



Journal of the International Public Debate Association
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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Times They Are A-Changin': An Argument for Modifying the Team IPDA Format

Christopher M. Duerringer & Gabriel Adkins¹

Since its inception, IPDA veterans have observed a number of significant shifts in the conduct of IPDA tournaments. In this essay, we take up the question of the new team IPDA format which was offered and eventually sanctioned. Based upon concerns about the format's slow rate of adoption, we intend to propose significant revisions to the format which will offer important administrative and pedagogical benefits to the association.

Though it has existed now for over a decade, the IPDA remains a relatively young organization. And because the association is annually reinvigorated with a new cadre of college students, it is continually infused with the practices, habits of thought, and culture that these new recruits acquire in middle and high schools. Additionally, as a competitive debate association that focuses on public forum debate, IPDA is somewhat unique as compared to other (especially collegiate) debate associations in that it invites members of the general public to participate in competitions both as competitors and as judges, creating the opportunity for significant variation in the backgrounds and knowledge bases of competitors and judges alike. Due in part to these influxes and variations, since the inception of the IPDA its veterans have observed a number of significant shifts in the conduct of IPDA tournaments. Additionally, given the youth of the institution and the unique

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qualities of its membership, it is perhaps no surprise that we have witnessed considerable flux in IPDA practices and policies over the past several years. First, a time change was proposed and eventually incorporated. Next, low-cost broadband and ubiquitous portable computing helped end the reign of the evidence tub. Division titles and inclusion criteria have been juggled. And finally, a team IPDA format was introduced and eventually sanctioned by the executive committee.

The introduction of team IPDA was met with considerable student support. Even when the event was considered “experimental,” there was enough interest and competition to support team debate tournaments complete with outrounds. And after some time, the format was recognized as an officially sanctioned and scored event. However, the event is still not widely offered at tournaments; it is our hope that the under-utilization of the team IPDA format can begin to be alleviated through implementation of the proposed changes we offer in this article.

In this essay, we take up an inquiry into the team IPDA format. Based upon concerns about the format’s slow rate of adoption, we intend to propose significant revisions to the format which will offer important administrative and pedagogical benefits to the association. In the pages ahead, we argue for the unique value posed by the team IPDA format, consider some of the limitations of the format that may have stunted its popularity, and conclude by offering our proposal for revisions.

The Value of the Team IPDA Format

The introduction of team IPDA has been met with considerable student support. As we have noted, the format found enough takers to necessitate out-rounds even when it was simply an experimental option. It is not hard for us to understand why: we believe the format offers a greater level of camaraderie within debate rounds and out; it can be used to help train newcomers; and it may ease the transition from policy debate formats.

Team IPDA seems to foster camaraderie between teammates by the simple fact that debaters are no longer sent alone to each round. It has been our experience that students who participate in debate fall in love with the debate community as much or more than with the event itself. A team debate format seems to foster an immediate sense of involvement among newcomers who might otherwise feel a bit out of place on teams full of veterans.

Many teams also took this opportunity to pair veterans with fresh recruits in a way that seemed to rapidly develop their abilities. Debaters on Duerringer’s undergraduate squad often teamed up with those who could help balance out their weaknesses: the technical line-by-line “flow” debater would pair with the polished orator with a knack for creating audience rapport. The big thinker would join forces with the detail-oriented strategist, and the extroverted humorist would team up with the sober, straight-shooter. Not only did the teams achieve success, but the students learned more when they were able to see their teammates make use of different rhetorical techniques and argumentative strategies.

Having a teammate also means having support before and after the round. Sitting at dinner, taking a break between rounds, or sulking on the van ride home, debaters have one other person with whom they can commiserate and compare observations about the round and what might have been done better. While the role of

teammates as providers of emotional and social support is understudied area in terms of competitive debate, it has been shown to be a significant factor in individual commitment to and success in team sports (Freeman, Rees, & Hardy, 2009; Hassell, Sabiston, & Bloom, 2010). Not only are teammates able to provide a sort of therapeutic support, but they can help debate coaches (who cannot possibly watch each of their debaters in a given round) understand what obstacles students are facing. In the individual format, coaches must choose to attend the round at the expense of numerous other obligations (such as coaching other competitors, judging rounds to cover team obligations to the tournament, or competing in the professional division to contribute to team sweepstakes standings) or trust an audience member, the debater, or the ballot to provide enough information to provide significant guidance for improvement.

Team debate also found support from those who came to the IPDA from policy debate formats, probably because having a partner was familiar and comforting. Our students at Arkansas Tech University who have made the switch from the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) to IPDA, for example, have expressed strong interest in the team format because it will allow them to work with their former NPDA teammates.

Limitations of the Team IPDA Format

Despite these significant virtues, official support for the format has been often been underwhelming, perhaps because of numerous concerns about the administrative and pedagogical implications of the format. In this section, we consider two issues that probably limit the Team IPDA Format.

First, we consider the pedagogical implications of the much longer speaking times. To cut to the chase, we suspect the team-based style may provide debaters enough time to begin constructing more complicated arguments similar to those being marshaled in policy debate formats. The team format permits a total of nine minutes of affirmative constructive speech—four given to the first speaker, five to the second. This certainly provides ample room for carefully worded definitions, the specification of various weighing mechanisms, and the deployment of contentions in favor of the resolution. However, the length may also tend to lend itself to more complicated policy-oriented advocacy. Still, it is the nine minutes afforded to negative construction that gives us pause.

In addition to the nine minutes of constructive speech offered to the negative, the second negative constructive is to be followed (only interrupted by CX) by the first negative rebuttal. In light of this, it will likely suffice for the negative to simply offer a shell for their refutations which can be fleshed out in that first rebuttal. Being free from the requirement to offer definitions and weighing mechanisms or more than a brief mention of their objections to the prima facie case, the negative has ample time in this block to launch topicality arguments, counterplans, solvency presses, and kritiks.

There has been an ongoing discussion in this publication about the appropriateness of meta-debate in the IPDA (see Courteau, 2011; Duerringer, 2008; Ducote & Puckett, 2009; Eldridge, 2008; Key, 2010). For the time being, we wish to leave aside the debate over the appropriateness of meta-debate and simply acknowledge that conditional counterplans, kritiks, multiple topicality arguments,

extra-topicality complaints, fiat-abuse arguments and the like have not historically been a part of normal debate in the IPDA and are likely to be regarded as pathological by a significant portion of IPDA programs.²

The second major concern relative to the current format of team IPDA is an administrative issue created due to inequities in round time between the individual and team IPDA formats. The team format may represent an administrative problem insofar as it requires rounds that are significantly longer (when all of the elements of the round are considered including topic strike and case preparation), thus either lengthening tournaments or reducing the amount of experience debaters might acquire in a given weekend. Forensics programs have often found IPDA because it offers a more affordable solution to the increasingly expensive policy formats. In an era of shrinking budgets, the prospect of booking more hotel rooms for the same number of rounds is a significant disincentive.

