

# THE “GENREOLOGY” OF U.S. ARMY WORLD WAR I REPORTS

An exploration of historical genre change

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Scholars in professional communication often focus on how genres function within business. One example is JoAnne Yates (1993), who argues, from a historical point of view, that the genres of business communication changed during the early twentieth century, in the United States. She argues that, as small, family owned companies grew exponentially at the turn of the last century, so did the need for business communication to become more controlled and impersonal (p. xv). But there is a lack of further significant research on how the organizational changes that affected early twentieth century business communication genres also influenced the communication that occurred in other sectors, such as the government. My article argues that the communication in one branch of the government—the U.S. Army—was affected by the changes of the early twentieth century, as shown through examples of government-released reports from the army’s famous First Division as they fought in France during an international conflict: World War I.

**Keywords.** Genre theory, Professional communication, World War I.

## The World at War

Between 1914 and 1918, the *machine age* contributed to the death of almost fourteen million men and the wounding of twenty-two million more during the Great War (Lengel, 2008, p. 71). As World War I progressed, soldiers were sent up against machine guns, artillery, tanks, and poison gases, resulting in mass slaughter. “The Doughboys



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[American soldiers] never forgot the poison gas. Decades later, nightmares would wake them, choking and sweating, in the night” (p. 76). As a result, soldiers quickly learned the devastating consequences of the union between the machine age and war.

The staggering number of men killed or wounded during World War I is significant because it demonstrates the enormous scale of the conflict. What is more, the process of organizing the first modern army in U.S. history was no small matter. For instance, when the United States entered World War I, in April 1917, the standing American Army was quite small, having only about 130,000 men, and many of these were spread around places such as Panama and the Philippines (Evans, 2001, p. xx). To put the numbers in perspective, Evans points out that, in early 1918, Germany had about 250 divisions on the Western Front, which amounted to more than four million men (p. xxi). As a result, the United States had to quickly solve, not only a massive recruitment problem, but also an embarkation problem.

The massive recruitment and embarkation challenges were solved by Congress. Henry J. Reilly, Brigadier General and author of the *1936 Americans All*, explains that the 1917 Congress decided to “raise a war army made up of a greatly expanded regular army, a greatly expanded National Guard in Federal service, and a national army raised by the Federal government along the lines of the U.S. volunteers . . . but recruited by the draft instead of volunteering” (p. 23). James Hallas (2000), in *Doughboy War*, describes how, by the end of World War I, the U.S. Army had grown from 130,000 men to five million, the largest fighting force the country had ever seen (p. 1). Such a huge change in overall size obviously affected the way the organization functioned, at many levels. For instance, the army increased the size of companies from 100 men to 250, and regiments from 1,000 men to 3,700 (Taber, 1925, p. 13).

As the first decade of the new century came to a close, “The extraordinary force of machine power would astonish the world and result in a prolonged World War—a war with unprecedented destruction and a shocking loss of life” (Ford, 2008, p. 71). Ford discusses the widely held understanding that the machine age affected, not only civilian society, but also the nature of warfare. In World War I, according to Nancy Gentile Ford (2008), “America, like Europe, sought progress in the machine age” (p. 71).

## **The Machine Age**

Historian Thomas Hughes (1989) has described the century after 1870 as characterized by the technological and cultural shift to what some economic and social analysts called Fordism. This technology included, not only Henry Ford's famous assembly line—dating from 1913—but also the division of labor and prescription of work behavior that made it possible; practices that were formalized in Frederick Winslow Taylor's system of scientific management developed just a few years earlier.

As large business organizations of the late nineteenth century stitched regional networks together to create national markets, they altered both the form and meaning of local autonomy (Zunz, 1990, p. 12). Additionally, the nature of relationships between the labor force and the managers, as well as the highly individual identification of persons with their firms, underwent considerable change in the “big businesses which had evolved by the turn of the century” (Porter, 1973, p. 20). The bureaucracy became more impersonalized, as “complex administrative network[s] created a social and economic gap between men on various levels of . . . hierarchy” (p. 21). As the operations of a single business grew larger, more involved, and more widely separated, individual employees often had no knowledge of the distant, almost invisible people who controlled and manipulated the business and, to some degree, their lives. Many workers had little or no understanding of their part in the overall operations of the giant organization, and work itself, as well as their relations with others in the organization, grew increasingly impersonal (Porter, 1973, p. 22).

Systematic management developed theories and techniques that transcended the individual by relying, instead, on the system. It had two primary principles: “(1) a reliance on systems mandated by top management rather than on individuals, and (2) the need for each level of management to monitor and evaluate performance at lower levels” (Yates, 1993, p. 10). Yates claims: “During the years from 1850 to 1920, a new philosophy of management based on system and efficiency arose, and under its impetus internal communication came to serve as a mechanism for managerial coordination and control of organizations” (p. xix). This was vastly different from early nineteenth-century America where business enterprises were generally small, family affairs. The internal operations of these firms were controlled and coordinated through informal, personal

communication. Employers and employees, according to JoAnne Yates (1993), would use word of mouth, except when letters were needed to span distance (p. xv).

