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The Inter-State Oratorical Contest in the 1800s: The Beginning of Organized Collegiate Competitive Speaking

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The purpose of this article is to explore the beginnings of the Inter-State Oratorical Contest (IOC) and the Inter-State Oratorical Association (IOA) and to examine the characteristics of the Inter-State Oratorical speeches from 1874 to 1899. Through an analysis of the top two speeches from each of these years in regard to topic, evidence, organization, style, and delivery, I identify trends and strategies which appeared in competitive collegiate persuasive speaking in the late 1800s.

The invitation to the first Inter-State Oratorical Contest,¹ or IOC, hosted by Knox College at the City Opera House of Galesburg in Galesburg, Illinois, on February 27, 1874, begins this way:

To the Honorable and Students: SIRS – The Adelphi Literary Society, of Knox College, feeling that it would be for the mutual benefit of ‘Western colleges’ to engage in friendly rivalry, and preferring the culture of the rostrum to the oar, desires to submit for your consideration the following proposition. (Prather, 1891, p. 7)

Invitations were sent to Illinois State Industrial University, Chicago University, Iowa State University, Iowa College, Wisconsin State University, and Beloit College. Wisconsin State University refused the invitation; thus, a supplemental invitation was sent to Monmouth College, who accepted. The founders of the IOC wanted to ensure that collegiate public speaking contests continued after the first event. Therefore, in the invitation, they asked delegates from each of the institutions to attend a planning meeting in order to create a public speaking organization. Prather (1891) explains, “[a]fter some discussion and mature deliberation, it was decided to make the association an Inter-State Oratorical Association” with the purpose of continuing collegiate oratory contests (p. 8). Thus, the Inter-State Oratorical Association (IOA) was created, and the 1874 IOC was the first event held by what is currently the oldest competitive intercollegiate speech organization in the United States (White & Messer, 2003).

The roots of competitive intercollegiate speaking in the United States reach back to the birth of academic departments of “speech” in this country. In 1884, at the University of Michigan, Thomas Trueblood offered the first classes in “speech and oratory” ever taught at any U.S. college or university (“Historical and Descriptive Notes,” 1943). He subsequently founded and became the first chair (in 1892) of the university’s Department of Elocution and Oratory, which was the first department in the speech/communication discipline to be established at any major college or university in the U.S. (Nesbit, 1998). Among his many contributions to the forensics activity, he “organized and coached the competitive debate and oratory contests at Michigan” (Walker, 1995, p. 2), and mentored the Northern Oratorical League and the Century Debating League. It was “due to his zeal

¹ In this paper, the name of the contest, Inter-State Oratorical Contest, and the name of the organization, Inter-State Oratorical Association, will have the first word of each title, i.e. Inter-State, hyphenated. Though a hyphen is not currently used in reference to the organization and contest, the hyphen was used in the Constitution, tournament invitation, and *Winning Orations* book published in the 1800s.

in organization, his success in arousing interest in the contests, and his skill in drilling the representatives of the University of Michigan, that that institution...[took] first rank among the large universities of America in competitive contests” (Prather and Groves, 1907, p. 18). The depth of our forensics roots is also evident in the printed record of our larger discipline. The very first edition of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* included an article by Gunnison (1915) which examined the use of creativity and imagination in the art of oratorical speaking. Yet, while it has been a rich part of the history of intercollegiate competitive speaking in the United States, there has been relatively little published about the IOC contest and the foundation of competitive intercollegiate public speaking. Important exceptions to this general rule do exist. Reynolds (1983) conducted a generic criticism of the contest between 1974 and 1981. Sellnow and Ziegelmüller (1988) completed a content analysis comparing strategies deployed in IOC speeches during the period ranging from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. White and Messer (2003) explored the evolution of persuasive speeches from the beginning of the contest to the present, and Olson (2010) outlined strategies for successfully coaching students to qualify to compete at the contest. In this paper, I use these essays as a foundation for writing from a historical-critical perspective about the early days of the IOC and the IOA in the late 1800s. By critically examining the IOC and IOA from 1874 to 1899, I hope to expand general awareness of the foundation of the academic activity we know today as forensics, specifically the collegiate category of persuasive speaking.

To offer this perspective, I will analyze both the speeches and the accompanying materials found in the first two editions of *Winning Orations of the Inter-State Oratorical Contests, and Biographies of Contestants*, later known simply as *Winning Orations*, which became the official publication of the IOA (Reynolds, 1983). The first edition of the book, published in 1891, includes the original invitation to the IOC, the original Constitution of the IOA, a “Historical Perspective” on the contest and the organization, all of the first-place and second-place speeches delivered between 1874 and 1890, biographies of each of the winning competitors, a position statement on “Orators and Oratory,” and an article on “Plagiarism” (Prather, 1891). The second edition of *Winning Orations*, published in 1907, includes an introductory article on the “Qualities of a Winning Oration” by the aforementioned Professor Thomas C. Trueblood (Trueblood, 1907), all of the first-place and second-place speeches presented at the IOC from 1891 to 1907, and the biographies of most of the winning competitors (Prather & Groves, 1907).

This paper begins with an overview of the beginning of the IOC and the IOA in order to lay a foundation for understanding the association and the contest. This historical foundation is followed by an analysis of the Inter-State speeches of the 1800s, developed by critically analyzing the fifty-two first-place and second-place speeches delivered at the IOC between 1874 and 1899, reading “Qualities of a Winning Oration” (Trueblood, 1907), and reviewing past forensic research. Trends and competitive strategies emerged from my exploration in the areas of topics, structure, evidence, and stylistic features. I will also briefly review the period’s preferred approach to delivery. This analysis will lead to some final observations.

The Creation of Competitive Intercollegiate Oratory

Charles E. Prather, of Topeka, Kansas, editor of the first two editions of *Winning Orations*, justifies oratorical speaking as a venue for collegiate competition in its first edition by stating, “[t]here always exists in ambitious natures an inborn desire to excel, and never does this desire become more prominent than during the years spent in college” (Prather, 1891, p. 7). He explained that intercollegiate “contests in boating, ball games and similar sports” exist to test college students on their “physical power and endurance” (Prather, 1891, p. 7). However, these sports do not allow for a competitive *intellectual* outlet for students. Prather stated, “[i]t remained for the Adelphi Society, of Knox College-Galesburg, Illinois, to crown all former efforts in conceiving another outlet for this restless and impetuous spirit of rivalry, by testing intellectual merit through the eloquence of oratory” (Prather, 1891, p. 7).

Along with the original tournament invitation, each institution was asked to send a delegation to Galesburg to attend a meeting before the competition. The goal of the gathering was to create an organization “for the purpose of continuing contests in oratory” (Prather, 1891, p. 8). The meeting was held “in the handsome parlors of the Union Hotel,” and at the meeting they created the IOA (Prather, 1891, p. 8). The membership elected Mr. Geo Sutherland of Chicago University to be the first president and Mr. F. I. Moulton of Knox College to be the secretary (Prather, 1891, p. 8). During the convention, the newly created IOA decided to host an inter-state speaking contest every year. Each state was charged with creating its own state association that would annually host a contest to select that state’s IOC representative.

After the convention, the delegates and the competitors came together for the first Inter-State Oratorical Contest on February 27, 1874. The contest commenced with a stately overture by the Grand Orchestra (Prather, 1891, p. 9). Next came the first two speakers. H.C. Adams from Iowa College delivered his speech, entitled “The Student and the Mysterious,” followed by A.G. McCoy of Monmouth College, whose speech was entitled “Conservatism” (Prather, 1891, p. 9). The popular Mrs. Chas G. Hurd followed these presentations with the performance of an operatic solo, after which two more speakers delivered their orations: T. Edward Egbert from Chicago University spoke on “The Heart, the Source of Power,” and Frank E. Brush from Iowa State University considered “Ideas; their Power and Permanence” (Prather, 1891, p. 9). Then, the Grand Orchestra played the “Blue Danube Waltzes” to introduce the last two speakers. Geo T. Foster from Beloit College spoke on the subject of “The British Rule in India,” and W.W. Wharry from Illinois State Industrial University delivered “Labor and Liberty; or, the Mission of America” (Prather, 1891, p. 10).

