Enhancing Digital Rhetoric

An Honors Thesis (Icom 495)

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Abstract

Rhetoric, the ancient art of persuasion through language, is an integral aspect of human nature; therefore, it is consequently included in human communication efforts, including websites. The rhetorical strategies generally found on the Internet are basic fundamentals in the broad art form. In addition to these core functions, rhetoric also offers a range of theories to be included in web design as well. If such theories were included, the audience's comprehension and rate of retention would increase. The benefits of rhetoric make it a necessary skill in the education of both content creators and website developers.
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Thesis Statement

Incorporating ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos into websites enhances web presence and builds a more informed online audience.

Keywords

Rhetoric - the art of discourse that aims to improve the capability of writers or speakers that attempt to inform, persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situations

Ethos - an appeal through character of the speaker, described by Herrick as "understanding what the community believes makes a person believable" (Herrick, 2012, p. 81).

Pathos - an appeal to the audience’s emotion, described by Aristotle as "putting the audience in the right frame of mind" (Herrick, 2012, p. 79).

Logos - an appeal using reason and argument, described by Randall as "acting intelligently" (Herrick, 2012, p. 79).

Kairos - consideration to opposite viewpoints, timing, and circumstances, a passing instant of balance when an argument will have the most impact.
Introduction

Rhetorical perspectives - such as ethos, pathos, and logos - are capable of benefiting websites by increasing web presence as well as the involvement of the online community. Rhetoric is already being used as a persuasive power in the content on the web - in the same manner that it has been used in oral speeches since ancient Greece; however, a better awareness of how to institute more effective rhetoric can be incorporated into the content and even the actual design of the site. Everything can be analyzed rhetorically, including the layout and presentation of a web page. The type of information and how it is presented affects the ethos, pathos, and logos of the site's argument.

Because they are responsible for shaping the way their clients' brand is being presented to the online audience, web designers must consider the rhetorical power of their design because it will affect the success of their product and further employability. These clients, also, must consider the rhetorical nature of the content they are posting on the web. Further study into both the current and possible uses of rhetoric on the Internet would help web developers anticipate the audience's view of the website's design, subject, and main argument.

Rhetoric is already being used in web design for it is inherent in humans' construction of an argument, which is what a website is designed to do, selling either a product, an idea, or a person. However, not much analysis or interpretation of design rhetoric has yet been done.

The important questions to answer about rhetoric on the Internet are:

- How can reconfigure ancient Greek rhetoric to be useful in the technology age?
- How are rhetorical strategies already being used?
- How can websites be designed to put their inherent rhetoric to the best use?
- How will an audience respond to appropriate use of rhetoric on the Internet?
Literature Review

Rhetorical Theory

Before analyzing the effectiveness of web content, critics should have a working knowledge of rhetorical theories. Rhetoric first became a subject of study in ancient Greece. Though its popularity in education has fluctuated over the centuries, currently historians have provided the most complete understanding of ancient Greek rhetorical teachings since that time period. Understanding how Aristotle's and Cicero's theories apply to today's society can help web designers build more effective websites.

Ancient Rhetoric

Aristotle's systematized record of rhetoric supplies the basis of current rhetorical application. Forbes I. Hill (2003) breaks down the essay attributed to Aristotle entitled "Rhetorica." Aristotle describes the three situations that call for rhetoric (deliberative, forensic, and epideictic), the three strategies to use in those situations (ethos, pathos, and logos), and the variety of different arguments (also called topoi) that can persuade the audience.

Cicero is also an important ancient figure in the study of rhetoric. Donovan J. Ochs (2003) presents Cicero's theories on the process of how a speech should be written and how it should be structured. His five canons of rhetoric include invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. The organization of speech ought to be introduction, statement of fact, division, proof, refutation, and conclusion. These organizational theories provide systematized formula for ordering an argument.

The ancient Greek rhetoricians also utilized an element known as kairos. Kairos translates to time but does not mean the same as chronos, which also translates to time in a more lengthy sense of the word. Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee (2011) describe kairos as the key or pivotal moment in which all necessary factors line up in the rhetor's best favor. The rhetor must seize this fleeting moment and use his rhetoric wisely to persuade the audience.

These rhetorical theories are frequently applied to societal communication, both oral and written. Seeing how they are used in real life can be beneficial when applying rhetoric to the web. The rhetorical theories should translate easily from a live community to a digital one.

Contemporary Rhetoric

James Herrick (2012) discusses how the 20th century shift in the sciences led to once again incorporating rhetoric into our understanding of the world. He shows the focus shifting from the content to the audience so that humanity could better understand their own selves. Rhetoric was also found outside of writing, in art, architecture, etc., and so it had to be redefined again to include more elements. Finally, he describes how rhetoric facilitated societal discussion about issues in politics, equality, and power. Herrick provides a broad look at role of rhetoric in modern history.
David W. Smit (1997) discusses how rhetorical techniques affect communities. Rhetoric is functioning continually in a community. A rhetor reflects his community's values and has the persuasive power to expand those values. Expansion is achieved mainly through validating the community's existing actions and then calling for further action from them. Appropriate use of rhetorical theory can convince the community members of the benefits of their continued action.

