

More specifically, a liberal education program is designed to teach students in ways that allow them to "respect themselves and others, as rational and autonomous persons" (Bailey 137). By teaching students how to evaluate evidence and the beliefs behind the evidence, how to understand relationships between new concepts and those already understood, and how to learn while caring about reason and other individuals, educators can help students grow as persons (Bailey 161). The similarities between a traditional liberal arts education and the educational experience of forensics are striking. In fact, the similarities are exemplified in one of recorded civilization's first teachers of liberal arts, Isocrates, who is also recognized as "'the foremost speech teacher in the world'" (Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 41). The fundamentals stressed by Isocrates strongly resemble the primary aspects of both a liberal arts education and contemporary forensics: one-on-one instruction, a well-rounded education, civic development of the student, and the pursuit of good (Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 41-42). While Isocrates taught delivery skills, he believed that the most effective communicators were those whose communicated content reflected the mark of a liberally educated person (Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 41). In addition, Isocrates taught that communication skills should serve noble ends rather than expedient aims (Bryant)—a contrast that parallels the learning versus competition tension in contemporary forensics. Thus it is certainly no stretch to define forensics as a liberal art. In fact, as Bartanen notes, the eminent scholar A. Craig Baird envisioned the connection between liberal arts and forensics in 1923 (406).

The advantages of redefining forensics as a liberal art are numerous. Before I illustrate the positive implications of such a redefinition, however, I need to address the second component of the forensic definition in need of reworking. Just as the laboratory metaphor required a

context-specific perspective (the argumentative) appropriate to forensics, the liberal arts definition requires a contextual perspective in order to make the whole package more appropriate for forensics. I propose a substitution of "rhetorical" for "argumentative" for several reasons.

First, a *rhetorical* perspective, as defined by Campbell, more appropriately includes the various ends of each kind of forensic communication: "A *rhetorical act,* however, is an intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end" (7; emphasis original). Specific types of rhetorical acts are situated along a continuum ranging from the creation of virtual experience to maintaining action (Campbell 8-14; see diagram 1). No single type of rhetorical act is privileged in Campbell's scheme; each is a worthwhile effort. Such a perspective lends itself well to the diverse communicative experiences that now mark forensic competition. For instance, oral interpretation, public speaking, and debate activities all can concern themselves with everything from creating virtual experience to maintaining action at some point during their performance.

Diagram 1 Continuum of
Rhetorical Acts

Creating virtual experience	Altering perception	Explaining	Formulating belief	Initiating action	Maintaining action

From: Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982.

Second, a rhetorical *perspective* places more emphasis upon the ideas of individual students. As Campbell explains, a perspective is "an angle of vision, a way of seeing. All perspectives are partial and, in that sense, distorted or biased: each looks at *this* rather than *that;* each has its particular emphasis" (3). Students, then, can be taught to recognize different perspectives and their respective value rather than assuming that one approach is "right" and another "wrong." Further, as McGee explains, the word "perspective" moves us away from the preoccupation with procedure that rests at the core of the scientific method (47). A rhetorical *perspective,* in sum, emphasizes a comparison of relative concepts rather than the testing of the truth of certain concepts.

A rhetorical perspective for forensics provides an ideal counterpart for a liberal arts definition because rhetorical theories, generally, are concerned with preparing individuals to face future situations (Brummett 104). Writes Brummett: rhetorical theory "equips students for practical experience in the world rather than adding to the store of

knowledge about the world .... Rhetorical studies can thus serve as a kind of integrative, underlying perspective on which liberal arts education is based" (105).

The positive implications of a redefinition of forensics as a liberal art with a rhetorical perspective can enhance students' educational experiences while addressing many of the concerns of the individuals who offered the laboratory metaphor as an answer to forensics weaknesses.

Initially, the meshing of the assumptions of the liberal arts with the rhetorical perspective can increase the open-minded consideration of the relative worth of ideas and approaches. Rather than seeking to test for truths, an absolute yes/no option, students and coaches can assess ideas and approaches as possessing varying degrees of value. Such a philosophical approach can encourage what Rorty calls a scholarly "conversation" in which the supposed answers are constantly evaluated (377). Not only does this option prevent dogmatism in an arena where critical and personal judgements are made, it more appropriately reflects contemporary rhetorical theory. Brummett, for example, borrows from Becker in his discussion of the multiple meanings that can be perceived from one communicated expression (101-102). Following a similar line of analysis, McKerrow notes that messages are fragmented when processed by individuals and thus open to polysemic interpretations (107-108).

Second, the proposed redefinition of forensics may encourage a more inclusive community in two ways. To begin, we can recast the usually unarticulated belief that certain types of forensic activities are *better* at fulfilling the definition of forensics to a belief that each forensic activity fulfills a *valuable portion* of the forensic definition. By eliminating the privileged status of some forensic activities, the rift between what Kay terms the "individual fiefdoms" of forensics may be healed ("Research" 63). Also, a redefinition can make all forensic activities more accessible to students who, for various reasons, do not find the argumentative perspective appealing. For example, Murphy ("Separate") convincingly argues that females generally exhibit communication patterns incompatible with the argumentative perspective, a position reinforced by Georgetown University sociolinguist Deborah Tannen's recent work on the differences in male and female conversation patterns. Ironically, some psychological research offers evidence that females think more in terms of relationships, a central component of liberal arts teaching (Toufexis).

Third, at the risk of belaboring the obvious, a redefinition of forensics should allow students and teachers to more effectively meet their educational goals. Recognizing all perspectives as possessing degrees of

value promotes the kind of thinking cherished in a liberal arts education. Students and teachers must focus on evidence, belief, relationships, and the human condition to evaluate each rhetorical perspective offered. Brummett's position that rhetorical theory is both heuristic and moral seems valuable in this effort: individuals are better prepared "for apprehending rhetorical experience" and recognize that the choices they make "are moral choices, for how one chooses to structure one's world shapes what one sees on it and how one acts in response to it" (Brummett 103 & 104). Certainly, a rhetorical perspective within the liberal arts tradition seems to offer more richness and challenge for both student and teacher than does a search for absolute right and wrong.

Finally, a redefinition of forensics may well improve the state of forensics research as well as its reception outside of the activity. If members of the forensic community cease bowing at the altar of the laboratory, they may well discover that "research" can be legitimately defined as works that contribute to Rorty's conversation as well as those that provide data to digest. Potential scholars, then, need not fear demonstrating their ignorance in matters related to "number crunching." In addition, teacher/scholars may not need to fear the tenure axe to such a large degree of administrators do not expect us to "practice what we implicitly preach" by producing scholarship that embraces the scientific orientation of the laboratory. The danger that must be guarded against, however, is that a forensics research program may become a series of "here's what I think" papers/articles. As the liberal arts tradition teaches, a respect for evidence is always necessary.

Concluding Remarks

Earlier in this essay, I pointed out that no one had deemed it necessary to explore the full ramifications of the laboratory metaphor. To avoid charges of hypocrisy, then, let me admit that there is a down side to redefining forensics as a liberal art which utilizes a rhetorical perspective. Certainly, forensics may enjoy diminished marketability if it is viewed as less specialized than a laboratory. There is then a possibility that administrators will see forensics as *only* an activity. Also, scholarship produced by members of the forensics community may be considered "fluffier" by colleagues and administrators. Forensics, too, maybe defined as a theoretical if its participants reject the implication that knowledge is cumulative. Internally, the broad terms "liberal arts" and "rhetorical" may produce a loss of focus that the laboratory/argument definition, to a degree, provides.

Yet, a careful comparison of each alternative suggests, I believe, an advantage for the proposed redefinition of forensics. The negative

characteristics associated with the laboratory, and their detrimental implications for forensics, are too strong to toss aside. The laboratory is hundreds of years old and its elements are strongly ingrained in our culture. Meanwhile, the redefinition of forensics as a liberal art with a rhetorical perspective can still address many of the concerns articulated during and since the developmental conferences. A traditional liberal arts orientation in this era of back to the basics still appeals to administrators and employers. A rhetorical perspective should better unify the various forensic activities. Most important, the forensics community can more accurately represent to students and administrators what its means and ends are, resulting in more appropriate expectations from both groups.

Even a redefinition of forensics as I propose does not necessarily exclude some of the valuable aspects of the laboratory metaphor. Many of the benefits students gain through forensic competition within the parameters of the argumentative perspective and the laboratory metaphor can occur within the liberal arts definition as well: research, analysis, critical thinking, interdisciplinary knowledge, and self-development (McBath, "Rationale" 10). Furthermore, the concept of forensics as a workshop is not inherent to the laboratory. In fact, the tossing back-and-forth of ideas that occurs in a workshop setting is ideally suited to the redefinition I suggest. The goals of the workshop would change—the search for valuable perspectives vs. immutable covering laws—but the process of the workshop can remain intact in a liberal arts definition of forensics.

These similarities, however, do not mean that we can use a small portion of both the laboratory metaphor and the liberal arts definition. Despite some similarities in process, "to be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a particular way" and thus, the approaches must be considered mutually exclusive (Burrell and Morgan 24). Such mutual exclusivity should not be a read, though, as an either/or dichotomy. Other definitions and/or metaphors should be allowed to "compete" with the laboratory and liberal arts conceptions.

Forensics needs a redefinition. The exigencies facing it now are hardly different from over 15 years ago at Sedalia. Administrators still question the value of the activities (Kay, "Research" 62-63) splits within the various forensic activities still exist (Kay, "Research" 63), and the demands on the director of forensics still contribute to keeping individuals out of tenure positions (Parson 70). A solution to these exigencies lies in the proposition that forensics is a liberal art employing a rhetorical perspective.

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Legal Issues Confronting the Director of Forensics

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In this age of increasing litigation, educators, professionals and others are being held accountable for the manner in which they discharge the responsibilities of their positions. This important, but often overlooked, issue deserves serious consideration in the academic community. For example, in the three and one-half year period from July 1, 1987, to December 14, 1990, the American Association of University Professors reports that the University of Arizona incurred $767,964.85 in outside legal costs alone defending nine lawsuits. As of this writing, four of these cases are still pending, three have been settled out of court after an expenditure of about $300,000 by the Office of Risk Management and two have been decided by jury, one of which involved a judgement against the University for an additional $146,000.[1] All areas of academia could profit from an examination of how job related responsibilities might lead to liability issues. For instance, the question of whether instructors are or should be account-able for insuring a certain standard of knowledge on the part of the students applies to all educators.

When an educator secures the position of Director of Forensics, however, the issue of liability mandates careful scrutiny. The job responsibilities of the forensic director transcend in-class and on-campus experiences. Forensic activities are sponsored by academic institutions. The Director of Forensics signs a contract with the institution to perform certain services. Often these responsibilities include supervising students on off-campus trips.

Forensics educators do not normally enter the coaching field apprehensive of the potential legal liability nightmare inherent in the activity. In fact, few coaches, whether beginning in the field or seasoned veterans, consider the issue of legal liability at all. The fact was demon-strated at the 1991 District IX, National Individual Events Tournament qualifying competition. Most schools in the Rocky Mountain region are accustomed to driving to tournaments in adverse weather conditions. Thus, even though a major snowstorm was in progress, teams from the registered universities made their way to Durango, Colorado. One

experienced and responsible coach from the region instructed students to fasten their seatbelts before driving over Wolf Creek Pass. Approximately thirty miles from Durango the van hit a strip of ice. The van spun out of control, went off the road and flipped before coming to a stop. Luckily, only one student received minor injuries. This incident, however, generated considerable discussion at the tournament. These conversations revealed a general lack of knowledge on the part of coaches regarding the coverage provided by their respective employers. When asked about the procedure for reporting the incident to the school and state authorities involved, the coach indicated that because the van was a state vehicle, that group was contacted. Further questioning revealed that the coach had no idea what, if any, liability coverage was provided by the school and only hoped that it would pay the medical bills of the injured student. Equally frightening, another coach indicated that his university would accept no liability for any accident or injury that occurred during forensics trips.

Isolated instances? Surely there are not many forensics-related accidents or liability issues. Coaches and forensic directors are usually mature and responsible educators; however, it is both specious and fallacious to argue that such maturity and responsibility mean one is aware and informed. A survey of the field over the past few decades reveals accidents have involved many schools including Macalester College, University of Wyoming, Augustana-South Dakota, University of Texas-El Paso, Iowa State University, University of Houston, Weber State University, University of Alabama and University of Kansas just to mention a few. Some of these accidents involved serious injuries and even deaths. Accidents are not the only potential legal problems that a forensic coach might face. Coaches have had legal actions brought against them for sexual misconduct and the misuse of funds, also. The potential for legal problems in other areas of forensic activity is also immense.

Directors of Forensics who seek legal liability information from the forensic community will be disappointed. A review of major publications in the field[2] reveal no articles dealing with the subject. Articles on ethics[3] and/or law[4] could be considered related issues. A quick survey of article titles demonstrates the differences in subject matter. Yet a court judgement—or even an out of court settlement—from a forensic-related incident could devastate a faculty member's finances, career, reputation and/or emotional stability. The work examines some responsibilities of the forensic director which could give rise to liability issues. Second, guidelines to minimize the risks of legal actions will be advanced.

Responsibilities of Directors of Forensics

   Two kinds of liabilities, contractual obligations and tort liabilities, are important to understand in assessing the responsibilities of forensic coaches. Frequently, the two are interrelated and often tort liabilities arise out of contracts.

   Contractual cases involve private agreements made between or among groups, individuals or individual(s) and groups(s). When a contract is entered into, it establishes an agreement which, when not adhered to by one of the parties, can give rise to allegations of breach of contract. Such a suit would indicate that some act(s), stipulated in the contract, was (were) either not performed or was (were) performed improperly. For example, the individual who is hired under the written stipulation that a degree will be completed in a specified time period and who fails to fulfill that expectation is not fulfilling a contractual obligation. In breach of contract cases, the resulting injury may lead to criminal liability, but it is not essential that criminal liability arise in order for a tort to occur. Criminal liability may also occur if the director is misusing the financial resources of the institution sponsoring the program.

   A tort is an injury or wrong, not arising out of breach of contract, which results in loss or damage to an individual. Of the various kinds of tort action, negligence causing personal injury is most relevant to forensic coaches. Negligence includes conduct involving a danger to others that should be recognized and avoided by a reasonably prudent person in same or similar circumstances. An often-cited court definition of negligence is "conduct which creates an unreasonable risk of harm... the failure to use that amount of care which a reasonably prudent person would use under like circumstances."[5] The issue in negligence cases involves the duty of an individual to protect others from unnecessary risks. Negligence is generally considered failure to act in a reasonably prudent manner; the breach of this duty of care causes injury, loss or damage.

   The court criterion for determining negligence cases is foreseeability. A classic discussion of some arguments and positions surrounding the issue of foreseeability can be found in the opinions of the 1928 case *Palsgraf v. Long Island Rail Road.*[6] A good working legal definition of foreseeability can be found in *Emery v. Thompson,* in which foreseeability is viewed as the ability to see or know in advance; hence, the reasonable anticipation that harm or injury is a likely result of acts or omissions.[7]

   Potential negligence issues faced by forensic coaches can be illustrated best through a tournament example. If the Director of Forensics does not accompany the team to a tournament and the team is involved

in an accident, is the coach liable? In December of 1970 the Macalester College team drove to Laramie, Wyoming, where they were to travel to the California Swing Tournaments with the University of Wyoming team. The coaches of the two universities were attending the Speech Communication Association convention in New Orleans and planned to fly to Los Angeles for the Tournament. Outside of Beaver, Utah, the van driver swerved to miss an animal and lost control. The van flipped. This accident resulted in the deaths of two students. What party (or parties) was (were) liable? Was negligence involved? While the parents of one student did not consider legal action, the family of the other student filed suit three years later. In a small out of court settlement, a scholarship fund was established in the name of the student.[8]

If a designated university official were with the team when the accident occurred would the individual be liable whether s/he was driving the vehicle? A unique example of this occurred to the Augustana-South Dakota team. The coach and four competitors were to be transported to a tournament by private plane. The pilot of the plane, the school librarian, not licensed for instrument flying, took off from the Colorado Springs Airport and encountered a storm over Montana. The plane crashed, killing all aboard. What party (or parties) was (were) liable, if any? Was negligence involved?