Currently, an individual IPDA round requires 56 minutes to run including topic strike and case preparation; team IPDA rounds require 70 minutes in comparison. This creates the need for team IPDA to be run in a separate flight; over the course of a tournament, the compound results of this decision lead to significant issues relative to tournament administration. Finally, we argue these issues serve in turn to limit the growth of the team format of IPDA through limiting the interest of host schools to include IPDA, limiting the number of team rounds offered in a tournament, creating long down-time periods between debate activity for competitors at dual-event tournaments; inadvertently (or perhaps intentionally) providing disincentives to incorporate the team format as a co-equal to the individual IPDA format.

Given the positive aspects of the team IPDA previously noted and the potential for IPDA to grow in recognition and influence, it seems reasonable to seek a way to fully encourage the growth and incorporation as a co-equal form of debate; especially if such a solution were also to provide additional benefits while preserving the integrity of the individual IPDA format. While we do not presume to argue we have a perfect solution to the issue of improving the incorporation of team IPDA into the IPDA tournament structure, we do believe that the potential solution we offer in this essay would successfully address the major concerns raised. In the next section of this essay, we will provide a suggestion for revising the team IPDA format in such a way that it retains its unique values but sheds time and much of the potential for complex meta-debate.

Revising Team IPDA

The proposed solution we offer for addressing both the negative meta-debate concerns and the administrative issues relative to the team IPDA format consists of three primary changes. By making these changes, we believe that at least five enhancements to IPDA tournaments will potentially be reaped. The efficiency of dual-event tournaments will be enhanced, participant experience will be enhanced, the quality and quantity of team IPDA rounds can be improved, the quality of out-rounds can be enhanced and participant safety can be positively impacted.

² While topicality arguments certainly occur from time to time, they are not de facto parts of the typical negative case as they often are in high school or collegiate policy formats.

The first change we suggest is to limit the number of rebuttals to one per side (with each side's rebuttal consisting of a four minute period) in the team format of IPDA. This change is not without precedent in the world of academic debate; other formats such as NPDA debate have historically utilized a one-rebuttal-per-side format. The second change to the team IPDA structure would be to standardize the four constructive speeches in terms of time; we suggest that five-minute constructive times be adapted.

Several positive outcomes can be realized from these first two changes. First, the elimination of the second set of rebuttals serves to help to alleviate some of the concern we have raised in regard to the negative critiques; by having only one opportunity for case summarization, the negative side must now either be much more efficient in leveling kritiks and counter-plans or choose to eliminate them in favor of standard negative attacks leveled directly at the affirmative case. Second, each side is given equal speaking time throughout the constructive phase. Third, confusion over speech times on the part of participants, judges, coaches and tournament ballots would be eliminated.

The third structural change we recommend is to alter the team IPDA prep time from the current 30-minute strike and preparation period to a 20 minute session. While we acknowledge that a greater than 33% reduction in the strike and preparation session may at first seem extreme, we believe the potential negative impacts to the quality of debate can be minimized while the overall benefits reaped from this action would potentially be substantial. In terms of minimization of the potential negative impacts arising from a reduction in strike and preparation time, two observations can be made; the aspect of having a partner to work with in case preparation potentially enhances the quality as well as the quantity of ideas generated (in other words, two heads are better than one), having a teammate also allows for increased teamwork through the utilization of efficient case preparation strategies (i.e. one partner conducts research while the other brainstorms, writes case, etc.). The potential benefits to the proposed model will be articulated and explored in the remainder of this essay.

Results of the Proposed Changes to Team IPDA

The proposed changes to the team format of IPDA would result in a reduction of the round time from 70 minutes to 56 minutes. It is no coincidence that this new time now mirrors that required for an individual round of IPDA. By mirroring the individual round, the new team format can therefore be incorporated into a proposed flight design for IPDA tournaments. When a collapsed flight system is also utilized, the positive administrative impacts can be realized.

We propose that dual-event tournaments (assuming the adaption of the proposed changes detailed above) utilize a three-flight system consisting of four phases. In phase one (30 minutes), novice and varsity individual debate rounds (Flight A) would conduct topic strike and case preparation. In phase two (30 minutes), Flight A debates would be conducted while the professional individual debate round (Flight B) would conduct topic strike and case preparation. Phase three (30 minutes) would consist of Flight B debates, with team debate rounds (Flight C) conducting topic strike and case preparation beginning 10 minutes into the phase. Finally, the fourth phase (36 minutes) would consist of the team debates.

This model compares favorably in terms of round efficiency with the current format. Even the most efficiently-run dual-event tournament we have observed (which utilized a 3-flight system) in IPDA required 182 minutes of debate activity per round; the proposed system would condense that same amount of debate activity into 126 minutes (a reduction in time greater than 30%). This time reduction has a drastic impact on tournament efficiency; two points of comparison illustrate this advantage. A common dual-event IPDA tournament currently consists of 6 rounds of preliminary individual IPDA debate and two preliminary round of team debate; assuming four out-rounds for both individual and team styles of debate, the currently utilized model requires almost twenty-two hours of debate activity (21.93 hours). In comparison, the same number of rounds in the proposed format would require just over 15 hours to complete.

As a second point of comparison, an examination of the consequences of making team IPDA a co-equal form of debate with individual IPDA (which we have argued could be highly beneficial for multiple reasons) makes this disparity even more clear in terms of tournament efficiency. If we assume a tournament consisting of five preliminary rounds of each form (our fourth proposed change) with the same number of out-rounds, the currently utilized model would require over 27 hours of debate activity (27.3) in a tournament; in comparison, the proposed model could accomplish the same amount of debate activity in less than 19 hours.