As businesses continued to evolve in the early twentieth century, one major means of maintaining centrality was to extend an informational web to regularize the flow of information, largely through the use of forms. The growth of forms in many businesses at this moment of history was part of the communication revolution that accompanied the rise of the modern corporation. One intention behind the use of such forms was, according to Allen and Bosley, for professional writers to produce a series of documents that appear to have been written by the same author: “to develop a unified corporate voice that is not undermined by issues of personal style and preference” (p. 84).

This emphasis on documents—not on the writer—means the documents are more efficient to produce (Allen and Bosley, 1994, p. 84). Further: “The goal of furthering corporate efficiency contributes to a more indirect control of voice, one that textbooks on writing and on [professional] communication do not prepare writers to meet” (p. 93). Even more importantly, when writers are “concealed behind corporate identities and bylines, a sense of personal responsibility may be more difficult to muster and may even appear to be inappropriate” (p. 85).

One of the reasons for maintaining a corporate voice would be to control the style and the textual variations of style that could result from personal voice and could lead to confusion. “Close adherence to guidelines also makes chunks of text interchangeable from one document to another. Corporations assume that, by controlling style, writers will produce documents that have the same voice” (Allen and Bosley, 1994, p. 85). The change to a more controlled and more impersonal nature in American business communication was, according to Yates, essentially complete by the end of World War I (p. xix).

### **The Role of Genre**

Amy Devitt (2004) argues that, as the nature of business changes, genres fill in the gaps of newly developed functions and reflect new roles for participants, as well as new situations:

Each new genre adds something a bit different to what exists, each develops out of different antecedents, even as each develops in a common context. Together, they indicate the complex interaction of genres and functions, of how contextual changes lead to perceived needs that are absorbed by modifying existing genres into newly constructed genres (p. 97).

In many ways, the detailed history of these genres reminds us of the typical origin of a genre: gradual development over time by modifying existing genres, responding to gradually emerging cultural and situational changes, especially newly perceived functions and changing relationships among participants (p. 97).

The particular genres that constituted the genre repertoire changed as the business world's functions, forums, and relationships changed. Completely new genres (that is, those that may have had antecedents but that appear not to have been perceived generically, previously) developed to meet the community's new needs (Devitt, 2004, p. 94). Among the new genres were circular letters or general orders issuing specific policies or procedures, routine and special reports, various kinds of forms, manuals describing the company's systematic procedures, in-house magazines, and managerial meetings. Yates points to possible antecedents for the new genres, confirming our expectation that new genres appear to emerge from other genres. Circular letters, for instance, had three possible antecedents in purpose, form, and audience: military orders first, advertising circulars second, and printed company rules as the third. Although Yates finds such antecedents for various aspects of these new genres, each genre, of course, differs significantly from its antecedents, as it fulfills some "newly developed purpose for the business community, purposes that emerge from the significant cultural changes of the time" (p. 66).

A rhetorical theory of genre, though, must look beyond particular classifications—which are only the indicators of genres, and change as our purposes change—and forms—which may trace, but do not constitute genre. Instead, genre theory must consider other factors, such as societal motives. At the beginning of *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1965) wonders: "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (p. xv). Similarly, Anis Bawarshi (2000), in "The Genre Function", claims that, as recent theory has it, genre entails purposes, participants, and themes, so understanding genre entails understanding a rhetorical situation and its social context (p. 356).

Recent genre theory that connects genre to purposes, participants, and themes derives from the notion of genre as typified response to a recurring rhetorical situation. Campbell (2009) traces the idea's roots to a 1965 discussion of genre by Edwin Black, in which he describes genres as responding to types of situations that recur. Carolyn Miller's definition (1984), developing out of the body of rhetorical scholarship that followed, defines genres as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (p. 159). Much of North American genre scholarship in composition and rhetoric has since followed Miller's definition.

While acknowledging Miller's influence on genre theory, other scholars delineate with their own related strains of genre theory. For instance, David Russell (1997) uses Vygotskian activity theory to define genre as "typified ways of purposefully interacting in and among some activity system(s)" (p. 513). Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin (1995) use Giddens's structuration theory to define genres as "dynamic rhetorical forms that are developed from actors' responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning" (p. 4). Although these scholars use very different theories to articulate and describe their definitions in important ways, Amy Devitt (2004) in *Writing Genres* argues that they both follow Miller in including some common elements of a genre definition: "that genre is action, that genre is typified action, that typification comes from recurring conditions, and that those conditions involve a social context" (p. 13).

