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Introduction to Special Issue: Forensics and the Net Generation

JOSH COMPTON, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE
Guest Editor

Forum

Digitizing Forensics: Coaching the Net Generation

TOMEKA M. ROBINSON & BEN REESE, MARIETTA COLLEGE

Avoiding the Dangerfield Effect: Earning Respect as a Young Coach in a Millennial Environment

JORDAN COMPTON, OHIO UNIVERSITY

Managing Millennials: Coaching the Next Generation

TODD T. HOLM, MIAMI UNIVERSITY

Book Reviews

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The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta invites authors to submit manuscripts related to scholarship, pedagogy, research and administration in competitive and non-competitive speech and debate activities. *The Forensic* welcomes submissions from forensic coaches, communication/rhetoric scholars, and students (undergraduate and graduate).

The Editor and Editorial Board invite scholarly discussion of making competitive individual events and debate powerful tools for teaching essential citizenship practices, including clear and ethical communication. Topics of particular interest to the Editor and Editorial Board include, but are not limited to: ways to increase diversity in forensics, speech/argumentation pedagogy, and transfer as it relates to forensics (e.g., transfer among individual events, debate, and interpretation; transfer between competition and the classroom, and vice versa; transfer between forensics and careers).

The journal seeks submissions reflecting perspectives from all current debate and individual event forms, including, but not limited to: NDT, CEDA, NEDA, NPDA, IPDA, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, as well as NIET, NFA and non-traditional individual events. The journal also welcomes explorations of non-competitive speech and debate activities, including classroom projects, interdisciplinary efforts, and civic programs.

The Forensic may also publish reviews of books, activities, and other educational materials. Potential authors should contact the Editor regarding the choice of material for review.

All submitted works must be original, unpublished, and not under review by other publishers. Submissions should conform to APA guidelines (latest edition). E-mail submissions to the editor in Word format with no specialized internal formatting. Manuscripts should not exceed 25 double-spaced typed pages, exclusive of tables and references. The title page should include the title, author(s), correspondence address, e-mail address and telephone number of the author(s). The second page should include an abstract of between 75 and 100 words. The text of the manuscript (including its title) should begin on the next page, with no reference to the author, and with the remaining pages numbered consecutively. Avoid self-identification in the text of the manuscript. Notes and references should be typed and double-spaced on the pages following the text of the manuscript. Tables should be clearly marked regarding their placement in the manuscript.

SEND MANUSCRIPTS TO: Nina-Jo Moore, moorenj@appstate.edu or Department of Communication, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608. **Do not fax submissions.** Send electronic submissions to: moorenj@appstate.edu. Authors should have an editorial decision within 3 months.

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Editor's Note: We welcome Josh Compton as Guest Editor of this issue. I am very pleased with the fine issue he has developed and know you will enjoy reading it. Josh Compton is a candidate to become the new Editor of The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta at the 2013 Centennial Convention and Tournament. Nina-Jo Moore, Editor

Introduction to *The Forensic* Special Issue: Forensics and the Net Generation

JOSH COMPTON, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

“**W**hen I did forensics . . .” Immediately, the *when* sets us up for a story. We steal a glance at the clock and wonder how long this story will take.

When I did forensics, to *cut-and-paste* meant scissors and glue. When I did forensics, hotel keys were metal. When I did forensics, submissions to Pi Kappa Delta’s oral history video competition were on VHS. We mailed—through the U. S. Postal system, please note—our tournament entries. Visual aids were propped up on easels. Briefcases, not backpacks. Stopwatches, not smartphones. We dialed pay phones to call our friends and family with tournament updates.

“When I did forensics . . .” The phrase is a contagion. We add our own versions, and soon, nostalgia is not only contagious, but also, competitive. Generations senior scoff at our relatively short trips down forensic memory lane. Veteran memory books have more chapters, with differences more stark. Metal hotel keys? We didn’t even get hotel stays. Oral history? We made the history!

As I read through the work that comprises this special issue of *The Forensic*, I wonder what future changes will make today’s forensic practices seem antiquated. How will future generations respond to the when-I-did-forensics stories of the Millennial generation? What stories will they tell? What perceptions—and misperceptions—will characterize the next generation?

In this special issue, contributors consider forensics and the Net Generation (a name introduced by Don Tapscott in his 1998 book, *Growing Up Digital*) in three forum essays and six book reviews. Forum essays offer the authors’ opinions, perspectives, advice, and syntheses of research and personal experiences. Book reviews offer brief sum-

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maries and reviewers' evaluations of recent publications that deal, in one way or another, with teaching, learning, and the Net Generation.

My hope is that forensic scholars will continue to explore, debate, discuss, consider and then reconsider best teaching and coaching practices. We have a lot to learn from each other—about how the Net Generation's courage with technology might lead to changes in speech, debate, and performance, about new directions for forensics that Millennials might propose, about how coaches and teachers respond—or, about which aspects of forensics stay the same.

