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Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom

Episode 3: Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Invention

By Jennifer L. Bowie

Transcript of the Podcast

<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie/ep3.html>

Welcome to “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom” a multimodal project exploring podcasting as a part of a writing class. You are listening to Episode 3 “Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Invention.” This is a seven episode podcast series with an interconnected webtext published in [*Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*](#). A full transcript of each episode is available on the related website or in the lyrics field of this MP3 file.

I am Dr. Jennifer L. Bowie, your host for this series and a Senior Usability Research Analyst for The Home Depot website. This work draws from my experience as an Assistant Professor at Georgia State University. Inside and outside the academy, I teach and research podcasting, digital media, writing, usability, and rhetoric

In this episode, I address how podcasting may be used in classrooms to help students rethink the “old” writing concepts we have been teaching. I start with invention in this episode and cover the other four canons in the next two episodes. Without further ado,

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let us begin Episode 3 of “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom.”

Rethinking the Old in New Ways

Lemke suggests that [quote] “new information technologies, new communication practices, and new social networks make possible new paradigms for education and learning, and call into question the assumptions on which the old paradigms rest” [quote] (p. 76). Podcasts are calling into question some of the teaching methods and media we use. As more texts become digital texts—from those written on a computer and printed, to those created solely for reading or access online—the need to teach our students methods and skills to write these texts becomes even more vital. Lunsford, among others, has contended on page 170, that we are in “secondary literacy,” which is a [quote] “literacy that is both highly inflected by oral forms, structures, and rhythms and highly aware of itself as writing, understood as variously organized and mediated systems of signification”[unquote]. Thus, writing has become more oral. Conversely with digital media, oral texts may become “writing”—with, as Shankar suggests on page 375 the [quote] “essential properties of writing, such as permanence of record, possibilities of editing, indexing, and scanning” [quote]. With this expansion of what we consider writing comes the needs to teach students how to write in these new forms. In addition, Lunsford asserts, on page 170, that [quote] “in this scene of secondary orality and secondary literacy, student writers must be able to think critically and carefully about how to deliver the knowledge they produce” [end quote]. Warnick agrees, arguing on page 332 that [quote] “there will be an increased need in the near future for the work of critics with an understanding of what’s under the hood, as electronic texts in time

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become more complex and immersive” [end quote]. Integrating podcasting into our classrooms is one such way our students may examine and explore “what is under the hood”.

Warnick argues that online discourse [quote] “works through strategic use of argument forms, common topics, conventionalized genres, stylized expression, and other structures suitable for rhetorical criticism and analysis” [quote]. Podcasting, one form of online discourse, certainly incorporates all of these. In fact, podcasting, when done well, should heavily draw on ideas from our ancient rhetorical roots especially in ways typographic-based media cannot. Podcasting provides a medium through which we and our students may rethink these rhetorical roots in new ways. Next, I first briefly discuss how I have used podcasts in my classes. Then I explore how the rhetorical canon may be reconsidered and reapplied in podcast texts, focusing on invention in this episode.

Podcasts in My Classes

I have taught podcasting since the fall of 2007. I have included podcasts as an optional or required project in eight classes: five graduate and three undergraduate classes, requiring podcasts in three of the graduate classes and two of the undergraduate. Podcast projects included the Week in Review assignment, where students presented a review of a week of class from discussions to readings and lectures. Another assignment is the reading response podcast that asked students to podcast their reactions and thoughts on the readings. While never required, some students opted to do their final class projects in podcast form, which ranged from longer audio arguments, to a podcasts series on rhetoric, to a case study with interviews. In the companion piece to this text I

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discuss some of these assignments. I focus this article mainly on my undergraduate classes, and especially a senior seminar class with a social media theme that had a larger podcasting component; however, I include examples from a wide variety of classes.

While some of these podcasts are available online, I did secure the student's permission to use their podcasts and other intellectual property in this text.

