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

Episode 5: Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Memory and Delivery

By Jennifer L. Bowie

Transcript of the Podcast

<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie/ep5.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 5: “Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Memory and Delivery.” 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 website and 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 conclude my discussion of rethinking the rhetorical canon in new ways, focusing on memory and delivery. Without further ado, let us begin Episode 5: “Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Memory and Delivery.”

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Memory

Memory is one of the canons that has been often forgotten, ignored, or deemphasized with print rhetoric. In composing print arguments, the rhetorician has less of a need for memory aids to deliver the argument or to develop improvisational skills and a treasury of *topoi* to pull from improvisational circumstances. These skills are important for speeches and spoken improvisational arguments, but composition and rhetoric has pulled away from these types of argument with typographically-based arguments. With the focus on typographically-based arguments memory was considered the recall of *topoi* drawing on *kairos* and grounded in audience and circumstances. Regardless, memory was clearly defined and developed for spoken arguments. As podcasting brings back the spoken aspects of argument, memory once again applies and in more of the classical ways. The type of podcast most clearly related to the ancient spoken arguments is the unscripted podcast. For these podcasts the rhetorician may draw on the same memory aids to recall a memorized speech or, if the podcast is not memorized, may need to draw on improvisational skills and the *topoi* treasury.

A scripted podcast may still delve more into memory than we see with print arguments. Even when scripted the podcaster may opt to go off script as something new may occur to her, possibly from some kairotic consideration or some *topoi* she did not consider when scripting. As a podcaster, I know I do this at times. Even when composing a script, the podcaster may find considerations of *kairos*, audience, and circumstances more obvious and applicable. As podcasts have a shorter production process than many print texts (in part because they do not need to go through gatekeepers), kairotic choices may not only make more sense but may be necessary to keep the podcast up-to-date. The

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students in my senior seminar class were more likely to mention current events—including the presidential election that occurred that semester—in their podcasts than in any other writing they composed that semester, except possibly their twice weekly reading responses. They would draw on the debates, speeches, and other current and often political events for examples, to not only give their arguments ethos, but also to connect to their audience—who they knew was also watching and listening to the same events.

Most of my student podcasters created scripted podcasts, which drew on their *topio* treasury and the occasional improvisation, but did not require memorization or large amounts of improvisation. However, in the senior seminar class they had three podcast reading responses, which were more causal, often off the cuff, and part of their twice-a-week reading response requirement. For these responses, students often pulled from their *topio* treasury, using comparisons, relationships, circumstances, and testimony. Interestingly, there was less of these *topio* in their print reading responses.

Through the use of podcasting, both scripted and unscripted (but especially unscripted), students may work with the canon of memory in more classical and often richer methods than with a print argument. In my classes, students seem to value this canon or at least understand it in more complex ways.

Delivery

The final canon, delivery, applies to podcasting in both traditional and new ways.

Delivery is, of course, how something is said—the public publication and presentation of

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discourse including the production of the argument with effective gestures, tone, words, movement, and images. Obviously the performance aspects of delivery such as gestures, voice modulation, and articulation are not easily applied to print texts and thus some aspects of delivery have been omitted or only briefly covered in print-based rhetorical texts and training. However, podcasting brings back some of these aspects. In audio podcasts many of the techniques of vocal delivery are again applicable. Voice modulation, sound levels and articulation are important considerations in audio podcasting. In video podcasting these aspects of delivery are also important, along with gestures.

However, these classical oral delivery methods are not the only delivery methods applicable to podcasting. The delivery methods developed for print, web, and other typographic-based texts may also be appropriate in audio or video podcasting. Delivery of typographic-based texts includes the “look” of the text. Paper choices, background colors, typography choices and visuals all impact the look and feel of a typographic-based text. As many podcasts have scripts, show notes, or other typographic-based texts associated with the episodes, the authors of these texts should draw on the same design and visual presentation methods developed for other typographic-based texts. In addition, many podcasts have websites and associated digital “places” for the podcasts, which should also draw on design and delivery considerations developed for digital visually-accessed texts.

So, the effective delivery of an audio or visual podcast should consider the classical rhetorical speech methods, along with typographic-based texts methods. A good podcast

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should be delivered in a way that draws on and remediates the delivery of various media before it. But, podcasting also bring with it additional considerations for delivery. The visuals of typographic-based texts may show up in the traditional places—with the transcripts or websites, but also can be a part of the podcast files, included as album art and visuals within more advanced podcasts. Slides or pictures that change at particular intervals during the podcast is an example. As one student, Ryan Rice put it [quote] “compared to other types of electronic writing and publishing, I think podcast[s] actually allows the creator to do more in terms of presentation.” [quote]

Editing is another delivery related concern. With typographic-based texts, editing is important, however editing for a podcast is a bit different. Sound editing, for example, includes editing out verbal tics, adding or removing pauses and silences, making words louder or quieter, fixing poorly pronounced words, editing for time and size, and more. Sometimes the edits may change poorly delivered aspects such as articulation and voice modulation, thus improving the final delivery of the text, and in ways not possible with the classic rhetorical speeches.

