

# Features of Written Argument

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**Abstract** To complement theoretically driven work on argument, we present a datadriven description of published, written argument. We analyze political or philosophical treatises, articles in scholarly journals, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The description has emerged out of an inductive and a posteriori process based in grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss). The result is a suite of thirty-eight features that begins with conditions antecedent to writing and continues through to the consequences for the reader. We relate observational data to theories and practices from the fields of rhetoric and applied linguistics, including pragmatics, to explain how the features work together as social and communicative acts in which the writer produces a text in order to affect or change the beliefs or actions of the reader. For our purposes, the whole text is the argument and is not reduced to its propositional content; it is a unified communicative act. In our description of argument, the writer, reader, and text are central categories. We describe these categories and their features using examples from a variety of types of written argument.

**Keywords** Argument · Rhetoric · Applied linguistics · Speech acts · Writing studies

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## 1 Introduction

Bazerman (2008) notes that the field of writing studies has inherited from the humanities “very large theories... [that] hardly have evidentiary warrant” (p. 301). He claims that most research studies in the field have “an explanatory modesty,” since typically they only include data on individual classrooms and individual writers. More directly relevant to our work here on argument, van Eemeren et al. (1993) propose a “pragma-dialectical theory” of argumentation that brings together, respectively, empirical data claimed to be value-free and based in social-science methodology with the normative theories of classical rhetoric and Gricean principles of communication. The result, with which we agree, is “normatively informed description and empirically adequate theorizing” (p. xi). Following Bazerman and van Eemeren, we propose a framework of written argument that emerges from observable evidence. Our framework is in what Bazerman, citing Merton, calls the “middle range” in that it involves “empirically researchable phenomena, relations and mechanisms” (pp. 300–301). Developed through an inductive and a posteriori process based in grounded theory, it arrives at a suite of thirty-eight features that take a broad view of written argument that goes from conditions antecedent to writing through consequences for the reader. In this article, we present that system of features that illustrates the concurrence of the rhetorical and the linguistic, and we propose a framework of written argument in which representations of the writer, the text, and the reader account for how communication through written arguments takes place.

Written arguments are concurrent rhetorical and linguistic acts produced by a writer for the purpose of communication with a reader through the vehicle of a text. The writer’s goal may be to overcome objections, to reach consensus or find a middle ground, to confirm or strengthen the reader’s situation, or to establish or advance a new idea or action. The text may explicitly or implicitly indicate the writer’s goal. We are concerned with discursive argument (as opposed to proofs), written and published texts through which the writer aims to persuade, convince, influence, sway, or just inform (and so on) the reader. We consider texts that range from several pages up to a book in length, including such acts as making a case, defending or establishing a position, setting the basis for agreement or disagreement, proposing a solution, and more. We try to account for complete works, since we respect the fact that for writers to do what they wish takes time and words (see Eggs 1994, p. 4). Those words are not just window-dressing (sometimes dismissed as “mere rhetoric”) for the text’s propositional content; they create the argument itself and embody the writing situation and the writer-reader relationship (Halliday 1977). While propositions do make up the substance of the argument (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, p. 38), propositions alone cannot account for its social, communicative function. Rather, argument emerges when, in a particular situation, a particular writer communicates some meaning in a particular way to a particular reader for a particular purpose. Motivated by a writer’s goal, a written

argument is a purpose-driven activity that aims to affect or change the beliefs or actions of some readers.<sup>1</sup>

Studying argument as it relates to the writer, the text, or the reader is not unusual, and proposing separate representations for each is typical in rhetoric and literary studies. In these fields, models (or theories) of argument focus often on one of the three (for example, expressive, objective, and didactic) and are often silent about the other two. Moreover, the writer (speaker, rhetor) or text typically draw more attention than the reader. While many of our framework's features have been the subject of extensive theoretical exploration and applied study (some of which we outline on a web site<sup>2</sup>), rarely have rhetoricians and linguists<sup>3</sup> focused on the overlap among those features. In this work, in keeping with systemic functional linguistics and pragmatics (see Halliday 1994; Austin 1962; Grice 1989), we bring the writer, the text, and the reader together in a single account of argument as a social, linguistic act. In our framework, the data-driven study of written argument and the systematic scope of the resulting features are new, as is the incorporation of features into representations of the writer, text, and reader, as well as their systemic scope. That our data-driven approach establishes a framework in which the reader is as an equal partner is also new. The result is a detailed description of argument, one that illuminates the rich and layered complexity of argument as a social act.

In keeping with Richard Larson's call for developing "dimensions or scales" as a way to describe or locate the demands of a piece of discourse (Larson 1984), our features provide a rhetorical "profile" that is more robust than traditional and rigid taxonomies such as modes or the communication triangle. The structured list of features is a semiotic system in Halliday's sense: "what is captured in a system network is the logical structure of the system." Within the system, content and expression (realization) get meaning from the choices that the writer makes and how those choices are related to each other as a text. Language is a "resource for meaning making by choosing" (Eggsins 1994, pp. 209, 210). Specifically, writers select and express the features of argument in order to put a text together, and readers create meaning from the features by paying attention to those textual features that they find (for whatever reason) to be important for their interests or needs and in their context as readers.

## 2 Developing the Framework

Our analysis was guided by the question, *How does written argument work as a social-cultural institution and as a rhetorical-linguistic act?* Our approach in developing the framework of written argument has involved two interacting

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<sup>1</sup> We are using the word "belief" for a wide range of psychological phenomena that include thoughts, attitudes, and understanding. It doesn't really matter (for our discussion) how the writer or reader characterizes this, or whether either is accurate. We also pair the reader's "beliefs" and "action," fully aware that affecting the former predates the latter.

<sup>2</sup> Owing to space limitations in this article, these details are presented at a website [<https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/donaldross/home/appendix>].

<sup>3</sup> Notable exceptions are in genre studies by John Swales and his followers, and systemic functional linguistics from M.A.K. Halliday and others in the "Sydney" school.

processes: adapting a grounded-theory approach to identify, describe, and categorize its features (Corbin and Strauss 1990), and constructing a framework with the help of academic work in argument that accounts for the features and their categorization. We have aimed to follow this approach as closely as possible, as it offers a rigorous and repeatable means to understand written argument. We do recognize, however, that our work deviates from typical grounded-theory studies in two ways: we are not aiming to redefine a concept addressed in “usual scientific canons” (Corbin and Strauss p. 3) and our “actor” (p. 5) is not a human being. Rather, we use grounded theory, as noted earlier with reference to Bazerman, to add empirically based descriptions and explanations of argument to the typically humanistic theories of written argument. Our goal here is to enrich, not to replace. Our “actor,” written argument, is clearly not human; however, it is a social and a uniquely human phenomenon governed by communication contexts and the choices of writers and readers.