The Five Canons

Invention

The first of the five canons, invention, is possibly the least changed in podcasting from the older traditional methods. According to Aristotle, invention is [quote] “discovering the best available means of persuasion” [quote]. Invention deals with “what” to say, not “how” to say it. The “what” may vary due to media, but not as much as the “how”. The question of *topoi*, or common places, comes into play with invention. Of the common topics, testimony may work particularly well with podcasting, as the podcast may literally include others' testimony—by recording and integrating them into the podcast. The testimony is even more meaningful in the voice of the person giving the testimony. This adds both ethos and pathos to the testimony and thus to the text. In previous media, especially print texts and speeches, the testimony would only be quotes, which are helpful but not as persuasive as the actual voice or image of the speaker giving the testimony. Likewise, including the spoken words of witnesses or authorities will make the argument stronger and more reliable and trustworthy. Maxims or proverbs may be included, either spoken by the podcaster or incorporated from sites like [LibriVox](#), which provides free public-domain text recorded by volunteers. Incorporating maxims or

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proverbs from LibriVox in another voice may provide additional ethos and impacts later canons like delivery. In addition, resources like LibriVox may offer maxims and proverbs the modern day student may not know about, thus expanding their possibilities. So, while the “what” of invention may not change much for podcasting, additional variety of the “what” may be offered through inclusion of the real voices of the witnesses and authorities, and by other voices delivering the proverbs and maxims. While this incorporates more of the “how” into invention, it may also encourage students to think about the “what” in new ways.

One of the bigger changes from print papers, most typographic-based texts, and even ancient rhetorical speeches, is that podcasters may include music in their recordings. While music plays into arrangement, style, and delivery, the inclusion of music begins with invention. The student composer must decide if music fits into the “what” of her argument. If she thinks the music will help with the persuasiveness of her message, then she will later consider the style of music that best works; the arrangement of the music, perhaps as an introduction, bed music the background music while speaking, transitions; and finally the delivery of the music. The possibilities of music add to the list of tools the podcaster may use when deciding what to say.

In my own classes, students have included interviews, quotes by famous people, proverbs, music, and maxims. These “whats” of the argument were often wise rhetorical decisions many of which are much less common (and even impossible) in the other media students used for projects. Many of my students took the opportunity to think beyond the standards of the typographic-based texts they were used to composing and

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were very inventive with the “what” of their podcast arguments. Here is one example of a student, Brett Jones, drawing a maxim from LibriVox:

[clips from podcast]

And that wraps up to Episode 3 “Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Invention.” I hope you enjoyed it! In episodes 4 and 5, I continue exploring how the rhetorical canon may be reconsidered and reapplied in podcast texts. I examine arrangement and style in episode 4 and memory and delivery in episode 5. In episode 6, I investigate podcasts and other writing skills, such as audience, purpose, context, and tone. All these episodes have plenty of student examples. In episode 7, I wrap things up and talk about the future. If you have not listened to the first two episodes, I suggest you do. In episode 1, I set this article up and provide a 101 on podcasting. In episode, 2 I look at some of the literature related to podcasts. These all are, of course, part of the multimodal text “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom.”

This multimodal text was published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. Please check out the full webtext on *Kairos* at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie>. Full reference information, transcript, and links are available in the webtext and also in the lyrics field of the MP3. All student samples in this podcast were used with full permission. The music used in this podcast is “6” off *Ghosts I* by Nine Inch Nails, which is available under an [Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike Creative Commons License](#).

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Thanks for listening!

Student Podcast Clips:

- ◆ Jones, Brett. (2008). A Progymnasmodcast, for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 12/1/08 on iTunes University.

Album Art

Album art designed by Jennifer L. Bowie. Images:

- ◆ Ruhsam, William. (2008). "AKG Perception 220 Microphone." Posted 8/17/2008 on Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bruhsam/3031270525/> with an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Creative Commons License.
- ◆ Brassey, Anna a. (1878-83). Illustration from *A Voyage in the Sunbeam, our Home on the Ocean for Eleven Months*. Image is in the public domain. Artist may not be Brassey, but no other information was available. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anna_Brassey_438-victorian-woman-writing-jornal.gif

Links

LibriVox: free public-domain text recorded by volunteers <http://librivox.org/>

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- Shankar, Tara Rosenberger. (2006, fall). Speaking on the Record: A Theory of Composition. *Computers and Composition* 23(3), 374–393.
- Warnick, Barbara. (2005, fall). Looking to the Future: Electronic Texts and the Deepening Interface. *Technical Communication Quarterly* 14(3), 327–333.