In my overview thus far, rhetorical scholars view genre visible in classification and form where relationships and patterns develop when language users identify different tasks as being similar. Charles Bazerman (2008) explains that genre research

goes beyond a gathering of details to a search for order and systematicity—in the historically produced systems of contemporary practice; in the processes by which practices, forms, and texts emerge, evolve, and decline; in the actual responses individuals and groups make within socially organized situations; and in the ways texts mediate actions and social relations (p. 300).

Similarly, Devitt argues, genre exists through "people's individual rhetorical actions at the nexus of the contexts of situation, culture, and genres" (2004, p. 31). But if genres are

generic responses to social situations and culture(s), then how do these genres originate, in the first place?

If there is an exigence—someone telling someone else to do something—then who decides how to frame the response? Campbell gives one explanation in that the complex relationships between form and content are part of the ways in which genres work: “Our ability to understand the form-content relationships created in communal practice are aspects of our social competence, but they also represent communicative potentials” (p. 263). Devitt echoes:

If each writing problem were to require a completely new assessment of how to respond, writing would be slowed considerably, but once a writer recognizes a recurring situation, a situation that others have responded to in the past, the writer’s response to that situation can be guided by past responses. Genre, thus, depends heavily on the intertextuality of discourse (p. 15).

The idea of the intertextuality of discourse mentioned by Devitt connects to Miller’s observation that, “What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms . . . We learn, more importantly, what ends we have” (1979, p. 165).

Sometimes, though, in the field of rhetoric, we study genres we don’t understand, especially when we don’t know the exigence. This kind of study usually happens when we (1) try to go back into time, and don’t understand the context, or (2) study very new emerging genres. Devitt had said this in 2004: “At least as important as recognizing antecedents in the context of genres is recognizing cultural and situational antecedents: the developing changes in ideologies, institutions, and settings that create the circumstances for a new genre” (2004, p. 93).

While studying new genres, especially with technological leanings is useful (Spilka, 2010, Miller & Shepherd, 2004, Spinuzzi, 2003), I enjoy trying to understand the context and exigence of the past as part of the genre. As part of this process, tracing the history of a genre might lead to other genres. “Where do genres come from?” asks Tzvetan Todorov. He answers: “Quite simply from other genres. A new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination” (1990, p. 15).

## Research Methodology of World War I Report Genre

My interest in early twentieth century history led me to the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. During my initial visit, I realized the museum had an archive available to the public for research. I then discovered the government-released *Official Records of the First Division* belonging to the AEF (American Expeditionary Forces). These records included various documents such as general orders, bulletins, and reports. Though these records were bound in volumes, they have never officially been published for wide distribution to research libraries.

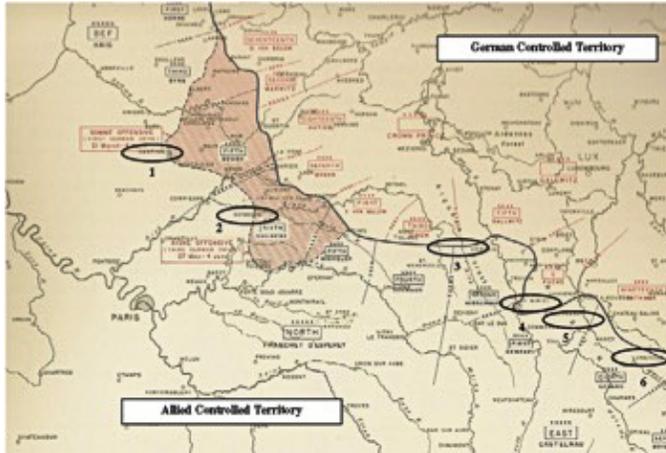
I was interested in The First Division of the AEF because it is often considered by historians as a representative example of the U.S. Army, in that it was the first already-standing army unit to be sent *over there* to France. For instance, the *History of the First Division during the World War: 1917-1919* states: “The Division was truly representative of America. Among its original members and among the dead at the end of its campaigns and battles were the sons of [47 states, 2 territories, and 4 possessions]” (p. 13).

The volumes of the *Official Records of the First Division* were divided into the following respective categories: field orders, summaries of intelligence, miscellaneous memoranda, operations reports, war diaries, and training documents. Due to the amount of information in the collection of records, I focused on volumes 12 and 13; these volumes contain the operations reports of the main battles that the First Division is known to have fought: Sommerville (Fall 1917), Cantigny (Spring 1918), Soissons (Summer 1918), St. Mihiel (Fall 1918), Meuse-Argonne (Fall 1918). (See Figure 1, p. 41). These operations reports, generally speaking, would have provided the chain of command specific tactical information on the day-to-day maneuverings and the official reports of battles of the First Division in France. As I was reviewing the documents, I learned of the First Division’s role in each of its battles and the complex, often messy, ways the U.S. Army communicated through written reports.