The proposed five preliminary round tournament actually increases the opportunities for debaters to engage in debate over the current model; those participating in team debate would now have 10 preliminary debate rounds to hone their skills versus eight preliminary rounds in the current tournament model. Additionally, participant experience is also enhanced through the minimization of down-time between rounds. By overlapping the flights, novice and varsity competitors would remain more consistently active throughout the course of a tournament; once the individual round of debate was completed, they could move almost immediately into the preparation phase for their team debate rounds and then move smoothly into the next round of individual preparation. While we acknowledge that in some cases “down time” can be perceived as beneficial, we contend that when excessive periods of inactivity are caused by tournament inefficiencies (and especially when they add significantly to the length of tournaments days and schedules), “down time” becomes a detriment. Further, we have observed that excessive periods of inactivity throughout a tournament day has a negative impact on competitor energy; in short, going from periods of frantic activity to excessive periods of inactivity is an emotional and physical drain.

We again acknowledge the model we are proposing is not without potential disadvantage in regard to the proposed three-flight system; the glaring weakness being the inability of professional debaters to engage in the team debate rounds. There are two possible concerns here. First, professional debaters would not be able to participate in the team format; however, this concern is minimized through the current IPDA rules structure as the team IPDA format restricts participation to those who are eligible to compete at either the novice or varsity levels of individual IPDA. This means only undergraduate students who are voluntarily debating at the professional level would be affected by the proposed change. Since the majority of the professional rounds of IPDA debate are primarily made up of participants who are either coaches or debaters who have completed their degrees, the actual impact would be minimized

in terms of affecting debaters who would otherwise be eligible to debate in the team rounds. The second concern is that debaters in the professional division will not be available to assist teams with their case preparation; this concern is minimized in impact via the previously-discussed benefits provided to team debaters through having a partner available for case preparation. Additionally, professional debaters would still be available to assist their squad mates during the individual rounds of debate.

A second area of potential concern with adapting the proposed tournament system is the unequal number of preliminary rounds to be allotted to teams and individuals in terms of debating on the affirmative or negative. This concern is perhaps substantial, as we have observed anecdotally that there is a bias in ballots in favor of the negative side; this claim seems to be at least somewhat supported (especially in terms of speaker point allotment and the compounding effects of speaker points in out-round seeding, etc.) by research into IPDA ballot decisions (Key, 2010).

Once again, we draw inspiration from currently utilized tournament practices to help alleviate this concern. The first four preliminary rounds should be pre-assigned (in terms of which side of the topic teams will be assigned to), with each team having two rounds on the affirmative side and two rounds on the negative side. For the final preliminary round, we would suggest the utilization of the coin-toss method commonly used in IPDA out-rounds; alternatively, the fifth round could either be pre-assigned or power-matched. We support the coin-toss method for determining sides in the fifth round; the coin toss creates even odds for either participant or team to be on their favored ground for the uneven-numbered round.

Finally, we turn to the advantageous impacts our proposed model would have on the overall tournament experience for debate squads and the implications for those squads. In addition to the previously noted benefits in terms of tournament efficiency, co-equal status for both formats, and enhancements to participant experience, we can see multiple advantages at the squad level to adapting these proposed changes. First, even when a tournament schedule is created which allows for lunch and dinner periods as well as awards ceremonies during the tournament, a dual-format tournament using the proposed model could now be concluded by a reasonable hour on Saturday evening (assuming a Friday afternoon start); this would yield two distinct advantages for squads. First, squads whose home campuses are within a reasonable driving distance would be able to leave on Saturday night (even if they competed throughout the entire out-round process), thereby saving on hotel costs; by extension being able to either attend more tournaments or travel with more competitors on the same budget.

Second, we believe that participant safety would be greatly enhanced in two major ways. First, teams would be less likely to be traveling into the wee hours of the morning to either get to tournaments or to arrive home after tournaments; for tournaments in the South which are held in the fall, this is a huge safety concern in relation to the deer rutting season. We know there have been squads which have hit deer while traveling late at night, and we personally came within (literally) inches of having an incident with our own squad while traveling home from a tournament. While we do not wish to over-dramatize this risk, we believe strongly that those in leadership positions should do everything in their power to maintain a high level of

safety; to put it bluntly, even a slight risk of injury or death could have drastic consequences for either the overall association or a squad and should therefore be avoided if at all possible.

The second safety enhancement is derived from the prevention of exhaustion on the part of squad coaches who frequently serve not only as coaches but also as designated drivers for their squad. Driving home after midnight on the end of a final tournament day that often started for the coach at 7 a.m. or earlier is (we believe) inherently unsafe; if these situations can be alleviated without sacrificing the integrity of the level of competition, we believe there is a strong argument that action should be taken in this regard.

Finally, we believe the proposed model has the potential to positively impact the quality of IPDA debate rounds and decisions resulting from them. Our argument here is based in simple logic; shorter tournament days means both judges and competitors are less likely to be suffering from exhaustion during the rounds that count the most (the out-rounds). We have seen in our own squad that on occasion our out-round participants are often exhausted and have significantly less energy by the time they get the opportunity to debate in these rounds; it is also logical to assert that the same can be said of judges who have either been judging or competing all day themselves by the time the out-rounds begin. We cannot help but to arrive at the conclusion that this exhaustion must have some negative impact on the quality of these rounds in terms of both the level of argumentation offered and the quality of decisions rendered in these most-important rounds. We believe our proposed model would therefore improve the outcomes of these all-important rounds of debate.

In conclusion, we believe it is time for change to more fully incorporate team IPDA as a co-equal form of debate. The potential positive outcomes for debaters, squads, and the overall association that could be realized through this alteration are significant; the model we have proposed allows for this positive development and its outcomes while maintaining the integrity of the debate format and even enhancing multiple aspects of the tournament experience. While we hope our proposed model will be seriously considered and perhaps ultimately adapted, our primary objective in offering this model is to serve as a catalyst for a conversation seeking these outcomes and objectives. Regardless of the model that is eventually incorporated, it is obvious to us that it is indeed the time for change to be seriously considered and for team IPDA to be fully incorporated into IPDA tournaments and tournament schedules.

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FORUM

Position Statements on the Issue of Disclosure

Editorial Note: In order to stimulate productive, reflective discussion among the members of our association, this issue marks the introduction of a Forum feature, in which a variety of viewpoints on a pertinent issue are presented, in brief format, for your consideration. The following position statements were solicited from the members of the IPDA via a mass e-mail on the IPDA listserv. They are reprinted here without editorial alteration.

Winning Isn't Everything: Redefining Success Through the Practice of Disclosure

Adam M. Key¹

Disclosure is perhaps of the touchiest subjects within current practices of the International Public Debate Association. While many have, and in this issue of the *Journal*, continue to advocate against the practice of the affirmative debater disclosing the general direction of the round to the negative, the simple truth is that all arguments against disclosure boil down to one premise: it provides the affirmative debater a competitive advantage.