There has also been comparative research between physical and online communities performed by James P. Zappen, et al. (1997). Before doing research on rhetorical function on the Internet, the writers discussed a traditional view of a rhetorical community. Since ancient Greece, a rhetorical community has been considered to be an association of people who maintain the same beliefs and values through the use of rhetoric. The authors argue that this definition is changing in communities that exist in cyberspace. Their research proves that a group of users who respectfully discuss differing, not just similar, ideas can be considered a rhetorical community.

Digital Environment

With a solid grasp of ancient rhetorical tradition and its function in society, these strategies must be applied in new ways to the Internet. Marshall McLuhan (1964) is continued to be proven true in his statement that the message is imbued with meaning by the medium through which it is presented (p. 7). Therefore, to fully understand the content, website design must also be rhetorically assessed. Not many critics focus on a rhetorical analysis of the Internet, but some do articulate how designers, as well as inherent features of the web, affect the meaning of the message.

Website Features

Nicholas C. Burbules (1997 and 2002) critiques both designers and the uses of hypertext in two of his essays. Burbules describes the function of hypertext as both semantic and navigational, providing meaning and facilitating association. They can narrow a word to specific definition or broaden it into a new idea. Links also give power to the user by offering the opportunity to break from the traditional, linear pattern, an opportunity that they can accept or decline. Burbules encourages designers to be conscious of how they are guiding their users through the web because it is easy to become lost or detoured in the expanse of the Internet. Additionally, designers should be aware of any contradiction that may be found in linked material. Maintaining a cohesive argument is more challenging when supporting sources are not completely under the author's control.

The Internet as a medium also allows for visual rhetoric to be incorporated. Mary E. Hocks (2003) discusses "audience stance, transparency, hybridity, [and] visual rhetoric as a transformative process of design" (p. 629). She states that already apparent persuasive power of images is amplified in the digital environment through hypertext and multiple media. Because arguments can be made through visual elements - images, charts, interactive games, etc., - Hocks says writing must be redefined to fit this new form of communication. This new definition
includes audience stance (digital interaction enhances their role), transparency (credibility is much easier to determine with hyperlinks), and hybridity (combination and construction of both visual and verbal design).

The nature of the Internet makes it an appropriate place to learn critical reading skills, according to Joel Walz (2001). Because the environment does not demand accountability from authors, the Internet provides material to be analyzed for correct context, vocabulary, and content. Walz says the three flaws most often found in writing on the web are manipulation, unsupported arguments, and bias. He concludes by offering basic pedagogical advice.

The issue of lack of accountability can also bring into play bigger questions about ethics. Heidi McKee and James E. Porter (2008) performed a study on how digital writers approach ethics. The Internet provides a place in which identity is not always apparent or necessary in authorship. Without the pressure of reputation or consequences, ethical practices may not be as inherent on the web. McKee and Porter split web content into public and private information, saying different ethics were considered acceptable for these sectors. They also determined strategies for ensuring ethical standards are met in digital writing.

Barbara Warnick (1998 and 2001) ties together the ideas of the new possibilities available via hypertext, adapting to the new medium, and the inconsistency of accountability. She also looks at the way the Internet brings together as well as segregates its users. A community can be quickly formed and then disassociated, and it is made up of a limited view of the other members. Creating rhetorical community online is more faith-based when the user has no way of know if the values the other members present are truly representative of that individual. Warnick also describes the reshaping of rhetorical analysis due to the fluid and inconsistent nature of content on the web.
Argument

Websites’ Inherent Rhetoric

Human Nature

The Internet functions as form of communication between creator and user; therefore, rhetoric is present on every webpage. Comparatively recent theories suggest that rhetoric is an inherent quality in human nature that is unconsciously expressed in all communication. Because it is built into our nature, rhetoric is an integral but subtle aspect of digital content.

George Kennedy

Kennedy (1998) supported the theory of inherent rhetoric through his cross-cultural studies. He investigated the rhetorical qualities of communication in non-Western cultures that were not as significantly influenced by ancient Greek ideology. Kennedy found that although other cultures focus primarily on different aspects than the Western world tends to, the aspects are still much the same. This study argues that rhetoric is part of human nature even when entirely different forces have shaped cultures.

Kenneth Burke

Content found on the Internet is simply another expression of our language. Language has frequently been referred to as one of the qualities that identify us as human beings. Burke (1950) said, “Rhetoric is rooted in an essential function of language itself” (p. 43) He believed that language is a symbolic representation of our very existence and that rhetoric is inseparable from the aspect that makes us human. It can then be said that rhetoric is an inherent part of our humanity. As Internet content is another form of symbolic language, our Internet use, therefore, is naturally rhetorical.