While many of the documents I looked at demonstrated forethought and strategic planning, others seemed spontaneous—more the result of momentary circumstances than of design. Sonja K. Foss (2009) explains that such a collection of documents lends itself to genre analysis: “Generic criticism is rooted in the assumption that certain types of situations provoke similar needs and expectations in audiences

Figure 1

Map of First Division fighting areas. 1. Cantigny; 2. Soissons; 3. Meuse-Argonne; 4. St. Mihiel; 5. Ansauville Sector; 6. Sommerville Sector



Source: The Western Front in 1918 in *The West Point Atlas of World War I*

and thus call for particular kinds of rhetoric” (p. 137). By focusing on just the operations reports, which were contained in volumes 12 and 13, I have chosen representative texts that reveal the rhetorical activity of the discourse. John Creswell (2007) would refer to this as sampling, which allows researchers to engage in large and otherwise unmanageable scholarly efforts” (p. 55).

Over the ensuing two years, I revisited the National World War I archives a few times to scan volumes 12 and 13 more comprehensively. These research trips were made possible by the C. R. Anderson Research Grant, through the Association for Business Communication. With my high-resolution hand-held scanner, I replicated over 2,000 pages of records. These 2,000 pages of records included around 300 operations reports. Shorter reports ranged from one to two pages, whereas longer reports ranged between eight and ten pages.

I then analyzed the records according to Foss’s four-step process. First, I selected my artifacts of the operations reports, as described above. Second, I analyzed the artifact based on its function. I did this by using what Foss calls generic description: “You examine several artifacts to determine if a genre exists. This is an inductive operation,

in which you begin with a consideration of specific features of artifacts and move to a generalization about them in the naming of a genre” (p. 140).

In my study, I examined the operations reports, and then classified them as either daily operations reports, or special operations reports. Foss would describe generic description as involving four steps: (1) observing similarities in rhetorical responses to particular situations; (2) collecting artifacts that occur in similar situations; (3) analyzing the artifacts to discover if they share characteristics; and (4) formulating the organizing principle of the genre (p. 141). In my approach, I describe the operations reports as belonging to two categories: first, there are daily operations reports, which pertain to a specific period of time; second, there are special operations reports, which address certain topics after a battle.

The third step, according to Foss, includes formulating the research question(s). Mine included the following:

- (1) Did or did not the records systematically change during the course of the war?
- (2) If the records did systematically change, what caused this development? More specifically, to what extent did the changing relationships within the U.S. Army, as it grew geometrically during the conflict, play in the organizational communication of the First Division?

Additionally, I used the following questions that focus specifically on genre, and which complement the overarching questions already posed:

- (3) What are the formats of the various kinds of documents included in the official records of the First Division? For instance, do they *look* like reports or memos? Or do they take some other format?
- (4) What is the verbal style of the documents included in the official records? For instance, what kind of voice is used to record information?
- (5) How does each document fit into the dynamic structure of the entire official records of the First Division? In other words, how do the various documents connect to create a composite picture of the division’s records?

After completing all three of the above steps, Foss would say the fourth, and final, step includes writing the results. The following section will include the results of my study

according to the analysis I conducted using generic criticism. Foss says, “The purpose of generic criticism is to understand rhetorical practices in different time periods and in different places by discerning the similarities in rhetorical situations and the rhetoric constructed in response to them” (p. 137). In my analysis, I explain how the *genreology* (the *genealogy* of the *genre*) answers my secondary set of research questions, with the following topics: format evolution, verbal style, and composite picture of the First Division’s WWI records.

### **Analysis of First Division reports in WWI**

My research shows that the written records of the First Division in World War I *did* systematically change during the course of the war. What might have caused these transformations? As mentioned earlier, the U.S. Army grew immensely during the conflict. In fact, this unprecedented growth was the main impetus behind the systematic transformation of the written records. Just as Yates’ scholarship claims that civilian corporations of the time period employed written communications as a form of control over large numbers of employees, I argue that the First Division in World War I used such correspondence to enhance control over the hierarchy of a fast-growing Army.