More commonplace examples, although equally problematic, can be illustrated by reviewing two separate accidents involving the University of Alabama and the University of Kansas. In both instances graduate assistants were traveling with the teams and driving when serious accidents occurred. The cause of the Alabama accident: a blowout. The cause of the Kansas accident: a deer. What party (or parties) were liable? Was negligence involved? A suit naming the driver, the university, the tire company and the automobile company was filed in the accident involving the University of Alabama students. The case was settled out of court.[9]

Because the team was traveling to a tournament when the accident occurred, is there any question of liability on the part of the school sponsoring the event? Under snowy conditions, the New Mexico Community College team was in an accident on the way to a tournament in 1983. Although no one was seriously injured and no legal action resulted, could there have been a question of responsibility on the part of the school sponsoring the tournament because it did not cancel the event although the weather posed a threat? If two teams had been traveling together to the tournament when an accident occurred, where would liability have rested? Following the District IX National Debate Tournament qualifier a few years ago, the Northern Arizona University squad offered to provide airport transportation to the Arizona State

University team. When ASU missed the flight, the teams decided to travel back to Flagstaff together in the van. About seven miles outside Cortez, Colorado, the NAU graduate assistant who was driving slid on ice, resulting in the car leaving the road. While no legal action was taken, if injuries would have occurred in this situation, who would have been responsible? Was negligence involved?

Even when there is no difficulty in getting the students safely to the destination, numerous issues can arise once the students arrive. After more than twenty-five years of coaching, one of the authors has experienced each of the following situations. Thankfully, none resulted in legal action, although any one of them had that potential. For example, the team arrives the night before the tournament. After dinner, most members return to the motel to prepare for the next day. One student asks for permission to take the school vehicle to visit relatives or friends in the area. If the student is old enough, would the coach be legally responsible if the student takes the vehicle and a problem occurs? After the first day of the tournament when the students return to the motel, some team members decide to play a football game on the lawn. The ball hits a window and breaks it. What responsibility does the coach have for the damage incurred? While some of the students are enjoying the football game, other team members attend a party given by another school. At this party, drinking and drugs are available. Even though neither coach is aware of the availability of the alcohol or drugs, are the coaches legally liable? If during the tournament or even transporting students to or from the tournament, one of the students becomes ill, what actions should the coach take?

In another related incident, a faculty member in early 1991 had taken a university van load of speech students from their rural institution on a trip to a major metropolitan area 150 miles away. At the end of the day-long visit, the faculty member turned the keys of the van over to one of the students, a student who had no official university authorization, to drive the van even though there was such a student in the group. The faculty member indicated to the students he would drive back to the campus with his wife later in a different car. The students, using the unauthorized student driver, made their way back to the university on their own. On the return trip, however, the van developed mechanical troubles. It was dark when the students left the van on the side of a winding mountain road and hitched rides back with a passing truck driver. In this scenario the possibilities of damage to the van and passing vehicles, as well as injury to the students and other motorists, are almost innumerable. Where liability rests would certainly depend upon the specific circumstances in each possible instances.

In addition to and in amplification of the issues raised above, there is the matter of *respondeat superior,* a Latin legal maxim which literally means "let the master answer" for the actions of the servant. This doctrine also extends to principals being bound by the actions of their agents. In the hypothetical instances posed above, what happens if, instead of going directly to the destination concerned in the scope of the trip, the individual(s) involved take(s) a side trip excursion during which an accident occurs? Such was the predicament in a pivotal 1834 English case, *Joel v. Morison.* Professor of Law Roscoe Steffen summarized the court's decision writing that legal liability "would turn on whether the servant was merely making a 'detour,' while on his master's business, or was going 'on a frolic of his own.'"[10] In 1979, the team from Mississippi University for Women attended a tournament at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Following the tournament the coach and students made a six hour side trip to Disneyworld in Orlando. The servant in this instance was surely 'on a frolic of his own' and probably would have been liable/negligent for any difficulties that could have occurred. Clearly, the forensics director is an agent within the meaning here, but what about the students? The problem is further exacerbated by various court rulings on fine shadings of the issue, as Steffen noted the "test obviously lacks precision." As in the 1928 case of *Thomas v. Magnolia Petroleum Co.,* some courts deny recovery for damages from "an unauthorized act" that was "beyond the scope of the servant's employment."[11] The issue, however, is not always clear-cut and it is on such ambiguities that litigation thrives.

Before examining specific actions that a forensic coach can take to provide safeguards from potential legal problems, two closely related concepts must be explored. The first doctrine, *in loco parentis,* means in place of the parent. The second doctrine, standard of care, is similar to *in loco parentis.* Both of these doctrines correlate with the age of the students being supervised. Anyone supervising students is expected to provide more guidance and supervision for under age students than non-minor college age students. For example, a coach may feel responsible for seeing that an eighth grade student who feels ill gets medical attention regardless of whether the student wishes to receive it. The coach may feel, however, that a college junior can decide for him or herself whether or not s/he needs to see a doctor. In the case of *Hale v. Davies* a sixteen-year-old football player, although feeling ill, gave in to the pressure of his coaches and entered the game. The court held that a sixteen-year-old is capable of realizing danger and exercising caution to avoid such danger. By participation in the activity, the student assumes a risk and in the absence of showing felonious and willful tort on the part of the supervisor, there can be no recovery for injury sus-

tained. According to *Black's Law Dictionary,* assumption of risk is derived from the Latin maxim, *volenti non fit injuria,* meaning "that to which a person assents is not regarded in law as an injury."[12] This doctrine, of course, is predicated upon knowledge and consent.

The applicability and use of the doctrine of *in loco parentis* has generally faded during the past two decades. This doctrine "should not be an issue in college age students—courts usually feel college students are adults, regardless of age and adults are usually responsible for their own behavior," commented one former dean of students.[13] An assistant dean of students also interviewed for this article said that the policy at her institution was to consider even those university students whose age indicates they are minors as adults under the justification they are emancipated minors.[14] Underneath this policy of abandoning *in loco parentis,* however, said the former dean, lurks the possibility the doctrine could resurface. "Administrators and lawyers say it's dead," he scoffed. "Courts can do whatever they want and it could make a comeback, especially if you have a policy in place you don't follow."[15] The best protection here, then, is caution coupled with awareness.

In terms of *volenti non fit injuria,* everyone associated with the forensic program needs to know that even if they personally are protected from liability and damages arising out of participation in these activities, their personal property probably will not be considered so protected. Many institutions of higher learning "self insure" and, common in that practice, is to deem losses of personal property as "acts of God" if no negligence on the part of the institution can be established. Thus, for example, a student who takes a compact disc player, a videotape camera-playback unit, a personal portable computer or other expensive objects on a forensics trip assumes the burden of risk if anything should happen to that item. The assistant dean of students mentioned above observed that from her experience, students and parents are often left disillusioned and angry over an institution's refusal to reimburse for such loss.[16] Here, a good advance remedy is to inform students and, one would hope through them their family, so that the assumption of risk is indeed made knowingly.

Guidelines for Minimizing Legal Liability

Ideally, all forensic coaches should maintain positive interpersonal relations with students. Although these skills may maximize coaching effectiveness, the belief that good communication can discourage law suits has not been documented. The following specific actions, however, can be taken by competitive speech and debate coaches to minimize the potential of legal action.

1. Understand the contract with the institution. The forensic director should sit down with school administrators to determine specific job expectations and the amount as well as the kind of support the institution will provide in the execution of those responsibilities. The school might agree to pay for any claims that arise out of formal or informal job-related activities. Many institutions will write in an "up to X amount" clause. Some institutions "self-insure" through their office of risk supervision and management. Some institutions claim sovereign immunity with regard to their employees. In most instances, however, should a claim be filed, the school is usually named in the litigation along with the individual instructor. The employee should be wary of accepting a position if the institution is unwilling to accept liability or to adequately protect the forensic coach.

Know the specific provisions or regulations with which you would be expected to comply in the event of an accident. For example, some universities request that employees carry proof of insurance cards. The purpose of the card is to indicate that the state provides liability and physical damage insurance for rental vehicles in the same manner that it does for state-owned vehicles. Normally, if the vehicle is rented through the university, the department of transportation services will have stipulations regarding reporting accidents and/or the repair of damaged vehicles. Knowing and following these procedures can be extremely important in insuring the expeditious handling of the incident.

2. Purchase the maximum amount of insurance available. If personal cars are used for transporting students, notify the insurance company and review the policy limits. Carry the maximum coverage for personal injury and property damage. In order to decrease the cost of premiums, companies often exclude high risk factors (i.e. persons under twenty-one are not authorized to drive the vehicle). Adhere rigidly to the provisions of the policy. If transportation is provided in whole or in part by the school, determine the coverage provided and insure that the vehicle is properly serviced for each trip. Suggest to the school that "travel policies" be taken out for participating students. Find out how the liability insurance of the institution affects employees. When renting a car, go with high-quality products where safety is concerned and purchase additional insurance if available. Although it is a little-known option, teaching and related educational malpractice insurance is generally available for a nominal fee as a rider on an already existing home-owner or other insurance policy.

The cautious forensics worker would be well-advised to investigate the insurance laws for his or her state as well as the policies of the employer. For example, in more instances than drivers realize, if an

accident occurs with a vehicle and the driver of that vehicle has his or her own insurance, the individual employee insurance is primary and employer insurance is secondary. This is often true even if the vehicle is university-owned. In either instance, the employee may be protected from personal liability, but his or her insurance rates could also be increased because of the resulting claim. A thoughtful additional procedure is always to be sure that if someone other than the faculty member is driving the vehicle, that driver is at least a part-time employee of the university, such as a work-study student, graduate assistant or the like. That way, if an accident does occur, it is relatively easy to make the argument that because the driver was employed by the university, the university is responsible for covering the damages. The driver should also, of course, have personal insurance coverage.

A $10 membership in the National Federation Interscholastic Speech and Debate Association, a branch of the National Federation of State High School Associations, would be a wise investment because the membership includes one million dollars of liability coverage. A March 5, 1991, letter from Richard G. Fawcett, Assistant Director of the Federation stated, "We certainly agree that college coaches should consider joining the National Federation Interscholastic Speech and Debate Association (NFISDA)."[17] Fawcett remarked that only 94 NFISDA members indicated that they coached on the college level and clarified, "Our insurance applies to coaches and assistant coaches who are agents of a school/college institution. Sponsors of traveling student groups who do not fall under this category would not be eligible for insurance under our program."[18] The NFISDA Membership Information pamphlet for the 1991-92 academic year includes the following:

> Membership in NFISDA automatically entitles speech, drama and debate educators to:
>
> $1,000,000 Personal
> Liability Protection
>
> Members are covered during the time they are acting in the capacity of a school interscholastic speech, drama or debate association specifically designed for speech, drama or debate directors and or judges.[19]

3. Publish travel rules and regulations. By writing rules and regulations as well as posting or distributing them to students, the coach instructs students in desired behavior. Such misconduct as using mind stimulants or depressants, engaging in sexual relations, stealing or destroying property, and driving unauthorized vehicles can be specifically addressed and will help to eliminate potentially problematic situations. Of course, once such rules and regulations are instituted, the

director must keep them in force or else a court may consider them to have lapsed or to have been removed.

4. Prepare and retain releases. At the beginning of the season, or preferably before each trip, the coach should have the students and their parents sign a release. While most courts will not normally treat this as a release from all liability, it may discourage suits and serve as an indication of the assumption of risk by the student. The more specific the release is to time, place and event, the more useful it will be. A release should include the following:

    a. The name of the student and, if a minor, the names of all legal guardians releasing authorization. Typical wording could be "We, the undersigned, as legal guardians of _____

    b. The permission or consent for the student to engage in the specific activity should indicate the purpose and destination of the trip. Wording of consent can simply state "I (We) permit this minor child to ... ."

    c. The wording should release liability, indemnity (an agreement to pay for litigation if sued by another), and hold harmless (an agreement not to sue which, if broken, could in some circumstances generate a counter suit for breach of contract).

    d. All parties released by the form should be enumerated specifically and generally. Thus, the form should include the name and position of any individual in authority, the school, the school board, the Board of Regents and any other involved party. This information should be the major portion of the release. In the event that another individual might be traveling with the group (for example, the assistant coach) their name(s) should be included.

    e. Specific wording should be incorporated in the form which delineates what acts are released from liability. The acts released should include any claim made by the child as well as any and all expenses of litigation including attorney's fees, court costs, travel expenses, investigation fees, subrogation, the cost of judgment as well as any settlements and/or covenants not to sue if settlement is made with a third party.

    f. Authorization and consent should include the authority to send the student home at his/her own expense at the discretion of the person in charge of the trip. This stipulation not only allows for disciplinary measures when necessary, but also provides for the possibility of illness.

    g. The form should include both the signature of the student and the legal guardian(s) of the student. The signature of the guardian

is essential if the student is under legal age. However, the student's signature should also be secured, especially in cases where the child could reach legal age during the time period for which the release is used. In such cases the release could be void without the student's signature. In order to guard against possible problems, the forensics director would be well-advised to execute a completely new release immediately when the minor student becomes of age.

When at all possible, the release mentioned above should be drafted by the employing educational institution's legal counsel. Legal form books, which contain suggested drafts of legal documents for a wide variety of purposes and contingencies, are available for most jurisdictions.[20] Although it is generally not a good practice to rely heavily on form books, such books often provide helpful starting points when drafting such a release.

5. Obtain authorization for medical treatment. Authorization for medical attention could be written into the release. However, it might be beneficial to make it a separate document. Once the document is signed by both the student and his/her parents or guardians, carry it on all trips and keep copies of it at the sponsoring institution. Because of the increase of malpractice suits, doctors and hospitals are often reluctant to treat individuals without the proper authorization. An indication of insurance coverage is often also required. Time can be invaluable in cases where students need immediate medical attention and the authorization and insurance coverage can help insure prompt treatment.

In many instances the insurance programs of the institution may not cover the medical expenses of students if they are injured while participating in university-related activities or academic programs. Consequently, strongly encourage students to obtain medical/health insurance prior to participation—either through their parent's health insurance plan or through packaged programs usually available through the university.

6. Be pro-active. Attempts to minimize potential problems in advance of the occurrence of those problems is always helpful. For instance, one dean of students interviewed for this paper suggested a tactic he employs whenever he sends people on university trips to destinations that have popular tourist attractions: assume the individuals involved may in fact visit the tourist attraction during their trip and in effect warn school superiors about that stop by listing it as a destination on the *pro forma* travel papers that are filed in advance.[21] For example, if a group is going to visit San Diego, assume members of the entourage

will visit Sea World, and, thus, list it as a destination. If, in the incident cited earlier, the faculty member from Mississippi University for Women had listed Disneyworld in advance as a destination, the group's trip from Gainesville to Orlando and back to the home campus would have been considered neither a "frolic" nor a "detour." Rather, it would have been considered apart of the institutionally approved trip and any damage arising out of that part of the trip would have been more likely considered by a court to be the institution's liability than it would have been otherwise.

Another pro-active procedure is not only to be aware of the policies of the employing institution, but to stay abreast of changes in those policies. For example, in the University of Arizona situation cited in the introduction to this article, the Office of Risk Management had recently indicated its new policy will no longer be to protect any faculty member whose activities with students were social rather than job-related. For instance, faculty advisers for sororities and fraternities, unless their work as an adviser was clearly indicated in their job description, would be personally liable for incidents arising out of that association. Those hired to serve as the campus director of forensics would be protected. Volunteers, unpaid assistants, and others allied to the program would be in a gray area, as would the forensics director in a social situation—such as a party at a tournament.

7. Use common sense. Liabilities arise from irresponsibilities. Acting in a generally responsible manner is the surest way to prevent legal problems. Driving all night or driving in poor weather conditions increases the possibility of difficulties. Remember that regardless of the age of the students involved, the supervisor is a role model. Consequently, the forensic director should set a positive example both as a professionally and socially responsible adult. In sum: stay within the job description, do not participate in unacceptable behavior, and be sure to do one's job.