I have often heard advocates against the practice of disclosure proclaim that, since the affirmative burden of proof is presumptively more difficult to meet than the negative burden of clash, that the ability to surprise the negative debater with an unforeseen definition is the only means of balancing the scales. This rhetoric, however, is problematic in that it sends an invisible, yet infinitely more sinister message: debate is about winning and nothing else.

In short, there are no pedagogical or educational advantages to a lack of disclosure. Without disclosure, when faced with a vaguely worded resolution, the affirmative debater will spend his or her half hour preparing a case, finding research, and developing argument. Conversely, the negative debater will do no research, as

¹ Adam Key (M.A., 2008, Stephen F. Austin State University) currently serves as the Assistant Director of Forensics at Tennessee State University.

they can only guess the specific subject matter, and will spend their time either memorizing stock arguments or preparing to cry abuse. The round itself will not be a debate at all. It will start out like one, with the affirmative constructive being identical to those in other rounds. When the negative is able to speak, he or she will have no offense and no research to dispute the affirmative's claims. The affirmative, as I have seen occur in IPDA rounds, will inevitably call the negative on a lack of evidence and win the round, unless the negative calls abuse. Either way, neither debater will learn anything from the experience, except that they wasted the past hour of their lives.

Debate is, in some ways, about competition. However, it is more importantly about education. The emphasis on forensics as an educational activity is nearly as old as the discipline of communication studies itself. The first recorded mention of the educational merits of debate came from Ehninger in 1954 when he advocated that forensics was a means to meet "the need to provide an educational experience for our students" (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003 p. 14). Two decades later, the first developmental conference for forensics, the Sedalia retreat, was held (McBath, 1975). The results from that conference were propagated in documents that of developing "students' communicative abilities" and "argument theory" through the "humanistic education" provided by forensics (McBath, 1975, pp. 14-16).

Numerous scholars have addressed the educational benefit of forensics. Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, and Loudon (1999) reviewed more than 30 studies examining participating in competitive forensics. They wrote that forensics provides a superior education to traditional methods of schooling, writing that "unbridled by the limitations found within the traditional lecture-oriented classroom situation, participants must learn to invent, organize, and articulate thoughts subject to scrutiny by others" (p. 19).

The premise that debate is educational has been used to justify the support of many colleges and universities including "housing the activity in departments of speech/communication, labeling forensics a 'co-curricular,' not 'extra-curricular,' activity, attracting new students, soliciting funding for tournament travel, and even for pleading with universities not to eliminate entire speech/communication departments" (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003, p. 12). Indeed, there exists a storied relationship between forensics programs and communication departments. Forensics was the reason for the creation, growth, and expansion of many university departments (Swanson, 1992). "Forgetting their roots, today many of those departments have divorced or distanced themselves from their forensic programs, much like they might distance themselves from an unfamiliar relative" (Swanson, 1992, p. 49). The reason for this departure is a realization that the educational benefits of forensics are not as plentiful as coaches have repeatedly asserted.

The problem of lack of education in intercollegiate debate may be more insidious than an oversight. Success in debate is not defined by achieving educational aims, but by winning rounds (Dalton & Pross, 1954; Mazilu, 2002). Success in debate is "a synonym for winning rounds or gaining speaker points. Debate professionals have correspondingly defined success this way for more than 50 years" (Brennan, 2011, p. 4). Rather than inform administrators about the true competitive nature of the activity, coaches have repeatedly engaged in a deception that the activity of forensics is primarily educational. A mere two years after Ehninger published the first scholarship hailing the educational virtues of forensics, Padrow (1956) responded,

“The time has come to stop deceiving ourselves and our administrators about the educational value of forensics” (p. 206). In a stark proclamation of the reality of forensic completion, Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) stated:

In fact, the discourse of forensics is all about competition. In preparation for *tournaments*, *competitors practice their events with coaches*. Forensics educators refer to themselves as *coaches*, who prepare *competitors*, not students, for week-end-long *tournaments* that give out *awards to top competitors, trophies to programs that receive sweepstakes points, and qualifier legs to competitors for national tournaments*. While at *tournaments*, *coaches judge competitors*, providing critiques on *ballots that reflect a competitor's school code*. Ultimately, the *judge* gives each *competitor rank and rate points*. Moreover, a *tournament director* and a *tab room staff*, whose sole purpose is to ensure that the *tournament is on time* and that results are *tabulated correctly, run tournaments*. (pp. 15-16, emphasis original)

IPDA was engineered to be different than our predecessors. According to the organization’s founder, Alan Cirlin (2007), “it is the only debate format in modern history which was intentionally developed using empirical methodologies to achieve specific pedagogical ends” (p. 11). Cirlin went on to explain that “Public Debate format was created by starting with the educational goals and working backwards, using a method of trial and error mostly, until a viable debate format emerged which consistently achieved the ends for which it was intended” (p. 11).

It is hard to fathom what, if any, pedagogical aims might be gained from surprising opponents with the direction of the round. It certainly does not prepare them for the workforce. If these students one day practice law, failing to disclose the arguments one will make in trial is one of the quickest ways to seeing the inside of a jail cell on a contempt citation. Fryar and Thomas (1980) asserted the claim made by many debate coaches that skills learned in debate “transfer directly out of the academic world into the everyday experiences of our society” (p. i). Cirlin (1997) founded IPDA on the premise that by creating this “sociological sub-culture, academic debate would indeed become a training ground where the specific oral communication skills students learn would, in fact, be transferrable to the larger business, legal, and political worlds” (p. 265). By not practicing disclosure, the question must be considered, “[a]re we suggesting to our students that what they spend hours perfecting for weekend tournaments has little applicability upon graduation?” (Dean, 1992, p. 193).

As a community, we should not and cannot sacrifice education for competition. If we disclose, our students may win less rounds, but they will learn a good deal more. With disclosure, both sides are able to prepare and put forth their best arguments. This leads naturally to more education for the debaters as well as the judge. Isn’t that the goal?

This decision ultimately comes down to how we, as an organization, define success. Is the successful student the one who wins at all costs or the one who does not need to surprise his opponent in order for his or her arguments to stand? One would hope the former, rather than latter, would dictate how IPDA proceeds. As has been noted many times, IPDA alum Steve Goode opened nearly every round by stating that “Debate is two things, fun and educational” (Key, 2009, p. 3). It is worth

noting that winning rounds is neither of those things. As coaches, we ought to value our students learning in and out of round more than any number of plastic trophies. We ought to value disclosure.