In my own classes and personally, I’ve found that podcasters tend to understand their speaking quirks after an edit or two of their own recorded voice. In some cases the podcasters become better speakers as they work to remove the issues they spend a lot of time editing out of their podcasts. I am much more aware of my “ummm” verbal tic and have begun working on my speaking to remove this. I use my “umms” as an example in class and have had several students come to me with similar examples they find in their own speaking including “ahs” and “likes” and other issues such as speaking speeds.

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Thus, it seems, podcast editing may lead to better delivered podcasts, and enable podcasters to understand their own speaking issues and work to improve them, thus leading to better spoken texts overall.

One final area of delivery consideration podcasters have that are not normally part of typographic-based texts or speeches is music. The classic rhetoricians, for example, did not have or use music to set the tone. Music also draws on invention, arrangement, and style considerations, and certainly adds to the final delivered product and the overall performance of the podcast. Music may be used to connect episodes of a podcast with a theme song, for transitions within the text, as examples, to set a tone, as background to add layers and auditory interest, and for other delivery-based considerations.

My students have used music in a variety of interesting ways to improve delivery. One student used music from a friend's band to link his three reading response podcasts together, creating interesting consistency more common among professional podcasts while providing free advertising for a friend. Several students used music for transitions between parts of their podcasts. The students who produced the previously mentioned pirate podcast included [beatboxing](#) a form of vocal percussion, which did not fit the pirate theme, but was used to wrap up the podcast and draw student interest. One student, Ashley Judge, created a series of podcasts called [Rhetorina](#) and she used music in ways that greatly increased the effectiveness of the performance of her podcast. She was a ballerina with a local company and her series was about rhetoric in a [Grammar Girl](#) style. The beginning of each podcast had a different musical composition related to ballet, which built ethos for the name of her podcast, provided an “ear-catching”

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opening to her podcast, and set the tone for each piece. Here are some examples of students using music, including a small bit of the music in the *Rhetorina* podcast. These illustrate how the tone is set and the ethos and pathos may be impacted.

[clips from podcasts]

My students who podcast tended to consider and reconsider the five rhetorical canons in both ancient and new ways. Delivery, style, and memory in podcasts have strong similarities to the delivery, style, and memory of the ancient Greek rhetoricians as they both are spoken forms. Thus, many of the key points Aristotle and others made about spoken rhetoric may be applied by students to their podcasts, permitting a more thorough understanding of these three canons than the students had when applying the canons to print texts. In addition, each of these canons may be applied in new ways—drawing on the benefits of the media—such as the inclusions of music and new ways of delivery. Invention and arrangement also may be applied in both new and ancient ways—from the use of testimony in the voice of the speaker and the arrangement of the various genres of podcasts. Students seemed to better grasp and understand the five canons when they applied them to podcasting. They used creative methods to make their podcasts richer and more effective rhetorical texts. But my students did not stop with the podcasts. They tended to later apply their deeper understanding of the canons to other texts, from the more traditional print texts; to websites, blogs, and other digital media; and to speeches and oral presentations.

[Musical transition]

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And that wraps up rethinking the canon to Episode 5: “Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Memory and Delivery.” Do check out episodes 3 and 4, where I cover the rest of the canon. In 3, I start the discussion of rethinking and investigate invention. In 4, I explore arrangement and style. Next, in 6, I delve into rethinking other writing skills: audience, purpose, context, and tone. Episode 7 is my conclusion. Do not forget the earlier episodes: 1, the introduction and podcasting overview, and 2, the literature review. 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!

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Student Podcast Clips:

- ◆ Woodard, Arch, & Jones, Brett. (2008). “Week in Review Pirate Cast,” for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 10/15/08 on iTunes University.
- ◆ Judge, Ashley. (2008). “WIR: Judge,” for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 11/19/08 on iTunes University.
- ◆ Manfredi, Robert. (2008). “Robert Manfredi Reading Response 1” for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 9/03/2008 on iTunes University.
- ◆ Judge, Ashley. (2008). “Rhetorina Episode Two: Ethos” *Rhetorina*, for ENGL 4320:005:FA08 , posted 11/30/08 on iTunes University.

Links in the Transcript:

- Beatboxing: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatboxing>
- *Grammar Girl* podcast: <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>
- *Rhetorina*, a rhetoric student podcast:
<http://deimos3.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/Browse/gsu.edu.2124884021.02124884032.2173554180?i=1925357101> (One sample *Rhetorina* podcast)

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- ◆ 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.

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