This work does not provide definitive answers to issues of legal liability. In fact, the discussion poses more questions than it answers. Initially a survey is needed of the practices and knowledge regarding liability issues in the forensics community. Because legal liability is rarely consciously considered by forensic educators, hopefully this discussion will heighten awareness and open a dialogue on the subject. The reader is urged to recognize that each legal situation is different and that it is important to be aware of the specific policy of each institution regarding coverage for sponsored activities. Different rights and responsibilities, as well as legal doctrines, may apply from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, institution to institution, and even setting to setting. An awareness of the individual legal situation is imperative. An open and

honest dialogue with the administration or the legal representatives of the school is an essential starting point. Equally important, should a legal issue arise, work with the legal representative of the school or secure private legal counsel. Hopefully, most forensic coaches will never be confronted with legal action. By taking precautionary measures, the risk can be minimized even further.

ENDNOTES

[1]Additional resources have been consumed in this litigation by the UA's attorneys and the Arizona General's Office. The amounts are 'hidden' in the general budgets of those entities." "Cost of Litigation Revealed to Faculty, Staff," *Arizona State Conference News,* February 1991, p. 2.

[2]The journals surveyed included *Augmentation and Advocacy: Journal of the American Forensic Association* (1964-1989), *The Cross Examination Association Yearbook* (1980-1988), *The Forensic* (1915-1990) and *The National Forensic Association Journal* (1983-1988).

[3]Ethical issues were considered in Donald Klopf and James C. McCroskey, "Ethical Practices in Debate," *Journal of the American Forensic Association (JAFA)* I (Jan. 1964); Stanley G. Rives, "Ethical Argumentation," *JAFA* I (Sept. 1964); Carl E. Larson and Kim Giffin, "Ethical Considerations in the Attitudes and Practices of College Debaters," *JAFA* I (Sept. 1964); Germain G. Grisez, "The Concept of Appropriateness; Ethical Considerations in Persuasive Argument," *JAFA* II (May, 1965); Raymond K. Tucker, "General Systems Theory: A Logical and Ethical Model for Persuasion," *JAFA* VIII (Summer, 1971); Walter Ulrich, "Ethical Obligations of the Forensic Educator," *CEDA Yearbook* (1986); H.B. Summers, "A Code of Ethics for Debaters," *The Forensic* 10:3 (1924); "The Pi Kappa Delta Code of Ethics," *The Forensic* 11:4 (1926; R. Chapel and G. Canker, "A Debate Code of Ethics," *The Forensic* 47:1 (Oct., 1961); Terry Cole, "Toward A Pedogogical Ethic of Individual Events," *The Forensic* 69:3 (Spring, 1984); Don Stewart, "A Standard of Ethics for Argumentation," *The Forensic* 71:3 (Spring, 1986); Bernard K. Duffy, "The Ethics of Argumentation in Intercollegiate Debate: A Conservative Appraisal," *The National Forensic Association Journal* I; 1 (Spring, 1983); David A. Thomas and Jack Hart, "Ethics in Speech Events: A Replication and Extension," *The National Forensic Association Journal* 1:2 (Fall, 1983) and Alfred C. Snider, "Ethics in Academic Debate: A Gaming Perspective," *The National Forensic Association Journal* 11:1 (Fall, 1984).

[4]Legal Issues were considered in Charles O. Tucker, "Forensics and Behavioral Science Research in the Law," *Journal of the American Forensic Association (JAFA)* II (May, 1965); William E. Arnold, "Debate

and the Lawyer," *JAFA* III (Jan. 1966); Stephen B. Jones, "Justification in Judicial Opinions: A Case Study," *JAFA* XII (Winter, 1976); William E. Arnold, "Membership Satisfaction and Decision Making in Six Member and Twelve Member Simulated Juries," *JAFA* XII (Winter, 1976); Caroline Welch, "Potential in Legal Communication: What's the Verdict?" *JAFA* XII (Winter, 1976); Vivian I. Dicks, "Courtroom Controversy: A Stasis/Stock Issues Analysis of the Angela Davis Trial," *JAFA* XIII (Fall, 1976); David A. Rabin, "Gottlieb's Model of Rule-Guided Reasoning: An Analysis of Griswold v. Connecticut," *JAFA* XV (Fall, 1978); John C. Reinard and Rodney A. Reynolds, "The Effects of Inadmissible Testimony, Objections and Rulings on Jury Decisions," *JAFA* XV (Fall, 1978); Dale Hample, "Motives on Law: An Adaptation of Legal Realism," *JAFA* XV (Winter, 1979); Sara E. Newell and Richard D. Rieke, "A Practical Reasoning Approach to Legal Doctrine," *JAFA* XXII:4 (Spring, 1986); William L. Benoit, "Attorney Argumentation and Supreme Court Opinions," *Argumentation and Advocacy: Journal of the American Forensic Association* 26:1 (Summer, 1989); John Baird, "Attorney Judges: A Communication Problem," *The Forensic* 56:2 (Jan., 1971); John Burt, "Parliamentary Procedure as Law," *The Forensic* 59:3 (March, 1974); Lawrence Metcalf, "Attorney-Judged Debate: A Worthwhile Proposition," *The Forensic* (Fall, 1982) and Walter Ulrich, "A Judicial Paradigm for the Evaluation of Debates," *The Forensic* 68:3 (Spring, 1983).

[5]*Peagler* v. *Phoenix Newspapers,* 560 P. 2d 12 16 (1977).

[6]*Palsgrafv. Long Island Rail Road,* 339 N.Y. 248, 99 NE 162.

[7]*Emery v. Thompson,* 347 Mo. 494, 148, S.W. 2d 479.

[8]Scott Nobles, Director of Forensics, Macalester College, phone interview, August 26, 1991.

[9]Frank Thompson, Director of Forensics, University of Alabama, phone interview, August 26, 1991.

[10]Roscoe Steffen, *Agency-Partnership in a Nutshell.*

[11]*Thomas v. Magnolia Petroleum Co.,* 9 S.W. 2d 1.

[12]Henry Campbell Black, M.A. *Black's Law Dictionary,* 4th ed., St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1951, p. 1746.

[13]Neil Potter, former Dean of Students, Northern Arizona University, interview, February 1991.

[14]Cynthia Anderson, Assistant Dean of Students, Northern Arizona University, interview, February 1991.

[15]Potter interview.

[16]Anderson interview.

[17]Letter from Richard G. Fawcett, Assistant Director, National Federation of State High School Associations, to author, March 5, 1991.

[18]Letter from Richard G. Fawcett, Assistant Director, National Federation of State High School Associations, to author, March 5, 1991.

[19]1991-1992 Membership Information pamphlet, National Federation Interscholastic Speech & Debate Association; for additional information contact either the National Federation Student Protection Trust, Doug Ruedlinger, Inc., Administrator, P.O. Box 2159, Topeka, KS 66601, 1-800-255-2400 (insurance only) or Richard Fawcett, NFISDA, National Federation, P.O. Box 20626, Kansas City, MO 64195,1-816-464-5400.

[20]These form books, produced by a variety of publishing firms, are available in most larger university libraries, law school libraries and county law libraries.

[21] Anthony Ross, Dean of Students, Northern Arizona University, interview, February 1991.

Pedagogical Objectives for
Multiple-Genre Interpretation

Jonah Lee Rice*

One of the most discussed topics in education today is critical thinking skills (Tuchudi, 1988), and for the most part, many coaches believe that forensic competition serves as an excellent activity for students to hone and strengthen these skills. Chaffe (1990) says that thinking includes the abilities to think actively, think for oneself, discuss ideas in an organized way, support views with reasons and evidence, and be receptive to new ideas. While almost all coaches would agree that public address events foster critical abilities for the forensic student, oral interpretation events can also develop critical thinking skills. As VerLinden (1987) says, "The aim of the reader [interpreter] should be to render a performance that reflects the critical thinking that went into the preparation" (p. 59).

Despite VerLinden's claim, however, there is some doubt that forensic competitors develop their critical thinking skills in interpretive events. On the forensic circuit, one may often overhear coaches and oral interpretation experts debate whether forensic interpretation caters to a performance-oriented paradigm or an analytical-oriented paradigm. For example, Pelias (1984) found that "it appears that interpretation critics on the forensic circuit most typically rely upon the conception of interpretation as a performing art as their basis for critical judgements" (p. 228). But physical performance, according to Marcoux (1966), should not be the only focus of oral interpretation. Analysis and related critical skills are "at the very heart of oral interpretation as an academic study" (p. 327). The problem, as recognized by other forensic scholars (Holloway et. al., 1983 and VerLinden), is that forensic interpretation does not provide for a proper balance between performance and critical thinking skills—especially analysis.

There are different schools of thought concerning oral interpretation, but two are very apparent; one is basically concerned with delivery and the other is concerned with intellectual and analytical growth. While a balance between the two is desired by many, forensic interpretation seems to cater to one school of thought emphasizing performance over analysis, thus deemphasizing critical thinking skills. Although most would agree that a better balance between delivery and

analysis would be desirable, forensic educators have not provided a means to unite delivery and analysis in a way that facilitates the development of critical thinking skills and allows judges to critique those skills in a typical tournament.

This essay argues that Multiple-Genre Interpretation, more than other interpretation events, has the potential to bridge the gap between performance and analysis in a way that maximizes both performance and critical thinking skills within the present confines of a forensic tournament. More specifically, this essay will examine the history and nature of Multiple-Genre Interpretation in order to establish a historical context for conceptualizing the event and justifying why it is an event that maximizes both performance and critical thinking skills. Second, it is necessary to explain how and why Multiple-Genre Interpretation provides a balance between performance and critical thinking skills for the forensic competitor while enhancing his or her critical thinking skills. Finally, since little has been written about evaluating Multiple-Genre Interpretation as both a performance and analytical event, the essay concludes with discussion of judging criteria in order to provide critics with a sound basis for their decisions.

History and Nature of Multiple-Genre Interpretation

Multiple-genre Interpretation is an event that goes by many other names including Mixed Interp, Oral Interpretation, and Program Oral Interpretation. These events, while relatively similar in concept, have existed for a number of years and have interesting origins. In a personal letter, Seth Hawkins comments on the origin of Multiple-Genre Interpretation in university competition:

> Mixed-genre oral interpretation events did exist sporadically prior to 1975. However, note that *all* availability of individual events competition was at a very low level by present norms until then. When these events did exist, they were called "Composition Interp" or (seldom) "Program on a Theme."

Multiple-Genre Interpretation was formally recognized as an individual event after interpretation events began to be divided into separate categories during the seventies. According to Hawkins, in 1973, Butler University hosted the first tournament on record to offer Composition Interp which allowed for a combination of the three recognized genres of literature. However, one particular forensic tournament series, the Great Eastern, created and kept Mixed Interp intact and active. The event was offered eight times in 1976: all of them in the East, multiplying to 118 times nation-wide in 1989.[1] The rules for Mixed Interp, and most interpretation events for that matter, usually vary from tournament to tournament, but most require literature with merit from one or more authors and original introductions and transi-

tions where needed. The rules for the Great Eastern Forensic Tournaments state:

> MIXED INTERP (INT) Rules analogous to PRO |prose] and POE [poetry]. Multiple-selection program must use two of the following genres: prose, poetry, drama. One or more authors. No journalism, speeches, essays, modern song lyrics.

A forensic organization that helped formalize the event is Phi Rho Pi, the community college national forensic organization. This organization had one of the earliest documented multiple-genre events that required a "unified presentation made up of at least two selections from at least two authors" (Ogden, 1960, p. 5). That event allowed the selections to be either prose or poetry, so it is reasonable to conclude that some programs had mixed genres while others did not. Phi Rho Pi formalized the event approximately a decade ago and made it an event at their national tournament. In a personal letter, M'Liss Hindman, President of Phi Rho Pi, states that "there are no accurate records of how this event began," but she speculates on the formalization of Multiple-Genre Interpretation, or Oral Interpretation:

> About a decade ago, in a business meeting, coaches began to quarrel about the unfairness of different judging criteria for Prose, Poetry and Dramatic Interpretation. Some regions seemed to prefer program approaches to the events (use of more than one piece) and other regions seemed to prefer a single piece of literature. Through the debate, another event evolved—Oral Interpretation.

The official (and original) Phi Rho Pi rules for the event state:

> This event is to consist of a unified presentation made up of at least two selections of different genre (i.e. prose, poetry, dramatic literature, plays). A contestant may use the works of one or more authors. The selections should develop a theme.

The AFA-NIET Committee chose Multiple-Genre Interpretation, or Program Oral Interpretation, as the experimental event for 1989 and 1990 national tournaments, and this event has now been added as a regular event starting in the 1991-1992 season. J. G. Harrington proposed the event to the AFA-NIET National Committee in 1988 in part due to the nature and uniqueness of the event. He states in a personal letter that "POI-like events do contestants a lot of good. Doing something different encourages contestants to take chances and to explore their own limits." The official 1989 and 1990 AFA-NIET Program Oral Interpretation event description is as follows:

> A program of thematically-linked selections of literary merit, chosen from two of the three recognized genres of competitive interpretation (prose, poetry, and drama). A substantial portion of the total time must be devoted to each of the two genres used in the program. Use of

manuscript is required. Maximum time allocation is 10 minutes including original introduction and/or transitions.

The above event descriptions have some interesting elements that separate Multiple-Genre Interpretation from regular solo interpretive forensic events. At present, most tournament rules stress that the event include at least two genres, and at some tournaments all three, taken from prose, poetry, and drama. The genres should be arranged in some type of balanced program, and he event should also develop a theme around the literature with appropriate introductions and transitions.[2] These elements suggest that Multiple-Genre Interpretation demands both effective analytical and performance skills.

Elements of Multiple-Genre Interpretation

Multiple-Genre Interpretation provides a strong balance between performance and critical thinking skills within a typical forensic tournament. This may be accomplished in two ways. First, Multiple-Genre Interpretation requires a student to maximize his or her talent by demanding a mastery of technical skills for different genres. And second, Multiple-Genre Interpretation demands the student to make a wide variety of critical decisions and choices concerning different genres in a program. In these respects, Multiple-Genre Interpretation is a unique event by the way it integrates a multiplicity of interpretation skills—both physical/vocal and intellectual—into a single program. These skills may be learned and/or accented in the major elements of this event. Specifically, the four major elements of Multiple-Genre Interpretation will be examined: genre, program balance, theme, and introductory material. Analysis of these four elements will illustrate how Multiple-Genre Interpretation integrates critical thinking skills and performance of literature in a way that maximizes a student's presentation.

Genre

The requirement of more than one genre in Multiple-Genre Interpretation offers many benefits for the forensic interpreter. Obviously, there is a demand for various technical skills from the interpreter. Each genre requires special skills. For example, poetry stresses heightened emotion and sound patterns; drama requires a great deal of concentration and commitment in that the interpreter must take on all the characters in a play and make them, as well as the time, place and situation, believable; and prose may demand a mix of elements from both poetry and drama with a strong focus on the narrator (Lee and Gura, 1987). Multiple-Genre Interpretation allows the student to illustrate his or her performance strengths of a specific genre and practice weaker skills from other genres. The interpreter is allowed to stretch his or her skills

by performing challenging literature from more than one genre. This requirement demands that the student actively search for, choose, and analyze different types of material.

The different genre requirement also gives the forensic interpreter a chance to broaden his or her knowledge of the types of literature—a benefit that surely does not quash critical thinking skills such as processing, analyzing, and clarifying. Armstrong (1968) says that the oral interpreter should strive to develop a broad reading background and choose material "that will open new vistas and make new discoveries" (p. 50). The more material an interpreter attempts to encounter, according to Armstrong, the better the chance he or she will broaden his or her literary background and deepen an appreciation for the genre choices.