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Disclosure and the Price of “Fairness” in the IPDA

Christopher M. Duerringer & Gabriel Adkins²

Living in the south, it is difficult to avoid conversations about professional and collegiate football. On the nightly news, on local radio talk shows, in the paper, and around the office, discussions about the past weekend's games and the local teams championship aspirations are manifold. Twenty-four-hour sports networks, fantasy football blogs, and text-message alerts keep the nation updated (like it or not) on the status of Payton Manning's neck, Tom Brady's love life, and Johnny Manziel's every breath. Even the most uninterested bystander seems to gain a marginal level of football knowledge simply by virtue of the sport's ubiquity. And no small amount of time is spent on the team by local sports commentators who consider every conceivable contingency and weigh the implications of those possibilities for each team's championship aspirations. But perhaps no one has ever considered what might happen if the head coach of the Green Bay Packers or the Pittsburgh Steelers were to simply telegraph each play to the competition before the ball is snapped. One can barely imagine the public's outrage at such a practice. And yet, similar behavior seems to have gained support in the IPDA.

In the middle of the last decade, IPDA competitors began telegraphing their strategy and, more recently, demanding that such concessions would be made by their opponents as well. We are referring to disclosure: the practice of declaring the Affirmative's resolitional analysis before the beginning of debate rounds. It is our position that disclosure, which is founded upon a well-intended but misguided conception of fairness, is not only antithetical to the spirit of competition but, more significantly, robs students of one of the most valuable educational aspects of public debate.

The Rise of Disclosure

IPDA debaters were not always expected to disclose. In fact, such behavior would have been quite unusual when Duerringer joined the association in the 2000-2001 season as a member of Stephen F. Austin State University's debate team. At his first tournament, the Hot & Spicy Debates hosted by Trey Gibson's Louisiana Tech squad, Duerringer was warned by teammates that the affirmative debater had the right to define the terms in the resolution and could do so in any way that she or he chose, so long as the interpretation was reasonable and provided fair ground. In other words, his teammates explained, the affirmative had to make sure that there were arguments

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(real, winning ones) for each side of the resolution as defined, and the affirmative was obligated to ensure that the interpretation was sensible to the average person.

If the resolution were "Red is better than Blue," for example, then the affirmative was well within her or his rights to interpret the resolution as an opportunity to debate about the virtues of two different colors, republican and democratic political policy, hot and cold weather, and a number of other topics which were logically analogous to the words in the resolution. The negative debater in these rounds would not yell and scream about topicality but would, instead, *actually adapt* her or his arguments extemporaneously. *It was almost as if we were expected to think on our feet.*

Abuse, at the time, was typically argued when a debater (usually an excommunicated policy debater or orphaned parliamentary debater) attempted to interpret a resolution so bizarrely as to make it nigh impossible to see a link between the resolution and the interpretation, generally because she or he wished to reuse some old case from a prior season. The other occasions were generally when inexperienced students made the mistake of defining the resolution into a tautology. But such occasions were not the norm. Topicality arguments were exceedingly rare on our team³ and generally were seen as a last-resort response to impossible interpretations. And when an opponent accused us of abusing our prerogative, SFA debaters were genuinely concerned; to accuse a debater of abuse was tantamount to calling her or him a cheater. We wanted to win, but we wanted to do so fairly.

In the latter years of the last decade, there occurred two significant developments which would lead to the rise of disclosure: first, the increasing use of topicality arguments as a *de facto* negative strategy; second, the success of clearly "canned" cases only tangentially related to the resolution.

The use of topicality arguments as a *de facto* part of the Negative case has long been a part of other forms of academic debate. Deployed regardless of whether the negative actually believes the affirmative has abused its prerogative, *de facto* topicality arguments are used in policy and (with increasing regularity) parliamentary debate for two reasons: first, because they are powerful *a priori* arguments which the affirmative must win or risk losing the round; and second, because their significance means the affirmative must address them, no matter how baseless they might be, they function as "time sucks." Topicality arguments (and other *a priori* arguments such as the kritik) may also have gained popularity in parliamentary debate because they can be used and re-used practically irrespective of the actual resolution under discussion.

As reformed (or failed) policy and parliamentary debaters and coaches filtered into the IPDA, we began hearing that some coaches were instructing their students to cry topicality abuse in every round, regardless of what was said by the affirmative. Our debaters who took their ethical obligation to topicality seriously were surprised to find that their opponents, who had just finished spending a half-hour calling them cheaters, would (once the round was over) admit to seeing no fault in the affirmative's

³ Teammates would sometimes grumble, "I had to call topicality this weekend." Crying abuse was, for us, always a last resort when the affirmative had left us no other options.

interpretation. Topicality had become, as it is elsewhere, just another negative strategy.

Many affirmatives (and judges) seem to find argument about topicality frustrating. Thirty minutes of preparation goes out the window when affirmatives feel forced to spend the round defending their right to define rather than arguing about climate change, the national deficit, or the virtues of some new technology. Topicality arguments are part of what has been called meta-debate (debate about the activity of debate) and they essentially amount to fighting over the proper application of the rules. And in some debate formats, meta-debate has led to important political and theoretical discussions about the problematic assumptions and undergird academic debate.

Unfortunately, the IPDA's ban on printed evidence⁴ means that no one has direct access to the constitution and, thus, the round is frequently reduced to a he-said/she-said squabble which often leaves judges to make the rules up as they go. Even this would not be so bad if the judges themselves were skilled interlocutors trained in argumentation. But since our judges are typically less educated in the rules of the activity than even our novice debaters, topicality rounds often devolve into gibberish. As a result, the educational value of these rounds is generally questionable at best. And we believe that the rise of disclosure was (partially) an attempt to preempt *de facto* topicality arguments insofar as disclosure allows the affirmative to assure the judge that the negative had exactly the same time to prepare for the resolution as interpreted as did the affirmative.

The second factor leading to the rise of disclosure is the widespread success of "canned" cases in the IPDA and the desire to identify oneself as opposed to such behavior. A particularly vivid example may help to illustrate this trend. One year, in the middle of the last decade, a University of Texas, Tyler debate squad ran roughshod over the entire Varsity division, capping the season by closing out the final round at nationals. They achieved this feat largely on the strength of a single argument, which they borrowed from Richard Cherwitz and James Hikins' (1983) "Rhetorical Perspectivism" essay. The team adapted the essay, which takes a position in disciplinary arguments about the epistemic function of rhetoric, for use as the framework for their affirmative cases and as a kritik when they took the negative position.