Andrea Lunsford

Studies have analyzed the way people use the Internet, and Lunsford (Haven, 2009), in particular, investigated the way rhetoric is used. Her findings, after studying Stanford University students for five year, show that not only are students writing more than ever, but also that they have a strong grasp of ancient Greek strategies. They make use of kairos, the ability to seize the opportune moment with the most effective words, in their everyday writing. As kairos is not typically an educational requirement, it can be assumed that instead of learning the delicate art of balance in the moment, kairos is part of the students’ natural instinct in the area of language. The language that students use every day on the Web is infused with concepts studied in ancient Greece, concepts that are not merely theories but inherent aspects of human nature.
Examples

With rhetoric as a naturally occurring human element, elements of rhetoric will be put to use, almost unconsciously, in website development. Though the current rhetoric of websites is fundamental in its complexity, it is still evidence of our inherent tend toward persuasion techniques. With further education of the art and intricacies of rhetorical perspectives, web developers could use these strategies more effectively. For now, though, the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos can be found in websites such as Billy Graham Evangelical Association, Compassion International, and The Case for Christ.

Ethos in Billy Graham Evangelical Association

The Billy Graham Evangelical Association leans heavily on the ethos of their namesake to reach their target audience. Billy Graham’s ethos - his credibility and trustworthiness as a speaker - has been built upon years of public ministry work. His widely publicized success as a preacher and evangelist has made his name well known both in and out of the church setting. Graham’s fame has helped him to develop a public identity of wisdom and compassion. He founded the Billy Graham Evangelical Association in 1950 to reach people with the message of salvation through as many types of media as possible, and BGEA still thrives today, at least partially because of his established ethos. The BGEA website consistently displays his name and picture throughout the pages. This showcase is not simply a tribute to the 94-year-old man but also an attempt to put the audience at ease, to convince them of the organization’s credibility. The rhetorical strategy of this website is that if the audience trusts Billy Graham, then they should trust BGEA as well.

Pathos in Compassion International

Compassion International employs pathos to reach people on an emotional level. The primary goal of this organization is to persuade their audience to sponsor a child from a developing country to provide them with nutrition, healthcare, education, mentors, and the message of salvation. Pathos helps them reach this goal by stirring feelings of empathy and duty in their viewers. The main page displays pictures of children who have been waiting over six months to receive sponsorship and a video of a child tearing up as he thanks his sponsor for their support. Seeing the faces and hearing the tears of children asking for extra help to meet their daily needs is a tangible way for Compassion International to have an impact on their audience. Frequently, pathos is used by organizations providing care for the less fortunate, and there is a fine line between showing the realities of people in need and exploiting them. Compassion International seems to be aware of this balance and shows simply children’s faces, not overly dramatic examples of malnutrition or abuse. The rhetorical strategy of this website is to show the audience the innocent faces of children who need their support.

Logos in The Case for Christ

The Case for Christ website (see Figure 3) is based upon the book of the same name by Lee Strobel. His research has been reformatted for the web, utilizing hyperlinks. It argues for the
Christian faith with *logos*¹. This website answers common questions about proof of divinity with evidence gathered by Strobel. The evidence examines the questions from many views, including archeological, medical, philosophical, and moral standpoints.

An appeal of *logos* must be grounded in certain types of evidence: deduction, induction, enthymemes, rhetorical examples, historical examples, fictional examples, analogy, and similar and contrary examples (Crowley & Hawhee, 2012). Due to the nature of the argument, The Case for Christ relies mainly on historical examples, as well as induction and enthymemes. Historical examples are supported by records of past, and Aristotle wrote that they can be used in brief or extended form. Induction is the type of argument that supports or confirms a general conclusion by using a particular instance or premise. Enthymemes are a form of inductive argument that focuses on a belief held by the community. Enthymemes get to the heart of problem that concerns the audience. The Case for Christ uses all of these types of arguments to prove that the Christian faith is true. The rhetorical strategy of this website is to appeal to the audience’s logic and critical thinking through supported arguments.

**Enhancing Rhetoric**

**Additional Theories**

Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals are generally well known aspects of establishing an argument. Yet even without knowing the names *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, our society is able to recognize the effect that character, emotion, and reason have on an argument. Western culture is grounded in Aristotelian theory.

However, more applicable theories exist outside of Aristotle. Integrating theories from any number of rhetoricians, including Burke, Bitzer, and Cicero, would have a positive effect on the argument that the website is supporting. Arguments are more well-rounded and less likely to be disproven if they are substantiated by multiple theories.

*Kenneth Burke’s Pentad*

The pentad (Herrick, 2012) is a model for dividing an occasion into segments so that the argument can be better evaluated. The dividing sections are: 1. the act, 2. the setting, 3. the agent, 4. the agency, 5. the purpose. An argument may rely more heavily on one or two sections than the others, depending on which aspect the agent wants to emphasize. Burke proposes that by defining each of these sections, we can more clearly see the connections working between them, the effect each has on the argument, and the motive behind the act.