Although Multiple-Genre Interpretation offers the interpreter a chance to strengthen performance skills, critical thinking skills, and literary background, there are limitations in some rules regarding genre. Specifically, two issues, one dealing with material type and the other concerning the. number of genres in a program, deserve attention before moving on to the next element. Dennis (1988) points out in his discussion of Mixed Interp that some event descriptions—usually at regular season tournaments—limit genre to prose, poetry, and drama; non-fiction material is usually not allowed. Armstrong, in his discussion about choosing literature, says, "Although poetry is often the most popular form of interpretive literature, the reader should include other forms, such as essay, short story, novel, drama, letters, and biographies" (p. 50). Bacon (1972) also promotes a variety of literary kinds and modes including the three recognized forms, children's literature, the essay, history, biography, autobiography, journals, letters, diaries, and the literature of travel. It would seem to be that inclusion of these genres may strengthen a student's breadth of knowledge and skill. Dennis concludes his discussion by saying, "This event [Mixed] would seem to be the only place where these forms of writing could be utilized, but obviously there is no agreement here" (p. 3).

Genre limitation is not the only restriction in certain rule descriptions. There is diversity at tournaments concerning the number of different genres allowed. For example, Phi Rho Pi tournaments usually require at least two different genres with any number of selections in a program. When Program Oral Interpretation was an experimental event at AFA, competitions could use any number of selections, but there was a two genre limitation in any program. This restriction was due in large part to prevent a program that, as Harrington argued "would consist of two relatively lengthy pieces and a 'sound bite' of the third genre." However, since AFA has made Program Oral Interpreta-

tion a regular event, the organization has lifted the genre limitation. It seems that such a limitation may restrict forensic students from developing more critical thinking and performance skills by challenging them to find, analyze, build, develop, and perform a program consisting of a variety of literature. Allowing the interpreter to use an unlimited number of genres in a program may offer a student the chance to broaden his or her literary knowledge and display and practice technical skills from each type of genre. Furthermore, unlimited numbers would allow for the creation and development of deeper and more complex thematic analysis. However, it is important to note that "sound bites," or snippets of genres, may not provide for a clear, coherent, and well-developed program. Coaches need to direct students to develop a program that best utilizes and stretches their analytical and performance skills without sacrificing the program in order to display many genres just for the sake of displaying many genres.

While genre limitation and the number of genres allowed in Multiple-Genre Interpretation constitute areas of disagreement for some coaches, there is agreement that the event should challenge students to display and expand their literary knowledge and performance skills, critical thinking skills, and literary knowledge.

Program Balance

The element of program balance in Multiple-Genre Interpretation actually deals with two individual but related factors, program intensity and program shape. *Program intensity* deals with how each text is emotionally and/or technically balanced, or weighted, against the other materials. *Program shape* deals with how materials are arranged in a physical sense, a factor relating to textual proportion.

Dennis (1988) recognizes that some sense of balance is desirable in Mixed Interp; however, he does not differentiate between intensity and shape. Program balance, according to Dennis, depends in large part on the material, but there is ambiguity as to how a student should achieve this. For example, a balanced program, according to Dennis' definition of program balance, may include an emotionally intense and technically challenging three-minute poem and a less intense and challenging six-minute prose. The element of program balance in reference to literary intensity is very situational while program shape is less so but still should be approached in such light. Program balance demands that the student make strategic choices in organization of varied materials, construct arguments to justify certain choices, and remain open to new ideas regarding program construction.

The arrangement, or shape, of the pieces in Multiple-Genre Interpretation requires that the interpreter create a program containing a

substantial portion of each genre. This factor does, in large part, depend on program intensity. A balanced program with respect to shape may take one of two forms. *Parallel organization,* or *block organization,* is one way of illustrating a balanced program where the chosen pieces are placed one after the other. For example, an interpreter may open the program with a poem and then end with a prose selection. Another organizational approach, what this author refers to as sequencing, is where the interpreter divides pieces into sections and integrates the material creating a program where two or more stories are told within each other. For example, the interpreter may choose to break up a short story into four sections and place three short poems or perhaps four stanzas from one poem between each story section.

Organization of material in Multiple-Genre Interpretation raises the issue of whether or not a student should somehow alter a piece to make it fit into the program when taking into consideration the 10 minute time limit. The actions of excerpting and cutting texts are of importance in this respect. Performance studies scholars are leery of cutting material. As Lee and Gura state:

> In excerpting from a longer work, the interpreter chooses a scene or passage that, when taken on its own, displays a totality of action, theme, or character development...Cutting differs from excerpting in that it imposes on diverse or unrelated words, lines, or scenes a false c consecutiveness or immediate relationship that was not intended by the author... We are not saying that you should never cut; we are saying that sensitive and experienced interpreters undertake cutting with great caution. If they can avoid cutting, they do (p. 219-20).

Although a purpose of this paper is not to debate the issue of excerpting and cutting, it is important to note that thematic excerpts from a text are preferred in Multiple-Genre Interpretation in order to capture a full-bodied, thematic moment. Parallel organization also seems to be a popular method of balancing a program because it does not disrupt the rhythm or tempo of a piece, whereas sequencing integrates textual rhythms and tempos that may create distortions of an author's work. These two factors, excerpting and cutting, deal basically with the appearance and rhythm of a program, but critical thinking skills may be gained by the forensic interpreter from these aspects of program shape. Excerpting requires that the student analyze pieces, find portions that are thematically related, and then extract them to build a program. Longer pieces, then, require a great deal of analysis to find the best excerpt to use in a program. If cutting is used, the interpreter should use great care in analyzing pieces that are to be cut in order to ensure proper communication of the essence of the work. All cuts should be thoroughly scrutinized, and arguments should be solidly constructed by

the forensic student in supporting such decisions. Excerpting and cutting most definitely require the student to possess sharp analytical, judgmental, and argumentative skills.

Theme

The element of theme is crucial to all interpretation events, and only through a variety of genre analyses may a forensic interpreter create a Multiple-Genre Interpretation program that captures the essence of different pieces and the intricate details that allow for a full-bodied performance. Guerin, et al. (1979) state that theme "is a complex aspect of literature, one that requires very intentional thinking to discern..." (p. 15). Thematic analysis is an important aspect in developing better critical thinking skills.

Results from an action caucus on criteria for oral interpretation in forensic tournaments held during the 1982 Speech Communication Association provides a great deal of information on the subject of analysis. Colley (see Holloway et al. 1983) gives his general impression of forensic interpretation from the perspective of an outsider, or scholar of oral interpretation theory. He states, "Overall, I tend to come away from oral interpretation rounds with a feeling of having heard a series of contrived readings. The aim of readers seems to be to display facility" (p. 6). Barr, a member of the caucus, adds, "How much actual analysis is involved in preparing a selection for competition? As coaches, I know we could put much more emphasis on understanding the literature" (p. 9).

Although all interpretation events usually stress thematic analysis, Multiple-Genre Interpretation forces the student to maximize such skills. A central purpose in Multiple-Genre Interpretation is to illustrate the forensic interpreter's ability to read different genres, analyze them, and construct an oral performance program that centers around a common theme. However, as Dennis points out, "The concept of theme or program should be more than a single word. It should also be more than some vaguely generic idea" (p. 2). A student may construct a program linked only by an item, or topic, such as a person, place, action, emotion, movement, or some other thing. For example, a number of programs in previous years of competition have been built around the ideas of "love," "death," "Marilyn Monroe," "cars," and "the Vietnam Conflict." A program about "fish" consisting of Hans Christian Andersen's story, *The Little Mermaid,* and T. J. Spencer's play, *Jonah* about a great fish that swallowed Jonah of Ninevah along with two other men who all become friends and philosophers about the existence of the supernatural, would not create much of a thematically-linked program. The subject of "fish" does not demand that the student fully

analyze the selections before building a program. A generically conceived program also fails to require a thorough analysis of thematic elements. For example, a generic program consisting of "boyish fun" including excerpts from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* the whitewash scene, and Howard Korder's *Boys' Life,* a play about three former college friends who illustrate their large male egos during various adventures in a large city, would not suggest a true thematic link either. "Boyish fun" is simply a label that describes these works in a rather simplistic and superficial way. Although the last two examples illustrate poor analysis, it is important to note that there might be substantive programs built from these materials with further analysis.

A thematic link, rather than a simple item or generic link, must be established in Multiple-Genre Interpretation. For example, a thematically-linked Multiple-Genre Interpretation program might be built around the theme of "good coming from evil" using three genres by combining Bertolt Brecht's poem "To Posterity" which explains how peace and a better society (the good) may come from revolution (evil), with Robert Flynn's short story "Christmas in a Very Small Place," a story of the birth of a wartime child (the good) during a patrol in Vietnam (the evil), and with Tim Kelly's play *Bloody Jack,* a bizarre drama (based on the killings of Jack the Ripper) about a series of crimes committed by a man whose victims are criminals themselves where the good is the retaliation against offenders even though the acts themselves are evil. In such works, a sophisticated thematic link can be developed. Such a program would show evidence of a student's ability to analyze literature for its thematic connections and illustrate those relationships in the performance of a literary program. The concept of theme in Multiple-Genre Interpretation requires an interpreter to analyze material in order to construct a thematically-linked program. An item or a generically conceived idea is not sufficient for a coherent and well-conceived program. Such vague labels only illustrate a student's inability to analyze literature and find common themes rather than common concepts. A program may, of course, be developed around both item and theme, but the theme is the overriding and crucial element of the two.

Introduction, Transitions, and Postscripts

Analysis, as stated above, must be completed before competition, but the task of analysis is not complete until the student can explain his or her analysis during the actual performance in the introduction, transitions, and—if used—postscripts. These elements become vital to a student's Multiple-Genre Interpretation because they reveal the depth of the student's understanding of the literature. A number of

scholars have commented on the power of introductory material. Bowen (1966) says:

> The introduction cannot be over-stressed for here is the place for the reader to establish his [or her] own individuality apart from the personality of the author. Here, too, is the place to prepare the audience for the author's message as the reader discerns it (p. 277).

Brandes and Shepardson also stress the importance of introductory material, but they state that one type of introduction, narrative, is better than another, artistic. A *narrative introduction,* according to the authors, should be a unified, coherent statement that will "acquaint subjects [the audience] with the circumstances of the story to a degree which would enhance their understanding of the poem [or other genre] without removing the factor of suspense" (p. 113). An *artistic introduction* gives little more than historical background and literary type of a work; little or no discussion of the theme or action in the material is given in the introduction. Brandes and Shepardson found that a narrative introduction is "more effective in improving retention of a complicated literary communication" (p. 115).

Introductory material in forensic interpretation is vital, but, according to VerLinden, since the 1982 caucus (see Holloway et.al.), little change has occurred in forensic competition in regard to perform-ance and analysis. VerLinden proposes an approach that utilizes the power of introductory material that promotes critical thinking skills and illustrates literary and thematic analysis. He suggests that the competitor needs to provide a link among the text, the performance, and his or her claims about the material. A student's thematic analysis (and any other interpretive claims) in Multiple-Genre Interpretation are shared with the judges and audience in order to make an argument and establish the program. In essence, the introduction, transitions, and postscript make the claim(s); the literature and performance support the claim(s).

These arguments may take one of two forms in Multiple-Genre Interpretation; description (informative) or prescription (persuasive). *Descriptive programs* merely illustrate a common theme among genres. For example, a simple program may be constructed around a theme of how good conquers all; such program introductions and transitions would merely give a description of common theme(s) and other neces-sary information pertaining to the pieces. *Prescriptive programs* attempt to construct a program that convinces an audience to adopt a certain belief, value, or proposition exemplified in the program material. For example, a program may be constructed around a theme that argues that resisting radical change in a time of political and societal turmoil is

desirable; the audience is persuaded to act on something and/or adopt a belief.

It is obvious that introductions, transitions, and postscripts are vital to Multiple-Genre Interpretation. These devices are where the interpreter makes critical claims about literary themes and other pertinent information after careful analysis has been conducted. As far as balance is concerned in regard to introductions, transitions, and postscripts, it is important to note that the first student-written device is usually longer than the others because it takes longer to reveal and fully explain the program.

Judging Criteria

Criticism in interpretation is truly an art that encompasses analysis, evaluation, and guidance (Cobin, 1968). Judges should *not* consider themselves the "general public to be entertained" (Leigh, see Lewis, 1984, p. 30). Rather, judges must remember that they are professionals who, as Leigh says, "aid students in exploring their tastes and abilities" (p. 30). Long (1977) tells us that interpretation critics must judge both textual understanding and delivery techniques demanding that the critic know the literature before the performance. Forensic interpretation judges have a responsibility to provide an artful critique, but this job seems to be difficult when taking into account Long's statement. Delivery techniques are quite well-judged in forensic competition (Pelias, 1984 and Keefe, see Holloway et al.), but as Allen (see Holloway et al.) says, very little textual understanding is judged in forensic competition. Allen states, "Today it can safely be said that no school of interpretive thought would deny that the literature must come first in performance. This leads us to the position that the evaluator must know thoroughly the literature performed..." (p. 14).

Since a typical forensic tournament may require a judge to critique a good number of interpretation events, it is not difficult to conclude that Long's explicit requirement concerning interpretation critiques and Allen's implied solution that forensic judges read the material before tournaments would be logistically difficult if not impossible to implement. But, as the 1982 SCA interpretation caucus report concludes, "We [forensic educators] are intelligent folk. Even though we may not know a piece of literature, we can listen hard and apply our past training and experience in making a judgement" (see Holloway et al., p. 21).

Multiple-Genre Interpretation allows the judge to critique both the interpreter's performance and analysis of literature. All that is required of the judge is basic understanding of performance technique, elementary argumentation skills, and the following set of suggested cri-

teria. These judging criteria for Multiple-Genre Interpretation should stretch across any of the definitions revealed in section one of this paper. This list includes both performance and analytical criteria concerning Multiple-Genre Interpretation. Questions concerning theme and introductory materials have been combined since they are so closely related.

Questions Concerning Genre:

1. Do the materials have *merit?* Are the texts universal in nature? Have the authors proven their individuality? Is there a sufficient amount of suggestion in the pieces? (Lee and Gura)

2. Do the genres allow the interpreter the opportunity to display a *breadth* of skill? For example, a program consisting of a dramatic poem and a first-person prose may not have the potential for performance breadth as a lyric poem and a four-character drama piece.

3. Is the student's *depth* of various genre skills effective? Does he or she illustrate an obvious mastery of interpretive skills in accordance with the literature? Is he or she believable?

Questions concerning genre should examine the literature and the performance of that literature. Although present tournaments do not allow enough time to have oral critiques or questioning periods, judges who have a working knowledge of literature and performance studies can critique the merit and difficulty of a piece just as the student must have done before the tournament. Judges may evaluate the performer on his or her ability to identify material that is unique and challenges them to illustrate his or her performance talents. However, putting technique before the literature is dangerous because the performer rather than the material becomes the star of the program. Literature must always come first when critiquing a program because it is the center of attention in oral interpretation, and it must also possess qualities that allow the student to be challenged in the preparation process. A quality program is one that contains literature with merit that challenges the interpreter to shape the material into an effective performance. Lee and Gura state that the "effectiveness [of an interpretation] is the result of a preparation so thorough and a technique so perfectly coordinated that the audience cannot see the wheels go around" (p. 4).

Questions Concerning Program Balance:

1. Are the pieces in the program balanced in accordance with their *intensity?* Does the material and the performance illustrate a balance of emotion and technique?

2. Are the pieces *shaped,* or arranged, in a rhythmic and flowing fashion?

3. Are program intensity and program shape balanced together? Does one piece pull attention away from other(s)? Does one piece distract an audience from the theme of the program? These questions concerning program balance attempt to provide a focus for a judge to critique performance talents and strategic choices in constructing the program. The interpreter should display a balanced mastery of performance skills illustrating his or her ability to perform more than one genre. Judges may critique how the program covers a spectrum of technique and emotional response. In addition, critics should not judge a program on a single, dominating piece. Instead, the program should display a variety of technique and emotion from a variety of material. The strategic choices in the arrangement should produce a very rhythmic program so that the unique appeal of individual selections are not diminished by being poorly arranged. In other words, all parts of the whole body should be proportionately placed—considering both intensity and shape—in a structure that is vibrant and pleasing to witness.

