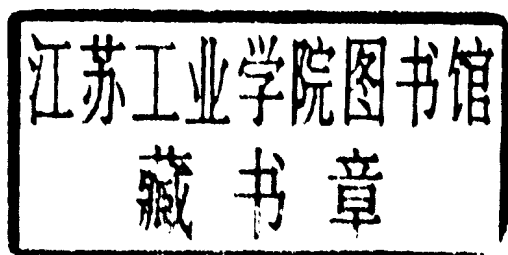




**ORAL AND WRITTEN  
COMMUNICATION**



# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION ANNUAL

An International Survey of Research and Theory

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**Written Communication Annual** provides an international forum for cross-disciplinary research on written language. The **Annual** presents the best of current research and at the same time seeks to define new research possibilities. Its purpose is to increase understanding of written language and the processes of its production and comprehension. Each volume of the **Annual** focuses on a single topic and includes specially commissioned papers from several countries.

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*Carnegie Mellon University*

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION ANNUAL**  
An International Survey of  
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# *In Memoriam*

**Eric A. Havelock**

The 'Orality Problem' as it has presented itself for investigation during the last twenty-five years, has been argued from several points of view. There is the historical dimension: What has it meant for societies and their cultures in the past to discard oral means of communication in favor of literate ones of various sorts? There is the contemporary one: What precisely is the relationship between the spoken word of today (or yesterday) and the written text? There is the linguistic one: What happens to the structure of a spoken language when it becomes a written artifact? Does anything happen? From this, one can proceed to the philosophical (or psychological) level and ask: Is oral communication the instrument of an oral state of mind, a type of consciousness quite different from the literate state of mind? (Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*, p. 24)

This memorial was composed near the completion of the volume, when we learned that Eric A. Havelock had died. Our loss was much more than that of a contributing author to this volume but—as the above quotation makes apparent—to the entire enterprise of examining oral and written communication. Few would argue against the statement that Havelock's contributions to the historical examination of oral and written discourse place him within the inner circle of this century's great scholars. As he so well expressed it in his final book, *The Muse Learns to Write*, scholarship from several diverse fields—ranging from classical studies to anthropology—simultaneously but independently recognized the complex relationship between oral and written composition (p. 25). Findings from Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord, from Claude Lévi-Strauss, from Jack Goody, from Walter Ong, and others (including Havelock himself) revolutionized our understanding of composing and reading. Rhetoric, in turn, became repositioned as a central activity so pervasive that it transcended time and culture. Yet, despite



rhetoric's longevity as an enterprise for explaining the relationships between thought and expression, each period and society adapted rhetorical principles to its own needs and, in the process, created new methods of composition warranting historical inquiry. Havelock and scholars of his generation opened the door to such an inquiry, and for that we must be forever indebted. It is only as a small measure of our esteem, and the acknowledgment of our great loss, that we dedicate this volume to the memory of Eric A. Havelock.

## *Preface*

This volume widens the scope of *Written Communication Annual* to include the history of rhetoric. The volume reminds those of us in composition studies how fortunate we are that our history is more than antiquarian: We have inherited a history that collects still unresolved issues and generates profoundly important questions. Ignoring or slighting our history, we are deprived of valuable insights into the relation of speaking and writing and of reading and writing, the influence of cognition and culture on the shift from orality to literacy, the relation of text to discourse, the social context of discourse and the roles of speaker or writer and listener or reader, and even some possibilities of pedagogy. Contributors to Richard Enos's volume take up these issues and more.

*Oral and Written Communication* is the fourth volume in the *Written Communication Annual* series, which began in 1986. Forthcoming volumes take up subjects as diverse as academic writing, writing in the community, and the writer-reader relationship.

—Charles R. Cooper

—Sidney Greenbaum

Series Editors

# Introduction

This volume of *Written Communication Annual*, the fourth in its series, offers a continuing but different contribution to communication. As mentioned by Havelock, scholars have sought to examine communication from dimensions that are linguistic and contemporary as well as historical. The three prior volumes in the series took up precisely those topics: the first dealt with linguistic approaches to written communication, the second with cross-cultural issues, and the third with the Western tradition of academic writing. The present volume contributes from the historical dimension, offering scholarship that examines the diversity and depth of oral and written communication across time and cultures. For this and other reasons, the present volume is much more diverse than the first three in the series. Chapters in this collection span from prehistory to issues that can be easily applied to present-day communication concerns. The chapters vary not only in topic but also method and procedure, yet all studies share a concern for how oral and written communication influences—and is influenced by—culture and period. Thus, while all of the chapters address issues dealing with the relationship between thought and expression, such diversity invites a brief discussion of their roots in order to make their shared concerns and objectives evident.