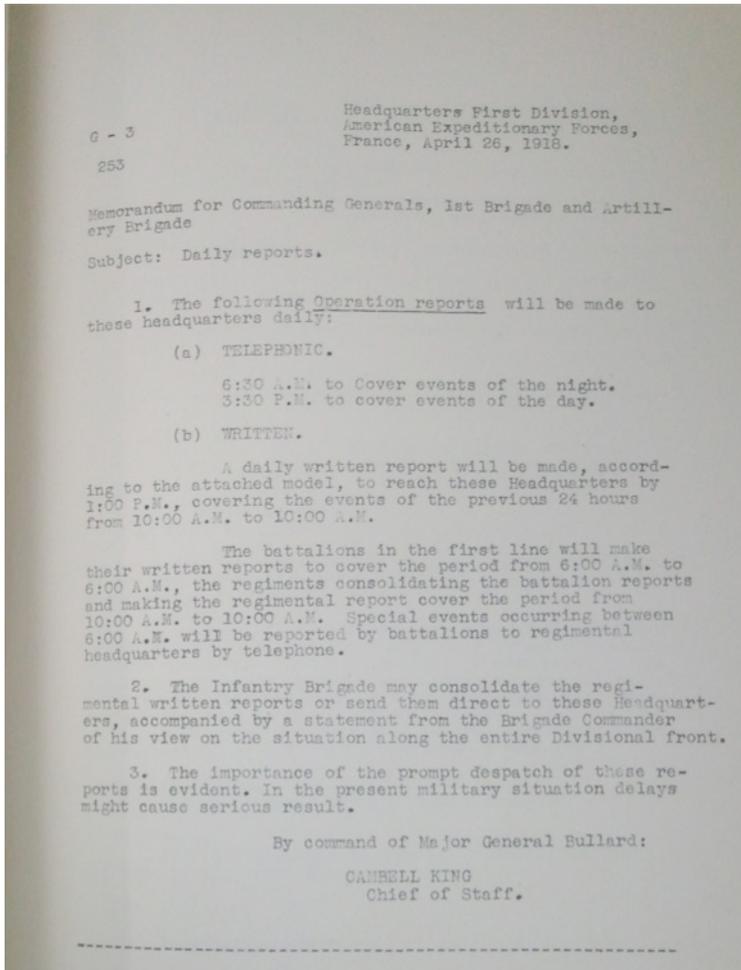
#### **Format Evolution**

The first place to look at how the formats of the records of the First Division evolved is with the documents surrounding the first combat action in the Sommerville Sector (November 2-3, 1917). It was the first combat event for the First Division, and it resulted in the first American deaths in the war. Throughout this series of reports, there is little consistency in format. This first set of documents, therefore, presents a starting point for comparison with later documents from future events in First Division history.

After Sommerville, the First Division headed west along the front to fight in various small-scale actions, and to hold the front lines—trenches—over the winter of 1918 in the Ansauville Sector. As the Americans participated in this trench warfare, the corresponding reports assume more elements of formal standardization. For example, a memo from the Commanding General, Robert Lee Bullard, calls for daily operations reports (dated April 26, 1918). (See Figure 2, p. 44). Not only does the memo call for

Figure 2

Memo calling for daily operations reports, dated April 26, 1918.



daily operations reports, but it also provides a model for how the information should be communicated. The reports are to cover events of the day from 10 a.m. to 10 a.m. of the next day—note that modern military time is not yet used—and they are due at Division Headquarters by 1 p.m. At the very end of the memo, the rhetorical exigency for such communication is stated: “The importance of the prompt dispatch of these reports is evident. In the present military situation delays might cause serious result.” The information included within the reports, as the models, were to start with the general characteristics of the day and end with “miscellaneous data.” Here, when compared to

the variety of reports following the first trench raid, we see evolution of format along with the emerging genre of the daily operations report.

The next step of format evolution within the records of the First Division comes from the documents surrounding the combat around Soissons. This fighting occurred during July 1918, when First Division losses totaled more than 1,000 dead and over 5,000 wounded. The daily operations report, as it was developed during the division's time in the Ansauville Sector, would not appear in the reports from Soissons. Instead, special operations reports emerged at this time, such as one on the subject of the loss of automatic weapons. Such a change in the kinds of reports being used begs the question: Why does there appear to be no daily operations reports for the First Division's actions in the Soissons area? Given the earlier push for format standardization in daily operations reports, the rhetorician might assume that there would be at least a few such reports accompanying the emergence of the new special operations report. However, as genres change, writers adapt. For instance, Division Headquarters asked the lieutenant who wrote the special operations report on Soissons to report specifically on the loss of weapons. Perhaps, there was no need for daily operations reports during this operation. Or, perhaps, the scale of warfare at the time led to the emergence of the special operations report as an alternative genre.

Although I was not there, I expect that the First Division needed a way to systematically format and organize the communication of events as the army increased in size. A move toward format standardization, in the Division's case, was a matter of necessity as its leadership tried to learn how to expedite actions, movements, and policies during the hostilities. If the reports were not standardized, then the officers would not be able to find the information they needed at a glance.