The judging and tabulation processes at the first IOC were explicitly structured. The governors of the three states represented—Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin—each selected “a man of prominence” to serve as a judge on the awarding committee (Prather, 1891, p. 8). The judges evaluated the contestants in three areas—excellence of thought, style of composition, and delivery—by ranking each student on a scale of one to ten in each category. After each contestant took their turn speaking, the competitors were given the privilege of choosing three audience members to add up the judging committee’s scores. The tabulators were selected this way to make sure there was no collusion tainting the score tabulation. While the results were being calculated by the chosen audience

members, Mrs. Hurd sang a ballad. At the end, the ranks and placements were announced. Geo T. Foster placed second, and the tournament champion was T. Edward Egbert. As Charles E. Prather stated, “Thus closed one of the greatest events in college history, the result of which is to-day an honor to our educational institutions” (Prather, 1891, p. 10).

On June 9, 1874, a meeting was convened in Chicago to discuss and draft a constitution which would enable the Inter-State Oratorical Association to become a permanent organization. Once the organizational structure was finalized, the contest flourished and grew in size and popularity. By 1891, the IOA was made up of sixty-three member colleges from the states of Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin (Prather, 1891, p. 10). For the remainder of the 1800s, the IOC was hosted in cities in each of these states, with the sole exception of Colorado.² The popularity of competitive collegiate public speaking grew, and other competitions not hosted by the IOA were created. However, the IOC remained a prestigious competition through the end of the 1800s.

A complete record of everyone who competed in these contests in those final years of the 1800s does not exist. After the first year, only a history of the first and second place competitors is available.³ For the most part, the competitors known to have participated in the contest were white men. However, exceptions included two notable women: Laura A. Kent from Antioch College earned Second Place at the 1876 IOC with her speech entitled “Beatrice and Margaret” (Kent, 1876, pp. 48-52), and E. Jean Nelson from DePauw University won the 1892 IOC with a speech entitled “Industrial Freedom” (Nelson, 1892, pp. 39-53). The other noteworthy exception to the predominance of white men was Charles W. Wood from Beloit College. Wood was an African American man who earned Second Place at the 1895 IOC with a speech titled “The Better Personality” (Wood, 1895, pp. 118-128). The different personal perspectives the speakers brought to their oratories were apparent in many speeches. Just as with oratories today, the students’ personal experiences and passions showed through in much of their argumentation.

Analyzing the Oratory Speeches, 1874-99

My historical-critical analysis of the earliest IOC speeches is influenced by two main scholarly sources: recent research conducted about the IOC by White and Messer (2003), and an article written directly about oratory in the 1800s by a prominent forensic coach who was active at the time (Trueblood, 1907).

First, White and Messer (2003) report on an analysis that traced common characteristics found in IOC speeches from 1875 to 2000. Through their content analysis, they developed a coding system incorporating five major categories: topic, organizational pattern/structure, evidence usage, stylistic features, and documentation. As these categories are consistently found in persuasive speeches regardless of era, they would seem appropriate to use when coding a sample of oratories from the 1800s. However, I diverge somewhat from the categories White and Messer highlighted because most of the speeches and research materials they reviewed to identify their categories were written after 1900. Thus, I have modified their categorization system in order to adapt it to speeches composed at an earlier time and in a distinct historical/cultural context.

² For a complete list of the dates and locations of the Inter-State Oratorical Contests in the 1800s see Appendix A.

³ For a full list of the speakers who placed first or second at the Inter-State Oratorical Contests in the 1800s see Appendix B.

My modifications are guided by the historically relevant comments of disciplinary pioneer Thomas Clarkson Trueblood, who coached Inter-State oratory speakers during the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the second edition of *Winning Orations*, he wrote an article entitled “Qualities of a Winning Oration” (Trueblood, 1907). In this article, he listed five elements or processes that typify a winning oration: (1) “a good subject” (p. 9), (2) “gathering material” (p. 11), (3) “constructing the oration” (p. 12), (4) language “style” (p. 14), and (5) “delivery” (p. 15). These elements are similar to the categories White and Messer (2003) highlighted, except that the “documentation” category was identified only by White and Messer (2003), while the “delivery” category was included only by Trueblood (1907). In the present analysis, White and Messer’s “documentation” category will be folded into Trueblood’s (1907) “gathering materials” category, since he includes in it both a concern for gathering materials and a charge to avoid plagiarism. Finally, while delivery is an important part of oratory, the speeches analyzed for the present essay were delivered long before the advent of widely-used video recording, which means that we have no access to viewing how they were delivered. Thus, the focus of this paper is on the actual texts of the speeches. We will be able to examine the delivery techniques popular in the late 1800s only indirectly, relying on comments made by speech professionals of the time. Ultimately, then, taking into consideration both White and Messer’s (2003) research and Trueblood’s (1907) perspective led to my use of five categories of analysis: (1) topic and subject, (2) gathering and documentation of research, (3) organization of speeches, (4) stylistic features, and (5) delivery.

Topics and Subjects of Oratories in the 1800s

For Trueblood (1907), the question of what makes a topic successful focuses on the actual subject of the speech. However, more recent forensic research has considered the types of appeals used to persuade the audience in relation to the topic (Friedley, 1992; Smith, 1996; Sellnow, 1992; White and Messer, 2003). Both of these approaches (Trueblood’s concept of “the subject” and the contemporary interest in “types of persuasive appeals”) were considered in the analysis in this essay. Before considering specific sub-issues, however, it is valuable to pause and look at the big picture of how the topics chosen by the orators evolved during the late 1800s. Appendix B at the end of this essay provides a chronological list of the titles the students gave to their speeches. Looking at this list reveals that the topics chosen by the students reflected key ways in which the United States was changing. Roughly grouped and partitioned, we can observe the following chronological flow of topics: (a) religion and religious advocacy, (b) biographical sketches, (d) science/change/progress, (e) linking religious subjects to cultural/national profiles, (f) seeking the rapprochement of science and religion, and finally (g) political issues (particularly concerning citizenship and the United States’ role in the world). While the chain is certainly not a simple or absolute progression, a look at the titles of the orations immediately makes it clear that the students of the last quarter of the 1800s were speaking in a world whose dominant concerns were changing around them.

Subjects of the speeches. Trueblood (1907) argued that the “first element of a winning oration is a good subject” (p. 9). He meant several things by this, including: (1) the speaker must choose a topic that fits his [sic] own level of maturity and capability, (2) the speaker must choose a topic that fits “the nature of his [sic] audience ... especially the character and bent of the average judge in contests” (p. 9), (3) the subject must be “a live

one” with “human interest,” which means that the philosophical “principles involved ... may be applied vigorously to present-day problems” (pp. 9-10), (4) the speaker must have a genuinely deep personal interest in the theme—“[t]here must be a careful searching of the heart to see if there is not some wrong to be righted, some high thought to be pressed home as a direct message, something that must be spoken ... something that wells up from the heart for expression” (p. 10), and (5) the speaker should possess personal authority on the subject – for example, a speech about life in Japan is best presented by a speaker who has actually lived there.