It seemed to many with whom Duerringer spoke that the "rhetorical perspectivism" argument had not been successful for its intellectual purchase (especially given the inchoate voicing it was given by many of the team's more novice members) so much as it had succeeded on the basis of the complete surprise it created in opponents. The canned case forced undergraduate debaters away from the substantive issues and into the realm of rhetorical theory and philosophy. The Cherwitz and Hikins essay, though significant for rhetorical studies and read by many graduate students focused on rhetorical theory and criticism, was not widely read by undergraduate students and its technical vocabulary would have been intimidating to many who might try. It was, in the eyes of some, a sucker punch.

⁴ A rule we wholeheartedly endorse, by the way.

In the following season, Duerringer noticed a significant uptick in the number of debaters who went out of their way to assure their opponents that they would be taking the round “straight up” and that any affirmative interpretation of the resolution would be well within the realm of the predictable.⁵ Indeed, many began to explain to the negative debaters in no uncertain terms how the debate would be framed. We suspect that this practice was partly in response to what some perceived as a rise in unethical “canned cases” and a desire to declare oneself clearly on the side of fair and educational debate. Disclosure seems increasingly to function as a *shibboleth*—a signifying practice—that identifies disclosing debaters with the “educational debate” paradigm, as opposed to the “games” or “strategy debate” paradigm, which rules other formats.

Duerringer last competed in the IPDA in the spring of 2007. When he returned in a coaching capacity in the fall of 2011, he found that disclosure was not only a popular voluntary signifying practice but one which was now foisted upon others. Our debaters at Arkansas Tech were frequently asked by opponents, “How are you going to define the resolution?” And any failure to disclose was now frequently cited by negatives as justification for topicality abuse arguments.

Maybe, Duerringer thought, something had changed while he was busy earning the doctoral degree; maybe the association had dramatically changed its historically broad policy on topicality? We re-checked the IPDA’s constitution to make sure that no new language had been added which might obligate affirmative’s to give away their resolitional analysis. We discovered nothing new. The constitution continues to grant the affirmative the right to define as she or he sees fit, provided those definitions are reasonable and provide fair ground. Similar wording is found on the backs of IPDA ballots. Absolutely nothing in the IPDA’s governing documents even suggests that affirmatives are under any obligation to give away their definitions or resolitional analysis before the round begins. Nonetheless, negative opponents instructed judges to vote against our debaters because they had failed to voluntarily disclose. And alarmingly, it often worked.

Disclosure as an Ethical Act

The insistence on disclosure is usually justified by reference to the value of fairness. Each debater has the same amount of prep time, proponents argue, but only the affirmative knows exactly how the round will be defined. This, they claim, is unfair. Fairness, which they seem to define as identical treatment and opportunity, requires that the affirmative let the negative know exactly what they know as soon as they know it. Frequently, negatives will claim abuse in rounds because they “didn’t have time to prep for this case.”

Unfortunately, this justification for disclosure is founded upon an erroneous assumption—that a round is only fair if the affirmative and negative have equal knowledge of the exact subject of debate before the round begins. In order to

⁵ Of course, these are merely observations on the basis of six years of competition and two more as a coach. And while we are aware that the plural of anecdote is not data; we hope these recollections serve to illustrate at least two very real and rational justifications that some might have for their investment in disclosure as an ethical practice.

understand why this assumption is erroneous, we would like to remind the reader that the affirmative and negative have vastly different burdens in the debate round.

In fact, the affirmative has a significantly more onerous burden. The affirmative has the burden to move the judge from her or his present position to one in keeping with the resolution. The negative has no corresponding obligation. Because presumption lies with the negative, a lack of evidence, a need for more time, or general imprecision with regards to the terms of the debate should all lead to negative ballots. Furthermore, the negative is required to do nothing more than defend the status quo—to ask the judge to vote in favor of the familiar and the hegemonic present—surely an easier task than moving the judge to consider new and unfamiliar positions. And even such a defense is not necessary to a negative victory: if both debaters are equally ineffectual, the decision ought still to be rendered in favor of the negative. Although some particularly topics may skew more toward the affirmative or the negative, it clear to see that it is generally easier to be the negative.⁶

Since the affirmative is required to win the dispute outright while the negative may take the round on the basis of a tie, uncertainty, or mutual futility, it seems clear that affirmatives stand at a marked disadvantage to negatives. And in light of this disadvantage, a debate format that strives to create roughly fair competition may try to balance these sides by providing the affirmative a few resources not available to the negative. One of the chief ways that the IPDA format helps to balance the affirmative and negative positions is by granting the affirmative the right to pick the fight it will be obligated to win. The affirmative has thirty minutes from the moment draw begins to craft a reasonable, fair interpretation of the resolution which she or he feels can be adequately proven in front of an untrained judge. The negative simply has to interrupt this feat in order to secure a victory. So the act of disclosure tips the balance in favor of the negative again. Disclosure is, in effect, an unfair practice that disadvantages the affirmative.

When an earlier draft of this essay was presented at the national tournament in Monticello last year, a faction of young debaters, who have never seen the IPDA before disclosure, raised a concern: wouldn't getting rid of disclosure would limit the negative's ability to provide an educational round for the judge? What if, they worried, the affirmative just totally shocks the negative and comes up with an interpretation which the negative had not considered? What happens to the quality of education in the round?

Duerringer responded, in part, by asking that we get serious about what kind of education IPDA debate rounds actually provide to audiences. Some highly technical, evidence-based forms of academic debate claim (and may well actually provide) a kind of education insofar as the material cited and investigated in the

⁶ This advantage is not necessarily experienced across formats. In debate formats where affirmatives have entire academic years to perfect their advocacy, the negative may well be disadvantaged. But in the IPDA, it seems clear that the Affirmative has more work and scant time to do it. This is one reason why all IPDA debaters are assured the same number of affirmative and negative positions in the preliminary rounds. Absent such a guarantee, those awarded more negative positions would be significantly advantaged.

course of the year provides the audience a deep, nuanced, and well-critiqued perspective on a given issue. They are able to claim this because the parties involved spend enormous amounts of time researching and preparing arguments about one topic for a year, because they compete in a format that promotes long, heavily cited oratory, and because they almost exclusively rely on well-trained judges capable of ensuring that the rules are followed. We do not believe that the IPDA can, in good conscience, promise that kind of education for audiences and participants on a regular basis. Providing a IPDA debater twenty-something frantic minutes of Google-searching and Wikipedia-scanning on a disclosed resolitional analysis does not seem likely, to this author, to provide significantly better education.