For instance, after the Sommerville Sector, the first few reports were not standardized and the reader would have to sift through the documents to find the information they might need, such as what individuals were involved, who died, and how the attack happened. Finding this information efficiently would have been difficult. The rhetorician would certainly note how, in introducing bulleted lists and headings, First Division report writers made reading the final Sommerville Sector report an easier task for most readers. For example, in the final report from the Sommerville Sector, there is a section where there is a list of lessons to be learned from the incident, such as keeping

the trenches better maintained. By moving toward a standardized format of reports, the First Division in later events would be able to glean information from a variety of officers who would write the two emerging reports: the daily operations report and the special operations report. More specifically, the daily operations report model would call for sections covering visibility, artillery activity, aerial activity, and losses. On the other hand, the special operations report model would call for sections on characteristics of terrain, artillery support, and data about conquered ground. Since these two emerging reports had clear models, with their corresponding sections, officers would know where to look within the document for the specific information they might need. Further, perhaps the apparent lack of consistent reports (i.e. daily operations reports not always present) is caused by the chaos of war, since the division did state, during the occupation, that they were missing reports.

### **Verbal Style**

Report writers of the Sommerville Sector tried to encapsulate the action and the reasons for the American losses with personal testimony from officers and enlisted men who had witnessed the action. These reports had a personal narrative quality, when compared to the final report of the event. For instance, there are many personal pronouns used and the sentence constructions included active voice. Active voice is often described as a sentence with a verb that can take a direct object and be written in a direct pattern (Rentz and Lentz, 2014, p. 58).

Unlike the first reports, the final report tried to look objectively at the action and did not appear to use the qualities of personal narrative. For instance, the final report covers material such as specific time frames of action, and also calls for lessons to be learned from what went wrong. It also avoided using personal pronouns, and used passive sentence construction. Whereas active voice uses a direct pattern in sentence construction, passive voice is often described as a sentence with a verb that uses an indirect pattern.

The next noteworthy example of personal narrative vs. objectivity in the reports of the First Division come from the action surrounding Cantigny, which was their first major battle (see Figure 3, p. 47). The division staved off a German counterattack on

Figure 3

Report on actions against Cantigny.

REPORT ON OPERATIONS AGAINST CANTIGNY.

1. Report of Lieut Parker, commanding 1st Platoon.

I was put in command of the detachment to furnish guides and make arrangements for the "Jumping Off" trench. This detail left MAISONCELLE in the evening of May 26. The detail entered the sector without any casualties and began work at once. The enemy made a raid on the morning of the 27th of May at which time the entire sector was subjected to a heavy bombardment. During the bombardment Corp. Randolph was buried in the front line, by a shell caving in the parapet. He was evacuated in a short while after the raid was over. He was severely shell shocked and crushed. A captain reported to me that the enemy had penetrated our lines beyond the support position. There were many scattered soldiers around Bois st Elcis. I immediately assembled about three platoons and formed them in a skirmish line behind a ridge in front of the Bois des Glandes\*. I then found a company of Engineers and ordered them to go in support of the three platoons. I reported my operation to a Major of the 16th Inf and turned over the detachment to him. With his permission I went up on a patrol to see how far the enemy had advanced and found that they had made a local raid on our front line. When everything quieted down I assembled my detail and completed the work in the "Jumping Off" trench. Later in the day Pvt. McDonald (Chas) was wounded in the leg, supposedly by an aeroplane bullet. Nothing further of importance happened during the day.

The guides led the company into position without a hitch on the night of May 27/28. No casualties during the bombardment before the attack. At zero hour the platoon "Jumped Off" and quickly established the attack formation. I lost one or two men wounded in the advance by machine gun fire. The platoon captured one machine gun with a quantity of ammunition. I turned the gun over to a Machine gun Sergeant attached to my platoon, ordered him to reverse it and put it in to action. The platoon captured several prisoners and sent them to the rear, - at least twelve men were sent in. In the advance many of the enemy were killed. On reaching the objective, outposts were immediately put forward and the platoon began to dig in. Just as the digging began a machine gun barrage was put down and this caused 12 casualties in my platoon. Things went well until 4 o'clock in the afternoon when the enemy began bombing our position. About six o'clock it became much heavier and word was passed down the trench that Lieut. WARD (or some such name) ordered us to evacuate at once. Not knowing who Lieut Ward was or with what authority he gave such an order, I ordered my men to stand fast, and stand guard for an approach of the enemy. I immediately passed word down the trench asking who Lieut Ward was, and with what authority he had issued the order. I received no reply, whereupon I went myself to the right of the Company sector to find him and determine if he had authority to issue the order. I found no Lieut Ward, but was told by some men that a Lieut. had retreated to the rear with a number of men immediately on the right of the sector. I found Lieut Morris on the right of our sector, I consulted him and we decided to remain in position until something more serious happened or we had the proper authority to withdraw. Whereupon I returned to my post and found that some one had led the company to the rear, without calling in the outposts. I then went out to the outposts, and found them discharging their duties faithfully, with some dead and some wounded in the posts. The positions were in full view of the enemy and it seemed an impossibility to evacuate the wounded in daylight. I explained to the post that the company had retired but that I was going out to find it and bring it back into the original position, and ordered them to hold out until the wounded were evacuated, or in case the enemy came on them they were not to abandon the wounded until it was impossible to save them without all being captured. I went back to the front line, then down through "L" Co's sector but could find no one. From there I went to Bn. Hq. and could not find the company. I reported to the C.O. He ordered me to round up all the stragglers and report to Capt. Pack. I found about 25 men from various organizations, supplied them with ammunition and reported.