Questions Concerning Theme, Introductions, Transitions, and Postscripts:

1. Is the theme more than a simple topic or generic idea?

2. Can the critic comprehend a *common theme* running through the program in all the pieces?

3. What are the student's *critical claims* about the literature? Can the critic list those claims? What is the student's argument?

4. Does the literature and performance work together to support these critical claims?

5. Is the program *descriptive* or *prescriptive?* If it is descriptive, has the student gone beyond a simple plot summary and constructed a unified, coherent argument that establishes a common link among texts? If the program is prescriptive, does the critic feel compelled to act on something and/or adopt a certain belief?

A judge may critique a program on the way a student has analyzed selections and built a thematically-linked program. Topical programs do not illustrate a student's ability to analyze and make strategic choices about literature. The judge may critique the complete program by the way a student makes thematic claims in relation to the literature and performance. For example, a program built around a theme of "creating facades to hide the inner-self can be physically and emotionally destructive" using, for instance, Frank Bidart's (1977) narrative poem, "Ellen West" about a young woman with anorexia nervosa, should come from the literature and be reflective in the performance.

A thorough analysis should reveal that Ellen is a young, physically weak, and secretive woman who creates a facade by starving herself to hide her insecurities and feelings. Ellen's starvation ultimately hurts her physically and emotionally. A performance—as well as the critical claims made in the introduction and transition—should reflect such an analysis.

The above judging criteria obviously promote an eclectic judging approach and are open to interpretation and criticism. Since very little has been written about Multiple-Genre Interpretation, and judging criteria for this event have never been established beyond event descriptions, it is hoped that these comments and questions can serve as a guiding model for judges in Multiple-Genre Interpretation rather than a rigid, prescriptive format.

Discussion/Conclusion

The central purpose of this paper was to promote Multiple-Genre Interpretation as an event that creates a strong balance between and maximizes performance and critical thinking. This essay in no way attempts to solve the conflict between performance and analysis; that problem still exists in the most basic interpretation events. Since forensic interpretation remains a relatively performance-oriented activity, integrating these valuable critical thinking skills with performance skills seems to be desirable. If critical thinking skills are not encouraged in forensic interpretation more than they already are, the activity will surely suffer as it will continue an elocutionary tradition focused on voice and gesture rather than intellectual stimulation. As VerLinden states concerning the lack of literary analysis in forensic competition:

> The activity suffers because when the rewards of participation are perceived to result primarily from vocal facility even our best students quickly make such facility their goal. The critical choices are then made on the basis of what will make for the best show, not what will make the best oral interpretation...the discipline of speech communication suffers because the judging model for oral interpretation as it has evolved is clearly a descendent of the elocutionary school of rhetoric. Too many of our colleagues in other disciplines still believe we teach merely gestures and inflection; our credentials suffer when we promote an activity that rewards such elocutionary training (p. 2).

In a way, Multiple-Genre Interpretation goes beyond gestures and inflections more than single interpretation events. All interpretation could be improved in many of the ways described above; however, Multiple-Genre Interpretation combines *all* of the interpretation events' foci and purposes with the added emphasis on a whole program of diverse skills. Multiple-Genre Interpretation best maximizes and stimulates a student's intellectual and performance growth, and it

moves forensic interpretation towards an analytical orientation while still promoting and maximizing performance. Thus, judges of this event must adopt an eclectic approach given the confines of a typical tournament and the nature of Multiple-Genre Interpretation.

Multiple-Genre Interpretation definitely offers a wealth of opportunity for forensic students and critics. In fact, future issues concerning this event may center around more opportunities for a student to stretch and grow by participating in Multiple-Genre Interpretation. For example, the event might be improved and advanced by replacing "thematically-linked program" to simply "unified program." Such a change would open doors to many more program ideas in accordance with literary analysis and criticism. Metaphoric analysis, symbolic analysis, and other methods may alter programs to go beyond just a thematic analysis. Other innovative ideas from interpretation coaches, teachers, and students may find their home in Multiple-Genre Interpretation, for as Chaffee writes, "While it is important to think for ourselves, others may have good ideas from which we can learn and benefit" (p. 40). While this essay outlines many elements and content for Multiple-Genre Interpretation, critical insights and new approaches should be explored. This event may be promoted and encouraged by educators in order to push students to expand not only their performance skills but their critical thinking skills as well.

Notes

(1) These statistics were researched by Seth Hawkins who found them in the only complete collection of I.S.T.R.

(2) Some of these criteria were discussed by George Dennis during a panel presentation at the 1988 Speech Communication Association Convention. His points of discussion are: 1) the nature of theme or program, 2) the balance among parts, 3) the use of scripts, 4) the genres allowed, and 5} lack of judging criteria.

(3) This label is not to be confused with VerLinden's "descriptive claims" explained in his metacritical judging model essay. These claims are superficial plot summaries, rhetorical questions, or some other type of introductory material that lacks any specific claim(s).

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Oral Interpretation Events and Argument:
Forensic Discourse or Aesthetic Entertainment?

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Whenever we start to explain oral interpretation to our beginning students, the inevitable query is, "What's the difference between this and acting?" Our response generally entails discussions of "the fine line" and "suspension of disbelief" and the "removal of the fourth wall," etc. Somewhat mollified with this response, students then ask, "Well, then, what does this have to do with debate and persuasion and impromptu? Why are they all called forensics?" Frankly, given the trends we have seen in the oral interpretation arena of forensics competition, this is a very good question.

Forensics is defined by the National Developmental Conference on Forensics as "an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people" (McBath, 1975, p. 11). Unfortunately, current practices in oral interpretation events seem to be lacking this argumentative perspective established by the forensic community two decades ago. Often we see an increased emphasis on the aesthetic components associated with the performance of literature and little attention paid to the argumentative and communicative elements of the event. Of particular concern is the introduction, where rarely do we see students making clear and cogent arguments to establish their programs. Instead, students seem to be primarily relying on the performance or aesthetic aspects of the event. Why is it that introductions have seemingly taken a less than important role in the preparation of the selections our students have chosen for performance? Many students do not seem to understand and/or even care about the process of creating an introduction, much less care about what their introduction really says about their literature selection and its meaning. Often the introduction includes mere references to the author and title of the literature while the selection is left to speak for itself as to its thesis and argument, without any input from the speaker.

The purpose of this paper is to provide justification for argumentative oral interpretation. In this endeavor, we shall first discuss the negative outcomes of the lack of an argumentative component in the introduction to an oral interpretation program. We shall then provide theoretical justification for viewing oral interpretation as argument by discussing the rhetorical functions of literature, oral interpretation and the performer. Finally, we shall discuss the various benefits of viewing oral interpretation from an argumentative perspective.

"Often times in our society...": Introductions That Say Nothing

A major problem many forensic competitors face with their interpretation scenes is that they do not allow the introduction of their literature to do its job. True argumentative introductions are replaced by meaningless phatic introductory talk. "Death is a twisted reality we all must face—*To Kill A Mockingbird."* "There is a fine line between love and hate, and when that line is crossed, anything can happen—*Lion In The Winter"* And our favorite, "Life-Death-Rats—Ben." The problem is that these introductions, and those like them, do absolutely nothing for the audience, the judge, the performer, or least of all, the literature.

As Lee and Gura (1987) explain, an introduction should prepare the audience for "the intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic entirety... (of a) work of literary art" (p. 3). In other words, the introduction should get the audience ready for the totality of what they are about to experience. Additionally, Swarts (1988) argues "an introduction serves informational and rhetorical functions, in addition to the obvious asthetic roles it plays" (p. 36). In order to accomplish this rhetorical function, the introduction must establish the argument the student will be supporting with the literature from the scene. Without this type of orientation from the speaker, a series of problems is created for the audience and the student performer, problems which then negatively impact the remainder of the presentation.

First, the audience receives no orientation about the scene. They have no idea what to expect, listen for, anticipate, or even care about. Like a speech without a signposting section, the scene wanders aimlessly without a stated purpose, direction or thesis. Second, without a strong introduction, the audience has less motivation to listen to the scene and/or participate in the interpretation. One function of an effective introduction is to provide a reason for the audience to listen to the scene, to motivate the audience to become part of the event. Without a clearly stated thesis, the audience has less reason to become involved. Third, from a pragmatic standpoint, when students do not properly introduce their literature, critics have less evaluative criteria to use in their critique of the performance. Many critics of interpretation com-

plain that they do not have enough criteria as it is. They tend to vote for "what I liked best," instead of basing their decision on how well a student performed emotionally—balanced with the arguments crafted and supported throughout the scene.

Fourth, a poorly constructed introduction is a red flag that the student has not taken the time to do a thorough literary analysis of the scene. This is reflected in a lack of understanding about the scene, its depth or even its purpose. The student is doing nothing more than following the rules which mandate some type of introduction. Students include introductions simply because they have to, not because they want to, nor because they understand what the introduction's true purpose really is.

Finally, without an effective introduction, the audience hears no justification as to why the student chose the piece of literature in the first place, or why the scene is being interpreted in the way presented. The question and concept of intent is never addressed, neither from the author's point of view or the student's. As Geisler (1984) suggests, the question is not "what did the author mean when he wrote this poem/story/play? The question is, more properly, what does this poem/story/play say, and what can it mean?" (p. 8). What is the intent of the student in performing this scene? What does the student believe is the intent of the author in creating this literature? And most important, *what does the student want it to mean?* Without a clear sense of intent, crafted in the introduction and supported by the performance, the audience and the critic are left only to wonder "why" and ask themselves, "What was all that screaming and crying about? What's your point?"

Basically, to achieve the argumentative perspective in the oral interpretation events, we must begin to look at oral interpretation as a rhetorical transaction—a sender delivering a message to a receiver with the purpose of having some effect. To understand this concept more clearly, we shall next address the rhetorical functions inherent in literature, oral interpretation and the performer.

Rhetorical Function of Literature

In order to determine why oral interpretation can be viewed as argument, we should first examine the materials that a performer uses: the literature. The text, as argument, has been a subject of much discussion. Fisher and Filloy (1982) argue that argument may be found in fictive forms of communication. They found that, like other forms of argument, facets such as claim, reasons and evidence can be found in literature. Other scholars have identified the rhetorical elements of literature as well. Literature is viewed not only in terms of the pleasure one can gain from reading, but also the ideas that are put forth.

> The greatness of any work of art depends not upon the images it
> arouses, nor even, at least solely, upon the emotions it stimulates, **but
> rather upon what it has to say, its meaning, its ideational content**
> [emphasis added] (Parrish, 1936, p. 374).

If, indeed, the ideas are the most important aspect of a work, then the responsibility of the performer is to emphasize the ideas rather than other "artistic" aspects of the performance. In many ways these "ideas" can be viewed as the communicative or rhetorical feature of the literature.

Molette (1968) also makes this connection between rhetoric and literature when he claims that a similarity exists between Aristotle's argument by example and dramatic poetry. He explains that there are two types of argument by example: 1) the mention of actual past facts, and 2) the invention of facts by the speaker. It is the second type of argument that is associated with literature. Through writing the author or poet or playwright attempts to persuade an audience (reader) through argument by example. As Molette explains,

> The assumption is that the characters in the story provide examples of
> behavior of characters in real life ... Depending on the treatment of
> the story, the behavior of the characters may be designed to inspire
> people to emulate or reject behavior patterns they see and hear acted
> out (p. 49).

Poetry and prose are obvious forms of argument. Parrish (1936) argues that the poet's purpose is to communicate ideas, and he likens the poet to the orator when he says, "Certainly it is true that the best poets have written to communicate. The desire to reach an audience has often been as strong and as clearly revealed as in the orator" (p. 375). While not specific to prose literature, we maintain that Parrish's characterization is germane to this genre as well. The idea of poet as orator is not a new one. Scanlan (1936) reiterates Plato's suggestion from the Gorgias when Socrates says, "... suppose we strip all poetry of song and rhythm and metre, there will remain speech... And this speech is addressed to a crowd of people... The poetry is a sort of rhetoric ... and do not the poets in the theatres seem to be rhetoricians?" (p. 636)

It is dramatic literature that can be most clearly characterized as rhetoric since dramatic works are intended to be performed (or delivered). In fact, many writers have used drama specifically as a vehicle for expressing dissatisfaction with life and as a means for providing solutions for the problems they present (Speer, 1972). Notable playwrights of this type include Moliere, Clifford Odets and Henrik Ibsen. More contemporary examples can be found in television and movie scripts. The recent trend toward network "movies of the week" tackling social

issues such as date rape, child molestation and homelessness is a case in point. However, rhetoric is not limited to those authors who write expressly to voice their opinions. In general, dramatists may utilize the agents of the play to persuade one another as well as persuade the audience, which results in a much broader external scope to the operation of rhetorical principles (Scanlan, 1936). In a rhetorical drama, the dramatist guides the audience through conflict to a predetermined resolution with which they must either acquiesce or reject the value system of the author (Speer, 1972).

Persuasion through drama [as well as poetry and prose] is also accomplished through the use of Aristotle's modes of persuasion: ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos is used when the playwright chooses to focus on the personal character of each persona as a means of persuasion. A dramatist, for example, may portray the protagonist as admirable and the opponent as unsympathetic and evil. Dramatic literature also makes use of pathos when attempting to stir an audience's emotions. While ethos and pathos can be utilized in implicit ways such as staging and characterization, logos is more explicitly accomplished through the actual words spoken by the characters (Smiley, 1971). Utilizing any or all of these modes of persuasion enables an author to present arguments to his or her audience.

Thus, we can see that regardless of the method chosen to accomplish the goal, persuasion can be found as an important component of literature. However, the rhetorical aspects of a work are not necessarily obvious to all who may hear it. Therefore, in oral interpretation, the performer and the argumentative perspective presented in the introduction are key factors in the creation of the communication.

Rhetorical Function of Oral Interpretation

Before we can discuss the rhetorical function of oral interpretation, we must first understand the function of oral interpretation itself. According to Macksoud (1968),"... the ultimate point of oral interpretation is the structuring of the listener's experience in such ways that the thesis which the interpretation seeks to call to the attention of an audience shall emerge as dominant over stylistic and aesthetic features per se" (p. 70). In other words, oral interpretation's purpose is the transmission of some kind of message. It is then the duty of the performer to "exploit what is essentially rhetorical power to channel listeners' responses toward his [or her] thesis, with proper subordination of all that is not relevant to that thesis" (p. 71). It is in this regard that oral interpretation can be viewed as a rhetorical transaction.

Sharpham, Matter and Brockreide (1971) define a rhetorical transaction as "an interpersonal and intrapersonal experience of people who

share meanings symbolically in a particular situation" (p. 143). While this definition is somewhat broad, the authors further characterize the interpretive rhetorical transaction as a situation in which the three elements of interpretation, the work, the interpreter, and the audience, are all actively present. In a rhetorical transaction, these elements work together to create the communication. Unlike an actor in a play, the oral interpreter takes an active role in the formation of the argument itself. The performer is the communicator. It is the responsibility of the performer to make critical choices to determine the best way to communicate the message. The performance of the literature is the means by which the message is conveyed. The message is not inherent in the literature itself, but rather the result of the critical choices the performer has made. The audience is, of course, the receiver. However, unlike a mere recipient of a message, the auditor in the interpretation transaction has an active role in the creation of the communication. Together, the performer and the audience members work toward the co-creation of the rhetorical exchange.

With these three interdependent facets of the interpretative transaction present, the communication is completed. As we can see, the oral interpretation experience can be justifiably considered rhetorical in nature. It is with this understanding of the transaction itself that we now turn to a more specific discussion of the role of the performer.

Performer as Creator

Part of the justification for viewing the performer as creator lies in the character of the oral interpretation activity. By its very nature, oral interpretation is subjective. Different performers may have different conceptions of character, attitude, internal relationships and perhaps most important, significance of various aspects (Geiger, 1954). As audience members, we see the re-created literary experience through the eyes of the performer. "It can be plausibly argued that just as the poet writes his [or her] poem, so the interpreter can find it only in his life history, and he can give to his audience only what he finds there" (Parrish, 1936). In other words, there is no absolute, inherent, "real" meaning to the literature, but rather the performance is based on what the interpreter has experienced and is able to communicate through the introduction. Based on this background the interpreter should make critical choices which are used to re-create the experience for the audience. Unfortunately, while this maybe the intent of the oral interpretation activity, it is all too often forgotten in actual practice.