The IOC speeches of the late 1800s certainly demonstrated the use of “live” topics which the speakers had personal connections to. The orations of the 1800s reflected the events and discourse of the time period in which they were delivered, a period that witnessed many social changes involving substantial economic, philosophical, moral, and scientific questions. The first IOC was hosted a little more than nine years after the Civil War ended, while the country was navigating its way through the Reconstruction Era. The speeches that addressed conditions in the South, the Civil War, and/or slavery included both a speech J.H. Finley delivered about the abolitionist John Brown (Finley, 1887) and Guy Everett Maxwell’s speech about an anti-slavery Senator named Charles Sumner (Maxwell, 1891).

While still in the throes of Reconstruction, the United States entered the Long Depression that lasted from 1877 to 1896. The depression devastated the country economically as tens of thousands of businesses closed and unemployment jumped to fourteen percent (Klitgaard & Narron, 2016). This economic crisis inspired discourse about employment and labor practices, including Albert J. Beveridge’s oration in 1885. Titling his speech “The Conflict of Labor and Capital,” Beveridge argued for the rights of laborers in a system focused on profits (Beveridge, 1885). Similarly, E. Jean Nelson’s 1892 speech “Industrial Freedom” focused on the role of the factories in economic progress (Nelson, 1892). Continuing to explore this general topic, L. F. Dimmitt in 1894 presented a speech entitled “The Humane Spirit in Modern Civilization.” It dissected the internal conflict that he believed Americans were feeling in response to the poor working conditions that prevailed in “modern” factories and cities (Dimmitt, 1894).

The depression and economic downturn were not unique to the United States. The impact of economic struggles was felt globally and had multiple causes, including Ireland’s potato famine. In 1841, the number of immigrants flowing to the United States from Northern Europe spiked as a result of the potato famine (Library of Congress, 2018). Between 1845 and 1855, around one million or more Irish adults and children emigrated from Ireland to start new lives in the U.S. Thomas W. Graydon, who according to his published bibliography was himself one of those Irish immigrants, talked about the political debates then occurring in Ireland in his speech, titled “The Two Races in Ireland” (Graydon, 1875, pp. 37-41). Immigration from Eastern Europe also drastically increased during this period, and it reached an all-time high during the late 1800s (Klitgaard & Narron, 2016). Many student speakers talked about their own experiences as either immigrants or first-generation citizens of the United States. For example, Chauncey Frederick Bell—who was born in Canada and then moved to the U.S.—examined the place of immigrants in the U.S. after the Civil War in his speech, titled “Statesman and Nation” (Bell, 1897). Meanwhile, Victor E. Bender, whose parents were German immigrants, delivered the speech “Schiller and Germany” to advise United States citizens to learn from

Friedrich Schiller's theories about intellectual freedom. He argued that the attention being paid to Schiller by Germans was a main reason for the positive political reforms taking place in Germany, and he asserted that the United States could experience similar reforms if it also embraced Schiller's philosophies (Bender, 1885). Whether examining their own experiences or those of their parents, student speakers frequently chose immigration as their focus at the IOC's of the late 1800s. Personal connections to the "live" topics of the time period were thus apparent in the topic choices of the students.

Persuasive appeals used in the speeches. Smith (1996) categorizes the types of appeals found in IOC persuasive speeches as either fact, value, or policy-based. Both Smith (1996) and Friedley (1992) argue that prior to the 1970s, appeals tended to be value-oriented, while starting in the 1970s the speeches shifted to a policy orientation. Digging more specifically into this division, White and Messer (2003) found that most of the topics explored prior to 1930 were grounded in rather broad value appeals, a trait which I agree typifies the IOC speeches of the late 1800s. Many of the speeches used value appeals to make arguments about government structure, the different roles government played, and the responsibility government has to its citizens. In some speeches, these themes appeared in the form of examples used as support, but many speeches centered around such subjects. The speeches that focused on the operation of government, for example, questioned the meaning of American citizenship and argued about what role citizens should play in the government and how the government should work for the country. Yates (1880) delivered a speech on the topic of "The Evolution of Government," Ritsher (1886) on "Conservatism, an Essential Element of Progress," Daniels (1887) on "The Man and the State," Bell (1897) on "Statesman and Nation," and Barnett (1898) on "The Second Duty of the Citizen."

Another cluster of topics that used values to persuade related to religion. Specifically, many of the speeches addressed the role of Christianity in government, civilization, and everyday lives. The orators spoke on topics such as "Satan and Mephistopheles" (Curtis, 1877), "Faith and Doubt as Motors of Action" (Prouty, 1877), "The Philosophy of Scepticism" (Coffin, 1881), "The Political Mission of Puritanism" (Ross, 1883), "The Unity of Science and Religion" (Mackintosh, 1884), "The Puritan and the Cavalier in Our National Life" (Naylor, 1890), and "The Coming King" (Farrar, 1899). While focusing on values they felt were needed in politics and religious practices, the orators used value appeals to persuade their audiences.

Gathering Materials and Using Evidence

In order to best analyze how materials were gathered and evidence was used in the speeches of the late 1800s, we need to anchor our analysis in the time period. Trueblood (1907) explains that, once a student chose a topic, they were expected to find good sources written by well-known authorities on the subject. The student was to look for as many facts as possible about the topic in order to acquire "full information in regard to the conditions and the principles involved" (p. 11). Students were expected to gather data approaching the subject from many different angles, typically recording the information in their own words, though they might sometimes choose to "quote directly" (Trueblood, 1907, p. 11). However, Trueblood (1907) stresses that the student gathers this material in order to harvest "food for his [sic] own best thought" (p. 11). The student must "remember that an oration is not a mosaic of stolen gems, but original thinking founded on critical reading" (p. 11). Thus, the student must scrupulously avoid plagiarism (Trueblood, 1907). As

Trueblood explains, in order for the speaker to “grow in mentality (he) must not only gather thought from other sources but must compare that thought with his [sic] own conception of the fitness of things” (p. 11). In other words, “[o]bservation, intelligent use of the eyes and ears, the attitude of interrogation, mental alertness and open-mindedness are essential to power of thought, the basis of all good speaking” (p. 11). Ultimately, the orator’s central goal during this stage is to “master the underlying principles, and to develop a spirit that is willing to deal fairly and squarely with facts and opinions” (p. 12). Only if the speaker develops a “clear insight into the fitness of things” will he/she develop “purpose in the oration, without which nothing can be accomplished” (p. 12). However, as a side note to the issue of plagiarism, it is important to point out that Trueblood did not discuss a specific procedure (or set of prescriptive guidelines) for how to document the sources drawn from, paraphrased, or even directly quoted.

Sellnow and Ziegelmüller (1988) provide a modern expansion of this approach to using evidence when they explain that evidence used in persuasive speeches can consist of either evocative appeals or logical proofs. They define evocative appeals “as the use of dramatic quotations, narratives or stories, slogans, refrains, vivid passages of description, or any other strategy designed to elicit emotional reaction from the audience” (Sellnow & Ziegelmüller, 1988, p. 77). On the other hand, these researchers define logical appeals as “the use of authoritative testimony, factual data, and statistical measures” (Sellnow & Ziegelmüller, 1988, p. 77). White and Sellnow (2003) also use these categories in their research. In the rest of this section, I demonstrate how evocative appeals, logical appeals, and documentation were used in the IOC speeches of the 1800s.