The 11 chapters comprising this volume fall into several basic categories. The first two chapters provide a background for the study of oral and written communication. Denise Schmandt-Besserat, in “Symbols in the Prehistoric Middle East,” introduces readers to the earliest use of symbols and, in the process, reveals those features in the development of scripts that both relate to oral communication and are distinct from it. Readers familiar with her masterful essay in *Scientific American* of 1978, “The Earliest Precursor of Writing,” will recognize her ability to

synthesize complex linguistic processes for readers and still provide a statement that puts forth original observations about the development of language and symbolic manipulation. Similarly, Edward P. J. Corbett introduces readers to issues; in this instance, however, Corbett draws upon his long-established scholarly career and his commitment to pedagogy. The result is a confluence of insights, personal and historical, that are presented in a synoptic format. While some of the topics may appear familiar to readers, it is his discussion of their impact and implications for reading and writing that distinguishes his chapter from overviews and lays the foundation for subsequent essays.

The next two chapters concentrate on the study of rhetoric during what has been called the first truly literate society: classical Athens. Richard Leo Enos's chapter discusses the relationship between oral and written communication and the role that sophists played in its development and in the dissemination of classical Greek script. Readers familiar with the terms and contributions of Walter J. Ong will be provided with a concrete example of the cultural, social, and political forces that shape the relationship between competing dialects, the emergence of a grapholect, and its resulting "literature." Enos's macroscopic approach to the study of rhetoric in the Hellenic world complements the chapter by Father William M. A. Grimaldi. In many respects, Father Grimaldi's brilliant chapter, "The Auditors' Role in Aristotelian Rhetoric," is unique to the volume. While Enos's chapter emphasizes the impact of oral and written rhetoric in a public domain, Grimaldi is concerned with the relationship and impact of the reader/listener in rhetoric. Grimaldi's emphasis on *ethos* reveals how the auditor participates in the shaping, making, and ultimately the assessment of meaningful discourse between people. It is this connection "between people" that is a link not only with the assembly of meaning central to Enos's chapter, but with the volume itself. That is, all chapters are grounded in the presupposition of the making of meaning as a public activity between individuals. Grimaldi's chapter makes explicit that relationship in terms of Aristotle's notion of *ethos*. Readers familiar with Grimaldi's earlier efforts will recognize how this chapter not only complements his recently published commentary of Book II of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* but also his internationally distinguished commentary of Book I, particularly his discussion of *pisteis* in the appendix. Through Grimaldi's

analysis and careful documentation, those new to classical rhetoric will have the opportunity not only to learn of the centrality of *ethos* to Aristotle's theory, but to enjoy a statement that amends long-established (but imprecise) interpretations by earlier scholars. From this perspective, while unique in its orientation, this chapter is central in establishing an understanding of the rhetorical process which later chapters presuppose.

One of the most active areas of research in the history of rhetoric is the medieval period. One reason for this activity is the recognition of the importance of rethinking assumptions about literacy and its impact during this period. The need for reassessment stems from our initial inclination to assume a univocal meaning for the term *literate* and what such basic activities as reading and writing meant during the Middle Ages. James L. Kinneavy's chapter on *ars praedicandi* provides a lucid statement on the evolution of meaning and techniques growing out of sophistic rhetoric and its impact on scholasticism. As intriguing as his findings is Kinneavy's methodology for amassing evidence. One of the most praised features of his recent volume, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* (1987), was the method and taxonomical system he devised for understanding his subject and presenting proof to his readers. Here again we see Kinneavy at his best: posing an important problem and constructing a method for providing the most sensitive explanation. Readers will find that they will be as interested in how Kinneavy constructs his interpretation as with what he discovers.

Of all the chapters in our volume, Denise A. Troll's study of the medieval scribe is the most thorough example of challenging assumptions about the meaning of literacy. The religious and intellectual forces that shaped the scribal traditions of the Middle Ages produced a unique type of literacy, one which is only recently being understood. Troll's chapter, one of the most responsible efforts at carefully articulating and documenting this phenomenon, is a result of preliminary efforts leading to her dissertation. Unlike the standard history of rhetoric texts in our field, Troll's chapter directly addresses the mentality driving literacy.