Our analysis began with the open coding of the Declaration of Independence and other public documents and then included a wide range of arguments to check and refine the features. The objects of study included American presidents’ “State of the Union” messages. In the nineteenth century, these were written documents formally presented to the Congress and then printed in full in national and international newspapers. Even when delivered in person (from 1913), they were published in the papers and, more recently, also on the Web. We also examined decisions of the United States Supreme Court that involve majority, minority, and concurring opinions developed in precise Constitutional and legal terms. Other government texts that we analyzed were Environmental Impact Statements, long and complicated texts that argue for what is called the “preferred solution” among plans proposed for a specific location, and reports on urban land use which are usually written for a specific municipality, and outline and explain alternate plans for decision makers to consider and adopt. We also examined book-length arguments, including Malthus on population, Woolstonecraft on the rights of women, *Origin of Species*, DuBois’s *Souls of Black Folk*, Labbé’s *Diet for a Small Planet*, and *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown. In addition we analyzed articles in scholarly journals such as *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Cognitive Science*, *American Literature*, and Law Reviews, as well as popular magazines (*Consumer Reports*), and informative web sites, such as those on invasive species.

Through discussion, coders agreed that rhetorical and linguistic events within texts would be “labeled,” either because they were frequent, such as the use of pronouns, or prominent, such as the use of headings and visuals. Coders determined to use “feature” for labeled events, since that term is more familiar in linguistics and language study. For example, we took into account the writers’ performative verbs (“I decided,” “I referred,” etc.) and the presence or absence of text-navigation guides (table of contents, headings). After we accumulated about a dozen of these labels, we conceptualized the data and made note on how they were manifested in each type of text. For example, the feature written *sources* of information in Environmental Impact Statements is manifested as scientific and social-scientific empirical investigations, consultations with political and economic

**Table 1** Features of Written Argument**FEATURES**


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	<b>WRITER</b>
	Author, rhetor, addresser, speaker
	<b>Before writing begins</b>
1	<b>Writer's assignment</b> Task environment or representation, <i>kairos</i> , conversation in academic exchanges, "exigence"
2	<b>Power relations</b> Audience awareness; the writer's position and reason for writing relative to the reader
	<b>Writer as encoded in the text</b>
	The name(s) on the title page
3	<b>Narrator</b> Persona, face, explicit or encoded author; for example, first-person or corporate
4	<b>Voice</b> Implied writer, e.g., formality, attitude to subject matter; tone, personality, identity, stance
5	<b>Writer's language</b> Descriptive or characterizing language linked to the writer, e.g., adjectives and verbs
6	<b>Meta-argument</b> The point or thesis statement; "I" or "this article" + argue(s), show(s), prove(s), etc.
7	<b>Occasion</b> Contrived or anticipated versus spontaneous
8	<b>Sources</b> Intertextuality; citation or quotation of written or spoken texts; use of earlier texts in a series; works cited
9	<b>Field</b> Discipline, discourse community; for example, politics, economics, ethics, humanities, arts
	<b>TEXT</b>
	Discourse
	<i>History of the book</i>
10	<b>Production media</b> Channel of communication; for example, print, web, Power Point, e-book
11	<b>Publication history</b> First edition, first release; includes material text, publisher, dollar cost
12	<b>Translation</b> International audience; translation (needed or unintended)
13	<b>Length and breadth of text</b> Number of pages, cost in terms of reader time
14	<b>Shelf life</b> Longevity, print run, web site hits; written "for the ages" or a specific occasion
	<i>Text structure</i>
	Organization; common, rhetorical plans
15	<b>Introduction</b> Classical <i>narratio</i> , preface

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**Table 1** continued**FEATURES**

16	<b>Advance organizer</b> Classical <i>partitio</i> , table of contents, overview
17	<b>Formal structure</b> Classical <i>dispositio</i> ; deductive or inductive placement of claims; problem–solution, question–answer; how major sections are flagged
18	<b>Navigation</b> Textual markers within the text—headings, cross references; table of contents, index, glossary
19	<b>Formal genre</b> Standardized series of topics, such as introduction, materials and methods, results, conclusion
20	<b>Rhetorical genre</b> Recognizable patterns of structure and rhetoric that emerge from writers’ responses to recurrent situations; social work that those texts do
21	<b>Traditional discourse modes</b> Narration, description, explanation, etc. as parts of the text
22	<b>Time frame</b> Past, present, or future explicit within the document
23	<b>Style</b> General pattern of sentences and vocabulary; level of formality <i>Support</i> Backing, evidence, reasons
24	<b>Special registers</b> Technical language, words in second language, dialect, slang, abbreviations
25	<b>Figures of speech</b> Figures and tropes; metaphor, satire, humor, and other not-literal language
26	<b>Visuals</b> Visual aids, nonlinguistic data, photos, graphs, drawings
27	<b>Numbers</b> Statistics, tabular data; specifics such as dates
28	<b>Money</b> Cash values noted, scale of expenses, etc. <i>Performatives and pragmatic considerations</i>
29	<b>Perlocutionary effect</b> Expectations for how readers will act or what views or opinions they should embrace; may be implicit or explicit
30	<b>Decision options</b> Choices, alternatives, bottom line, trade - off, priorities; contingencies. Often encoded as modal verbs: “should,” “must,” etc.
31	<b>Decision-making criteria</b> Costs-benefits, risks, priorities; criteria could be values-based or material.
	<b>READER</b> Audience, addressee <b>Possible reader responses</b>

**Table 1** continued**FEATURES**

32	<b>Audience design</b>	Explicit definition of primary or target audience, ideal readers; overhearers, or bystanders
33	<b>Addressee</b>	Personal address to or characterization of the (implied) readers, often as “you”; engagement markers
34	<b>Cued audience response</b>	How the text is to be taken socially or psychologically by readers
35	<b>Engagement</b>	From skim to study closely; scan, selective reading. Close reading is obligatory for some texts
36	<b>Predictability</b>	New information, surprise or confirm the reader’s expectations; news, expected or surprising patterns of presenting information: given-new, theme-rheme/topic-comment
	<b>After reading ends</b>	
37	<b>Uptake</b>	How the reader understands or responds to the text
38	<b>Actual result</b>	What the target audience did or believed as a result of reading

bodies, and public comments. For another example, “figures of speech,” which includes metaphor, irony, and satire, may take the form of non-literal phrases as well as extended arguments like Jonathan Swift’s “Modest Proposal.”