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¹ I find it coincidental that a website arguing for the Christian faith uses *logos* as the primary appeal because the Bible refers to Jesus as The Logos (Marlowe, nd). John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:14 goes on to say, “The Word became flesh and made his... dwelling with us.” *Word* comes from the original Greek λόγος or *Logos*, for it can be translated into English with many meanings, including: word, reason, story, belief, divine wisdom and power, the intersection of thought and speech. The Case for Christ uses *logos* to prove Jesus is The Logos.
Lloyd Bitzer's Rhetorical Situation

Bitzer defined rhetoric as "a mode of altering reality . . . by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action," (Bitzer, 1968, p. 6). The situation in which this rhetoric takes places is defined by an exigence, an audience, and constraints. An exigence is a problem that requires immediate action; however, not every exigence creates a rhetorical situation, only the ones that can be modified by discourse. The audience of a rhetorical situation must be one that is able to respond to the exigence. If they are not "mediators of change," then they are not a rhetorical audience. Constraints are factors in the situation that both restrain and enable the rhetor. They can be found in the rhetor's ability, the audience's existing beliefs, the available evidence, etc. Bitzer believes that if the rhetor carefully evaluates these three elements of the rhetorical situation, then he will find the appropriate rhetorical response.

Marcus Cicero's Canons of Rhetoric

The five canons of rhetoric described in De Inventione (Herrick, 2012) are Cicero's method for dividing a work into units for study and order. The five units are: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Cicero defined invention as the process of developing the arguments. Arrangement is organizing these arguments so that they will be the most influential on the audience. Style is the way the arguments are presented and connects most with the idea of pathos. Memory is not only memorizing a speech but also demonstrating a developed understanding of the arguments. Delivery is primarily an aspect of oratory as it deals with gestures, pronunciation, and tone. Utilizing these systematized units helps the rhetor to construct the best argument with the most impact.

Examples

Although the rhetorical appeals are sound strategies for making a strong argument, they are also very basic in terms of the whole of rhetoric. The theories just described, along with innumerable others, can be used in websites to bolster the argument and enhance the audience's experience. If Burke, Bitzer, and Cicero were applied to the websites considered earlier, they would have an impact on the information presented.

Pentad in Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

The five sections of the pentad - the act, the setting, the agent, the agency, and the purpose - are important for helping the audience to process the information. If BGEA is aware of these questions, they can answer them on the homepage and avoid any confusion for the audience. The act is going to be the website itself. The creation of the website was the act the association decided to use for proliferating their purpose - this is the only reason for its existence. The setting is where the act takes place, and in this case, it is happening on the Internet. The setting already has preconceptions about what is appropriate, what is allowed to exist there. Website creators need to be aware of the existing community and to meet their expectations if they want to be accepted.
Returning to the pentad, the agent who has initiated the act is the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, not Billy Graham himself. Graham is the agency, the person who initially gave the association their power to act. However, BGEA has built their reputation outside of Billy Graham alone. Having existed for more than half a decade, they have a long-standing tradition and adherence to values. The agency of the association, not just of Graham, is an important aspect that should also be emphasized in the website. The purpose of the website does not become clear until after investigating various pages. Confusion could be reduced with a sentence of explanation on the homepage and a brief paragraph in the about section. The purpose seems to be providing a hub for users to find information about various Christian ministries supported or created by BGEA.

Clarity on the Internet is important. If users are unable to decipher a website almost immediately, it is highly unlikely that they will spend much time there. The ultimate goal of a website is audience retention, and their attention must be captured immediately by answering their questions quickly. The more clickthroughs required to find information, the more viewers will leave the site prematurely. BGEA can use Burke's pentad in order to clarify their audience's visit to the website.

*Rhetorical Situation in Compassion International*

Compassion is positioned in a rhetorical situation made up of an exigence, an audience, and constraints. The main problem that Compassion is tackling, the exigence, is unsponsored children. Without sponsorship, these children's standard of living is unacceptable; however, a sponsor will provide for their health, educational, and spiritual needs. This exigence meets Bitzer's qualifications to be rhetorical for it is urgent and solvable by the audience. The audience of the rhetorical situation, everyone who visits the website, has the capability to sponsor a child and thus can solve the problem.

Constraints are more difficult to determine for they can be either enabling or restraining. Most agents in a rhetorical situation tend to downplay the negative constraints to their audience. Compassion highlights the more positive constraints such as the emotional bond created between the child and the sponsor through letter writing. They also emphasize the benefits of sponsorship for both the child's immediate circumstances as well as future opportunities. One constraint that can be both enabling and restrictive is Compassion is a Christian organization. Therefore, they appeal only to a Christian audience. A non-Christian person may be looking to sponsor a child, but they would not want to pay for this child to be taught beliefs they do not believe in themselves. Additionally, there is the financial responsibility that is downplayed on the Compassion website. Child sponsorship costs $32 a month and would preferably last until the child is 18, although that is not a commitment that must be made. These various constraints factor into whether or not the audience will act on the discourse presented to solve the exigence.