May 28, 1918, and the American casualties were over 1,000 dead and more than 4,000 wounded. The reports from this period of time illustrate how the model of a daily operations report from the Ansauville Sector influenced the communications during and after the Cantigny battle. For instance, there are daily operations reports that share the general characteristics of the day to miscellaneous data in a very objective way. Genre change, however, is never a straightforward or uncluttered process. From this same period of time, we also see personal testimony from a lieutenant on the operations against Cantigny. This report uses personal pronouns and is very *narrativesque*. In a time of exponential growth within the army and the corresponding communication, we see that the reports of the First Division in World War I are in flux.

Towards the end of the war, when the fighting moved near the St. Mihiel Salient east of Paris, in September 1918, the reports of the First Division appear to have become fully objective in tone. During the action surrounding the St. Mihiel Salient, the First Division eradicated the German position at the cost of only 93 American deaths and 441 wounded. The reports from this event showcase how special operations reports are now being fully used. For instance, the special operations report from St. Mihiel explains the overall operations in a very objective tone. Why was this tone being used? Perhaps the rhetorician could say that the objective tone from these documents stems from the point in the war when so many men were dying. But, on the other hand, during the action surrounding the St. Mihiel Salient, only 93 men were killed. Perhaps at this point in the war, use of an objective tone had already become the norm and so a personal narrative was not favored? Whatever the cause, the special operations report seems to have fully emerged at the time of this event, yet there appears to be no daily operations reports, just as in the time period of the combat near Soissons.

The rhetorician has to wonder why there are no daily operations reports from St. Mihiel, which would have used an objective tone, since the special operations report obviously uses similar qualities of objectivity. Oftentimes, scholars in our field like to argue that using an objective voice is done on purpose—as discussed earlier. Yet, I believe my study illustrates that sometimes there is a larger exigency and purpose when using an objective tone. In my study's case, not only was the war itself a huge exigency, since it was a very chaotic period of time, but there was also another exigency with

the larger purpose of pushing for standardization within the reports, which served to expedite actions, movements, and policies during the hostilities.

In order to communicate these actions, movements, and policies, the First Division needed a way to objectively communicate events so that a consistent tone would be present within all the documents. For instance, if an officer wrote a daily operations report in an objective voice, like during Cantigny, then that information might be more understandable to other officers when compared to writing in a conversational way. Additionally, if officers wanted to write another document regarding the actions during Cantigny, they would be able to pull together these various written reports easily and efficiently. As discussed earlier, businesses of the early twentieth century developed a *corporate voice* in their documents, and I would argue that the First Division was developing their own *Army voice* during World War I. The rhetorician can imagine the usefulness of the interchangeable features of an Army voice during a time of conflict and pressure.

### **Composite Picture**

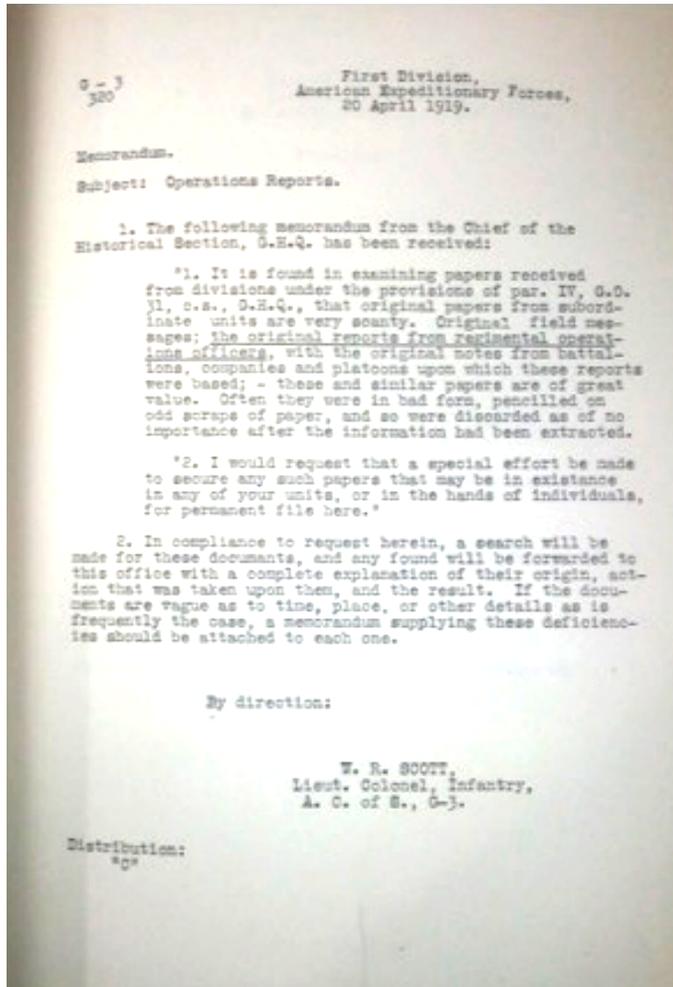
After the St. Mihiel Salient, the First Division participated in the last event before the Armistice, on November 11, 1918. This last battle, the Meuse-Argonne, was one of the bloodiest in American history. The First Division alone suffered over 1,500 dead and nearly 6,000 wounded. The reports following this event definitely demonstrate how the communication of the First Division in World War I adapted and changed. For the first time since Cantigny, the daily operations report surfaces again. As readers look at this type of report from the Meuse-Argonne period, they will see the familiar time frame surface, except that it is framed from noon to noon instead of 10 a.m. to 10 a.m. (see Figure 4, p. 50).