As the list of features accumulated and coders began observing connections among features, discussion and analysis additionally involved the process of “conceptualization,” that is, bringing related features together to form “concepts.” For example, coders observed several features related to the writer, including broadly defined authorship, the occasion for writing, and the sources the author used (who, why, what). As we added more data (different kinds of documents), we began to structure the developing list with features linked to the writer at one end and to the reader at the other. That led to other abstract concepts that brought related features together. For example, the concept of “support” included special registers (e.g., technical language), visuals, numbers, and money. “Performatives and pragmatic considerations” included the perlocutionary act of the argument, stated decision options, and decision-making criteria. The working list of features that emerged was discussed and revised by the coders as different texts were considered, and we further refined the descriptions, definitions of features, and concepts. Recursion was structured into the process through analysis of new samples, which served to check, revise, and formulate new features and concepts.

During the process of developing concepts, coders began to organize the “concepts” into more abstract, general, or superordinate “categories.” Given our topic, written arguments as acts of rhetorical and linguistic communication, the categories of writer, text, and reader emerged naturally and fit the data nicely. We aligned our representations with the models from traditional rhetoric (world, writer, text, reader), Searle’s speech act theory from philosophy of language (Grice 1989;

Searle 1969), and Halliday's systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1977). Argument can thus be seen as having simultaneous social-scientific, rhetorical, and linguistic dimensions. Then, in keeping with the protocol of grounded theory, we created a "story" or narrative that explains how the categories that inform written argument are related. Once the categories were determined, the next goal was to bring them together to form a coherent framework. This involved identifying the connections among categories from causal conditions (in our case, the assignment) through consequences (the reader's responses). The "action/interaction strategies" in the middle are the many features of the text where meaning is expressed and interpreted. We thus arranged the writer features to begin with those that happen before writing begins, followed by how the writer is encoded in the text. Text features go from those controlled by the writer, starting with how the text is published and then covering organization, reasoning, and evidence in the text. Pragmatic considerations such as decision options are the bridge to reader's possible responses and finally what can be known about what happens after reading ends. The resulting numbered features with brief descriptions are in the Table 1.

The process of developing the features was inductive and a posteriori, rather than being normative and a priori, where theory or desirable practice sets the terms for discussion (see van Eemeren et al. 1993, pp. 52–53). It was interpretive rather than being analytical—from the inside, rather than from the outside. We focused on the perspectives of the participants, the writer and reader, rather than on analysts' defined features. In addition to analyzing texts, we used "ethnographic evidence" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 40), that is, making inferences from the texts about the writer and the writing situation and the writer's role as a public (publishing) figure. Owing to our concern with *observable features of text*, we do not take into account the actual intentions or motivations of writers, just their intentions or motivations as they are encoded in texts. Nor do we explore or account for what actual readers believe or do as a result of their reading.<sup>4</sup> In addition, we are not making claims about debate, face-to-face speech, or spoken conversation where the physical presence of an audience must be taken into account.<sup>5</sup>

Our method reflects the complexity of argument. Its elements can be observed in the formal features—direct address from the writer ("I" or "we") to the reader ("you"), selection of modal verbs and other syntactic markers to claim certainty or tentativeness, use of headings and other structural markers to help the reader negotiate through the text. Other elements, such as the writer's voice or the hoped-for response by readers can be inferred successfully, even when they are not explicitly in the text. Owing to the complexity of argument, we have drawn on multiple works to refine our framework, analogous to the "pluralistic" or "eclectic" approaches suggested by Bawarshi and Reiff (2010, p. 109) and Swales (1993, p. 13), respectively. These approaches are defined by formative work in rhetoric, linguistics, and they include attention to the interpersonal and social dimensions of argument. As rhetorical acts,

<sup>4</sup> These questions are addressed through studies of author's (auto) biography or the responses of real readers, e.g., through book reviews or polling results. Such studies would complement our approach.

<sup>5</sup> Differences between written and spoken arguments are important and well defined—writing can last in its static form for generations, and texts can easily be transmitted in print or online. Readers are physically remote from writers; they can skim, move backward and forward, pause and start again.



arguments are based in the writer's communication with his or her reader for specific and usually stated purposes. As linguistic acts, they use the full resources of language from word choice, syntactic and stylistic patterns, and figures of speech, as well as whole-text consideration such as organization and formal genres. Pragmatic theories, especially Speech Acts, are a specific border between rhetoric and language that focuses on the link among the writer's intentions, the reader's understanding, and response. Van Eemeren et al. (1993) developed the idea that argument is "a complex of illocutionary acts on the sentence level which constitute, as a unit at a higher textual level, the illocutionary act complex of argumentation."<sup>6</sup> The writer's choice of the communication medium is often dictated by external considerations such as the need to follow the requirements or conventions of a particular genre. Successful communication depends on the reader's shared understanding of the medium. As social acts, arguments emerge from the writer's situation and power relations with his or her readers, and they depend on some level of shared membership in a discourse community.<sup>7</sup>

The field of rhetoric has, from classical times to the present, contributed important theories and commentary on argument, especially in speech, making it clear that written arguments are rhetorical acts. The central claims of the rhetorical tradition are rehearsed by van Eemeren et al. (1993):

The design of argumentation is assumed to be fundamentally instrumental in nature, that is, aimed toward the practical end of discovering the basis for collective action, agreement, or understanding. See, for instance, Aristotle's 'faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion' (1924, 11.I.2.135b 26), Bryant's 'function of adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas' (1953, 413), or Burke's 'inducing cooperation' (1950, 43).

We agree with van Eemeren et al. that argument is "fundamentally instrumental." We define argument as an instrument to do social work, but not always collective action, at multiple levels.

Our view of rhetoric is different from those theories that limit it to "agonistic" or adversarial situations where people disagree over two opposing views, and the writer seeks to "win" through reasoning and compelling evidence. Some rhetorical critics focus almost exclusively on the Aristotelian appeals to the reader—*ethos* (the writer's character), *logos* (the propositional or logical content of the text), and *pathos* (emotional appeal to the reader)—and claim that *ethos* and *pathos* detract from or, at best, only enhance the text's logic. The features in our framework invite a broader view that recognizes the complexity of how writers communicate with readers. Furthermore, a logical appeal is not always central to a recognizable argument. Instead, we take a broad view of Aristotle's "available means" claim, where the "means" include the wide range of linguistic, pragmatic, communication,

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<sup>6</sup> See also van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984). The illocutionary act complex is used in Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) to demonstrate how it gets things done in the world. They do this by analyzing how peer-review editors' correspondence validates knowledge claims in scientific articles. In a later article, Berkenkotter and Hanganu-Besch (2011) show how the "genre chains" of documents concerning "certification of madness" led to legal confinement in mental institutions.