The exigence is well promoted on Compassion via pathetic appeal. They have made it clear what the problem is and how the audience can solve it. Compassion also gives the audience the agency to fix the situation. However, based on the constraints involved with the exigence, the
audience may or may not act to solve the problem. Compassion tries to improve audience retention rates through emphasizing or downplaying particular constraints.

*Canons of Rhetoric in The Case for Christ*

The canons of rhetoric - invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery - can be applied to The Case for Christ. Each of these units help to bring order to an argument, and The Case for Christ is based on the argument for Christianity.

Invention of the arguments that are featured on the site come straight from Strobel's book; therefore, not much work was necessary for developing appropriate evidence since it already existed. Additionally, arrangement was also based off the book. Though on the website, arguments are hyperlinked and redirect to other websites with more information. Style, or presentation of the arguments, is a little lacking. The site is functional yet not visually appealing because of its narrow content area, basic and cluttered sidebar, and unoriginal typeface. Design is a very important aspect on the Internet as the space is visually oriented. Inattention to the details of design elements creates an unprofessional feel on the website.

Memory refers to not only the memorization of a speech but also to how well the subject matter is known. Examination discovers whether the research is both extensive and presented intelligibly, for the writer must understand the subject to present it clearly. The delivery aspect traditionally refers to the orator's body language and tone of voice. On a website, these things can be presented through video, but a page can also manage to convey a particular tone. The language used and the site design all say things about how the information is being presented: whimsical, business-like, parody, etc. Delivery is still a vital aspect for presenting arguments even on the Internet.

Design has much to do with the effectiveness of an argument presented on a website. If the audience finds the presentation to be unprofessional, they may leave the site and never learn about the argument. Or, if the information is not presented in a way that keeps their attention, they may never finish reading the argument. Or, if the design does not help to clarify the argument, they may never understand it. Design helps the creator to keep the audience on their page and helps the audience to understand the creator's arguments.

**Audience Experience**

**Social Components**

Just as an exigency requires an audience to resolve the problem, a website also requires users to explore the pages and to act upon whatever argument the site may be presenting, whether it is selling a product, an idea, or a person. Today's digital audience demand attention be paid to them and expect that their needs will have been anticipated in advance. With the emphasis on the audience, web developers need to know how to gain and retain users. Rhetorical strategies help provide methods for accomplishing this goal.
Marcus Cicero’s Audience Centrality
While some ancient rhetoricians viewed the everyday audience with little patience for their lower intellectual skill, Cicero considered the ability to communicate with the audience at any level as a vital part of good oratory skill. He wrote in De Re Publica, “the very cardinal sin is to depart from the language of everyday life, and the usage approved by the sense of the community” (Herrick, 2012, p. 100). If the audience is unable to comprehend the orator, then it is the orator who has failed, not the audience. Cicero also suggested that a speech not become so ornate that the meaning is lost amongst the flowery language. Ultimately, the argument must be accessible to the ordinary audience member.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca on Particular Audiences
Though founded in rhetorical theories of ancient Greece, The New Rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1989) addresses various types of audiences and what makes them unique. The authors theorize that arguments must be made to address three types of audiences: the universal, the dialog, and the self. All of these audiences come with an established set of beliefs and values that, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca believe, shape the argument. If an argument is to be effective, it must transcend universal biases, withstand the scrutiny of a close conversation, and align with the speaker’s own set of beliefs and values. This theory relies on the idea that a good and moral argument will be a successful one.

Examples
The Billy Graham Evangelical Association and Audience
To reach the intended audience, BGEA must communicate in a manner that can be understood and must function on the same moral system as the users. The website uses language that is clear and comprehensible; however, it is still confusing in its simplicity because the purpose is veiled. Without direction, all of the clearly labeled links are meaningless. Understandable language does not necessarily correlate with an understandable purpose.

In terms of values, it seems as though the BGEA website is trying to reach two different types of people. The site has resources for Christians: devotionals, ministry updates, music concerts, etc. It also makes requests of Christians to donate to the ministry and volunteer in online evangelism. The other audience that BGEA attempts to reach is non Christians. The website, amidst its many links, has pages for the unsaved to find the prayer of salvation or to connect with one of the previously mentioned volunteers. However, this website does not appear to be a place for convincing atheists but for receiving those who have been made ready to accept Christ as their Savior. It functions more like the doorway to salvation rather than the path.

Compassion International and Audience
As they are dealing with children’s simple hopes and dreams, Compassion uses simple language to convey these desires, which can be granted through sponsorship. Everything is plain and straightforward, including the organization’s financial statements that have been made available to the public in order to foster trust. The only obliqueness is found in the fact that the
cost of sponsoring a child is not mentioned until the potential sponsor has already been convicted by the child's innocence and need. The language may be slowly revealed to the user, but at least it is clear and understandable.