At this point we must clarify that it is not our intent to disregard the concept of author's intent. Of course, the author's ultimate intent should be preserved. This concept, however, should be treated as a

guideline as opposed to a restriction. To think for a moment that anyone fully understands the absolute intent of an author's every thought is ludicrous. Indeed, many authors are unable to pinpoint precise origins of thought or intent in their own work. The need to make interpretive choices regarding what to emphasize or de-emphasize is intrinsic to the activity and a choice that must be made by the speaker.

A literary work does not exist in a vacuum. Its existence is based on what the performer brings to it; if his or her life experience changes, so too, does the conception of the work (Sharpham, et al., 1971). This constant change of experience and conception seems problematic, but it need not. Unlike the actor in a theatre presentation, the interpreter has greater control over the creation of the argument. Instead of merely performing a role, the performer is free to offer introductory, as well as transitional, commentary from the platform (Macksoud, 1968). These opening remarks, based on literary analysis, should serve not only as a description of what is to come, but also establish the claim the performance will attempt to make. As an argumentative event, oral interpretation can be viewed as analogous to a debate or a persuasive speech in which a speaker makes a claim and then supports that claim with evidence or example. In this case, the example is the literary work. The use of the literature to support an argument is the most important component of the oral interpretation event.

Based on what we now understand about argument in literature, the rhetorical function of oral interpretation, and the role of the interpreter as creator, we can see the justification for argumentative oral interpretation. The oral interpretation of literature must be approached from an argumentative standpoint. The piece of literature is a representation of experience from which arguments may be drawn, but which is not in itself an argument (Geiger, 1952). Together, the performer, literature, and audience create the argumentative transaction.

Implementation

We are certainly not the first to write about the importance of argument in oral interpretation. Both Jay VerLinden (1987) and Valerie Swarts (1988) provide insightful and compelling justification for this very issue. Why then, as critics, do we find ourselves repeatedly writing the same types of comments when judging oral interpretation: "You need to make more of an argument in your introduction." "What point are you trying to make with this literature?" "This event is inherently rhetorical."

Clearly, the voices calling for change have not yet been heard and further discussion is warranted. Steps need to be taken if we want to change the direction of oral interpretation in intercollegiate forensics.

There are those who feel that the answer lies in the creation of new events, while others would have us decrease the number of oral interpretation events. We do not believe the answers to the problems lie in the creation of new events but rather in modification of the conception of existing events.

Changes can be made in two ways. First, as coaches and educators, we need to reevaluate how we teach oral interpretation to our students. We should not focus solely on the performance and aesthetic components of the event. Instead, we must direct the focus of the event toward rhetorical discourse through the use of argument. In this way we shall maintain the integrity and legitimacy of oral interpretation as a communication activity.

A second, and perhaps more influential direction we can take is through our roles as critics. We agree with VerLinden's (1987) assessment of the role the judge has in the success or failure of proposed changes. He argues that because forensic practices are a response to what competitors and coaches perceive will win, the best place for change to take place is at the tip of the judge's pen.

VerLinden argues for similar changes in the way we perceive, and accordingly, judge the oral interpretation events. His metacritical model for judging oral interpretation events encompasses many of the issues we support. He argues for these changes based on two problems: 1) the use of inferior literature, and 2) performances which lack the integrity of the literature. The metacritical model involves making decisions based on assessments of the interpreter's critical thinking. "First," he claims, "the forensic interpretation may be conceived as an argument" (p. 59). According to the model, the critics then base their decisions on issues such as whether 1) the literature supports the claim, 2) the performance supports the claim, and 3) the literature supports the performance. Benefits to using these judging criteria are articulated only in terms of ease for the judges. VerLinden argues that in utilizing this model, judges do not need to be experts in all forms of literature, but instead can rely on their ability to listen to claims and support.

Although VerLinden's method is impressive, his justification is less persuasive. He makes no mention of why this conception of interpretation as argument is beneficial to anyone other than the critic. He merely asserts that the event should be conceived of in this way. Far more justification for the metacritical model can be found in the arguments presented in this paper. We propose an expansion of the justification for the use of VerLinden's model to include not only his ideas, but the theoretical issues addressed here as well. The current practice in intercollegiate oral interpretation has swung too far in the direction of

performance. While noble in intent, we believe that VerLinden has swung too far in the other direction. It seems as if he would eliminate the performance aspects of the activity from the judge's decision-making process. Our proposal seeks to strike a balance between the two extremes.

We believe that the aesthetic components associated with the performance are important to the overall program presented. However, just as important are the rhetorical components of the literature. The development of a cogent argument in the introduction of a program is crucial to the perpetuation of the argumentative perspective that the forensic activity seeks to promote. The answer to the question of oral interpretation as forensic discourse versus aesthetic entertainment should not be an "either-or" but rather a "both." Students should not choose one or the other, but should be encouraged to incorporate elements of both argument and entertainment in their performances. These elements need not be mutually exclusive. With this combination, we will have critical as well as disciplinary justification for argumentative oral interpretation and provide the following benefits.

The Benefits of Linking Argument With Oral Interpretation

As we see it, there are three major benefits resulting from incorporating both argument and entertainment in the interpretation events. When this relationship is crafted into the student's entire performance, we believe it will strengthen the educational, communicative, and competitive aspects of these events.

Education. The first major benefit of using argument in oral interpretation is the strengthening of the educational value of these events. By encouraging students to make arguments in their interpretation events, forensic educators can teach them the basics of argumentation, how to conduct a thorough literary analysis of their material, and enable them to use critical thinking throughout their preparation and performance. Unlike debaters, many "interpers" are not entrenched in argument theory. Many do not come from communication backgrounds or departments. Therefore, encouraging these students to make arguments with their cuttings opens up this "new" area for them. It forces them to think as much about what arguments their scenes support as well as how to perform it. If properly applied, the use of argument will solve the problem of students performing literature they simply do not understand and will create the necessary balance between argument and performance. "If students can be convinced that the text is participating directly in the discourse, while they are basically a channel, perhaps an awareness of the importance of text can then ensue" (Geisler 1985, p. 78).

Also, as mentioned above, the use of argument will integrate critical thinking skills into the oral interpretation events. If we can get our students to really think about what they are interpreting, to understand the subtext, the persona, the intent of the author, and the argument they are crafting, in short, the rhetorical transaction, we believe the events will be stronger and more educational. Of course, these interpretation events are entertaining, as well they should be. After rounds of communication analysis and extemp, many times a prose or drama round is a nice change of pace. But we get frustrated when we hear judges say things like, "Oh, good. I've got duo; I won't have to think for a change." The concept that the interp events are mindless, aesthetic entertainment is damaging, not just to those particular events, but to the educational value of forensics as a whole. When we encourage argument through literary analysis, we develop the analytical and critical thinking skills so valued in our discipline. Several goals can be achieved at once when we focus on the educational value of teaching argument and critical thinking skills to our students.

Communication. The focus on argument also increases the communicative value of the oral interpretation events. With a focus on argument comes a focus on what is being communicated to the audience through literature. "The interpreter develops and uses technique as a means of communicating the material; the material is not used as a means for displaying technique" (Lee and Gura 1987, p. 3). The first step begins in the introduction, where the student defines the argument being made. As the performance unfolds, the audience can focus on what is being communicated through the performance and what message is being sent via the literature. Good communication is the goal of forensics. Therefore, we feel the focus on argument is an important concept in keeping the focus away from sensationalism and overboard emotion. Douglas Leland (1984) addresses this issue when he says, "The philosophy of 'If it makes me cry, I'll give it a first' is an example of that which helps to perpetuate this problem. This emphasis on presenting literature merely to achieve a singular extreme audience response may be leading us away from the intent of artistic oral interpretation" (p. 6). He cites the example of the movie *Friday the 13th* and its strong emotional impact. Yet, who would claim this to be film making at its best? "This focus on extremism detracts from those elements which are intellectual and aesthetic" (p. 6). Emotion is one element, but we all know emotion with an argument behind it has a more powerful effect. Emphasizing communication also provides a stronger judging criteria. A judge can evaluate another aspect of the performance that does not include who made them cry or laugh. A performance

based in argument can be evaluated from the criteria of BOTH emotion and logic.

Finally, a focus on communication will better defend the place of the interpretation events in forensics. Clearly, we believe that literature can and does argue. If argument is used within these events, it will better enhance their rhetorical/forensic nature. We are not advocating that poetry be treated as persuasive speaking in rhyme, but we do suggest that the use of argument strengthens the association between the interpretation events and the other more overtly forensic events.

Competition. The final benefit is the enhancement of the competitive aspect of the interpretation events. The concept that literature can, and does argue, should help to "match" students with scenes that are right for them. Consequently, students will have a stronger understanding of the scene and how to perform it. Clarity, understanding, personal links to the speaker, and more passion for the literature, all should combine to create stronger and more believable performances.

Not only will the student be better oriented to the literature, but also the audience will be better prepared for what to expect. The focus on argument forces students to explain their points and work to support them through their literature and performance. We also believe the focus on argument will realign the interpretation events with the directives of the First and Second National Developmental Conferences on Forensics. The first conference in 1974 addresses our thesis by claiming that "A performance-centered approach ignores the argumentative perspective that underlies the foundation of forensic activities" (McBath 1975, p. 12). Richardson (1990) further explains "When method supplants message, the argument is no longer the crucial issue; the manner of argument dominates" (p. 7). The second conference on forensics established five general guidelines for the evaluation of oral interpretation events, of which only one mentions performance skills, explaining they should "enhance and not detract from the literature" (Parson 1984, p. 90). Again, Richardson (1990) notes, "Even according to criteria established by the forensic community, forensic competitors in oral interpretation are emphasizing the wrong artistic aspects" (p. 8). Focusing on argument will help to pull the interpretation events back into the established definitional criteria of forensics, enhancing their competitive nature.

Finally, argument allows students to justify the choices they have made in crafting their literature into the performance. At the 1990 AFA-NIET, we overheard a coach talking about a Program Oral Interp round he had just finished judging. His main complaint was that none of the students justified the choices they had made in building their programs. Focusing on argument allows students to explain, rationalize,

and justify the strategic choices they have made in their scenes. It allows the audience and critic a glimpse at the critical thinking processes of the student which should increase the strength of the performance and the audience's acceptance of it.

Conclusion

In order for oral interpretation legitimately to remain a communication activity in intercollegiate forensics, we must strengthen the focus of the event. We propose a movement toward a more argumentative form of oral interpretation. Both students and coaches will be rewarded for taking the time to make their programs argumentative in nature. "Literature is the result of someone (the author) creating a voice (the persona) to share something (the text) with someone (the listener)" (Valentine and Valentine 1981, p. 9). The goal is to find the best way for this to occur. We believe emphasizing the argumentative nature of literature within the interpretation events is the best way to achieve this important objective. In order to justify this position, we presented arguments based on three theoretical issues: argument in literature, oral interpretation as a rhetorical transaction, and the role of interpreter as creator. Finally, we presented ways in which we as educators can enhance the oral interpretation events by creating a balance between performance and argument. Through achieving this goal, it is our hope that the integrity of the interpretation events, as well as their legitimate place in forensics, will be fully justified.

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An Analysis of Topics Used in Persuasive Speaking

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Persuasive speaking has been a basic part of American forensic competition for many years. As the more old-fashioned "oratory," it goes as far back as 1874 and the Interstate Oratorical Contest. In the late 1960s, before the birth of the national tournament in individual events, persuasive speaking was still a very popular event. Howe (1969, p. 86) found the event ranked third in a list of all competitive events with 134 verifiable instances of the event taking place. Twenty years later, persuasive speaking is now the most frequently offered individual event. Hawkins (1990, p. 21) reported 234 instances of persuasive speaking in the 1989-1990 forensic season.

With its popularity and endurance as a collegiate forensic event, I was curious about what topics were being used in persuasive speaking. My curiosity might yield some tangible guidelines for forensic coaches who must attempt to answer the question, "What should I talk about?" My article will try first to discover what experts suggest should be appropriate topics for the event; second, to discover what topics are being used in competition; and finally, to see if there is a correlation between experts' suggestions and actual practice.

Advice from Experts

How are topics for persuasive speaking competition selected? There are many factors that influence topic selection, and any of these factors might take precedence over the others during the process of creating the speech. These factors could be the contestant's own interests and experiences, what topics have been used in competition by teammates and competitors, the "hot" topics of the day, and the coaches'/students' opinions about the potential success of the topic in actual tournament competition.

Advice on how to choose topics for forensic competition is not only remarkably dated but vague as well. Scott (1964, p. 2-5) suggests, "Any idea might become a subject for an oration, provided it 'bothers' a speaker." Buehler and Johannesen's (1965, p.46) advice is equally broad: "Topics should be timely and of wide public interest. Speakers should find something new, unusual, interesting and original." Golden (1965) does get more specific when he cautions against "overdone topics unless they are highly original and compelling and particular

problems related to a campus or special school issue." Klopf and Rives (1967, p. 12-13) do come close to suggesting possible topic areas such as "human poverty, racial issues, public apathy, and contemporary societal problems." They also provide a checklist for discovering if a topic will be suitable for contests. Topics should be significant, have available information, be worthwhile, be interesting to the speaker, handled within the time limits, and fit the occasion.

The advice from texts and articles specifically related to persuasive speaking as a forensic event is also dated and contains few specifics concerning topic selection. Many of these sources seemed to be more concerned with justifying the event itself rather than exploring the details of the event. (Reynolds, p. 122) With limited sources available, I also checked with several college speech communication textbooks to determine if more specific advice might be available. Wilson, Arnold, and Wertheimer (1990, p. 49-44) recommended speakers "draw from their own experience limited only by the speaking situation." Like Klopf and Rives, Gregory (1990, p. 80-88) suggests speakers choose a topic they care about, know about already, one that is of current interest, and one that interests an audience. Gronbeck, Ehninger, Monroe, and German (1988, p. 398-399) do offer a potential list of topic areas on the inside of the back cover of their text. They include foreign policy issues, domestic affairs, censorship, education, crime, race, child abuse, drugs, and pollution, to list but a few of their suggestions.

Two articles which have appeared in previous issues of this journal come closer to offering more specific suggestions or at least a more specific topic area for potential topic selection. They are among the very few articles to discuss topic selection in persuasive speaking. Reynolds (1989, p. 124-125) contends that because of "our cultural ignorance about medicine and disease," we are very curious and interested in these types of speech topics. Reynolds states these have become known as the "Dreaded Disease" speech. The reason topics in the area might be effective is that they involve interesting and disturbing subject matter sure to grab the attention of listeners, especially the judge. Sellnow and Ziegelmueller (1988, p. 84-85) expanded the scope of topic selection in their study of 24 different winners of the Interstate Oratorical Contest over a wide span of years. They theorize that because of the increase in individual events tournaments in the 1970s, there has been a growth in the number of competitors in persuasive speaking. The authors then suggest that many speakers look for fresh and unique topics unlikely to be used by the competition. As the most frequently offered event, it would seem important to choose a topic unlikely to be used by others.

With only a few exceptions, the advice of experts on topic selection is broad and general. Almost every topic used in persuasive speaking could conform to some of the expert opinion. Those who coach persuasive speaking do not usually reach for a journal article or textbook to help students select a topic. By examining the topics used in the NFA's National Tournament, we might be able to determine if there are potential guidelines for topic selection in persuasive speaking.

Methodology

A survey questionnaire was included in all sections of one preliminary round of Persuasive Speaking at the NFA National Tournament held on April 28-30, 1990, at Mankato State University. There was a total of thirty sections of persuasive speaking at the national event. The NFA assigns two judges per section in preliminary rounds; therefore, a total of sixty surveys were included for the round. Judges were instructed to record the contestant's 4 digit code number and last name. They were asked to "write what you think is the topic sentence of the speech." They were directed to "be as specific as possible." As an example, judges were advised to write, "Loud music on personal stereos is a serious problem" instead of just writing, "Loud music." Judges were employed to record the topic sentence instead of the actual competitors themselves for two reasons. I did not want to interfere with anything that could distract a speaker during competition. Asking them or having them write the topic sentence before or after they spoke could have potentially distracting consequences. Second, since the NFA used two judges in each preliminary round, a double set of topic sentences would provide a built-in double check for topic accuracy.