<sup>7</sup> Carefully defined in Swales (1993), Chapter 2.

and rhetorical resources that we have identified and that should be taken into account in what is persuasive.

Rhetorical criticism in practice often focuses on propositional content, the series of assertions (or proofs) that can be evaluated for their logical validity or soundness of their reasoning. In practical terms, this kind of analysis is best suited to a short text where the enthymemic assertions (the rhetorical parallel to syllogisms in logic) are close enough for their interaction to be observed and evaluated. Because we are looking at complete, long, and complex arguments, arguments shaped in particular ways by writers for readers, our approach warrants a position similar to Jeffrey Walker's: "Aristotle's notion that all the other skills of rhetoric are supplementary or 'accessory' to enthymeming may be looking at the matter backwards" (Walker 1994, p. 61). To build our framework for describing complete and complex written arguments, we account not only for enthymemic assertions, but also for what are called "supplementary" features associated with the writer, the text, and the reader.

Systemic functional linguistics provides a powerful overview of how language is structured for use and how people make meanings with and for each other. It involves three kinds of meaning that are concurrent: (1) real-world or "experiential," what people do and who they are, (2) "interpersonal" having to do with how the writer relates to the reader, and (3) "textual," how meaning is organized (Eggins 1994). According to this approach, language is interpreted "not as a set of structures but as a network of SYSTEMS, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning. Such options are not defined by reference to structure; they are purely abstract features, and structure comes in as the means whereby they are put into effect, or 'realized'" (Halliday 1994, p. 16). Because systemic functional linguistics views language as a meaning-making system that is grounded in social interaction, it serves as an excellent framework for describing argument. Within this framework, specific features of arguments can fruitfully be characterized by drawing on linguistic descriptions and theories of language at all levels, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, syntax, and semantics.

While this brief consideration of seminal works in rhetorical and linguistic analysis highlights difference, we claim that these areas are more complementary than divergent, and are both lenses into the problem of communicating meaning for the reader. As linguist Paul Hopper observes, "The choice of linguistic forms is a rhetorical choice, and so the question of whether a fact (or an interpretation) is to be regarded as '(micro)rhetorical' or 'linguistic' may come down to one of perspective" (Hopper 2007, p. 240). Thus we draw on these different perspectives to shape empirical observations of different levels of language use into a coherent framework.

Especially since we took into account theories and approaches from rhetoric and linguistics through the process of developing and organizing the features, we have concluded that within the framework, we needed to identify separate feature-sets for the writer, the text, and the reader. In the next section, we present our description for written argument, which consists of the writer-, text-, and reader-functions and the related features.

### 3 Writer, Text, and Reader Representations, and the Features

As described in this section, the representations that emerged are ones of communication, with the core categories being the writer, the written texts, and the reader. They are socially and discursively constructed linguistic and rhetorical “functions” in the post-structuralist sense.<sup>8</sup> Within the writer-, text-, and reader-representations are the thirty-eight features that we present in this section.<sup>9</sup>

Written argument is a rhetorical, linguistic and social-communicative act. As noted earlier, it is a purpose-driven activity motivated by the writer’s goal and intended to affect or change the beliefs or actions of some readers. Given the nature of writing, when read out of context or by someone other than the intended audience, arguments can seem monologic, despite their dialogic nature.<sup>10</sup>

#### 3.1 Writer

The writer selects ideas from her or his world and renders them into words and, sometimes, visual images. To craft the written document, writers use recursive processes for conducting research, and planning, drafting, and revising their texts. Writers assume that their readers share cultural values and discursive rules and conventions, and that they are members of the same “discourse community.” Writers have an image of (or a fiction<sup>11</sup> about) the readers with whom they wish to communicate. Even though they are published, written arguments are interpersonal communications,<sup>12</sup> ultimately between the writer and reader. They have social goals by the writer’s design and the readers’ perception, even though writers and readers can only speculate about each other’s actual attitudes, beliefs, and personalities. Because of the writer’s goal, the effect on the reader’s beliefs or action, or both, arguments are categorically different from other kinds of discourse. While, like other texts, they might delight or instruct, that is not their primary communicative function.

Writer features, as indicated by headings in the Table, trace written argument from conditions antecedent to writing itself, the category **before writing begins**, to the **writer as encoded in the text**. These features are described below with the help of examples.

<sup>8</sup> That is, they do not have the implications suggested by notions of personal creativity of the writer or the absolute autonomy of the reader. Nor is the text seen as having transparent meaning.

<sup>9</sup> Categories (writer, text, and reader) and concepts appear in boldface, features in italics with the corresponding number in brackets from the Table.

<sup>10</sup> See Grice (1989), Austin (1962), and Searle (1969) for early descriptions and explanations of how people use language to do things in the world. van Eemeren et al. (1993) say that “advancing a standpoint” is not an argument, since they are interested in how different parties try to negotiate and settle their differences. If one sees argument only as debate, then the same limitation would obtain.

<sup>11</sup> As famously proposed by Ong (1975) and cited frequently since then.

<sup>12</sup> Politeness theory demonstrates the idea that all communication has an interpersonal component. See, for example, Brown and Levinson (1987) and Brown and Gilman (1989).

### 3.1.1 Before Writing Begins

The motivation to develop the argument is the *writer's assignment* [1], whether established by outsiders or just a result of what she or he chooses to do. It anticipates what the writer sets out to accomplish. Unless the writer points it out, planning and drafting are not known to the reader. The assignment ranges from an institutional requirement to a self-imposed response to an immediate circumstance, an exigence. The U.S. President's written Annual Messages, for example, had explicit institutional constraints: they had to meet Constitutional requirements to "give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." In contrast, Henry David Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" represents an assignment that emerged from an individual reaction to current events: "Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, in the onset the people would not have consented to this measure."

*Power relations* [2] between the writer and readers are relevant to what the argument can accomplish and involve the social affordances and barriers to achieving the goal. Power relations may be stated in the text or inferred from the context established within the text. U.S. Supreme Court decisions are authoritative and have legally defined power relationships with readers. The decisions become the law of the land, so all courts, branches of the Federal and state governments are obliged to follow them. In contrast, private individuals rarely have power over their readers except through their knowledge or expertise: "The rules we have set down here are not mere theories or guesswork... I have seen the application of these principles literally revolutionize the lives of many people" (Dale Carnegie, "How to Win Friends and Influence People").