Compassion does not, however, veil their religious affiliation. The tag line in the header proclaims that the organization's acts happen through Jesus' name. They do not attempt to persuade non Christians to sponsor a child under the guise of a secular organization. This is one of the things that keeps them aligned with their target audience's values. Any viewer can quickly determine Compassion's values from the homepage where they can find words like "trustworthy," "integrity," and "Christ-centered." These prominent descriptors reach out to a Christian audience looking to sponsor a child.

*The Case for Christ and Audience*

The target audience for The Case for Christ is more scholarly, and therefore, academic language is used to make the argument. Although the words are not difficult to understand, they are elevated to appeal to the reasoning and logical. In some cases, it is more important to concede to the target audience as opposed to the universal audience.

Though it has the same Christian values, The Case for Christ is quite different in its approach to saving the lost as compared to BGEA. The Case for Christ does confront the atheists and the hard to answer questions. In fact, the website becomes a place contesting the audience's values rather than aligning with them. The role that The Case for Christ plays with its users is more aligned with the persuasion techniques of ancient Greece, a time when orators were less courteous about differences of opinion.
Conclusion

Critics have been studying the use of rhetoric and have been developing strategies and theories since ancient Greece. The theories have traditionally been applied to oral speeches and later on written arguments. It has been proposed that these theories would naturally translate to content on the Internet. Although the vastness and uncontrollability of the World Wide Web complicate the application, I suggest that basic rhetorical theories are being used subconsciously as part of human nature. I also think that more advanced forms of theories can be utilized to improve websites’ arguments and audience interaction.

Because the rhetoricians Kennedy, Burke, and Lunsford theorize on the inherent nature of rhetoric to humans, I analyzed various websites for rhetorical strategies. Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals were found in websites for organizations such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Compassion International, and The Case for Christ. The argument of each leaned heavily on one of the appeals - ethos, pathos, and logos, respectively. The emphasized appeal fit the goal and nature of the individual websites, which seems to be further proof of how essential rhetoric is in human communication.

In addition to Aristotle’s appeals, theories by Burke, Bitzer, and Cicero are also effective tools for creating a rhetorical argument. Burke’s pentad could be applied to BGEA to clarify any miscommunication about the purpose of the website. Bitzer’s rhetorical situation well describes the argument made on Compassion International’s website, although there are some improvements that could be made to express downplayed constraints to the audience. Cicero’s five canons of rhetoric fit well with the logical argument and arrangement of The Case for Christ, yet style and design leave something to be desired. Design should not be ignored for it shows the audience what to expect.

The audience, as in ancient Greece, still plays a vital role in the presentation of an argument. Cicero wrote how it is vital for the audience to be able to comprehend the orator; otherwise the orator has failed in his duty. A more recent theory by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca describes how an argument must respond to the values of three distinct audiences. Using these theories, I considered the three websites’ approach to their target audience, how well they communicated and related to their users. Although all have areas in which to improve, the organizations are obviously seeking a specific kind of audience through their interaction with them.

Rhetoric may be an integral part of our communication, but this certainly does not make us masters at the art form. Further study and practice are necessary for web developers to be able to integrate rhetoric effectively into their websites. However, the results will worth the effort as the audience will better understand the argument and so remain on the site longer. The rhetoric of ancient Greece remains a powerful tool for persuasive communication.
References

Appendices

Annotated Bibliography


Nicholas C. Burbules is a professor of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership and an affiliate of the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois. His essay "Rhetorics of the Web" was included in Ilana Snyder’s book *Page to Screen*. Snyder is a professor of Education at Monash University in Clayton, Australia.

The book, as a whole, looks at the differences between language in print versus on a digital device. It discusses new literacy skills now necessary and emphasis on visual communication. Burbules’s chapter compares the exclusive, finite text of print to the interconnected, infinite text of the Internet. Due to hyperlinks, the Internet’s text is repetitious, flexible, and complex. It requires advanced critical reading skills to comprehend all of the information.


Nicholas C. Burbules is a professor of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership and an affiliate of the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois. His essay "The Web as a rhetorical place" was included in Ilana Snyder’s book *Silicon Literacies*. Snyder is a professor of Education at Monash University in Clayton, Australia.

In the third section of Burbules’s essay, he discusses what it means to view the Web as a rhetorical place. In a place, rather than a space, users build a sort of home for themselves by saving settings in the particular way they like them and by reaching out to their neighbors across the Internet. The community aspect can clearly be seen by the spider web-like connections between hyperlinks. As in society, this communication via the web of links has many rhetorical features including assumptions and expectations, publicity and privacy, enclosure and exclusion, and transparency.


Peter Caws is a professor of Philosophy and of Human Sciences as George Washington University. He has written multiple books, mainly on the philosophy and ethics of sciences.
In this article, he analyzes the Sophists and their continued influence in the sciences today. Sophistry differs from traditional Aristotelian rhetorical perspectives and is not often considered by modern society because of the emphasis education has placed on Aristotle as well as Cicero. However, with a fuller understanding of Sophistry, Caws is convinced that their theories are still prominent in our rhetoric, particularly in scientific investigations.


