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Taking the Journal to the Digital Age

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Taking the Journal to the Digital Age

Todd T. Holm, PhD, Editor

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When I accepted the Speaker & Gavel editor position last year, I was encouraged to give the publication a cosmetic upgrade. Graphic art, layout, and design are not something I ever studied, nor am I one of those people who have a natural eye for such things. Despite those disadvantages, you will notice changes in the way the journal is laid out and formatted. I wanted to take just a few minutes to talk about the journal's new look as well as some of the history of the journal.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

First, I have done what I can to upgrade to journal's look. If there is a member of our readership with an eye for layout and design who would like to improve upon what I have done...Welcome to the Editorial Staff! I would encourage you to contact me. The journal is an important part of DSR-TKA's legacy. Unfortunately, the organization had lost some of its history over the years. When I asked for the DSR-TKA logo, the best I could get was the image on the right. A 34X72 pixel image would hardly serve as cover art. Fortunately, I was able to find someone online who produced new cover art based on that tiny image (and some pictures of DSR-TKA logos on trophies) and that is the image you now see on the cover and is shown below. I hope you will agree that this is a nice upgrade from the small and antiquated artwork we had.



HISTORY

Second, one day as I was waiting for a meeting to start, I was perusing eBay.com and found a Vintage Printer's Press Printing Block for Tau Kappa Alpha (see the following page). Tau Kappa Alpha was originally founded in 1908 and merged with Delta Sigma Rho (founded in 1906) in 1968 to form the organization we know as Delta Sigma Rho – Tau Kappa Alpha today.



You can see the great influence the Delta Sigma Rho pin (below) had on the creation of the logo for the two organizations when they merged in 1968. As an organizational communication scholar with an interest in organizational culture, I understand how important symbols like a logo or lapel pin can be. Symbols provide an opportunity for organizational identification to develop. They allow us to recognize other members of our organization when we see them at tournaments or conventions. But artwork, like the ones presented here, also represent part of our shared history. While the technology available to create our parent organizations' logos was much different than what we have today, the images are rooted in similar symbols: a key, Greek letters, and a star. These images are symbols for organizations that trace their roots back well over 100 years.

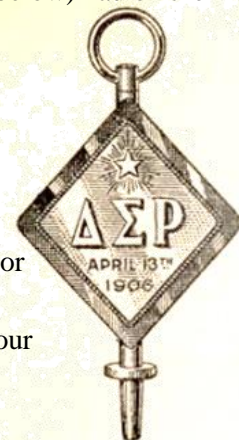




Photo Credits: Jennifer Baader Holm



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While we have lost some of our history, we also regain some thanks to a generous gift from Dr. James F. Klumpp, Professor Emeritus (University of Maryland) that will preserve more of our history. When he retired recently, he realized that his office was filled with decades of research and journals that he would no longer need. Included in his collection were issues of *Speaker & Gavel* all the way back to the days of the organizations' two separate publications: *The Speaker* and *The Gavel*. If this collection does not represent every issue of *Speaker & Gavel* (and *The Speaker* and *The Gavel*), it represents *nearly* all of them. Dr. Klumpp has loaned the collection to us until we have had the opportunity to scan them into digital copies and archive them online. For that, our organization will always owe Dr. Klumpp a huge debt of gratitude.

ALUMNI

Third, we are reaching out to forensic alumni to involve them more in our community. This issue features three articles from distinguished forensics alums. Two of our alumni discuss what the activity did for them and how it helped prepare them for their careers. The third alumni article challenges us to improve forensics. Each issue will feature between one and three articles from forensic alumni across the country. It is our hope that these articles will help directors of forensics when they are asked to justify their program's existence. It is also a good way for past generations to offer current competitors advice. As a community, we are always looking for ways to improve forensics. We ask that our alumni challenge the activity to evolve and improve. This issue presents the first of those challenges from a former national pentathlon champion who is challenging the activity to get with the times and embrace technology in presentations by using



PowerPoint, Prezi, or similar software in competition. We will be incorporating both of these types of articles in each future issue, so if you know someone who would be able to make an excellent contribution please have them contact the editor of the journal directly.

ISSUE DEBATES

Fourth, we are trying to bring debatable issues in the community to the forefront. Important contemporary issues are discussed at national tournaments, national conventions, and even at the average weekend tournament. But rarely are these issues written about in our journals. To foster those discussions, and in an effort to document some of the history of intercollegiate forensics, we will have an “Issue Debate” in each issue of Speaker & Gavel. For this issue, two well-known and successful coaches (and top-notch extempers in their day) debate the issue of note card use in extemporaneous speaking. We have seen this topic debated at length at multiple national events. But the interaction is limited to less than a minute per speaker and usually involves a dozen different speakers with two dozen different reasons as to why the event description language should or should not be changed. A journal’s format provides an opportunity for two scholars, well-versed in the activity, to express their reasoning on the issues related to this topic. It is an interesting read, and both sides make valid arguments. We will be incorporating an issue debate in each issue of S&G, so if you have ideas for topics you would like to see debated, please contact the editor directly.

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AUTHOR BIOS

Fifth, as part of the cosmetic redesign of the journal we are adding pop-out boxes and author bios to each article. These features are consistent with the best practices of some of leading academic journals. The author bios also include a headshot of the authors to help us put names with faces in the hope that being able to do so will encourage more discussion between scholars about their research when they meet at conventions or tournaments. For convenience, we are also adding the proper APA source citation for each article so researchers who cite the articles can simply copy and paste the citation into their reference material.

INCREASING EXPOSURE

Finally, as we move forward with the journal, we are investigating ways to take our articles to a broader audience. In conjunction with the editors of other forensics journals, we are exploring opportunities to incorporate Speaker & Gavel articles into national databases while maintaining open access to everyone. Research in our field is important. But great research is irrelevant if other scholars can’t easily access it. Integrating our research into national databases while maintaining open access means that more people will be able to use the existing research to do more for our activity and the discipline. If you have ideas for other ways the journal could be improved, please do not hesitate to contact the journal editor. Editors want to serve their readers to the best of their abilities.