### 3.1.2 Writer as Encoded in the Text

Within the document, **writer as encoded in the text** features may exist because of the nature of the written communication, because of the genre, or as a result of the writer's choice. The identity of the writer may be explicit or implied and may range from an individual who does everything from planning through proofreading, to institutional authors with no individual's name listed (e.g., government documents). The putative author (individual or corporate) has a formal role as the *narrator* [3]. The narrator is present throughout the text as an abstract entity that tells a story, makes a case, or argues, as in Woolstonecraft's "Dedication": "I utter my sentiments... In this work I have produced many arguments..." Articles in *Consumer Reports*, which are not signed, indicate that the narrator is the magazine as an institution, as in "Experts at Consumer Reports believe that organic is always the best choice" (May 2015).

The writer's *voice* [4] corresponds to the impression that a person (or corporate identity) is writing the words and gives a sense of who that person is. Similar to *ethos* in rhetorical theory, voice expresses an attitude to the subject matter and the readers; it may be individualized, personal, and subjective, or distant and objective.

Woolstonecraft establishes her voice in the Introduction, “Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean ...” “from every quarter I have heard exclamations against masculine women, but where are they to be found?” ... “My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures....” A typical law review article is impersonal, “This study seeks to explore these questions and add to the growing body of empirical research on law review article selection. ...Although the study found that most editors consider each of these factors to some degree.”

The writer can choose to use words to indicate his or her presence in the text. First-person pronouns and self-referring adjectives and adverbs are elements of the *writer’s language* [5]. “I have already granted [that men’s bodies are stronger]... I speak collectively of the whole sex; but I see not the shadow of a reason to conclude... I must therefore, if I reason consequentially, as strenuously maintain...” (Woolstonecraft). Thomas Malthus is more formal, “The most important argument that I shall adduce is certainly not new.” “I mean to place it in a point of view ... different from any that I have hitherto seen...” “I have certainly no right to say... I ought rather to doubt the validity....”

Writers can establish more or less explicitly, that they are engaged in argument through what we call “*Meta-argument*” [6], a form of meta-discourse. Other terms indicate the formality of reasoning. Woolstonecraft frequently uses explicit language, including the word “argument” and similar or parallel terms. For example, in the dedication, “my arguments...I plead...My opinion...I utter my sentiments...my main argument is built on this simple principle...” and so on throughout the book. De Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk* is presented as an informal argument. From the “Forethought”: “I have sought here to *sketch*... in another [chapter] I have sought to *make clear*.” In a typical article from a literary studies journal, the scholar writes, “In this essay, *I try to describe* Stevens’s pursuit of value from his point of view.... Each poem, *I argue*, approaches the problem of values as a problem of community formation.”

Writers can explain what motivated them to write, why they wrote. Exigence in rhetorical theory is often limited to being an *occasion* [7] that demanded a rhetorical response. The occasion ranges from regular events (e.g., contrived and anticipated annual reports, quarterly journal publication) to ad hoc, special or limited occasion and that allows writers to give their own version of the assignment that led to the text. A corporation’s financial report is a regular occasion for a written document, whereas a President’s declaration of war is a spontaneous response to the circumstances. The first sentence of Woolstonecraft’s dedication to M. Talleyrand-Périgot demonstrates a particularly explicit example of a writer presenting the occasion: “Having read with great pleasure a pamphlet which you have lately published.” Du Bois’s famous sentence explains his motivation, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.”

Writing is always built on previous writing. The writer’s use of *sources* [8], written, spoken, or other communication modes, helps to situate the argument in ongoing discussions and to establish the writer’s credibility. Sources may or may not be required or explicitly acknowledged. Supreme Court decisions must be based on the Constitution, other court decisions, and statutes. An expected component in

academic writing is the bibliography or list of works cited that connects current to past work. On the other hand, the classical allusions central to Du Bois's Chapters 5 and 8, "Of the Wings of Atalanta," and "Of the Quest for the Golden Fleece," are included at the writer's discretion.

The general intellectual and social environment where the writing takes place and the intertextual connections with discourse community(ies) are the *field* [9]. The "review of the literature" and use of technical language in the title help to define the field, as in the title, "Stereotactic body radiation therapy for inoperable early stage lung cancer" (*Journal of the American Medical Association*). More broadly, *Wealth of Nations* is in economics and *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is in history.

Writer features, like many connected with the reader, are more or less continuous throughout the text. They represent the ongoing rhetorical presence of both participants, as, for example, when the President writes to Congress, or the department of natural resources web site advises the homeowner on invasive species ("Is buckthorn in *your* yard?").

### 3.2 Text

The text is a functional, linguistic act (Halliday 1977) that has the potential to change the reader's knowledge, beliefs, or actions. The text is the argument, not only a representation of it. It may be more or less explicit and facilitate readers' inferences about any aspect of the written argument, such as when a reader assumes that the writer is a woman or is an attorney.

The text of an argument exhibits a combination of features that is recognized by linguistically and rhetorically competent observers as argument. The text allows communication between writer and reader by representing claims, evidence, and reasons through particular kinds of language and discourse structures, some of which have been established as conventional by and in the relevant discourse community. It is almost universally required that the claims need to be backed up, and the backing needs to be explicit, on the page. Nevertheless, no matter how much is explicit in the text, written argument, owing to its social nature, carries with it complex interactions of ideas and personalities. Texts are seen here as "authentic products of social interaction..., considered in relation to the cultural and social context in which they are negotiated" (Eggins 1994, p. 1, citing Halliday). Within this view of the text as socially situated, the textual features are described and analyzed for both their form and their function, since communication is achieved by how meaning is made, and the social work it does, not just the linguistic features of sentences and words.

The category of **text**, which includes **history of the book**, **text structure**, **support**, and **performatives and pragmatic considerations**, may be discussed from a non-linguistic, material perspective (*production media*), a linguistic, material and medium perspective, (orthography, iconic representation), or from a meaning perspective (Halliday). In addition, meaning might be broken down into what is said or what is meant (Grice).

### 3.2.1 History of the Book

The academic field, **history of the book**, brings together information about the material and social nature of a written text or other forms of print or electronic publication. While this area of research is important for all kinds of writing, it seems especially so for argument, since so much depends on the writer's sense of how to reach the audience, and material publication is a key element in that effort. The description of how and when the text becomes available to the public carries with it cultural and historical information. The *production media* [10], or the channel of communication, includes, for example, print, a web site such as that of a candidate for office or *whitehouse.gov*, a PowerPoint presentation, or an electronic book. Aspects of *publication history* [11] include whether it is the first or revised or updated edition. Also relevant are intended readership and the publisher's reputation, and the price, thus who can afford it. Other elements of the printed text, including the size of the font, quality of the paper, and binding, are also indicators. If known, how much the writer earns could be significant.