Sharon Crowley is a professor of English at Northern Arizona University, and Debra Hawhee is an assistant professor of English at the University of Illinois. Their textbook applies ancient rhetorical theory to modern oral texts. I think this framework can be easily translated to apply to website design as well.

Chapter 2, “Kairos and the Rhetorical Situation: Seizing the Moment,” discusses how context is ever changing and calls for a careful response in the moment. Websites have the great advantage of instantly reaching a wide audience and so must respond appropriate to the *kairos* of the moment.


Laura Gray-Rosendale and Sibylle Gruber are both assistant professors of Rhetoric and Composition at Northern Arizona University. Gray-Rosendale has also written *Rethinking “Basic Writing”: Exploring Identity, Politics, and Community in Interaction*, and Gruber was an editor of *Weaving a Virtual Web: Practical Approaches to New Information Technologies*. Their textbook brings to light the aspects of rhetoric that have been left out over time or are not used often, particularly in Western culture. It aims to present a more accurate picture of rhetoric, not merely the information that is convenient for our context. The book also discusses reading and writing while keeping rhetorical context in mind.

The second section of the book, *Exploring the Multiple Rhetorics of Cyberspace*, may prove to be helpful in expanding the idea of what rhetoric means on the Internet. Instead of being a singular entity, it functions under many different roles. Specifically, I will be considering rhetoric in the role of communication between creator and user, anything that the creator desires to convey to the user must travel through the conduit of rhetoric. It shapes both the message and the meaning.

James Herrick is a professor of Communication at Hope College in Holland, Michigan and has written multiple books on rhetoric. This textbook follows the rise of rhetoric from ancient Greece to modern day, focusing on current uses of Aristotelian ideology. Chapter 4 provides a summary of Aristotle's book "The Rhetoric" and all the techniques it describes. Chapters 9-11 cover contemporary rhetoric through the topics of arguments, audience, advocates, context, story, display, text, power, and alternatives.

Chapter 4 will be necessary to define and provide background information on *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *kairos*. It defines the terms and presents them in the context of ancient Greek ideals. Chapters 9-11 are a look at how rhetoric is influential today. I think certain topics will be more helpful than others, especially context, story, display, and probably text. The chapters show how these elements shape and are shaped by rhetoric. While writing the paper, I may find that other chapters will also be useful.


Mary E. Hocks is an assistant professor of English, the director of Writing Across the Curriculum at Georgia State University, and was an editor for *Eloquent Images: Word and Image in the Age of New Media*. This research paper was aimed at teachers to show them how best to teach visual rhetoric to their students based on the information that the researchers gathered from analyzing student work designed to be displayed on the Internet. The paper discusses not only what should be taught to the students but also how teach it.

Most aspects relating to the pedagogy of teaching rhetoric will not be especially useful; however, the analysis that looked at the audience reaction and the intertwining of traditional writing with digital writing will be helpful for showing how rhetoric enhances web design and reaching users.


Heidi McKee is an associate professor of English and an affiliate faculty member of the Armstrong Center for Interactive Media Studies at Miami University. She teaches classes on digital writing and rhetorics, composition pedagogies, qualitative research methodologies, and ethical research practices. James E. Porter is a professor of English and director of American Culture and English at Miami University. He teaches digital rhetoric, rhetorical theory, and professional communication.

Their research looked into how rhetorical principles can assist digital writers with the ethics of their work in design, communication, and judgment. Often times, writers find themselves in a position of vast influence over their audience; it has been an age-old discussion on whether the manipulative power of rhetoric is a positive or negative tool.
Through the Internet, a single person's rhetoric has a more vast audience to influence. McKee and Porter encourage proper use of rhetoric, leaning on the Isocratic concept that good men produce good words.


James J. Murphy is Professor Emeritus of English and of Rhetoric and Communication at the University of California, and has authored many books on rhetoric. Michael J. Hoppmann is lecturer in the department of Communication Studies at Northeastern University in Massachusetts. Forbes I. Hill was a professor at Queens College. Donovan J. Ochs was Professor Emeritus and Department of Rhetoric at The University of Iowa and had written multiple books on rhetoric.

Their textbook is an in depth look at rhetorical theories in ancient Athens and Rome. Based on archeological discoveries and careful translation of texts, it is based on the most current evidence of discoveries of the past. Synopses are provided on the most influential texts from the time period.

Chapter 3 will be useful for discussing Aristotle's views in a fuller context, and the chapter on Cicero may also come to be useful as well, depending on what things are discovered during website analysis. Aristotle and Cicero both provide a systematized view of rhetoric, which makes it easily translated across media.


