THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

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The planning committee has wisely divided the agenda into a considera-
tion on ten areas of study ranging from standards of evaluation/judging and
training judges/coaches, to administrative support/publicity and ethical
ques-tions for both coaches and competitors.

The overall purpose of this paper is to pose the right questions, provide
some good answers, and offer some recommendations. Specifically, the paper
will address three questions: 1) What is the role of research in individual
events? 2) What are some appropriate areas of research in individual events? 3)
What are some reasonable recommendations which will ensure that research is
conducted and the results disseminated?

I. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

Before answering this question directly, the author will answer two other
questions.

A. IS RESEARCH IMPORTANT TO INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

On the surface, this question seems easy to answer. Yes. Research is im-
portant to individual events for six reasons. First, research is important to the
researcher. This may appear to be a selfish answer, but a realistic one in to-

day's academic institutions. For the undergraduate student, choosing individual events as a research area can provide a unique introduction to serious scholarship. For the student who may have already participated in speech events for four years in high school and already gained a goodly number of benefits from the activity itself, investigating some aspect of individual events can add a depth of understanding not available from mere participation alone. A well conducted research project, whether it be descriptive, historical, or experimental can provide insight into the field of speech communication.

For the graduate student, scholarship in individual events can provide term paper subjects, a thesis topic and/or the subject for some early scholarship efforts. For the aspiring faculty member, a list of convention papers and published articles will assist the applicant in securing that initial academic appointment. An increasing list of scholarship can assist with reappointment, promotion, and eventually tenure. For the tenured faculty member a list of publications can help to provide status in his/her own department, university, and in the field of speech communication.

Second, scholarship in individual events is important to the forensic educator as teacher and coach. Because of the time and space limitation, this paper will not address the old question "will performing research actually make someone a better classroom teacher, or are the qualities which distinguish teacher from scholar quite different?" Presently, this author argues only that a well-read coach will be aware of trends in the activity and should be able to pass along some of the important findings in the form of good teaching and effective coaching.

Third, research in individual events is important to the tournament director. Few persons associated with our activity face more decisions than do the tournament managers for contests at all levels. These decisions affect not only a number of students on an individual squad, but many programs, coaches, and hundreds of students. When should the tournament be hosted? What events should be included? How should the events be grouped? How many rounds of each event should be offered? How much time should be allowed for each round? What ballots should be used? How many judges per round should be used? How should judges be assigned? How many elimination rounds should be held? How should seeding be handled? These are just a few of the many questions which must be considered. Research results can guide in the making of these decisions. Thus the tournament director can benefit from the investigation of others.

Fourth, scholarship in individual events is important to the student. The student forensic participant can benefit from solid research findings whether they be passed along from a scholar/coach or gained by the student's own careful reading. The results should increase the student's quality participation and perhaps more successful participation. Today's student most often "learns by

doing," "learns by observing other winners," and occasionally "learns by winning him/herself." Exposure to research dealing with individual events means a student participant can learn by reading, as well.

Fifth, research is important to the judge. There are those who believe that the ultimate change (and even progress) in forensics is produced by the judge. By voting for the best student in a contest round, as well as communicating that decision clearly to winners and non-winners, the judge influences the future of the activity more directly than any other participant. If judges are exposed to the best research in individual events, then that research will be of benefit to the judge, and to those whom he/she criticizes and judges.

Sixth, scholarship is important to the activity itself. Scholarly writing which is significant in quantity and quality will be advantageous to individual events. Such research answers the question of whether or not individual events are even worth being studied. As coaches, tournament directors, judges, and students are changed, improvement is bound to come to the activity itself.

B. HOW IMPORTANT IS RESEARCH IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

Having asserted that scholarship in individual events is important, one might be tempted to ask a question Ed McMahon often poses--how important is it? What is the most influential aspect of individual events? Putting it another way, of all of the elements involved in this activity, which part or parts has the greatest potential for creating change? This is not an easy question to answer and agreement is not likely.

This author suspects that the participants in each aspect of this conference will make a good case for his/her own area being studied.

Some might contend that the most influential factor is tournament administration. When a tournament manager makes the decisions of when a tournament will be held, what events will be included, how the events will be defined, what rules will apply, how the events will be grouped, and what awards will be given, that person has essentially and significantly defined the activity and determined the future of individual events. This is especially true when one looks at the effects of national tournaments upon tournaments at a lower level. Many tournament directors choose to mirror the methods and procedures used at the national tournaments, the national championship, or those tournaments sponsored by a forensic honor society or an honorary.