John O. Ward, whose primary research concerns the history of classical rhetorical theory in the Middle Ages, looks here at the broader, sociological implications of the history of literacy and rhetoric in a period recognized as the seedbed of modern, rational mentality and

culture called “the twelfth-century Renaissance.” Building on work that examines the nature of power, truth, and knowledge, Ward argues that the relatively rapid advent of more wide-scale literacy promoted new opportunities for social mobility and new arenas for social conflict. Out of this lively period arose the dominant ideas, methods, and structures of modern knowledge, “truth,” and education. Ward argues that “Renaissance” here reflects not a quantitative revival of knowledge as such, or even the general advent of attitudes similar to those familiar to us from classical and modern literature, but rather the advent of new groups to literacy, the collapse of social boundaries for literate people, and of firm notions of a single “truth” in society. The appearance of multiple “truths” reflecting the society—as well as efforts of different groups to rationalize, institutionalize, and profit from the new opportunities and modes that literacy promoted—make apparent the dynamism of the period. The “routinization” of the conflicts and instabilities that characterized the eleventh and first half of the twelfth centuries produced, from the second half of the twelfth century onward, the sciences, methods, and concepts of truth and knowledge, the institutions, degrees, curricula, and textbooks that lie directly behind those of today. The particular role of rhetoric in all this provides a continuous thread in the chapter.

Part of understanding oral and written communication from an historical perspective requires an understanding of history not only for our own direct knowledge but, indirectly, so that one may understand the historical assumptions that influenced a period. James J. Murphy provides an excellent illustration of precisely this point in his chapter on the impact of Quintilian in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. There is little argument that Quintilian was not only one of the Roman Empire’s preeminent educators but that his impact continued (with noted absences in the descent of manuscripts) throughout the course of higher education. Murphy’s chapter provides readers with a specific study of Quintilian’s impact and how pervasive his views of rhetoric were in the shaping of speaking and writing.

Although the nineteenth century is often regarded as the zenith of philological research in classical rhetoric, the real understanding of rhetoric as it operates in social contexts is only being realized by this

century's historians of rhetoric. One of the scholars most worthy of recognition is Robert W. Smith. His landmark study, *The Art of Rhetoric in Alexandria: Its Theory and Practice in the Ancient World* (1974), provided important historical information about a period long recognized as important in the history of rhetoric, but relatively unknown. Smith's present contribution to rhetorical education in France before 1600 performs much the same function; Smith builds on what knowledge is known about the period and then provides new, basic information so that the reader is left with a comprehensive overview of an important period. The mark of this contribution, and a measure of Smith's scholarship, is the harmony with which he integrates received scholarship with his own primary research. There is little doubt that this chapter will become standard reading for students and scholars of rhetoric.

One of the most difficult tasks of the scholar is to synthesize research—one's own and others—and make a statement that provides readers with an understanding of the implication of claims. Our last two chapters in the volume make such a contribution. Walter J. Ong, one of the pioneers in the field of oral and written communication mentioned at the start of this introduction, provides a provocative study of how mentality itself can be shaped by technology. Readers familiar with such works as Ong's *Interfaces of the Word* and *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* will see here also a specific topic studied in depth, in order to then provide a piece of evidence for the complex and evolving shaping of meaning prompted by technology. Our final chapter, Lynette Hunter's essay on public discourse, offers a detailed, extended analysis that captures many of the issues raised and dealt with by earlier studies. In a certain respect, her chapter complements the introductory statements of Schmandt-Besserat and Corbett by positioning and reassessing presuppositions and operating notions that influence our understanding in the shaping of meaning.

All the chapters of this volume are the result of considerable labor and cooperation far beyond the limits of reasonable expectations. For their commitment, patience, and consideration I express my heartfelt thanks to the authors. I also wish to thank Peggy Vento, Liz Weaver, and Rick Pisani for their help with preparing the format of these

chapters. Sandie Danovitz, Nancy Landy, and Anna Marie Skaro will always be remembered for their encouragement and attention to special details necessary for such work to exist. A special thanks is extended to Ann West at Sage for her help and support and to series coeditor Charles R. Cooper, who had the confidence and compassion to support my efforts during this project. To all mentioned—and to those inadvertently forgotten—appreciation is extended.



# 1

## ***Symbols in the Prehistoric Middle East: Developmental Features Preceding Written Communication***

**DENISE SCHMANDT-BESSERAT**

*Historical studies of oral* and written communication, particularly those of Western orientation, tend to stress relationships between verbal and literate discourse as it bears on the development of script. Yet foreshadowing—and indeed developing—the advent of writing is not only the systematization of speech techniques but an awareness of and development in the process of symbolization itself. From this perspective it is clear that the study of written communication from an historical perspective must not only be based on the study of orality but on the development of semiotics if we are to understand more completely the relationship between how individuals think and how they convey information. But what do we know about the early use of symbols and signs in prehistory? To answer this question, even in part, requires a review of evidence available for the evolution of symbolism in the prehistoric Middle East from the first appearance of man in the region to the Neolithic period; the particular emphasis here is on Paleolithic tallies, interpreted as notations, and Neolithic tokens used as symbols of goods. This chapter will discuss how these mnemonic devices paved the way for the invention of writing.