Evocative appeals. Evocative appeals were found in every speech examined. Examples (a type of narrative) were the most common form of evocative appeal employed. In 1878, J. Gerry Eberhart’s oration was entitled “Dante,” and he was judged by Benjamin Harrison eleven years before Harrison became the U.S. President. Eberhart’s opening passage employs an admiring tone, an inspirational atmosphere, a lilting texture, and poetic nuance to make us “feel” Dante’s importance. It relies on creating a sense of the man, rather than providing detailed logical facts about him, to provoke an evocative response in the listener, stating:

The history of a nation is the history of her great men. Dante was the prophetic exponent of the heart of the Middle Ages, the embodiment of the character, and the realization of the science of his day. A character original, pathetic, and angelic, whose inspired soul led the intellect in its train. Tasso, Spenser, Goethe, Byron, and Milton bathed themselves in the light of his resplendent genius. (p. 73)

Another example of an evocative appeal is evident in a passage from Laura A. Kent’s speech “Beatrice and Margaret (1876).” By using (among other things) adjectives that act as evocative labels (“exquisite delineations,” “fair divinities,” “irreverent hands,” etc.), allusions to religious icons (Beatrice and Jesus), and assertions of experienced emotions (“most pleasing”), she builds an evocative appeal. She states,

Beatrice and Margaret are, perhaps, the most exquisite delineations of womanhood to be found in the literature of the Christian centuries; and while so many fair divinities of elder days are fading into myths, it is most pleasing to find that the critical method which has dared to lay irreverent hands upon the person of Jesus himself, concedes, almost without an exception, that these two characters are real flesh and blood. (pp. 48-49)

Both of these quotations show how language was used to make evocative appeals in the IOC speeches of the 1800s. The examples were used to support arguments and make pathos-based appeals advancing the speaker's larger purpose.

Logical appeals. Authoritative testimony was a commonly used form of logical appeal. Occasionally present, but far less common, were logical appeals in the form of numerical data and statistical measures. Authoritative testimony was employed in almost every speech in the form of statements from famous people such as philosophers, writers, religious figures, and poets. In his speech, "Satan and Mephistopheles," Olin A. Curtis sought to describe how Satan's body looks. Rather than coming up with the words himself, he added authority to his argument by citing Milton, though he does not specifically state John Milton's full name nor the title of his work. He simply says, "but, touched by Milton's remarkable genius rendered formless and indistinct as well as vast" (Curtis, 1877, p. 54). He continued by citing George Elliot, saying, "...[this] serves to increase what George Elliot calls 'the grandeur of the wild beast'" (p. 54). Using Milton and Elliot as authorities on the visual image of Satan, Curtis asked the audience to combine the two viewpoints and logically deduce how the body of Satan would appear. Another example of this approach to citations was found in "Charles Sumner as a Philanthropist," delivered by Guy Everett Maxwell. Sumner, a U.S. Senator representing Massachusetts, died in 1874 while fighting in support of important civil rights legislation. In order to demonstrate that his own audience should support civil rights in 1891, Maxwell notes that Sumner's "last words were, 'Don't let my Civil Rights Bill fail' " (Maxwell, 1891, p. 37). These examples are logical appeals to the extent that the speakers are citing authorities to provide philosophical, legal, or moral support to extend their own claims.

Second, while the speeches of the late 1800s did not rely heavily on numbers and statistics, they were sometimes employed in speeches like Albert J. Beveridge's "The Conflict of Labor and Capitalism," in which he made a point about the growing likelihood of union proliferation. He stated, "[i]ncreasing population brings it each day nearer. Already we have 1,000,000 unemployed men; already 2,000,000 laborers secretly organized; already fifty newspapers spreading sedition and excess; and our population is doubling every twenty-five years!" (Beveridge, 1885, p. 152). Beveridge's example used numbers to show that in the status quo there was already support for unions, thus demonstrating to his audience that many others agreed with his position. Another example can be drawn from Lyman (1899). In his speech, "The Altruism of American Expansion," he stated that "[o]n America rests the obligation to determine the future of eleven millions [sic] of nature's disadvantaged children" (p. 193). In using this number to demonstrate the severity of the problem, he asked his audience to logically understand the magnitude of America's problem relative to children living in poverty. While the speeches of the 1800s incorporated very few statistics, numbers were used by these particular rhetors to provide logical perspectives on specific problems.

Third, following the lines laid down by Trueblood (1907), while expectations about the documentation of sources were loose, clear attempts were made to avoid plagiarism. However, the content of the source citations provided by students tended to be very "incomplete" by today's standards. As demonstrated in the previous examples, the original author was usually mentioned before the statement referenced. Most of the authors named tended to be famous figures of the past or present – contemporary "journalists" went essentially unmentioned. Meanwhile, the actual publication – the precise book or article –

was not usually cited, nor were publication dates provided. Additionally, when numbers or statistics were mentioned, a source was not usually given. One notable exception to the absence of named sources was the Bible, which was sometimes referenced by name. Overall, the speeches did not employ a consistent style of citation.

Construction of the Oration and the Organizational Pattern or Structure

The construction guidelines and organizational patterns used in the 1800s were not rigidly prescribed, but as oratory contests became more popular, a typical organizational pattern emerged. Trueblood (2007) goes into quite a bit of detail on the issue of organization, considering both the identity and nature of the elements which should be used to structure the oration. He suggests that the speaker begins by looking at the notes he/she has collected during the previous “gathering” phase, and then arrange them into “the order that seems most logical” (p. 12). The basic structure of the speech is built around three main parts: (1) the introduction, (2) the “development” (p. 12), and (3) the conclusion.

In nature, the introduction “should aim to get possession of the audience, and direct them into favor and cooperation” (p. 12). Its goal is to “conciliate and arouse interest” in the audience (p. 13). Ideally simple and concise in style, it “should be neither argumentative nor persuasive, but rather narrative, historical, or expository” (p. 12). For example, Coffin (1881) in his speech, “The Philosophy of Scepticism,” asks, referring to faith and skepticism, “[h]ow does it occur, and what does it mean, that these two great intellectual forces are so often found together? Does it mean that they are related as cause and effect? Does it mean that faith can be purchased only by paying the fearful price of scepticism?” (p. 105). Coffin (1881) did not create an argument, but rather set up a dilemma by pointing to historical connections. The parts suggested by the question became the main points of division in the speech.

Another organizational component considered by Trueblood (1907) in relation to the introductory part of the speech is the element we currently call the organizational preview. He notes that “not infrequently the last part of the introduction takes the form of a partition of the speech” (p. 12). However, as described by Trueblood, this sentence takes a more subtle form than contemporary practice assumes – it may come in the form of a question, and it does not attach numbers to the main ideas. Furthermore, Trueblood’s comment that this statement is “not infrequent” implies that it is also not automatically expected. Certainly such previews were not *de rigeur* in the late 1800s.

The second part of the speech, the “development,” is what we would now refer to as the “body.” Trueblood (1907) explains that the development of the speech “usually hinges about two or three divisions,” and he argues that their basic nature should be as follows: “the first ... historical in character; the second, a setting forth of the present conditions; the third, the outlook, in which it is always pleasing to the audience to have one take a hopeful view of things” (p. 13). However, the number three is not sacrosanct. Rather, the actual number of main points used in the body of any given speech was determined by convenience, as different topics lent themselves better to a greater or fewer number.

The conclusion, according to Trueblood (1907), “should be the most persuasive part of the speech.” It should include a summary that “bring[s] into hurried review the main points set forth in the oration.” It also “gives opportunity for appeal to the loftiest sentiments, and to reach the highest moral level of the address” (p. 15).

Trueblood also pulls back from this detailed look at the specific parts of the speech to offer some general guidance about over-riding principles which should guide organizational choices. To begin with, each idea should rise out of what comes before it and lead into what comes next, so that “each idea will gain additional strength from those that precede it” (p. 13). Next, as the speech proceeds, “the purpose of the speech should be kept steadily in view, and every step taken should aid in accomplishing that purpose” (pp. 13-14). A third general principle is that the speaker should constantly keep the audience in mind as they write, striving “to impress his [sic] thought as though he [sic] were actually before the people” (p. 14). Next, the overall structure of the speech should demonstrate “clearness, force, variety, and rhythm.” Fifth, the basic building block of the speech is the individual paragraph, “each adding a block to the structure, and bearing directly on the end sought.” These paragraphs should be tied together through “the use of proper transitional phrases” which clearly show “their relation to each other” (p. 14). In a similar way, “link-words” should be used “to bind sentences together within the paragraphs” (p. 14). Finally, the structure of the individual sentence (as well as each larger unit of the speech) must be considered. According to Trueblood (1907, pp. 14-15), “[i]f properly written, a sentence grows in strength toward the end. The same may be said of the paragraph, of the division, and of the speech.”