One could also argue that the ultimate influence upon the activity has been and will probably continue to be judging. When a judge rewards a team or individual with a "win," a high ranking and/or high rating, the future of individual events is determined. It is no accident that the final rounds are the most well attended at any tournament. Students and coaches want to know what is 'winning" these days. Once observed, it is difficult to stop a student from incorporating certain aspects of subject selection, style, arrangement, or delivery into his/her own contest event. For imitation is not only the highest

form of flattery, it is a very common form of behavior in our activity. When the judge determines what will be observed in the final round, he/she determines the future of the activity itself.

Most of us went into this field because we like to teach. We know that the type of teaching which is possible in speech communication, and especially within the related co-curricular activities is extremely influential. We hold the belief that teaching or coaching can make a difference. Therefore, we should be able to argue successfully that, in fact, coaching makes the most difference and therefore is the most important aspect of the activity being considered.

Those of us who have been in or close to programs with extremely high or little financial support are pleasantly or painfully aware of the effect which administrative support can play in the success of the program. No matter what else a program may have, if it lacks administrative and financial support it will eventually dwindle to nothing. Accordingly, there is no aspect which is more basic than support from one's administration.

Similar to the chicken and the egg question, we can ask, who has the most influence college or high schools? Good and bad practices at the secondary level quickly find their way into college forensics. But alert high school coaches will readily point to colleges and their high school institutes, and judging behavior as the real cause of the problem.

A good case, then, can and will be made for each of the possible areas being considered this weekend in Denver. Where does research rank in this hierarchy? Is it the most important aspect? Does it fall near the top? Should it be placed somewhere between judging and coaching, judging and tournament administration, between administrative support and public relations? I shall not argue for a specific ranking. Instead I shall suggest that it plays a supplementary function. It is not a matter of research vs. any of these aspects, but rather research _and_ judging, coaching, tournament administration--and all the rest.

C. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

The author is now prepared to make three statements. First, research must play a role in individual events because it benefits the researcher, coach, tournament director, judge, student, and the activity itself. Second, research is _very_ important. Third, the role of research is to provide a knowledge base at all levels: for the tournament director, for the judge, for the high school and college coach, and for the administrator. Decisions for the future must be based upon the best of what we know. Knowledge must spring from the most solid scholarship we can muster. What has been said on many previous occasions should be said here--ours is not only to pass along knowledge, but to create knowledge as well.

Earlier in this paper the author gave a definition of a National

Developmental Conference: "a meeting of persons who are making wise decisions based upon good answers to the right questions." Of course, a national developmental conference is more than that. A successful national developmental conference must do six things:
1) Be sure that the right questions are asked.
2) Be sure that good answers are provided.
3) Adopt strong recommendations.
4) Disseminate the results widely.
5) Provide a definite method of implementing the recommendations.
6) Provide a mechanism for evaluating the results several years down the road.

To be sure that this developmental conference is able to accomplish these things, I shall address two additional questions: What are some appropriate areas of research in individual events? What are some reasonable recommendations which will ensure that research is conducted and the results disseminated?

II. WHAT ARE SOME APPROPRIATE AREAS OF RESEARCH IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

What follows is not an attempt to present a complete review of the literature in individual events nor a final word or limitation of what must be studied in the future, rather it is only one person's attempt to see some of the main trends of the past and to suggest a few directions for the future.

EVENTS

Some effort has been and can continue to be focused on the events themselves.
1. After Dinner Speaking (Dreibelbis, 1987; Hanson, 1988a; Mills, 1984)
2. Communication Analysis (Benoit, 1985; Dean, 1984; Dean, 1985; German, 1985; Harris, 1987; Klumpp, 1984; Larson, 1985; Murphy, 1988; O'Rourke, 1985; Rosenthal, 1985; Shields, 1985)
3. Extemporaneous Speaking (Aden, 1988; Crawford, 1984; Harris, 1986a)
4. Impromptu Speaking (Boone, 1987; Dean, 1987; Harris, 1986a; Reynolds, 1987)
5. Informative Speaking
6. Persuasive Speaking (original oratory) (Ballinger, 1987; Benson, 1982; Frank, 1983; Hope, 1973; Reynolds, 1983; Ryan, 1981)
7. Sales
8. Dramatic Duo (Klope, 1986)
9. Dramatic Interpretation (general oral interpretation) (Geisler, 1985; Green, 1988; Holloway, 1983; Holloway, 1986; Keefe, 1985; Lewis, 1984; Lewis, 1988; Rhodes, 1972; Sellnow, 1986; Swarts, 1988; Verlinden, 1987)
10. Poetry
11. Prose
12. Trigger Scripting (Miller-Rassulo, 1988)

We can profitably continue to look at the events themselves asking some of these questions: Do we have an accurate picture of individual events today?