*Translation* [12] into or from another language is a sign of international interest in the topic or how it is written. The writer may or may not be able or willing to control this. Publishers sometimes announce the existence of translations on the copyright page or promotional texts on the cover (or the book's web site). The dates of translations suggest when the book got international attention. Describing the *length and breadth of a text* [13], whether realized through words on a page or the complexity of a web site, indicate the potential demands on a reader's time. It is parallel to dollar cost, since people need to have the (leisure) time to read long texts. Publishing practices determine how long a text is available, while archives like libraries and those on the web extend what we call *shelf life* [14]. Most books are only in the stores for about 6 months; ephemeral publications such as pamphlets like Tom Paine's *Common Sense* for even less time. Popular magazine are published weekly or monthly, and are usually thrown away when the next issue arrives. Scholarly journals have been bound into yearly volumes by research libraries; now many are in digital archives that are maintained by the publisher. Some texts like the French "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" (1789) are designed by their writers "for the ages."

### 3.2.2 Text Structure

Writers organize an argument through structural elements relevant to the whole text. This corresponds to the concept **text structure**, which captures the writer's explicit organization of the argument with special attention to the beginning. Text structure is often—but not always—rule-based and according to conventions of an academic discipline or a genre.

Arguments begin with a bridge between the text and the (perceived) personal, social, and psychological attitudes and interests of their readers. The writer can explicitly voice his or her assumptions about the reader in an identifiable *introduction* [15]. The introduction, for example, presents the theoretical base of a scientific paper or the context of a history book or a biography. Many history texts

begin with a rehearsal of previous scholarship on the topic (the “conversation”) into which the current study enters. The first sentence of the “Introductory” chapter to John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859) defines the key term, “The subject of this Essay is not the so-called Liberty of the Will so unfortunately opposed by the misnamed doctrine of Philosophical Necessity; but Civil, or Social Liberty: the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual.” A different kind of introduction is where the author introduces himself to the reader. Charles Darwin begins: “The nature of the following work [*The Descent of Man*] will be best understood by a brief account of how it came to be written” and the first-person narrative continues for five pages. Often appearing immediately after the introduction, an *advance organizer* [16] anticipates the major sections of the text. A table of contents is the most obvious example. The third paragraph of Du Bois’s “Forethought” narrates the contents of the book’s chapters. Editors preview the chapters in a book that brings together contributions from different scholars.

Long arguments may be organized from an introduction to a conclusion, with major segments between, according to a *formal structure* [17]. This structure may involve labeled segments, such as the chapters in a book. Another kind of *formal structure* is a deductive argument with the main points at the beginning, or an inductive argument with them at the end. Other familiar arrangements are problem–solution, and question–answer. Classical rhetoric’s often emulated “arrangement” (*dispositio*) divides a discourse into predictable and easily identifiable sections, each of which has a specific rhetorical function. Another example of formal structure is that each article in Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* asks the question or states the issue, followed by objections, the thesis, and finally replies to the objections. Explicit cues such as headings tell readers the order and location of information so they may easily find the parts of a text that are interesting or important. Examples of such *navigation* [18] tools include the table of contents, as well as chapters, and the use of color in web pages. Cross-references and an index allow the reader to move within the text. Malthus and Darwin follow an earlier convention of having very detailed chapter headnotes, which, when put together on the contents page, become a preview of the book.

Some academic fields and government agencies, require that writers organize their texts according to a fixed sequence of sections. Following the rules of *formal genre* [19] brings together the writer and reader in a professional (discourse) community. Traditional series of topics and sections prevail in most writing in science, engineering and social science from the Abstract to the Conclusion. The organization of Environmental Impact Statements is dictated by statute and official procedures. They include technical appendices, and a glossary of terms and abbreviations. Although text structure often proceeds according to visible conventions, some written arguments, including many informal essays, do not have a linear organization, but instead develop through the association of ideas. For example, Margaret Fuller in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) writes, “And now I have designated in outline, if not in fullness, the stream which is ever flowing from the heights of my thought.”



*Rhetorical genres* [20], unlike *formal genres* [19], do not have set rules for organization and the distribution of their contents. Carolyn Miller has pointed our attention to texts that respond to recurring social and political situations by stabilizing their rhetorical appeals and strategies, and language. In “Genre as Social Action,” Miller (1984) claims that genres are based on recurrent rhetorical situations and viewed as pragmatic rather than syntactic or semantic forms. For example, corporate or governmental press releases do “damage control” in the face of disasters or errors in judgment, while legislation and public-policy documents resolve incidental political and economic problems.

Rhetoric has identified several ways for a writer to develop content, such as classification, or show the relations among assertions, such as exposition. *Traditional discourse modes* [21] are often expressed as a sentence or two, with several modes existing in the same text. In Walter Bagehot’s *Historical Essays*, one finds, for example, definition, cause-effect, and comparison-contrast: “A select committee of the legislature chosen by the legislature is the highest administrative body, and exercises all the powers of a sovereign executive that are tolerated by law” (definition). “At such periods, the dissident class threw off a swarm to settle in America; and thus our old colonies were first formed” (cause-effect). “The prodigious growth of manufactures and trade has created a new world in the North of England, which contrasts with the south in social circumstances and social habits” (comparison-contrast). In practice such brief assertions stand on their own, or they can be developed into an extended discussion. For a sustained example, more than half of Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk* is a narrative history of African Americans from Emancipation to the present (1900).

Explicit reference to past, present, and future, the *time frame* [22], is a familiar way to organize the world that is depicted in the text. Within the Presidents’ Annual Messages, for example, important events from the past year must be represented, as well as recommendations for future policy. Economic documents like annual reports use past performance of the company to project future earnings, assets, and liabilities. Most of *Diet for a Small Planet* is about the future, what the reader should do to solve the pesticide contamination problem.

General patterns of sentences, the feature of *style* [23], include formality and syntactic complexity, logical and reasoned prose, and subjective or emotional language. *Style* affects readability and is central to how the writer communicates. Compare the formal, “When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...” (Declaration of Independence) with the polemical opening of Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man*, “Among the *incivilities* by which nations or individuals *provoke and irritate* each other, Mr. Burke’s pamphlet on the French Revolution is an *extraordinary* example.... Every thing which *rancour, prejudice, ignorance, or knowledge* could suggest, are poured forth in the *copious fury* of near four hundred pages.”