In seeking to connect Trueblood’s (1907) ideas to the observable structure of the IOC speeches of the late 1800s, I discovered that expectations about the organization of the introduction, development, and conclusion took firmer shape and became more popularly accepted as the years passed. The earlier speeches seem to be more “free-flowing” in form, while the later speeches are moving toward the guidelines identified by Trueblood. A few of the student orators provided their speech outlines as part of the texts they submitted to the contest, and thus some of the printed texts include not only the words of any given speech but also the student’s outline of it. The following three outlines (all published in *Winning Orations*) were variously used in speeches presented in 1885, 1888, and 1899. Thus, we are looking at how the students themselves envisioned the structure of their speeches. Viewed as a progression, they suggest a possible evolution.

Some of the oratories delivered in the early years of the contest used introduction-development-conclusion patterns overall but did not closely follow the three-point pattern Trueblood (1907) suggested be used in the development section. For example, in his speech titled “The Conflict of Labor and Capital” (1885), Albert J. Beveridge submitted the following outline to be published alongside his speech text in *Winning Orations*:

Introduction

- I. Principle originating most conflicts
- II. Principle solving such conflicts
- III. Application of above to conflict of labor and capital

Discussion

- I. Importance of the labor problem
- II. Social extremists already moving
- III. Positions of these social extremists
- IV. Positions of social extremists refuted
- V. Our present society equal to problem
- VI. True causes of conflict
- VII. True remedy the removal of these causes
- VIII. Forces preventing removal of these causes
- IX. These forces must therefore be overcome

- X. Methods of overcoming them
- Close
- I. Summary (p. 151)

This speech outline does not follow contemporary rules regarding the use of co-ordinate ideas, nor does it keep the development (“discussion”) section concise. However, it does foreshadow Trueblood’s (1907) suggestions in that it helps the audience understand the history of the problem, explains the problem, and gives the audience hope for the future.

A second cluster of speeches, as illustrated by the speech, “Principles of Political Parties,” likewise did not follow the Introduction-Development-Conclusion expectation articulated by Trueblood (1907). The author of this oration, R. G. Johnson, provided the following outline. Note that while it does not overtly employ the Introduction-Development-Conclusion format, it does roughly employ the trajectory from the historical to the present to optimistic reform:

- I. Logical ground for existence of parties
- II. Necessity of two parties
- III. Derivation of principles underlying political parties
- IV. The principles traced in political history
- V. Outcome of attempts of independent parties, based upon narrow issues, to subvert dominant parties, e.g., Abolition, Free-soil, etc., Labor, Socialistic, and Prohibition parties considered.
- VI. Errors of third partyism.
- VII. Power of public sentiment to secure reform through existing parties.
- VIII. Conclusion (1888, p. 191)

An organizational pattern such as Johnson’s demonstrates the independent thinking some speakers used when organizing their speeches. Here, even the basic organizational “building blocks” of the speech are determined by what the speaker feels the particular topic and argument call for.

Trueblood’s (1907) suggestions for how to organize a speech seem to have been followed more closely toward the very end of the 19th century. For example, to accompany his speech titled “Macbeth and Iago,” William Samuel Wescott (1899) provided an organizational pattern that closely adhered to the pattern subsequently advocated by Trueblood (1907):

Introduction

Discussion

Conduct is only an outward expression of an inner condition. The philosophy of evil must be based upon the desires and purposes of the heart and mind.

The villain is necessary to the highest literary art. Shakespeare’s philosophy of evil is found in his dramas. Macbeth and Iago are ethical types.

Macbeth is controlled by feeling. Iago is controlled by intellect.

Macbeth represents heart without mind. Iago represents mind without heart.

Conclusion

These two characters exhibit Shakespeare’s philosophy of evil.

Humanity has much in common with Macbeth.

Iago is the consummate fiend; he champions the cause of heaven, but ruins the soul (p. 212).

The speech has an introduction, a discussion that is concise and to the point, and an ending that leaves the audience with a pointed conclusion.

The different organizational patterns we have reviewed show that, although a variety of organizational patterns was used during the last quarter of the 1800s, there was a clear difference between the earlier speeches and the later speeches. It seems the method of organization became more uniform as the years passed, moving toward the format soon after advocated by Trueblood (1907) as an optimal approach to persuasive speaking.

Stylistic Devices

Style has long been recognized as one of the basic “canons” of rhetoric. Given that both Trueblood (1907) and White and Messer (2003) highlight style as an important element of an oration, I analyzed the language strategies frequently used in the speeches of the IOC during the late 1800s in order to better understand the stylistic devices employed to persuade audiences. It is also important to examine the issue of style because this essay is centrally interested in the impact of cultural shifts on changes in the practice of oratory, and according to Okabe (1983) “the rhetorical canon of style is subject to the influence of cultural values and assumptions” (p. 492).

Definitionally, the term *style* refers to “the words and rhetorical devices the speaker uses to clothe his ideas” (Golden *et. al.*, 2007, p. 41). According to Cicero, any given communicator’s style can be pitched at three basic levels, two of which are relevant here. The first (and lowest) of these is the *plain* style, which is used to “prove” an idea. It embodies propriety, and is typified by being “clean,” “proper,” “adroit,” and “neat.” The speaker who uses it has their attention “directed to thought rather than language” and thus “disregard[s] rhythm and smoothness and avoid[s] ornamentation. . . [it] might employ mild metaphors and maxims, but only when they enhance . . . understanding, never for effect.” In other words, the *plain* style is “direct, expeditious and ordinary” (Golden *et. al.*, 2007, p. 91). Elevated above the *plain* style is the *middle* style. According to Golden *et. al.*, in this style “vigor [is] sacrificed for charm. Any and every form of ornamentation [is] appropriate, including the use of wit and humor. . . Harsh sounds [are] avoided. Euphony and imagery [are] cultivated” (p. 91).

We might argue that the typical oratory of 2020 tends to rely primarily on the *plain* style, while the IOC oratories of the late 1800s manifest a language style that tends toward the *middle* style. Thus, when reading the essays, it immediately becomes apparent that the overall tone and texture of these texts is more elevated and poetic than we are generally used to hearing modern speakers employ. Both Trueblood (1907) and White and Messer (2003) help guide my analysis of the specific stylistic elements which contribute to this overall impression.

Trueblood (1907) notes that there is a significant difference between the written style which is appropriate to essays and the oral style that best suits orations. He asserts that the orator “should strive to clothe his thought simply, in direct and pointed language, without pyrotechnics in thought or style” (p. 14). This is important because, while the written essay “is directed primarily to the understanding, the oration [is directed] to both the understanding and the will. The object of the speech is to secure action, and everything must bend to that end” (p. 14). Even so, what seemed “direct and pointed” to the audiences of a century or more ago seems quite elevated and poetic to the average audience member of today. Thus, when following Trueblood’s 1907 guidelines, the speaker needs to be

sensitive to stylistic issues that are significantly more advanced than those we tend to talk about in 2020. Trueblood (1907, p. 15) urges the use of “variety in sentence structure,” “force of expression,” “an intermingling of light and heavy syllables in due proportion,” and “rhythm” (though this last must not “be carried to excess so as to destroy the directness of the address, and make it sound too much like a poem”).