And all of this assumes that disclosure means that the affirmative has been rather detailed in their disclosure.⁷ In practice, disclosure is sometimes little more than a vague gesture in the general direction the round might go. Consider a round in which the resolution will be: “We should work smarter, not harder.” A debater might send a teammate over to our team's prep area with the message, “we're going to make this round about oil.” Given the enormous range of value and policy cases that might, in some way, be made to fit under the general logic of the resolution, it's hard to make a compelling argument that this kind of disclosure made any substantive improvement to the negative's ability to provide an educational round. We suspect that the most effective way to deal with the false-fairness of disclosure is, in fact, to perform exactly this kind of disclosure: by making the most general admission about one's resolitional analysis, the affirmative might exempt her or himself from ridiculous disclosure-based abuse arguments and, simultaneously, preserve the bulk of their strategic advantage.

While disclosure probably doesn't lead to a significant increase in education, granting the negative this unfair advantage may lead to another highly undesirable impact: an increase in negative spreading. Ordinarily, preparing to debate as the negative consists in making educated guesses about possible affirmative interpretations and inventing several argumentative strategies that might apply under those circumstances. But when affirmative debaters disclose enough to actually be helpful, they eliminate much of the guesswork and anticipation involved in prepping the negative case and, thus, give negative debaters thirty minutes to dig up arguments and evidence germane to the affirmative's interpretation. Negative debaters, thus, may increasingly arrive to their rounds armed to the teeth with as much research as their hurried web searches can deliver them. The result, we contend, is a greatly increased tendency for negative teams to “spread” the affirmative—spitting out frantically Google'd source after source, forcing affirmatives to speak ever faster in order to keep up, and often turning what should be a contest of rhetorical talent into an evidence war.⁸

⁷ Our thanks to Anthony McMullin of the University of Central Arkansas for this elaboration. He was the first to point out to Duerringer how frequently attempts at disclosure are entirely unhelpful.

⁸ Evidence wars or “card wars” are certainly a part of other forms of debate, but they are especially undesirable in a format that does not allow for any fact-checking or even basic examination of evidence.

Competitiveness and Education

We have, thus far, narrated the emergence of disclosure as a response to specific developments in the IPDA. After a brief recapitulation of the various obligations that pertain to the affirmative and negative, we have argued that disclosure is an unfair practice, which disadvantages affirmatives and likely leads to other undesirable outcomes. In this final section of the essay, we will contend that this practice is also anti-competitive and anti-educational insofar as it robs our students of one of the most important educational experiences this format has to offer.

Although it has a clear and important pedagogical component, debate is also a game. It is a competition; and the awards earned through the event derive their meaning from the conditions of that competition. If we may be permitted another reference to football, we would remind readers that New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick was fined \$500,000 for using recording technology in an attempt to “steal” the New York Jets’ defensive signals. The Super Bowl winning coach was given the largest fine ever imposed on a coach because his behaviors constituted the most dangerous sort of infraction for the sport: calling into question the legitimacy of the league’s competitions. And though Belichick was disciplined for surreptitiously seeking to destroy the element of surprise in the competition, the NFL would likely have been just as swift in disciplining him for publicly insisting that the Jets share their game plan with him before the game.

While the IPDA is by no means the NFL, it is an association which sponsors and sanctions ostensibly fair competitions. And much like the game of football, part of the game of debate (and indeed, the fun) consists in the opportunity to respond swiftly to the unexpected. When debaters seek to force their competitors to disclose their strategy before the round begins, they are engaging in anti-competitive practices that diminish the competitive value of the event.

To the extent that debate can be called an educational event, some of that education consists in the experience of being required to respond, on one’s feet, to unexpected arguments. The preparation of platform speeches has value and is well represented in a number of forensics events, but much of the value of IPDA debate lies in the experience the event gives students in dealing with contingency—learning to adapt argumentative strategies that work in a wide array of argumentative contexts. One common warrant for participation in debate is that the activity provides an opportunity for students to develop practical argumentative and communication skills they’ll need in the workplace: but we can be assured that their future co-workers and bosses will *not* gently warn them when the conversation is about to take an unexpected turn or when they will be put on the spot to answer questions; nor will their competitors in industry ensure that these future leaders are ready for every strategic innovation. When debaters insist on disclosure, they are not only diminishing the level of competition at a tournament, but they are robbing themselves of the educational experience of being compelled to think on their feet and extend their knowledge.

Clearly the concerns that gave rise to this practice are valid: *de facto* topicality abuse claims and canned cases can limit the educational potential of debate rounds. And we should respond to these issues. But the appropriate response to these concerns

is not to tamp down the educational and competitive potential of the event. Debaters should be taught to respond to abuse claims definitively and with the authority of a person who has memorized the rules of the competition so that *de facto* abuse arguments become no more frightening than solvency or evidence presses. Our debaters must learn how to help untrained judges understand what topicality abuse is and why the negative is claiming it even where it does not exist. And debaters should be taught rhetorical strategies that will allow them to respond to “canned” cases with the same vigor they muster for the “straight up” ones.

We want to close this brief essay with a call to action: if you are invested in the values of fairness, competitiveness, or education in debate, please decline the injunction to disclose. We have instructed our students never to disclose; and we hope none of their opponents disclose to them. We want each of our students to have the challenge and the opportunity to respond to unexpected (but fair) resolutorial interpretations and arguments; We want them to learn to make topicality arguments when those interpretations do not provide fair ground and reasonability; and we want our students to win honestly and fairly, not because their opponent gave away their game plan beforehand.

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In Favor of Disclosure

Molly Brown⁹, Oral Roberts University

Personally, I approach this disclosure as an opportunity for students to build their negotiation skills. As debaters, we don't get to work on dispute resolution skills very often and I believe this practice can be worthwhile - particularly when dealing with vague topics where it would be in the best interests of both parties to find some sort of common ground in order to strike on a more debatable premise.

Towards that end, if a student would prefer to work something out with their opponents, I have no objection. If they wind up granting too much ground to the other side and making their own jobs more difficult, then I consider it a lesson learned. Hopefully the next time they are in that situation, they will do a better job of finding common ground while not giving up too much of their own.