### 3.2.3 Support

Precise language, rhetorical tropes and figures, and facts are evidence to back up and illustrate the points of the argument. A register is the choice of particular words and phrases that are used in specific linguistic settings. *Special registers* [24] include a specialized vocabulary, words from another language (sometimes translated, sometimes not), and shifts to informal slang or dialect. Scientific, medical, legal, and social science papers depend on technical vocabularies in order to communicate the precision of their studies. Some texts include a glossary that defines the technical terms. In writing what he calls “An *Indian* history of the American West,” Dee Brown uses Native American names for the months, “Deer Rutting Moon,” “Drying Grass Moon.” The president is often the Great Father; generals are Bear Coat (Miles), Gray Wolf (Crook), Long Hair (Custer); soldiers are Bluecoats. Some Indian names are translated as well, Tatanka Yotanka (Siting Bull), and Tashunka Witko (Crazy Horse).

Rhetorical devices, *figures of speech* [25] such as metaphor, humor, and irony, go beyond literal meaning of the words, even though they can be a central feature in an argument. Throughout *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, metaphors add an element of visual imagery. They include clichés such as “rotten at the core,” and other phrases, one every three or four pages: “strong *wind* of authority,” “*iron hand* of destiny,” “rank *soil* of wealth... *putrefaction*.” Tom Paine accumulates metaphors: “There is a natural *firmness* in some minds, which cannot be *unlocked* by trifles; but which when *unlocked*, discovers a *cabinet* of fortitude.”

Jonathan Swift’s “Modest Proposal,” a famous satire on England’s economic oppression of Ireland, sets up the topic with this sentence, “I have been assured by a very knowledgeable American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or ragout.” H.L. Mencken uses humor, overstatement, and irony, for example, “Every time an officer of the constabulary, in the execution of his just and awful powers under American law, produces a compound fracture of the occiput of some citizen in his custody, with hemorrhage, shock, coma and death, there comes a feeble, falsetto protest from specialists in human liberty.”

Graphs, figures, photographs, and video clips add both a visual dimension to the text and a kind of precision that is not available with words alone. The field of visual rhetoric explains their function of *visuals* [26] in discourse. In scientific and technical publications some readers find visual and numerical information more valuable, more accessible, and more precise than verbal descriptions. Film and audio clips are available in web sites and other multimedia settings.

*Numbers* [27] or tables and statistical analysis give the sense that the points are objective and exact. A handful of numbers in a verbal text often stands out, such as the famous claim by Malthus, “[T]he human species would increase in the ratio of—1,2,4,8,16,32, 164,128,256,512, &c. and subsistence as—1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, &c. With doubling every 25 years, in two and a quarter centuries the ratio would be 512 to 10, in three centuries 4096 to 13.” Like other numbers, *money* [28] is objective and exact, although it has its own cultural and linguistic resonance.

Corporations' annual reports and other documents that discuss financial information have money and other data as part of their central argument.

### 3.2.4 *Performatives and Pragmatic Considerations*

The final group of **text** features, grounded in Speech Act theory and pragmatics, involves how the writer's goals are stated to elicit a hoped-for response from the reader. A central concept in Speech Act theory and pragmatics is that, given appropriate circumstances, an utterance (spoken or written) is a rule-governed act through which the writer aims to affect the reader. In the case of written argument, the writer produces a text (locution) to argue (illocutionary force) in order to affect the beliefs, knowledge, or actions of the reader (hoped-for perlocutionary effect). Both the writer's intent to argue (see *meta-argument* [6]) and the hoped-for changes in the reader's beliefs or actions may be more or less explicit in the text. When the argument involves more than an either/or result, the writer may describe the options and specify which ones she or he advocates, and the writer can explain the criteria that should be used to decide among those options.

*Perlocutionary effect* [29] is when the writer either explicitly or by clear implication indicates how he or she hopes readers will act or what views or opinions they should embrace.<sup>13</sup> President Abraham Lincoln calls for specific actions by Congress, "I recommend the adoption of the following resolution and articles amendatory to the Constitution," followed by the text of the amendment. The *Communist Manifesto* lists ten "generally applicable" political actions that should take place in order to replace the old bourgeois society. In *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois hopes to shift his audience's beliefs: "survival of the fittest shall mean the triumph of the good, the beautiful, and the true; that we may be able to preserve for future civilization all that is really fine and noble and strong, and not continue to put a premium on greed and impudence and cruelty."

Instead of proposing a single course of action, Environmental Impact Statements and planning proposals explicitly present *decision options* [30] for the policy makers who must decide among alternative plans to solve a problem such as flood mitigation or the location of a highway. Writers can use modal verbs to indicate what the reader "must," "should," or "may" consider or do, and thus the strength of their recommendations. In addition to aiming for a particular reader effect or setting out a readers' options, arguments often present explicit *decision-making criteria* [31]. Supreme Court decisions do this retrospectively by enumerating the constitutional, legal, and statutory texts that led to their conclusion. Proposals of various sorts often enumerate advantages and disadvantages defined in terms of their economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits.

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<sup>13</sup> Often seen as complementary to Grice's principles of communication, speech act theory established criteria for a successful speech act, one of which is that the reader be able to do or think as the writer intends (Austin, Searle). Focused on the perlocutionary act, Marcu (2000) explicitly extends Austin's and Searle's early definitions of a speech act to extended persuasive written texts, bringing the concerns of rhetoric to Speech Act theory.

### 3.3 Reader

A written argument is a text that a reader perceives as having been written with the rhetorical intent to change (some) readers' beliefs, feelings, or actions. Competent readers recognize an argument when they see one, and understand what it is about and how it goes about its business—how it is supposed to work.

We take the position that the reader makes meaning.<sup>14</sup> Reading is a performance of the text, based more or less on the “script” or “score” that is on the page, so it begins with the reader's understanding and interpretation. The ideal reader of an argument (often assumed in rhetorical criticism) accurately understood what the writer wrote and the writer's intentions, and is persuaded to approve of or adopt the beliefs espoused and (as appropriate) to act on what the writer proposed.

For actual readers, arguments can be interpreted in many ways, and the individual reader's chosen interpretation depends on many factors. The reader may respond to the argument much the way the writer intended, or ignore or dismiss it out of simple disinterest, because it is not relevant to his or her personal concerns, or because he or she is not in an appropriate position to act. The argument can reinforce a reader's entrenched position and lead to outright approval or hostility. The reader may also have a stake in the topic and can gain or lose, depending on the outcome.

In addition, readers may not be consistent in how they respond to an argument: for example, when reading a text a second time, they may interpret it or respond quite differently. Owing to the nature of writing, a reader may experience the published text in different and remote times and places. Consequently, it may be difficult to reconstruct the originally shared values or shared understanding of the writer-reader relationship, or to enter fully into the original discourse community.<sup>15</sup>

No argument is universally successful, and there is no normative formula that will ensure an argument's success, in large part because readers respond to a particular argument in many ways. This may be similar to the situation with literature (fiction, poetry, drama), which aims to move its audiences emotionally, but rarely has that effect on all readers or theater-goers. No deterministic or even necessarily causal relation exists between the argument's rhetorical goals and its results. A reader's response may not correlate with the “quality,” “reasonableness,” or other criteria by which arguments are evaluated in academic or popular critiques or textbooks. Readers, in response to the argument, may even adopt beliefs or take particular actions as intended by the writer *despite* how well or poorly the argument is framed.