Trueblood (1907) argues that the speaker’s use of style should shift as the speech progresses. While the introduction should be “simple, concise, [and] without figure or ornament” (p. 13), the speaker should escalate their style in the conclusion in order to “urge” their ideas “with great force of expression and appeal” (p. 15). To aid with this, “[t]he last sentence may be longer than the usual sentence and may contain special beauty of thought and rhythm of expression (p. 15).” The employment of this longer sentence at the end of a speech was demonstrated in many IOC oratories. For example, in his speech, “The Political Mission of Puritanism,” John M. Ross (1883) ended by saying:

... the soul of Puritanism ‘is marching on.’ As once it wrested Liberty from the tyrant’s grasp, so to-day in the face of maddened mobs it asserts the majesty of Law. Nor will its works be complete till universal right prevails, and men are freed from every chain, save those by which ‘this whole round earth is bound about the feet of God. (p. 133)

Beautifully worded and powerful sentiments, such as shown in this example, were affirmed at the end of many speeches. Furthermore, according to Trueblood (1907, p. 13), the conclusion should adopt an optimistic tone, since “it is always pleasing to the audience to have one take a hopeful view of things. Pessimism is poison to an audience or a judge.” For example, Charles Noland (who earned Second Place in 1876), concludes his speech (which examines the struggle between science and religion) by saying,

Let us harmonize all sectional differences and disputes, forget the dark cloud of fratricidal war which once hung loweringly o’er our fair land, and strike hands around our country’s common altar of thanksgiving. Our nation *can* purge itself from its weaknesses, its follies, and its corruptions; so let it do, and with renewed youth and vigor spring forward to make the future as the past, and ever yet more glorious. Let the mighty conquerors of the first century go forth to yet grander triumphs; let Science and Invention subdue and subsidize to their purposes our forests and rivers, our mountains and prairies, and lakes; while Religion, untrammled by civil laws or ecclesiastical bigotries, but bathed anew in the sunlight of its own pure heaven, and baptized with the spirit of the one Universal Father of us all, sheds its purifying and ennobling radiance over hill and valley, over mansion and cottage—then shall each successive year and age and century but mark the progress and prefect the triumphs so well begun. (pp. 46-47)

A more specific listing of the stylistic elements that can be sought in the IOC speeches of the late 1800s is provided by White and Messer (2003, p. 5), who looked “for cases of language strategies such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, personification, repetition, and allusions to literature, religious texts and mythology” in the speeches they studied. Such devices can be important to the speech, for as Olson (2010) argued, “metaphors and clever language choices serve to highlight the intentionality of writing the oration” (p. 201). My analysis of the IOC speeches of the late 1800s revealed that they made significant use of all of these devices.

Metaphors and similes were used frequently in these speeches. For example, metaphors appeared when T. Edward Egbert drew a parallel between the “breeze against

the sails [which] propels a ship” and “the emotions acting upon the will [to] beget action in the direction in which they impel” (1874, p. 19), and when he equated the orator’s voice to a “trumpet” (p. 18). LaFollette (1879) made frequent use of these devices, connecting such pairs as suspicion/poison, jealousy/consuming fires, virtue/pitch (tar), goodness/ensnaring net, and Iago/a magnet with only one pole (pp. 80-86). Douglass (1890) used a metaphor at the very start of his introduction to establish his basic argument, equating the English language with a bubbling “silver stream” whose “rippling waters flash diamonds from their sunlit surface” as they flow across the earth (p. 222). And near the end of the century, A. M. Cloud argued that “democracy had become a grand fact, a living, transforming power ... as resistless as the surging ocean-tides” (Cloud, 1896, p. 134). Overall, the frequent use of metaphors and similes is easily found in the IOC speeches of the period.

While alliteration did not appear to me to be heavily used in these speeches, it is easy to find some or several examples of it in most of the orations. For example, Foster (1874, p. 23) included such phrases as “the fleets of the world will flock,” while Coultas (1875) employed alliteration in a more complex and layered way when he talked about “wild, warring, struggling, surging humanity” (p. 32), as well as when he deplored “the impress of evil; popes, prelates, and priests, led on by the powers of hell” (p. 33). Also making use of alliteration, Noland (1876, p. 43) described “a darkened and depressed land,” and men who have “delved into the deep mysteries.” Meanwhile, Bancroft (1878) made heavy use of the device in passages such as: “swallows consort in myriads; the condor dwells companionless in the awful solitudes of the Cordilleras. Weakness wars with thousands. . .” (p. 67).

Personification was also regularly used by the orators in the late 1800s. For example, Coultas (1875) made frequent use of this literary device, apparent in such passages from his speech as: (1) “Culture – her garments yet wet with the dew of dawning day, her face luminous” (p. 33), (2) “Profound and metaphysical Germany, artistic and imaginative France, practical and energetic America, bluff and sturdy old England” (p. 35), and (3) “we grasp with firmer friendship the electric hand of Europe” (p. 35). Likewise, Prouty (1877) attributed human qualities to the concept of science-inspired doubt, stating that “the spirit of doubt has been bold and aggressive. It has questioned the wisdom and perfection of nature” (p. 59). Fifteen years later, the device continues to be used by such orators as Douglass (1890), who describes right and wrong “crowned on a common throne, while despotism and oppression crouch at the feet of liberty” (p. 223). In all of these cases, the use of personification vivifies the theoretical concepts the speakers are exploring and makes it easier to envision and grasp them.

Repetition was also used in the IOC speeches. Sometimes it appeared in the form of asking multiple questions in a row and then making a persuasive argument based on how the audience was assumed to have answered them. At other times, repetition appeared in the opening lines of sequential paragraphs. For example, E. Jean Nelson repeated the word “freedom” at the beginning of three consecutive paragraphs to argue that freedom cannot exist if people do not have the will to advocate for it (Nelson, 1892, pp. 41-43). In still other cases, repetition was used within a single sentence to create rhythmic builds. For example, Noland (1876) pointed out to his audience within the confines of a single sentence that “I have said nothing of the science of navigation ... nothing of the advancement of the

science of government ... nothing of the great discoveries in chemistry ... nothing of the laws of acoustics” (p. 43).

During the 1800s, it was also common for speakers to incorporate allusions to stories drawn from literature, the lives of famous figures, religion, and mythology. Many examples of this are available.

Some orators made allusions to famous literature. For example, in his speech on British rule in India, Foster (1874, p. 23) illustrates an idea by alluding to a poem by Byron, though he does not cite Byron as the author (“know ye the land of the cedar and vine, where the flowers ever blossom, the beams every shine”). Wescott (1900) mentions Shakespeare, Richter, and Matthew Arnold in his opening paragraph, as well as quoting Hugo saying, “[t]here is something grander than the ocean, and that is conscience; something sublimer than the sky, and that is the interior of the soul” (p. 212).”

Meanwhile, many speeches alluded to the lives of famous figures. Thus, Foster (1874) referenced “antiquity’s greatest woman – Semiramis,” Alexander the Great, and the knights of the Middle Ages – all within his introductory section (p. 22). In a single sentence, Prouty (1877) invokes the presence of “Milton, Dante, Virgil, Homer, [and] Horace” (p. 63). And in another speech, R. G. Johnson explained, “[o]ur Lincolns, our Sumners, our Grants, met the Davises, the Stephensens, the Lees, not on the moral issue of slavery only – they fought for the broader idea, a political principle. They fought for the integrity of the nation” (Johnson, 1888, p. 193).