I have a lot to learn about these and other issues, but I do know this: It is an exciting time to be teaching. I delight in working with my students—with my students in general, and with my Millennial students in particular. I get caught up in their enthusiasm and creativity, and I learn from them—from issues of technology to fresh perspectives on ways of thinking and communicating. I appreciate how my students appreciate and offer diverse perspectives and ask new, challenging questions. I am inspired by their curiosity and innovative responses to communication challenges.

I suppose, now that I re-read these words, that the sentiment I have just voiced—how it is an exciting time to be teaching—is something that connects generations. I suspect my mentors said something quite similar. I suspect my current students—those who will become tomorrow's teachers, forensic coaches, and communication scholars—will say something quite similar, too. I am confident that forensic coaches, teachers, and students will continue seeking the best ways to teach, to learn, to discover, to communicate—with each other, and then, with the next generations.

Whether preceded by “when I did forensics” or “when I do forensics,” the stories that follow can continue to remind us of lessons learned—and can challenge us to keep learning.

I want to thank Nina-Jo Moore, Editor of *The Forensic*, for her help in putting together this special issue. (She also assumed editorial responsibilities for Jordan Compton's submission, since he is my brother.) I appreciated her advice and her patience, very much.



FORUM

Digitizing Forensics: Coaching the Net Generation

TOMEKA M. ROBINSON & BEN REESE, MARIETTA COLLEGE

Abstract: *The advent of social media has had a major impact on the way that individuals and particularly young people communicate. As the demographics of forensic teams have changed, the students bring their unique experience of having grown up with computers to a speech and debate circuit that has not yet fully adapted to the transition. Very little research has been done on how the power of social media can be channeled to improve the power and impact of forensic education. This paper seeks to make some recommendations on ways to incorporate new technology into forensic education.*

It was December 5th and the fall tournament season was complete. As we recapped the successes of the semester and discussed the spring tournament schedule, the time came to offer the perennial plea that students practice their speeches over break and the impact of failing to do so. The coaches were expecting the usual nods and grunts from students promising that they would indeed practice, but knowing that they would not. This time, something different happened. A very vocal student asked, "How can we possibly practice without the coaches?" Another student joined in and asked, "Would it be possible to practice online?"

In that moment, we saw the promise of a new approach to forensic education. The advent of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.) has had a major impact on the way that individuals and particularly young people communicate. The sheer power of these new means of communication in the hands of the so-called Net Generation caught the attention of the entire world with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in late 2010. In countries such as Egypt, where the under-25 age group is estimated to make up more than 50% of the population, many of whom are both educated and under- or unemployed, social media became the rallying point, news source, and lifeline of the revolution in Tahrir Square (Ghannam, 2011). Young people, armed with the tools that remain almost entirely within the province of their generation, launched a revolution that shook the world. It is members of this same generation that launched Occupy Protests, fought the Stop Online Piracy Act, and, most importantly for

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the purposes of this article, make up today's forensic teams.

As the demographics of forensic teams have changed, the students who are variously referred to as the Net Generation (Tapscott, 1998; 2009), Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 1991, 2000; 2003), or Digital Natives (Prensky, 2001; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Brumberger, 2011) bring their unique experience of having, literally, grown up *with* the computer to a speech and debate circuit that has not yet fully adapted to the transition. Prensky (2001) argues that growing up with digital technologies has had a profound effect on all young people: "It is now clear that as a result of this ubiquitous environment and the sheer volume of their interaction with it, today's students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors" (p. 1). Hence, the students' organization and communication skills are different than past generations'.

The immersion in technology has prompted many scholars to research Millennial students' use of, and preferences for, technologies, both in higher education (Console et al, 2006; Oliver & Goerke, 2007; Kennedy et al, 2008; Smith, Salaway, & Caruso, 2009; Jones & Healing, 2010) and in forensics (Woods et al., 2006; Voth, 2003). Snider (1994) articulates the need to use various techniques to integrate new information technology and new media with debating activities. Many debates are now videotaped and uploaded online for various public uses. Voth (2003) discusses the use of notebook computers, wireless communication, Internet, and other digital devices within the competitive realm, and additional research has demonstrated the ability to host debates digitally (Snider, 1999, 2000, 2006). Although it can be argued that using online debates to teach students various concepts has its pedagogical purposes, very little research has been done on how to incorporate technology into practices. More specifically, how can we coach our students when they are not in the same space and how can the power of social media, which has been so thoroughly demonstrated by recent events, be channeled to improve the power and impact of forensic education? This article seeks to make some recommendations on ways to incorporate new technology into forensic education.

Tweaking Habits

The use of social media applications in teaching and learning has garnered substantial interest among educators (Cain & Policastri, 2011; Cain & Fox, 2009; Estus, 2010; Fox & Varadarajan, 2011; Vincent & Weber, 2011; Chao, Parker, & Fontana, 2011; Pilgrim & Bledsoe, 2011; Hung & Yuen, 2010). The openness, collaboration potential, and the popularity of social media among college-aged students have made software platforms like Facebook and Twitter attractive to college instructors (Cain & Fox, 2009). As the demographics of our teams are changing, so too must our approaches to forensic education. Social media has the potential to complement, enhance, and add new collaborative dimensions to our pedagogy.