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Of what value is each event? Do we have a clear educational rationale for each event? Do we have a clear description of each event? Do we have a clear list of judging criteria for each event? What are the unique competencies developed by each speaking event? Are some events kept merely because they are popular? Are there "new" events which should be included which would broaden the range of competencies? Once introduced, have new events really been given a chance?

TOURNAMENT ADMINISTRATION AND THE TOURNAMENT SETTING

A second area which has received attention is the competitive setting.
1. Competitive Atmosphere (Rasmuson, 1986)
2. Events Offered (Manchester, 1986)
3. Events Guidelines (NFJ, 1983)
4. Host Participation (Hanson, 1986)
5. National Tournaments (Fryar, 1984; Leiboff, 1987a; Leiboff, 1987b; Manchester, 1980)
6. Participation (Friedley, 1985)
7. Research Lab (Harris, 1986b)
8. Scheduling (Peters, 1983)
9. Seeding (Hanson, 1987)
10. Speaking Position (Benson, 1975; Hale, 1986)
11. Tabulation Methods (Littlefield, 1986; Littlefield, 1987; Weiss, 1984)
12. Tournament Competition (Klopf, 1966)

Other relevant questions might include: Do the national tournaments have too much influence? Are current tournament practices educationally justifiable? Do the best speakers win?

ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULaR: PHILOSOPHY, COACHING, AND ETHICS

1. Coaching Positions (Shelton, 1986)
2. Credit for Participation (Keefe, 1987)
3. Ethics (Frank, 1983; Friedley, 1983; Thomas, 1983a; Thomas, 1983b)
4. Forensic Education (Douglas, 1971)
5. Funding (Crawford, 1984)
6. Recruiting (Dean, 1985; Nadler, 1985)
7. Using Ballots (Hanson, 1988b)

Do we have an accurate picture of individual events programs today? What is the effect of high school participation? What can university participation in individual events add to high school participants? Have participants in individual events become too professional?

JUDGING

1. Demographics (Harris, 1986a)
2. Effect of Participant Clothing (Jones, 1987)
3. Judge Agreement (Kay, 1984; Lewis, 1981)
3. Judging Standards (Dean, 1984; Mills, 1983; Lewis, 1984)
4. Judge Workshops (Ross, 1984)
5. Male/Female Judging Decisions (Friedley, 1987)
Scholars interested in studying judging behavior might consider these questions: What are the schools of judging in individual events? Are standards of judging too diverse? Are training sessions for judges beneficial?

RESEARCH IN FORENSICS

Some scholars have addressed the questions of research itself.
1. Behavioral Science (Cronen, 1970)
2. Data Research Center (JAFA, 1973)
3. Forensics (Douglas, 1972)
4. Tournament as Lab (Harris, 1986a)

There is always a value in assessing our own methods and procedures of research. Can individual events be studied in the current tournament setting? Does anyone take research in individual events seriously? Is it possible to conduct controlled studies in the rush of a tournament setting? Should experimental tournaments be set up for the study of individual events?

III. WHAT ARE SOME REASONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL ENSURE THAT RESEARCH IS CONDUCTED AND THE RESULTS DISSEMINATED?

1. The list of journals (state, regional, and national) which normally publish articles on individual events should be publicized. The names and addresses of editors should be easily accessible.
2. Editors should be encouraged to publish special editions exclusively devoted to research in individual events.
3. Research grants and awards should be available for undergraduates performing scholarship in individual events.
4. Research grants and awards should be available for graduate students performing scholarship in individual events.
5. Research grants and awards should be available for faculty members performing scholarship in individual events.
6. The NFA and AFA should cooperate in establishing a national forensic data base.
7. Dissemination of research results should be increased by conducting workshops and seminars at individual events tournaments.
8. Tournament directors should be encouraged to allow the administration of well planned research projects at individual events tournaments.

CONCLUSION

We have considered three questions: What is the role of research in individual events? What are some appropriate areas of research in individual events? What are some reasonable recommendations which will ensure that re-

search is conducted and the results disseminated? Those of us who have had anything at all to do with individual events during the last two decades know of the basic values of this activity and the real benefits to all who participate. While others may sit on the sidelines and shout "prove it, prove it," we have all seen the value of these activities in the lives of hundreds of present and past student participants. We do not need to see the results of empirical research to be convinced. However, we should continue to be involved in research which documents and quantifies these values.

Though there may be some disagreement as to exactly where we want this activity to be as we cross the century mark and enter into number twenty-one, the great majority want individual events to be strong, thriving, and benefiting as many students as possible. Serious, solid scholarship must play a role in the maintaining and development of individual events.

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