David W. Smith is a professor of English and the director of the Expository Writing Program at Kansas State University, and he has written many articles for rhetorical journals. Leaning heavily on the words of Robert L. Scott (a respected writer on rhetoric and epistemology), this article reaffirms his ideas of rhetoric as essential to understanding the human condition and also, through definitions, reveals the various roles that rhetoric plays in our communities.

This article shows the multiplicity of rhetoric and its importance in society. Rhetoric plays many roles in building and maintaining societal relations. The ideas of rhetoric in community can easily be applied to online communities to show how rhetoric in websites encourages user retention.


Joel Walz is Professor Emeritus of French and teaches applied linguistics at Indiana University. This article on pedagogy addresses the how critical reading skills have fallen
by the wayside. Walz shows that critical reading is still a vital skill for navigating the Internet and makes a case for its continued role in the students' curriculum. He focuses his analysis on content, vocabulary, and context on the web.

Websites should be an example of quality writing and be created as worthy of critical reading. If a page cannot hold up to a close, critical reading, then it should be revised. This article will be helpful in addressing the ways that websites should be improved for educated users.


Barbara Warnick is a professor of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh and has performed multiple studies on the effectiveness of persuasion in new media environments. This article describes how the Internet has changed the role of rhetorical critics because the text is no longer stable but dispersed and assimilated by other web pages. Warnick’s thesis is as follows: “The malleability of the text, the indeterminacy of authorship, and the changing natures of community, audience, and public in new communication environments surely complicate the critic’s task” (p 74).

Warnick’s discussion of how rhetorical critics should perform their jobs on the Internet can be applied to ways of remodeling a website to better fit rhetorical standards. Her analysis of communication shows how to best communicate with an audience.


Barbara Warnick is a professor of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh and has performed multiple studies on the effectiveness of persuasion in new media environments. This article seems to be an updated version of Warnick’s “Rhetorical Criticism of Public Discourse on the Internet” but with a broader focus on various types of technology. She also discusses the ways rhetorical criticism has been modified to more effectively analyze a text with little consistency, as users can quickly switch between contexts.

One section focuses on the author’s responsibility to make their text coherent with the other texts that are intermingled with it. Due to hypertext, web pages build relationships with other pages and change the context for the user.


Jim Zappen is a professor of Communication and Media at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York. Laura J. Gurak is a professor and founding chair of the department
of Writing Studies at the University of Minnesota. Stephen Doheny-Farina is a professor and chair of the department of Communication and Media at Clarkson University in New York.

This research paper discusses the findings of a study on communication, particularly looking at the mix of cultures, values, beliefs, etc. when people come together. The Internet allows us to communicate with a range of races, ethnicities, genders, religions, and cultures, and the exchange of rhetoric between these people is the most important aspect in building a community.

The section titled "Contemporary Rhetorical Communities" will be helpful in describing the audience that websites are reaching these days. The actual reach via cyberspace may be much broader than another medium could allow, and so being able to communicate with this variety is vital to building a successful online community.
Figures

Figure 1

Figure 2

SPONSOR A CHILD

WHERE IN THE WORLD

YOU CAN RELEASE A CHILD FROM POVERTY IN JESUS' NAME.

SPONSOR A CHILD TODAY

Sponsor a child who has been waiting over six months for a sponsor.

A Trustworthy Charity

At Compassion, we take your trust in our ministry very seriously. We know how valuable your confidence is, and we will do everything we can to ensure that your gift is used efficiently and effectively.

Compassion consistently earns high ratings for financial accountability and integrity. Charity Navigator, America's largest charity evaluator, has awarded Compassion the highest ratings—four stars—for 11 consecutive years, placing Compassion in the top 1 percent of all charities.

The Case for Christ - The Hearing

Is there a case for Christ? If there were to be an arbitrary legal hearing - a court case to determine whether or not Jesus Christ is in fact the only begotten Son of God - would He be vindicated by the evidence, or exposed as a fraud?

The Case for Christ - The Prosecutor

Has anybody ever compiled the evidence to determine the case for Christ? As a matter of fact, Lee Strobel, an atheist at the time he undertook this endeavor, decided that he would prove Jesus Christ to be a fraud by the weight of the evidence. Strobel was certainly qualified to undertake such a task, compiling the case against Christ. He has a Macion of Studies in Law degree from Yale Law School and was an award-winning journalist at the Chicago Tribune. Strobel's area of expertise was Courtroom Analysis and he rose to the rank of Legal Editor of the Chicago Tribune. Furthermore, Strobel was not biased towards defending Christ - he was an atheist.

The Case for Christ - The Findings

Strobel divides the case for Christ into three basic headings:

1. The Historical Record

   - The synoptic evidence: can the biography of Jesus Christ be trusted, and do they stand up to scrutiny?
   - The documentary evidence: were the biographies of Jesus reliably preserved for us?
   - The corroborating evidence: is there credible evidence for Jesus Christ outside of the biographies?
   - The scientific evidence: does archaeology or contrast Jesus' biographies?

http://the-case-for-christ.com