To most effectively engage our students, it is essential to understand their attitudes toward processing information. McCarthy (2010) found that “digital natives” prefer receiving information quickly and are adept at processing information rapidly. Additionally, they prefer multi-tasking and non-linear access to information and rely heavily on social media for social and professional interactions. Mason and Rennie (2007) argue that as educators, we can benefit from understanding the dynamics of the attention-grabbing effect of Web 2.0 so that we can harness it to educate. Salavuo (2008) further contends that the keywords to the successful utilization of social media for educational purposes are participation, presence, and ownership.

We have found it useful to use software platforms with which students are already familiar. The ones that our squad uses are Facebook, Skype, and Google+. This has led to more active participation, engaged presence, and the students have taken more ownership of practice time. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these interfaces. We will explain each software platform in more detail with explanations of the strengths and weaknesses, based on our experiences.

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website that launched in February 2004. Facebook currently has 901 million active users and is available in more than 70 languages (Facebook Statistics, 2012). Facebook provides an interface for people to communicate with friends, family, and coworkers. Although there are many social networks to utilize, Facebook is by far the most popular (Pilgrim & Bledsoe, 2011; Hew, 2011; Dba & Karl, 2008). Recently there has been increasing interest in studying the use and effects of Facebook. Numerous empirical studies have been conducted to examine patterns of college students' use of Facebook. These have focused on myriad academic interests, including purposes of Facebook usage (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2010; Lewis & West, 2009; Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier, 2010), effects of Facebook on learning performance (Sanchez-Franco, Villarejo-Ramos, & Martin-Velicia, 2011), and the educational usage of Facebook (Bosch, 2009; Cain & Policastri, 2011; Pilgrim & Bledsoe, 2011; Hung & Yuen, 2010; McCarthy, 2010). Research on Facebook has shown that many students may reap both social and educational benefits from the use of the site. Karlin (2007) found that nearly 60% of students discuss education-related topics online. How can we harness the educational potential of Facebook into forensic coaching?

After discussing the idea of incorporating Facebook into team practices, we decided to utilize the group chat feature to host online debates during our semester break. Our first attempt at an NPDA round via Facebook chat was in December 2010. The first step was to make a private Facebook group for only those involved with the team. The dates and times were negotiated in the group prior to the actual practice. Once a date and time were set where everyone was to log

into the system, the resolution was decided by the coaching staff. At the start of the practice, the coaches checked to make sure that all of the debaters and critics were online. The resolution was announced via the chat feature, and the debaters were given 15 minutes prep time to privately message or call their respective partners to prepare. After the 15 minute prep time, the debaters returned and proceeded to debate their sides. Everyone in the group could see the entire chat and at the end could pose comments and offer feedback.

After the first attempt, the coaches and students discussed the successes and failures of the practice session. The students suggested that the resolution be released earlier in the week so that they could discuss with their partners more specific debate strategy and spend more time on case construction. While this time modification does not mirror an actual debate round, the alteration made for more in-depth and interesting analysis in the subsequent debates, and this was what the coaching staff viewed as more important for learning outcomes.

From our venture into the world of Facebook debate, we found that there were several advantages to using Facebook for debate practices. First, Facebook is a free service and is heavily used by most undergraduates (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2010; Dba & Karl, 2008; Hew, 2011; Mazman & Usluel, 2010). On our squad of 13 students, only one student did not already have a Facebook account. This student quickly agreed to get an account so that he could participate in the practices. Additionally, many researchers have found that students have an overwhelmingly positive response to the use of social media as a supplementary tool to enhance classroom activities (Hung & Yuen, 2010; Papp, 2011; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). Hung and Yuen (2010) argue that the use of social networks such as Facebook opens the opportunity for students to interact beyond the walls of the classroom—or in our case, the squad room—and can enhance participation.

Another benefit we found through our experiment was that Facebook automatically archives chats. This makes it easier to go back into the system and point out specific arguments and issues during coaching sessions. The ability to retrieve written records of debates is not only convenient, but it also extends the teaching capabilities of coaches. We were able to have individual meetings with students and debate teams and more in-depth discussions of debate theory and strategy. We encouraged the students to take the archived cases and figure out ways to improve them. The use of reflection with the written record transformed our coaching practices. Many scholars have touted the benefits of reflection within formal, informal, individual, and organizational learning activities (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Illeris, 2007; Jordi, 2011). Our experiences with the Facebook debates and subsequent archives found similar benefits.

There are also some drawbacks to using Facebook for forensic coaching. Our use of the Facebook chat features prevented the coaching of individual events and forms of debate outside of NPDA and