The double set of questionnaires was used to insure the right topic went with the right contestant and to verify the actual topic being used in competition. The tournament tabulation sheets were used to double check the accuracy of the contestant names and codes. A double set of topic sentences was received from 23 of the 30 sections, with just a single set for the remaining 7 sections. Of the 171 contestants entered in the event, 39 received only one judge's opinion on the topic being presented. Despite only topic sentence, it was still possible to determine if it were the right contestant in the right section. It was impossible to verify a topic for two competitors. Both were in the same section and had only one judge responding. One was left blank and the other was not readable. A total of 169 topics were determined to be usable for this article.

Topics were placed in categories based on the topic sentence recorded by each judge. It became obvious that definite categories were emerging. It also became apparent, if I alone put topics into groupings, it would be extremely arbitrary. I decided to have "experts" also put the

topics into categories. The experts were colleagues in the Communication Department at Mansfield University that teach the basic oral communication course. All these instructors teach the principles and theories of persuasive speaking in their classes. I supplied each person with a list of topic categories with the direction to create new divisions if it were more accurate. Each person was supplied with a stack of note-cards with one topic sentence on each individual card. The cards were shuffled to randomize them. Each expert was given several blank cards to record new category divisions if necessary. Besides the author, four colleagues served as experts. Topics were then placed into categories arrived at by the experts. When the experts disagreed, the topic was placed in the group with the plurality of votes. Topics like "Ritalin is overused in hyperactive children" received three votes for the medical category and two for the children's grouping. It was placed in the medical group. Categorizing the topics proved to be a difficult task. Of the 169 usable topics, all five experts agreed completely on 85 topics. There were 20 topics that were placed into a specific category because they received a 9-to-2 vote plurality.

Findings

Table 1 is the breakdown of topics into the categories devised by me and my experts. (A complete listing of topics by category is included in Appendix A.)

Table 1 Breakdown of Topics by Category

Category	Topics
1. Medical	...35 topics
2. Ecological	...30
3. Political/Legal	...18
4. Consumer	...14
Crime	...14
6. Education	...13
7. Children	...10
8. College/University	...8
Business/Industry	...8
10. Elderly	...5
11. Drug Abuse	...4
12. Social Issues	...4
13. Women	...3
14. Miscellaneous	...3

These categories are the ones agreed on by the five people who grouped the topics. Even with the use of five people to place the topics into appropriate groupings, it is an arbitrary grouping. I am sure others might disagree. The four drug abuse topics, for example, could have been included in the medical, crime, or even the social issues group. The majority of my colleagues felt it should be a separate category, and like all the other category decisions, the group that received the most choices became the final classification.

The rules of the National Forensic Association call for a contestant competing at the national tournament in Persuasive Speaking to place in a final round of the event at a regular season contest. These topics are the ones that have stood the test of competition throughout the forensic year. This might help to explain the surprising lack of duplication of topics at the national event. Of the 169 contestants, 128 used a unique topic (over 75%). Judges at regular weekend tournaments could be rewarding the contestants with unique topics, thus accounting for a relatively small number of duplicate topics at the national event.

Table 2 Most Frequently Used Topics

1.	Recycling	 8	contestants
2.	Danger of Dioxin	 4	
	Censorship of the Arts	 4	
4.	Illiteracy	 3	
5.	High insurance rates	 3	
	Poorly-trained Coroners/		
	Medical examiners	 3	

There are several topics I could only label as "Golden Oldies." They were topics I have heard and even coached over several decades of forensics—oldies like organ donation, vitamin overdoses, animal research, noise pollution, hazing, charity deceptions, and capital punishment appear never to go out of circulation.

With the names and contestant codes available, it was possible to examine what topics were given in the elimination rounds at the national event. It would be erroneous to assume the topic alone was the reason for a contestant's advancing to the out rounds of IE Nationals. It does, however, offer some interesting observations, since topic selection must play a role in reaching the elimination rounds. It would be impossible to eliminate criteria like organization, delivery, use of evidence, logical thinking, etc., but it might indicate certain trends as to what the top competitors in persuasive speaking were talking about.

The following chart illustrates the breakdown of topics used in the elimination rounds of persuasive speaking:

Table 3 Topic Categories In Elimination Rounds

QUARTER-FINAL TOPICS		SEMI-FINAL TOPICS	
Ecological	..11	Ecological	..8
Crime	.. 4	Consumer	..2
Medical	.. 4	Medical	..1
Consumer	.. 3	College/University	..1
College/University	.. 1	FINALS TOPICS	
Elderly	.. 1	Ecological	..4
		Medical	..1
		Consumer	..1

It is clear that topics from the ecological category dominated in the elimination rounds. Of the eleven ecological topics in quarterfinals, three were all concerned with the problem of dioxin.

Conclusions

Reynolds' (1983, p. 124-125) categorization of the "Dreaded Disease" topic in persuasive speaking does seem to be true for the topics used at the NFA National Tournament. While there were only a few speeches that dealt specifically with actual diseases, medically related topics comprised 20.7% of all the topics used. Contestants and coaches must conclude as did Reynolds that these topics are interesting and disturbing.

A second significant area used in national competition was the ecological category. It was the "hot" topic in elimination rounds and the runner up for topics used in preliminary rounds, with 17.1%. It is possible to add a new type of topic category we can call the "Dreaded Toxin" speech. The same logic that helped to explain the amount and success of medically related topics can be extended to the ecological group. These topics areas present subjects that are disturbing, interesting, and potentially dangerous to the American public. These two areas account for almost 40% of all the topics at I.E. Nationals #20. Interestingly enough, the ecological category was the one that had the most duplicate topics. Eight different contestants had topics concerned with some aspect of recycling, and four had speeches concerned with dioxin.

It appears that one of the single significant essential factors in choosing a topic for national competition would be topic uniqueness. The use of a compelling, disturbing, and even an unusual topic appears to be the explanation for the two largest categories. The advice that some authors give persuasive speakers to choose topics that are timely and of wide public interest is not followed at the national contest. Sellnow and Ziegelmueiler (1988) seem to be correct in their analysis that topics should be fresh and unique.

What topics weren't used at the national event? It appears the ultra-controversial topics are not found in significant numbers. There were no topics on abortion. Except for the topic on "Saving the Elephant," there were no topics on foreign affairs, though some authors suggest using it as a topic area. The traditional judge for a round of persuasive speaking held during the year is most likely a college educator or former college competitor. In spite of the obvious potential of college and university concerns, this topic category comprised less than 5% of all the topics used at NFA Nationals.

The topics used in competition at the National Tournament are topics that affect people's lives, that are disturbing, and probably not

controversial. It struck me that a great majority of topics were what I will call "Infosuasive" speeches. In an attempt to secure uniqueness, speakers choose topics that are unfamiliar to their potential judges. The judges must first be informed about the topic before the speaker can move to the persuasive points of the speech. Judges will be less likely to argue with a speaker and less likely to give a lower rank.

Topics employed at the national event do appear to be topics of widespread concern for the potential judges. The final round topics of overreaction to cholesterol; the danger of asbestos removal; the glut of paper products; the hazards of disposable diapers; the leaking of underground gasoline tanks; and pension plans are going broke all are topics that could have an impact on the people judging the persuasive speech.

It would be interesting to discover what topics rise to popularity and which ones fade away. Having found some tried and true topics, we could probably predict what topics will still be used in years to come. The late 1980s are the decade of ecology and recycling, and the specific topics reflect it. I can't help but wonder what persuasive speakers will be talking about when the National Forensic Association celebrates its 30th anniversary.

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APPENDIX A
Topics by Category

("Q" = Quarterfinalist; "S" = Semifinalist; "#" = Finals Place)

MEDICAL
 "Fluoride is harmful."
 "There is a potential danger from fluoride in our water."
 Surgery on premature babies should be done with anesthesia."
 "Cholesterol mania."
 "We are overreacting to cholesterol." Q,S,3rd
 "We still need organ donations."
 "Organ and tissue donations are needed."
 "Computer usage causes health problems."
 "Trauma centers are in critical condition."
 "The infant mortality rate in the U.S. is too high."
 "Infanticide is being allowed to occur in U.S. hospitals."
 "The problems of artificial insemination."
 "There is a lack of adequately trained medical examiners."
 "There is a problem of poorly trained coroners." Q
 "There is a problem of poorly trained/equipped coroners." Q
 "Tanning beds are dangerous."
 "The dangers of generic drugs."
 "The abuses of estrogen."
 "The problem of closing of rural hospitals." Q
 "We need to protect against lung disease."
 "Ritalin is overused in hyperactive children."
 "Faulty medical equipment is causing serious problems."
 "Drug reactions occur due to the interaction of different medicines."
 "Stop Hepititis B."
 "The problem of Obsessive-Compulsive disorders."
 "Give acupuncture a chance."
 "Plastic surgery is a serious health problem."
 "The problem of vitamin overdose."
 "There are serious health dangers at weight-loss clinics."
 "Over-the-counter drugs are still a serious problem."
 "We need national trauma centers."
 "Physicians dispensing drugs causes deaths."
 "Use animals in medical research."
 "Animal research is necessary."
 "The health benefits of walking."

ECOLOGICAL
 "Dioxin is a serious problem."
 "The problem of dioxin." Q
 "There is harmful dioxin in paper products."
 "There are harmful effects from dioxin." Q,S
 "Asbestos removal may be more harmful." Q,S,lst
 "We need to minimize electro-magnetic radiation." Q,S
 "We need to recycle."
 "We need to recycle."
 "We need to recycle."
 "Recycle plastic."
 "There is a glut of paper—we need to recycle." Q,S,2nd
 "Paper product packaging is wasteful."
 "Irrigation practices are causing serious damage."

"There are harmful effects from factory farming."
"Our nation's bridges are unsafe."
"U.S. buildings are suffering from metal corrosion."
"Our seafood is contaminated." Q,S
"Disposable diapers are hazardous." Q,S,4th
"Stop chemical backhauling." Q
"The EPA has failed to respond to the public."
"The Defense Department is selling toxic waste."
"We should save the elephant."
"Tropical rain forests are being destroyed."
"Degradable plastics are not the solution."
"Our drinking water is contaminated."
"Noise pollution."
"The problem of leaking gasoline tanks." Q,S,5th
"The problem of toxic clouds." Q,S
"Oil spills are a serious problem."
"We need to remove lead from our drinking water."

LEGAL/POLITICAL
"Ban the use of lie detectors."
"People should sign prenuptial agreements."
"Censorship is still a problem today."
"Censoring the arts is a dangerous practice."
"The U.S. Congress should stay out of censorship of the arts."
"Write to your congressman on important issues."
"We should have life in prison instead of capital punishment."
"English-only laws are unfair."
"Exporting tobacco products to Asia is a serious problem."
"Immigration laws should be changed to allow more immigration to the U.S."
"There is a serious stagnation of congressional action."
"There is a serious problem of jury misconduct in the U.S."
"The National Endowment for the Arts should resist political pressure."
"Burning the U.S. flag is nothing to get upset about."
"Our lawmakers are very unethical."
"The President needs a line-item veto."
"We should return the remains of native Americans to their rightful heirs."
"We need to curtail "Pregnancy police."

CONSUMER
"Pension plans are going broke." Q,S,6th
"There is too much graphic violence on television."
"There is a problem of unethical trade schools."
"There is a problem of fraudulant fertility clinics."
"Beware of the problem of Social Security fraud."
"Car owners are paving too much for insurance."
"Beware of fraudulant charities."
"Medical insurance is too high."
"Charities in the U.S. are deceiving donors." Q
"Beware of unethical financial advisors." Q,S
"We need more boat safety."
"Beware of telephone fraud."
"Insurance rates are too high."
"Poor inspection leads to contaminated seafood."

CRIME
"Airport security is lacking." Q
"Overcrowded prisons can be solved by making them privately owned."

"Machine bolts are being poorly manufactured."
"Private security guards are a serious problem."
"The U.S. military is covering up accident investigations." Q
"Plastic explosives aren't being detected in airports."
"We should stop criminals from profiting by selling their stories to the media."
"There are problems because of our fear of crime."
"There is a military cover-up of accidental deaths."
"There is a serious problem of scientific fraud."
"Computer databases are being misused."
"The problem of art theft."
"There is a serious problem of juvenile sex criminals."
"The problem of credit theft." Q

EDUCATION
"Graded schools discriminate against underprivileged children."
"We Americans need to be more culturally aware."
"Sex abuse programs in school are harmful."
"We need to reduce illiteracy in our country."
"There is a serious problem of prison inmate illiteracy."
"There is a serious illiteracy problem."
"Parents should be allowed free choice of where to send their children to school."
"Second career teachers are a failure."
"There is a problem of emotional maltreatment by teachers."
"Driver's Education should be mandatory in the U.S."
"We should restructure our educational system to allow school choice."
"We need to improve the teaching of sex education."
"We should allow tax credits for private/parochial schools."

CHILDREN
"The problem of adoption."
"There is a problem of child care in step families."
"Child poisoning is a serious problem."
"We need to reform foster care programs."
"Dial-a-porn is harmful to children."
"We need to fund children's programs."
"We should punish mental abusers of children."
"We need to insure playground safety."
"The day care system in the U.S. needs to be reformed."
"There are serious problems associated with adoptive children."

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
"Use the penny."
"We need to use the penny."
"American businesses need more creativity and innovation."
"There is a serious shortfall in the U.S. labor class."
"We should allow the commercialization of outer space by private industry."
"The problem of employee theft of time."
"Handwriting analysis for employment should be banned."
"The losses from the savings and loan scandal are too high."

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
"There is a serious crime problem on college campuses."
"Eliminate the Greek system on college campuses."
"Stop forcing college professors to conduct research."
"Collegiate athletics needs to be more responsive to academics."
"There are unsafe scientific labs on college campuses."
"Eliminate hazing."
"There is a problem of racism in our universities." Q,S

"There is racism on college campuses."

ELDERLY

"The elderly crisis in America is growing."

"We need to treat the elderly better."

"The elderly need more long-term healthcare."

"There is a serious problem with elderly drivers."

"Elderly drivers are dangerous."

SOCIAL ISSUES

"There is a problem of racism in America."

"Give 1% of your income for peace."

"Surrogate motherhood is wrong."

"We need more volunteers."

DRUG PROBLEM

"There is a problem of substance abuse in public transportation."

"Our approach to the drug abuse problem is doomed to failure."

"We need to stop meta-amphetamines."

"Legalize drugs."

WOMEN

"Women face serious problems with careers and families."

"We should allow women into military combat."

"The women's movement is not getting its message across."

MISCELLANEOUS

"We need to add playfulness to our lives."

"Americans suffer from touch deprivation."

"Watch the tv show, 'America's Most Wanted.'"

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Strategies for Increasing the
Use of Ballots in Coaching Individual Events

Mary Ann Renz

The forensic community has long recognized the central role ballots play in competitive speech activities. The ballot is, after all, the medium through which students receive feedback on a specific performance. In an effort to improve the quality of the feedback, forensics research has analyzed the content of current ballots and tested the impact of ballot form on the feedback content.[1] Much of the concern seems to be with ensuring that the ballot gives adequate justification of the rating and ranking awarded a specific performance. This focus is worthwhile, since improved ballots will better justify decisions on completed (past) performances.

The purpose of this paper is to shift the focus away from ballots as justification of past decisions toward considering use of ballots in improving future performances. Although there are programs in which ballots are disregarded and discarded, there are other programs which operate on the philosophy that careful attention to ballots for past performances is the source of suggestions for future improvements. Even when we adopt this philosophy for our own programs, however, there are practical difficulties which come from trying to adapt to ballot-derived criticism, especially since time pressures generally impede the production of "perfect" (i.e., complete and clear) ballots. At times, the limits on ballot quality may make it appear that the ballot cannot be used well in coaching. However, suggestions in this paper are intended to identify ways of reading between the lines, increasing the utility of ballots as coaching tools. To add specificity to the suggestions, I will draw upon ballots my students received and identify ways we adjusted speeches in response to those ballots.