The use of religious allusions was even more popular. Highlighting just a few of the large number of examples available, Foster (1874, p. 22) alludes to the tower of Babel, Coultas (1875) references the killing of Abel in the Garden of Eden by Cain and then goes on to reference many other Biblical figures (among them Moses, Miriam, Jeremiah, and David’s harp), Noland (1876, p. 42) alludes to “the Capucin friar,” and Bancroft (1878) asks his audience to “think of the Prophet at Horeb; the royal Buddha in the caves of India; the divine Dante wandering like the shade of an unburied Greek” (p. 68). Of course, this last passage also illustrates the use of mythological allusions (which often intersect with Christian references). For example, Kent (1876) references “horrid Minos, judge of Hades” (p. 49). As the examination of religious topics continued throughout the late 1800s, so too did the use of religious and mythological references. Late in the century, Olin A. Curtis referenced Mephistopheles as a character in the work of John Milton by saying, “Mephistopheles would shatter every blessed hope and every cherished opinion; would blast whatever of zeal, whatever of trust, whatever of affection ennoble our toil and hallow our homes” (Curtis, 1891, pp. 55-56).

Yet other allusions commonly referenced historical locations, periods, or events. For example, A. M. Cloud referenced the different nations who had liberated themselves from Napoleon, saying that “Italy and Spain had blazed forth in democratic revolution and were sweeping on to grander freedom” (Cloud, 1896, p. 133). Yet another form of allusion involved referencing the emotions of people in a particular time period. As one case in point, R. G. Johnson stated, “An era of good feeling, as during Monroe’s administration, may prevail, hiding, temporarily, these differentiating principles from public view; nevertheless, they exist” (Johnson, 1888, p. 193). The frequent use of vivid allusions seemed to be a very common trend in the speeches.

Delivery

The passage of years and the absence of video recording in the later 1800s means that we are unable to independently observe or assess the delivery techniques used at the time. However, two sources of information are available to us in *Winning Orations* that can crack the door open on what traits typified the delivery of these orators.

The first source of information is the collection of biographies which accompany the printed texts of the orations. Most (but not all) of the oratory texts are preceded by biographies of the student speakers. Some of these biographies are fairly detailed, others are quite brief. It is hard to be sure of who wrote them – some or all may be a mixture of information provided by the orators with the observations and research of the general editor – but we will here attribute them to Charles Edgar Prather, who edited the first volume of orations and co-edited the second volume. Some of these biographies praise specific aspects of a student's delivery. Thus, I will cite some of these comments since they seem to both reflect what the students did and reveal what the judges were looking for in regard to delivery.

The second source of information we have about the delivery ideals of the day (at least as they applied directly to the IOC) is an essay by Professor George W. Hoss, which Charles Edgar Prather (the editor of the 1891 edition of *Winning Orations*) describes as a “brilliant” essay by a “prominent educator of the day” that is “highly appropriate and instructive” and deserves “the popular praise of the public as well as the student” (p. 5). Titled “Orators and Oratory,” this essay describes four key “divisions” of oratory: the oratory of reason, the oratory of the imagination, the oratory of feeling and passion, and the oratory of delivery. This last section of Hoss' essay (1891) begins by asserting that the importance of delivery has declined since the classical age. It quotes Cicero as saying that “delivery has the supreme power in oratory,” and references Quintilian's claim that “it is not of so much importance what are ones [sic] thoughts, as it is in what manner they are delivered” (p. 235). However, according to Hoss, these views of delivery are “too strong for our age” since “a more intellectual age puts a lower price on delivery” (p. 235).

Even so, Hoss says, delivery is still important, and he makes “a strong plea for delivery” (p. 235). Hoss' essay, as well as the comments made in Prather's biographies, discuss aspects of both vocal and physical delivery.

The first aspect of vocal delivery noted by Hoss (1891) is having a rich, full voice that can assert itself strongly. This includes but is not limited to the ability to employ volume and project one's voice. He praises George Whitefield (a preacher well known at the time) as having “powers [that were] simply marvelous. His voice. . . could be heard distinctly by thirty thousand people” (p. 235). In the same vein, he praises Henry Clay for his “clarion voice” (p. 235), and admires Lord Brougham for being “the gladiator of Parliament” who was “[f]ierce, vengeful, [and] irresistible, you ... heard his roar. . . He seemed a mixture of man and lion—the lion often in front (p. 235).” Applying the call for full-throated delivery to the student speakers, Prather (1891) describes George T. Foster (an 1874 orator) as “a popular and eloquent speaker” whose “voice is full and remarkably flexible” (p. 21), depicts Thomas I. Coultas (an 1875 orator) as a speaker who is “impassioned and earnest” (p. 32), praises R.M. LaFollette (an 1879 orator) for having “a voice musical and magnetic” (p. 79), and honors R.G. Johnson (an 1888 orator) for having a “voice of remarkable richness and strength” (p. 183). Furthermore, voices like that of R.M. LaFollette demonstrate “faultless elocution” (Prather, 1891, p. 79).

Many of these comments also incorporate references to a second vocal delivery standard highlighted by Hoss (1891): excellence in the use of pitch and inflection. Hoss again praises the preacher George Whitefield, noting that “he could pronounce a single word with such pathos as to throw an audience into tears. Garrick said he would give a hundred guineas if he could pronounce the single letter O as Whitefield could” (p. 235). Accordingly, Prather (1891, pp. 15-16) notes the “full-toned melodious voice” of T. Edward Egbert, the first winner of the Inter-State contest in 1874. Prather refers to the voices of other student orators as “remarkably flexible” (Foster in 1874, p. 21), “musical” (LaFollette in 1879, p. 79), and in more than one case “rich” (pp. 190 and 197).

In relation to the standards of physical delivery, Hoss (1891) sets up several public figures as ideals to look to. These include Henry Clay for his “flashing eye and dilating figure” (p. 235). As already noted, Lord Brougham is depicted as a “lion,” for “you more than saw his glare and heard his roar – you felt them (p. 235).” Overall, Hoss (p. 235) praises speakers who can physically *take charge* of the speaking situation. He notes that, “[t]his is the victory of physical courage and physical force. These have won with many; as Fox, Chatham, Mirabeau, Luther, and others. These were the men to contend with popes and kings, men who, as Luther says of himself, were born to ‘fight whirlwinds and devils’ (p. 235).” Prather (1891, p. 15) says little to link the theme of physical delivery to the student orators in their published biographies, but he obliquely suggests this idea when he asserts that T. Edward Egbert, the first IOC champion in 1874, “possesses by nature the elements of an orator” including “an imposing figure.”

Comments by Prather (1891) also highlight the idea that delivery should demonstrate the speaker’s sincerity. In line with Quintilian’s “Good Man” theory, the ideal orator should be a true believer in the cause which they advocate. Accordingly, Prather notes that Thomas Coultas (an 1875 orator) “advocates what he believes” (p. 32), while R.G. Johnson (an 1888 orator) has “an earnest and direct style of speaking” (p. 190).

Finally, Prather indicates that the delivery of successful orators is typified by self-possession and the ability to think on one’s feet. The delivery of an effective orator should never reveal that something has happened to “shake” them. Accordingly, Prather (1891) praises Egbert in 1874 for demonstrating “a ready utterance” (p. 15), honors Ed. H. Hughes (an 1889 orator) for his “self-possession before the audience” (p. 202), and notes that J.A. Blaisdell had proven earlier in his career that he had “the ability to think on one’s feet” (p. 208).

Overall, Hoss (1891) concludes that the oratory of the ideal speaker “is powerful in passion and action, hence powerful in delivery (p. 236).”