⁹ Molly Brown serves as the Assistant Debate Coach at Oral Roberts University.

With that in mind, I do instruct my students that this practice is by no means compulsory and that if their opponents would rather not disclose, that is all part of the game.

In Opposition to Disclosure

Nakia Welch, College of the Mainland¹⁰

I am against disclosure in debate. While I am against it, I have partially disclosed and allowed my debaters to disclose rarely (fewer than 5% of the time).

First, I believe it opens the door for abuse and presentation of ‘canned cases’ in debate rounds, which, related to my second point below affects debate negatively. Second, it de-incentivizes the negative to engage in organic thought during preparation; a major benefit of debate is the teaching of quick, organic thought, which would be reduced. Third, it is a no-win situation to disclose. If the negative still feels the ‘bright line’ isn’t clear enough, the negative can and perhaps will still argue abuse, which could negatively affect the affirmative, even if he/she disclosed. Fourth, an extension of point three, is there is a check and balance system in the status quo currently. If the affirmative does not disclose and presents a non prima facie case, the negative can argue topicality and abuse and, thereby resulting is a punishment of the affirmative for crossing the ethical line in debate. Fifth, the problem with disclosure issues in debate isn’t disclosure or non-disclosure; it is instead a lack of training/ability of a debater to prepare and combat abuse cases and/or poor preparation of the lay judges (teach debate theory!-don’t just instruct to regurgitate a non-original case). IPDA is founded on the principle of being persuasion for the common person, disclosure potentially could swing IPDA in the direction of other forms of debate in which a background in debate is necessary to serve as a judge. That could severely limit/harm IPDA in my opinion.

Finally, regardless of one’s feelings about debate, I feel it should be an option that is left up to the debater(s). Instigating a rule that requires, restricts and/or rejects disclosure is an absolute that must NOT be instituted in my opinion.

¹⁰ Nakia Welch (Ph.D., 2011, University of Oklahoma) is the Director of Forensics and an Assistant Professor at the College of the Mainland.



BOOK REVIEW

Losh, Elizabeth. *Virtualpolitik: An Electronic History of Government Media-Making in a Time of War, Scandal, Disaster, Miscommunication, and Mistakes*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2009.

James A. Schnell¹

Elizabeth Losh addresses a subject that is difficult to competently cover in a single book. There is so much that can be described under the heading of her book title. The specific areas she focuses on are well written and documented but much more could be said in relation to the larger context for these specific areas. The reader who is not familiar with this subject would benefit from such contextual guidance.

The general subject area implied by the book title is certainly relevant and covers a wide range of topics. Losh has managed to coherently address some of these topics. She has not addressed all the areas one could include in such a broad domain of inquiry—nor should she be expected to. I was disappointed by the title of her work in that it was soon apparent to me it would take volumes, rather than a single book, to adequately cover the subject area.

The topics she chose to focus on are competently developed. Her selection of topics was obviously driven by her research and interests. The reader will be pleased with the depth of description, substantiation and illustration.

Losh opens her study with description of “Digital Monsters” regarding mass media reporting of how terrorists use of video games to recruit prospective jihadists and how congressional representatives have been swayed by such reporting. I was happy to see her move from this pop culture orientation into a more rigorous question that considered “What is digital rhetoric?”. She conveys four aspects in answering the question: 1) the conventions of new digital genres; 2) public rhetoric that is often in the form of political messages from government institutions and presented via digital technologies; 3) the emerging scholarly discipline concerned with the rhetorical interpretation of computer-generated media as objects of study; 4) mathematical theories of communication from the field of information science. This explanation provides welcomed foundation for attempting to grasp the scope of this book.

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Her emphasis on “Democracy and Military-Funded Videogames and Simulations” is helpful as illustration for how government has utilized digital technologies to advance military training objectives. I found her descriptions and analysis of the ICT (Institute for Creative Technologies) applications to be relevant and insightful based on my work with that organization. Similarly, her experiences teaching a seminar entitled “Teaching, Terrorism, and Technology” are beneficial insofar as they highlight varied interpretations of individual phenomena. Anybody who teaches can appreciate the relevance of her depictions—especially her discussion of the “Defeating Terror, Defending Freedom” film and “Muslim Life in America” web emphasis.

“The Virtual State and Its Discontents” summarizes how selected PowerPoint presentations influenced policy regarding the decision to invade Iraq and similar governmental actions.

From there Losh abruptly moves into consideration for how the digital age, most specifically use of e-mail, has redefined the “whistle-blower” role and process. She offers the view that e-mail offers instantaneous and global dissemination and it challenges existing institutional structures of political power in unique ways. Equally disjointed, with regard to book theme continuity, she offers thoughts on governmental monitoring of U.S. citizenry in “Digital Satires About Surveillance and Authentication.” In this she describes, as illustration, the plight of Christopher Soghoian—who was pursued by authorities after he developed a means for creating fraudulent Northwest Airlines boarding passes and posted it on the internet.

“The Nation-State and Digital Library Initiatives” reflects on the how the move to digitize books and related library collections has encountered varied challenges, encouragements, support, detractors and obstacles (intentional and unintentional). This evolution typifies how the digitization playing field is in a continual state of motion and redefinition.

“Serious Games About National Security and Public Health” and “Cultural Politics and the Founding Narratives of Information Science” offer closure to the book by considering the varied ways the information age, and the new communication technologies more directly, are not only impacting such phenomena (national security, public health issues, information science etc.) in significant ways—they are redefining the phenomena.

The general content area of her book provides ample contextual frames for analysis within argumentation and debate. As such, it can serve as reference for primary schools of thought and it establishes a grammar for addressing relevant phenomena. The new communication technologies pose challenges, not just for the consequences associated with them (intended and unintended), but for framing dialogs about key variables. There are many abstractions that can cloud understanding. Such efforts put forth to clarify essential elements convey helpful focus.

Losh addresses the aforementioned areas in a clear manner but I think she could have done a better job of connecting these areas with some type of unifying theme. Such a thematic orientation would provide a conceptual frame of reference for understanding what is presented. This would be especially helpful for the less familiar reader who is new to this type of material.

Most impressive to me is the degree of substantiation and clarification she provides via her thorough footnoting.. The book has 332 pages of text and includes an additional 65 pages of footnotes. The footnoting is very helpful in providing explanation and context for the information she is presenting. She is to be commended on her attention to detail with such matters.