After the daily operations report, a special operations report on the Meuse-Argonne follows in the records of the First Division. It is important to note that this report was written after the Armistice, on November 24, 1918, in Luxembourg. But the last part of it, nonetheless, lists the summary and conclusions from the offensive. Why? Perhaps the army realized that such a special operations report would be useful for future reference. The fact that the documents dealing with



Figure 5

Memo about lost reports, dated April 20, 1919.



Perhaps the division realized that the missing reports served, not only to expedite actions, movements, and policies during the hostilities, but could also serve as records of the war for future generations. For instance, the publication of the First Division records of the First Division was released on March 6, 1928, approximately ten years after the Armistice.

There were limited copies of these records available since they were mainly used by officers training at the war colleges of the Army. One complete set now resides in the archives of the National World War I Museum for those interested in them, today.

By looking at these reports and noting that the First Division commented on how some of these reports are missing, my research findings illustrate that the messiness of genre change resulted in both daily operations reports and special operations reports of the First Division during the course of World War I as the army expanded in size.

Through these three topics, the rhetorician can see how the First Division was using communication to control the format, tone, and overall picture of World War I records. Yates would suggest that these controls were enacted by both “downward” and “upward” communication (p. 6). In my study’s case, the downward communication served the purpose of dictating information to others within the organization. For instance, the memo from General Bullard that outlines how daily operations reports should be written is a prime example of such downward communication. On the other hand, upward communication is enacted by the lieutenants and other officers who wrote the daily operations reports and special operations reports for Division Headquarters. Through my study, the rhetorician can see the sorts of actions that the U.S. Army was attempting to control through changes in the communication.

### **Lessons Learned**

What are the lessons that the rhetorician can then take away from the findings of my study? The rhetorician can learn that the genealogy of genre may appear messy in the archive or elsewhere, but the complex relationships involved with how the genre was changing provide an opportunity for us to learn about genreology. It is in that messiness that scholars can find interesting and useful things to say, such as:

(1) *How military reports evolved to become standardized during World War I.*

In our field, military communications is an overlooked area of research. The connection between war and business during World War I, therefore, presents new insight into how changes in communication occurred during the early twentieth century. As discussed earlier, the influence of civilian business communication is well documented, especially by Yates. Yet, the connection to the communication of war does not seem prevalent in our field. I think that such a connection is very important.

(2) *How interested scholars can learn how genre changes over a certain time period.*

Researchers interested in genre are curious about how genre changes and adapts to social action. My study used the sociocultural approach to genre, as outlined earlier, while also contributing to the theory with my term *genreology* (the *genealogy* of the *genre*). To do so, I focused on how the reports at the beginning of the war compare to the reports found at the end of the conflict. Such an approach will extend the sociocultural theory, influenced by Miller, to consider how social action influences genre during a specific time period. I hope, through my research, that I have mapped a genreology of the U.S. Army records from World War I. While such a task seemed complicated, I think that this area of study has illustrated the complex ways in which the records from World War I adapted during a time of conflict and change never before seen by the world.

(3) *How we communicate within organizations today.*

Another aspect of genre research is to use what we learn from scholarship to better understand the way in which we communicate today. Queries into the way the U.S. Army has communicated in the past might help initiate future studies on the classified records from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While military communication is important to study, I also think that considering other historical areas of professional communication would equally lend itself to a study of genreology. I think that more examples on the roots and development of professional communication will help enrich both the classroom and the field. ■

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