Conclusion

After reviewing the creation of the IOC and the IOA and analyzing the top two speeches delivered at the contests in the late 1800s, there are some clear trends that can be seen throughout these 25 years. The topics that were written about, the evidence that was used, the organizational patterns of the different speeches, the stylistic devices employed, and the delivery praised, were clearly impacted by the time period. This historical critical analysis can help the forensics community understand the foundation of our craft. This is important because, as Messer and White (2003) argue, “so often in forensics we focus too much on what is cutting edge, and not enough on the traditions upon which our activity is

grounded” (p. 16). Knowing more about how competitive speaking came about and why the first national organization was founded can provide us with a historical foundation for an activity that is ever-changing.

However, this paper is only a starting point to understand the IOC and the speeches delivered at the contest. Further papers could explore other aspects of the speeches delivered in the 1800s and look at the speeches during the early 1900s. Delving into these speeches and the early history of forensics organizations reminds us of where our activity and its traditions comes from, and reflecting on our roots creates an appreciation for our own history, motivating us to consider the potential need for change as we move into our future.

It seems appropriate to end this essay with a final look back at the Inter-State orators of the late 1800s, who sought to emulate the ideal orator described by Hoss (1891). In his words,

... it is obvious that the problem of oratory becomes in a good degree the problem of metaphysics. He who would control mind must know mind. He must know how to address the understanding to the exclusion of the imagination and feelings, and *vice versa*. He must know how to build a solid masonry of argument strong as a military fortress, and if need be, as rough and cold; and when built, he must know whether to leave it thus, or to soften its rugged outline by flinging over it a drapery of sunshine and flowers. He must know whether reason rules alone, or whether reason blended with the imagination, or feeling, or both. At other times he may wish the imagination to rule, weaving a web as light as gossamer or gorgeous as the Orient. At another time it is passion, when the soul becomes a furnace, and speech a mixture of whirlwind and fire. In a word, he must know, and that clearly, whether his aim is to *please*, to *instruct*, to *convince*, to *move*, or to *storm*. His aim known, he will know his instruments, whether logic, rhetoric, delivery, singly or combined. Here as everywhere aim or end must determine means. (p. 236)

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Appendix A

Dates and Locations of the Inter-State Oratorical Contests

Date	Location
February 27, 1874	Galesburg, Illinois
May 1875	Indianapolis, Indiana
May 1876	Chicago, Illinois
May 1877	Madison, Wisconsin
May 1878	St. Louis, Missouri
May 1879	Iowa City, Iowa
May 1880	Oberlin, Ohio
May 1881	Jacksonville, Illinois
May 1882	Indianapolis, Indiana
May 1883	Minneapolis, Minnesota
May 1884	Iowa City, Iowa
May 1885	Columbus, Ohio
May 1886	Lawrence, Kansas
May 1887	Bloomington, Illinois
May 1888	Greencastle, Indiana
May 1889	Grinnell, Iowa
May 1890	Lincoln, Nebraska
May 1891	Des Moines, Iowa
May 1892	Minneapolis, Minnesota
May 4, 1893	Columbus, Ohio
May 10, 1894	Indianapolis, Indiana
May 2, 1895	Galesburg, Illinois
May 6 (or 7), 1896	Topeka, Kansas
May 5, 1897	Columbia, Missouri
May 5, 1898	Beloit, Wisconsin
May 5, 1899	Lincoln, Nebraska

Appendix B

Inter-State Oratorical Contest Speech Topics and Speakers

Year	Speaker	School	Topic	Award
1874	T. Edward Egbert	Chicago University	The Heart, the Source of Power	1 st
1874	George T. Foster	Beloit College	British Rule in India	2 nd
1875	Thomas I. Coultas	Illinois Wesleyan University	Culture, a Basis for Brotherhood	1 st
1875	Thomas W. Graydon	Iowa State University	The Two Races in Ireland	2 nd
1876	Charles T. Noland	Central College	The World's Conquerors	1 st
1876	Laura A. Kent*	Antioch College	Beatrice and Margaret	2 nd
1877	Olin A. Curtis	Lawrence University	Satan and Mephistopheles	1 st
1877	S. Frank Prouty	Central College	Faith and Doubt as Motors of Action	2 nd
1878	E.A. Bancroft	Knox College	The Loneliness of Genius	1 st
1878	J. Gerry Eberhart	Cornell College	Dante	2 nd
1879	R.M LaFollette	Wisconsin State University	Iago	1 st
1879	J.A. Barber	Oberlin College	Mahometanism and its Enemies	2 nd
1880	L.C. Harris	Iowa College	Poe	1 st
1880	Richard Yates	Illinois College	The Evolution of Government	2 nd
1881	Charles F. Coffin	DePauw University	The Philosophy of Scepticism	1 st
1881	Owen Morris	Carleton College	Progress, its Sources and its Laws	2 nd
1882	Frank G. Hanchett	Chicago University	The Old and the New Civilizations	1 st
1882	Arthur J. Craven	Iowa State University	The Cause of the Gracchi	2 nd
1883	John M. Ross	Monmouth College	The Political Mission of Puritanism	1 st
1883	Daniel M. Kellogg	Beloit College	The Saxon Element in Civilization	2 nd
1884	Charles T. Wyckoff	Knox College	Judas Iscariot	1 st
1884	George L. Mackintosh	Wabash College	The Unity of Science and Religion	2 nd
1885	Albert J. Beveridge	DePauw University	The Conflict of Labor and Capital	1 st
1885	Victor E. Bender	Knox College	Schiller and Germany	2 nd
1886	E. C. Ritscher	Beloit College	Conservatism, an Essential Element of Progress	1 st
1886	H. H. Russell	Oberlin College	Mob and Law	2 nd
1887	J. H. Finley	Knox College	John Brown	1 st
1887	Parke Daniels	Wabash College	The Man and the State	2 nd
1888	R. G. Johnson	DePauw University	Principles of Political Parties	1 st
1888	Harry M. Hyde	Beloit College	The Defender of the Constitution	2 nd
1889	Ed H. Hughes	Wesleyan University	The Philosophy of Inequality	1 st
1889	J. A. Blaisdell	Beloit College	Riot and Revolution	2 nd
1890	S. W. Naylor	Washburn College	The Puritan and the Cavalier in Our National History	1 st
1890	A.C. Douglass	Monmouth College	Our English Language	2 nd
1891	Frank Albert Fetter	Indiana University	The Heir Apparent	1 st
1891	Guy Everett Maxwell	Hamline University	Charles Sumner as a Philanthropist	2 nd
1892	E. Jean Nelson*	DePauw University	Industrial Freedom	1 st
1892	George Hiram Geyer	Ohio Wesleyan University	The Optimism of History	2 nd
1893	John Hovey Kimball	Beloit College	The Judgments of History	1 st
1893	Myron J. Jones	Wooster University	The Greatness of Personality	2 nd
1894	C. F. Wishart	Monmouth College	The Policy of Richelieu	1 st
1894	L. F. Dimmitt	DePauw University	The Humane Spirit in Modern Civilization	2 nd
1895	Otto A. Hauerbach	Knox College	The Hero of Compromise	1 st
1895	Charles W. Wood**	Beloit College	The Better Personality	2 nd
1896	A.M. Cloud	Lenox College	The Policy of Metternich	1 st
1896	Fred Elliott	Monmouth College	Mob and the Law	2 nd
1897	Perl D. Decker	Park College	The Basic Law of Progress	1 st
1897	Chauncey Frederick Bell	Colorado University	Statesman and Nation	2 nd
1898	William Pierce Gorsuch	Knox College	John Randolph of Roanoke	1 st
1898	Jacob Allan Barnett	Wooster University	The Second Duty of the Citizen	2 nd
1899	Rollo Lu Verne Lyman	Beloit College	The Altruism of American Expansion	1 st
1899	George E. Farrar	DePauw University	The Coming King	2 nd

*Signifies a woman who competed and placed in the contest

**Signifies an African American who competed and placed in the contest.