Improving the sense of audience

After discovering the source of particular ballot comments, it can be tempting to discount the comments from an "inexperienced," "less qualified," or "extremist" judge. The temptation should be resisted, since to ignore or disparage ballots from any writer is equivalent to rejecting the validity of another's perceptions, rejecting the reality of

multiple perceptions. By treating comments generically, rather than as the product of a specific producer, the coach adopts an assumption that every reaction carries validity. Throughout the course of a year, the ballots begin to represent a composite "universal audience," not just of those most able to make reasoned decisions, but a collection of varied interests in the issues being discussed.

Specific personal comments from judges help the students to develop a clearer image of the audience: they are not all homeowners or parents; some may have lost a family member to disease and will require evidence of a speaker's sensitivity. Students are better able to hone attention devices and appeals for action when they understand the diversity of real audiences.

The additional information critics supply may well indicate their predispositions toward a topic. For instance, when one of our students was competing in a Sales event, selling AAA services, she received several comments from judges who complimented her organization, but suggested that she add references to other AAA services. They also often added a thanks for reminding them to renew their AAA insurance. Only an occasional judge criticized the student's organization, saying she hadn't developed the motives for membership sufficiently or early enough in the speech. Those judges did not suggest mentioning additional services. What became clear to us was that she had two camps of judges: AAA members (who knew all about services, were grateful for a reminder to renew, but felt no need for motivation to join) and non-members. Although the former were in the majority (and were satisfied with the organization of the speech as it was), the latter were an audience which could not be ignored. In this case, reading between the lines helped us accept the criticism of the minority rather than the majority's praise.

There is, of course, a competitive reward for improving the sense of audience. It is outweighed by the educational value of recognizing that every audience member has a right to an independent perception of, and reaction to, the presentation and that responding to the majority reaction is not necessarily the wisest approach.

Repositioning logical and emotional appeals

Long ago, I became aware of the fact that judges' comments on the quality of logos or pathos may indicate a need for reordering, not changing, the appeals. Versions of a student's oration on lobotomies drew criticism of the "too dry and logical" or "too emotional" approaches the student used. Initially, we responded by changing the content; later we discovered that without altering the actual arguments, the student could alter reactions to the speech by reordering the arguments. By the end of the season, we had mastered positioning of the arguments suffi-

ciently to generate comments on the "well balanced appeals." More recently, the strategy was used to improve a speech on medical devices by moving a dramatic opening example much later in the speech where it functioned to create an emotional climax. Indirectly, ballots led us to understand emotional structure as an overlay of the logical structure of the speech.

Length and placement of comments to reduce ambiguity

When comments about clarity of ideas, interest factors, or delivery appear on ballots, it is often impossible to tell exactly which section of the speech is being criticized. For instance, the comment, "Be careful about preaching so harshly to us as if we were to be condemned. This only happened a couple of times," leaves a question as to when it did happen (and whether it was a matter of delivery or stylistic choices). The judge who inserts such a comment next to an outline of the speech clarifies the issue. Without that, however, we can interpret the ballot more easily by using cues of comment placement and length. Our interpretation of a comment can change when we notice whether the comment came at the end or middle of the ballot. Length of a comment indicates how important the judge perceives the problem to be and explains the level of distraction while the judge was writing. For instance, if an attention-getting device (or lack of it) gets the judge writing at the time a preview will appear, a student would be wise to add some "pre-preview fill" or take extra pains with delivery so that the preview will not be missed. The student's recollection of when the judge began to write, along with the length and location of the comments, can be helpful in interpreting the perceptions of the judge.

Adjusting to judges' comments on time

Seldom did I time individual sections of my students' speeches while coaching them; ballots made us aware that other judges watched watches more. Two ballots at one tournament criticized a persuasive speech when they noted that the speaker had begun to consider solutions when only four and a half minutes had passed. The comments did not identify a need for more development of the problem and seemed to recognize that the speech required a lengthier solution section than most speeches might. The student inserted additional material early in the speech, choosing to increase the level of pathos. Obviously, the speech needed something interesting enough to distract the judges from their watches.

In another case, judges of a rhetorical criticism repeatedly noted the lateness at which actual analysis of the artifact began. In coaching sessions after each tournament, we struggled to identify areas where the introduction and the justification of artifact and tool choices could

be pruned. Never could we find a way for the student to reach the analysis before at least three minutes had passed. By that time, watch-conscious judges had already been distracted. Finally we found a solution. Rather than dropping the preliminary material we deemed critical, the student inserted a preview which, in essence, moved the justification of artifact and tool out of the introduction (since it followed the preview) and into the body of the speech. Although the time allotment was actually unchanged, the anticipation of the audience was altered, as was evident in subsequent favorable ballots.

Discovering a more moderate solution

At times, responding to the specific suggestion of a judge will create more problems than it solves, because any specific change will also alter perceptions of a more general nature. Two examples may clarify the point.

Case one: A speaker analyzed an abortion debate using metaphors to provide insight into the positions represented in the debate. The initial version broke into elimination rounds quite often; judges found it interesting. One judge commented on the oddity of this version, in which the tool (metaphorical analysis) was addressed before the artifact. In an effort to conform with judge expectations, the student adjusted the speech as the ballot suggested: artifact first, then tool. The revised version elicited comments on the "over-used topic." Judges now had a chance to respond to the familiarity of the abortion issue before they could be intrigued by the use of metaphors. Moreover, the ranks were regularly lower. The student switched the order back again, but prepared to defend the uniqueness of the approach.

Case two: A student giving an informative speech on McGuffey's readers used no visual aids except an actual copy of one volume of the readers, held up early in the speech. Judges suggested incorporating visual aids, which the student did. Then judges viewed the visual aids as unnecessary and distracting. When the student experimented with eliminating not only the visuals, but also the actual book, the calls for visuals ceased. Holding up the book had created a predisposition to expect visuals. In both cases, the real solutions to the speakers' problems lay in something short of what the judges suggested as a remedy. By reading between the lines, the coach and student can use ballots to discover the spot where a problem exists and invent their own solution to the problem.

Incorporating judges' lines in revision

Not only did my students and I read all ballots they received, but on occasion, we also "plagiarized" the ballots, a process the students fully enjoyed. For instance, one judge reacted to a rhetorical criticism with,

"Woo, Wait a minute. You've told me 'how' and 'what,' but what about 'why' and 'with what effect'." The student transformed the comment into the following transition, "So far, I've described what the speakers did. Now, let's consider why and with what effect." The transition was subsequently refined a bit, but the initial adjustment was useful. In another case, the frequently asked question, "But what can we learn from this analysis?" became the transition into the final point of the criticism. While this strategy is more a matter of rereading lines than of re-reading between the lines, it is undoubtedly a use of ballots different from what the judge had intended.

Conclusion

For students involved in forensic competition, the pay-off for paying attention to ballots can come on future ballots. One of my students received a ballot which began, "Basically, see my comments from last week," but ended, "WOW! Sounds better this time!" The ballot reflected the pleasure of a judge who felt that he or she had been listened to; it also made both coach and student feel that the week's work had been on target and worthwhile. I was probably as proud of that comment as I was of any student's success, for it indicated that for our program, tournaments were not intended as trophy collection events, but as places to test ideas, learn from the ballots, and adjust the messages.

Most of us can identify with the frustration of hearing a speaker a second (or more) time who has not responded to our criticisms, even through we are certain that our judgments were astute and our suggestions clear and easy to adopt. It is equally likely that we have worked with students frustrated with ballots which (they are sure) are not quite accurate and not possible to use. They are willing to throw up their hands and change topics. They may throw out the ballots. The frustrations of both ballot writers and ballot readers can be eased when ballots are accepted for their real value. The key principle is this: the ballot writer may not be right about how to solve the problems in students' speeches, but they may be right about where there are problems. The role for coaches, whose experience and insight are greater, is to help students interpret the ballots, to read between the lines, use their own judgment, and enjoy the process of helping students tinker with their speeches.

Notes

[1]For examples of research analyzing the content of current ballots, see Dean, K. W., & Benoit, W. L. (1984). A categorical analysis of rhetorical criticism ballots. *National Forensic Journal, 2,* 99-108. and Hanson, C. T. (1989). Strengthening the tournament experience: Developing a more explicit set of expectations for our judges. *Proceeding? of the Developmental Conference on the future role of Pi Kappa Delta in the forensic community,* pp. 61-67. For an example of research which has tested the impact of ballot

form on the content of feedback, see Bartanen, K. M. (1991). Use of criteria referenced ballots for individual events. *National Forensic Journal, 8,* 133-144.

REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Jack Kay, Editor

Debate Tournament Administrator, computer program for tournament scheduling (IBM-based), by Stephen C. Wood and Joseph B. Miller, 1990.

As a society we have come to depend on computers to a degree unthought of ten years ago. The danger in this rapid proliferation of reliance on the computer is that we come to expect the computer to think for us rather than imposing our will on the computer. As a consequence, computer software is often written which directs us to accept the assumptions of the author of the software about how to perform a given task rather than permitting us to manipulate the program so that we can perform that task as we see fit. Fortunately, a debate scheduling program available on the market avoids the temptation of telling us how to run our tournaments; and instead, it challenges us to use the computer as a tool to impose our assumptions about tournaments on the computer.

DEBATE TOURNAMENT ADMINISTRATOR by Stephen C. Wood and Joseph B. Miller is available for IBM based computers through Kendall Hunt Publishers on a site license basis for $150.00. This software was previously reviewed in the NFJ by Pettus and Dittus (Vol. VII, #2, p. 145-149). My purpose is to examine the features of DTA, correct some misconceptions created by the Pettus and Dittus review, and to reach some conclusions regarding the assumptions of the DTA program and its utility for debate tournament directors.

Let me begin by saying that I have worked with DTA for a number of years as the program was tested and revised by Professor Wood. I have used it for over a dozen tournaments and authorized its use at the 1991 NFA Lincoln-Douglas debate competition. The program offers an excellent menu driven means to schedule teams, assign judges and tabulate results. It has excellent documentation with a well-written manual which explains the function of the program and makes application to common problems encountered in the tournament setting. The manual will permit those with little or no computer experience to run the program effectively, which is a great advantage to directors who are novices at running tournaments or operating computers. The program provides customer support with access to the authors directly for problem solving and trouble shooting. The program has undergone a number of evolutions and the latest version is available for a modest update cost for those who were previous purchasers. The key to using this program is to run simulations using old tournament data so that you can

become familiar with its operation before you try to use it on an actual tournament. The manual wisely urges new users to back up data frequently and initially to employ a manual back up as well. This seems prudent until the user feels comfortable with the program's operation.

What the manual only begins to tell you is the philosophy which underpins this program. As I mentioned before, this program challenges you to run your tournament your way using a computer to do manual tasks efficiently and rapidly. After having worked in a number of tab rooms, it seems to me that no two tournament directors run their debate tournaments exactly alike. When I think of a random round, I may mean a truly random pairing except that teams from the same school cannot meet. I may also mean that I would like all the teams paired geographically so that all the teams from one school are on the same side or I may want them spread. These simple decisions can be made by a computer program, but that eliminates the director's instinctive decision making ability. DTA opts not to make these decisions; instead it allows directors to make these decisions for themselves. The program will generate a random round and then ask you if you want to make changes. While on-line, the director can swap one or all the teams until the criteria for a viable pairing have been satisfied. The same feature exists for power matching and for assignment of judges. While I consider this the great advantage of DTA, those that expect to push a button and have the computer do all the thinking will be disappointed.

Perhaps this basic difference of opinion regarding the application of computer software lies at the heart of my rejection of the Pettus and Dittus review of this program. If I might summarize their criticisms of the program, these criticisms focus primarily on failures of the program to make decisions which the program purposely asks the tournament director to make. In their analysis, Pettus and Dittus employ a single six round, four team simulation. It is my contention that the utility of a program can only be judged by considering its operation in a wide variety of circumstances. One might also question the validity of a test that involved only four teams. The analysis continues with a suggestion that the program does not allow for mid-tournament drops. The program considers this to be a decision of the tournament director. In some cases it may be appropriate to edit the school code to call the team which is being dropped a "BYE," while in other cases it may be best to delete the team altogether. Either option is available through manipulation of the program's edit team information section. Pettus and Dittus also took exception to the fact that if rooms are changed each round, the program requires the operator to edit the room list. The implication is that this must be done "by hand," but in actuality the room edit function allows you to change the rooms while on-line. This may be somewhat confus-

ing the first time through the program, but after a few simulations, it is a very easy task.

The previous review, then, examines the DTA feature which allows for entry and review of results for each round. The complaint here is that "Entering results is easy with DTA, perhaps too easy." The specific criticism is that affirmative wins require a return key punch, but that any other key will record a negative team win. While this is true, in my experience a routine double check of all round results (which the manual also suggests) would reveal any errors. The review also suggests that changing an errant decision "creates some unique problems... later in the tournament" but they fail to specify the nature and extent of those problems and, as a user, I have failed to detect any problems if the abort procedures in the manual are followed. Pettus and Dittus do acknowledge the program permits and encourages the printing of result information after each round, and we agree that the printed tabulation sheet which includes all team and school names as well as win-loss, rank and rate information, sub-totals for all these categories, plus team opponent and side "is an excellent plus in using this program."

Pettus and Dittus take great exception to the round and judge scheduling features of DTA. As I explained before, this is a basic philosophical difference in user expectations of a program. If you tell DTA to power match without side constraints and the top two teams are from the same school, DTA will pair them against each other but it will tell you there is a scheduling conflict and allow you to determine how that conflict should be resolved. This means you must check the pairings that DTA generates, but a prudent tournament director would double check any pairings anyway. Judge assignments are made by assigning the first judge on the judge list that has not judged one of the teams previously, and that is not from the same school as the teams involved in the debate. If the operator overrides the program and inserts a judge in a given debate the program does not check the school or prior judging conflicts. This allows the director of the tournament to override the provision of a team being judged twice when the judging pool is limited or when the team debated on the opposite side. I should also note that DTA does not automatically switch teams to opposite sides if they are scheduled to meet for a second time. This permits the tournament directors to determine if they indeed want a pairing with a second meeting or would prefer to swap opponents to avoid a second meeting.

Pettus and Dittus do have some legitimate criticisms of DTA. They rightly note that all round postings are printed in top to bottom order and that to correct this requires either an on-line shuffling of the order or a manually prepared posting. They also note that instead of the commonly used high-low within brackets, DTA offers a high-low pairing

option. The reason for excluding the bracket pairing is that the tournament director would have to establish where the bracket was to be applied. Since that decision must occur outside the program anyway, the program allows the operator to install brackets by using the swap routine in the high-low pairing option. DTA also assumes that once elimination rounds begin that off-line scheduling will be done. DTA will rank teams so the operator knows which teams will advance, but it does not pair the elim rounds or assign judges or print elim results. I am told that the authors of the program will make accommodations for this in future versions of the program. The review also makes some curious statements regarding the provisions for breaking ties in speaker awards. The review states that "In this program, ties were broken based on dropping high and low points only once, then going to ranks." What is curious is that in keeping with the program's philosophy, it does not break ties but permits tournament directors to break them as they see fit.

In summary, I found DTA to be an effective and helpful tool for scheduling and tabulating tournaments. While it has some flaws, if you accept the essential premise that this is a program to allow you to schedule the way you want, then the program operates efficiently. The tabulation accuracy alone makes the program worthwhile, and the speed of tabulation is, as one would expect, impossible by manual means. The program requires careful reading of the manual and prior simulation exercises before actual tournament use, but once that is accomplished the program is easily mastered. Those willing to learn the program and employ it in the spirit in which it is written will find DTA to be an excellent tool. For those who want to turn on the computer and have it run your tournament, you will be disappointed and frustrated. Fortunately in a consumer economy, the choice is yours.

<div align="right">

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