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50th Anniversary of Speaker & Gavel Special Issue Introduction

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50th Anniversary of *Speaker & Gavel* Special Issue Introduction

Stephen M. Croucher, Editor

I am honored to be serving as the editor of *Speaker & Gavel* during its 50th year of publishing. When I was discussing this commemoration with the former editor of the journal, Professor Daniel Cronn-Mills, we both thought it would be fitting to invite key figures in forensics to contribute to a special issue. We put our heads together and thought of people we wanted to invite. These figures represent a wealth of knowledge about the diversity of forensics scholarship and activity, which is what *Speaker & Gavel* has, and will continue to represent long into the future. I am honored to have served as an editor for these manuscripts.

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

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

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

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

The fifth and final essay is a discussion of the place of forensics in the next 50 years by Christopher P. Outzen, Lucas J. Youngvorst and Daniel Cronn-Mills. In this essay, “The Next 50 Years of Forensics: Acknowledging Problems, Preparing Solutions,” the authors discuss the successes and potential pitfalls of forensics as an activity. They encourage forensics educators and researchers to look forward and avoid stagnation. They propose steps to help forensics continue a legacy of competition and education well into the future.

While these pieces each focus on different area of “forensics,” they collectively share a key quality, that of the adaptive nature of forensics. Rhetorical criticism as an area of study has adapted over the years, changed, developed, whatever you want to call it. This adaptation is well documented in the work of Zarefsky and Klumpp. Debate and individual events have also adapted as activities. Their organizational structures, number of events, use of technology, and doctrine have all adapted, as Schnoor, Loudon, and Outzen et al. all described. Scholars in *Speaker & Gavel* asked what forensics would be like in the 1980s. How will forensics adapt, and what will it look like in 2020? This is only seven years away. As this area of research and activity continues to adapt and grow it would not be surprising to see more technology, more doctrinal changes, and more structural changes to the study of rhetorical criticism and forensics as a competitive activity.

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