<sup>14</sup> Louise Rosenblatt has argued that there is a “transaction” between the text and reader, and that the relation is dynamic and depends on the individual reader's attitudes and interests (see especially Rosenblatt 1994, 1995). In discussing the perlocutionary act, Gu (1991) shows that the reader's response is not necessarily caused by the speaker's utterance; the reader has agency and plays a formative role in understanding and responding to the text. Both Gu and Marcu (2000) view a speech act as not only a linguistic and communicative act, but also a rhetorical act, one whose success depends on a transaction (collaborative meaning-making) between the speaker and hearer.

<sup>15</sup> This avoids the dilemma that, often, the argument doesn't have a chance of changing *our* thoughts or actions—we can read the Declaration of Independence and not even consider joining a war against King George III.

Three kinds of reader—ideal, projected or implied, and real—have been proposed by literary theory and criticism. As noted above, the ideal reader matches the writer’s hope (or expectations). The projected reader is a fiction, as is the writer: both are constructed through the communication process. In the category of **reader, possible reader responses** includes features that characterize the writer’s linguistic and rhetorical communication with imagined readers. The final pair of features **after reading ends** deal with real readers’ understanding of and responses to the argument. These responses are beyond the linguistic communication of the written argument, include the rhetorical and personal, and as such, are rarely expressed in the argument since they are not available to the writer.

### 3.3.1 Possible Reader Responses

The writer can foster communication and dialogue with readers by defining and naming target readerships. The readers’ participation in that dialogue depends largely on their ability and willingness to respond to the writer’s call for change in attitude and action, especially when the writer explicitly says what the readers are to do. The readers’ side in the dialogue also has to do with how much attention they actually pay to the details of the argument, and the extent to which they find the argument interesting and relevant.

*Audience design* [32] includes situations when writers specify and characterize primary and secondary readers, or when they anticipate overhearers or bystanders. Typical primary readers of planning proposals are an agency like the county board of supervisors (sometimes with their names listed) who can act on the recommendations; secondary readers include other stakeholders, such as regional agencies, affected municipalities, and business and non-profit communities. Environmental Impact Statements explicitly mention the entities that are expected to act with respect to allocating money, planning and building structures, and passing laws or zoning ordinances. Political documents often anticipate an undefined “public” as an important audience.

The text can specifically name the *addressee* [33] or encode the reader with pronouns. Presidents’ Annual Messages are written to “Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives,” the *Communist Manifesto* to “Working men of all countries.” Dedications provide another example, such as that for Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, “If Your Highness [Lorenzo the Magnificent] will deign to peruse it, you will recognize in it my ardent desire that you may attain to that grandeur which fortune and your own merits presage for you.” Frequent examples of the *addressee* include second-person “you” or the first-person plural “we,” what Hyland and Tse (2004) describe as “engagement markers” that bring the reader together with the writer in a common rhetorical space.

The *cued reader response* [34] indicates how readers are prompted to respond to the writer’s desired actions or beliefs. The “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” makes a sweeping request that “every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and educating to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective

recognition and observance.” Du Bois seeks a change in attitude on the part of both Negroes and the white South, who “must change, or neither can improve to any great extent.... Only by a union of intelligence and sympathy across the color-line in this critical period of the Republic shall justice and right triumph.” In other cases, social actions can be inferred from the topic. Wollstonecraft advocates general reform in individual manners, for example, that women pay less attention to their appearance, and that men no longer take advantage of women’s emotions. She is occasionally more specific about opening up career opportunities for women, and outlining a program of national education that, she hopes, would lead to women becoming full citizens.

Individual readers can choose to interact with a written argument in different ways. *Engagement* [35] takes into account that they may study, read selectively or sequentially, or skim. In some cases, careful study is required by law or social convention (for example, when members of a search committee read letters of application). Technical articles are often read selectively, with initial focus on the abstract, then the results. Complicated reports have technical sections directed at different readers, such as a budget and financial analysis for people responsible for those issues. People often seek to confirm or disconfirm their position when they read about current and controversial topics.

Readers usually expect to learn something from what they read; they value novelty either in the views expressed or how they are expressed. In some settings and for some readers, what is novel involves subtle differences between the current text and previous ones. An argument’s *predictability* [36], which ultimately depends on the individual reader, varies widely. What the writer assumes the reader knows and what might be unexpected can appear in the context or background sections at the start of a report. Scholarly articles are expected to present research “not previously published.” What have been called “genre chains” include, for example, “draft” and “final” Environmental Impact Statements. Most of the content of each stage overlaps, making these highly predictable, so readers familiar with early versions focus on the changes. In contrast, the content of articles in magazines and scholarly journals (periodicals) are surprising to their subscribers, although occasionally one issue lists the topics of the next one.

### 3.3.2 After Reading Ends

**After reading ends** concerns the response of real readers. *Uptake* [37] accounts for how individual readers understand the meaning of the argument, but then interpret it and accept or reject it on their own grounds. It is usually impossible to find out from the text what the writer knew about what readers understood or how they responded. In a few cases, owing to the existence of more than one edition (*publication history*), the writer has this information. In the Preface to the second edition of *Small Planet*, Labbé wrote that people from nearly every state wrote letters that “said the book changed their lives.” In actuality, readers’ beliefs or actions may be changed, although not necessarily along the lines proposed by the writer. In Speech Act terms, the perlocutionary act is successful if what was proposed happens. As with *uptake*, the *actual result* [38], what the audience did or believed differently after

reading, can rarely be determined from the text itself. In his final Annual Message (1860), for example, President Buchanan reported that several of his specific proposals from earlier Annual Messages had been rejected by Congress.

## 4 Conclusion

In this article, we presented the results from a grounded-theory analysis of a variety of written arguments, a data-driven process that led to a set of descriptive features within a framework that accounts for these texts as rhetorical and linguistic acts. The features, arranged in a sequence that focuses first on the writer and finally the reader, highlight how writers use the text in the world to affect the reader. The features, influenced by pragmatics, trace the strategies through which the writer specifies what changes in belief or action are expected of the reader. Finally, the features account for the consequence of recognizing that the reader ultimately determines his or her own understanding of and response to the argument.

We have used a wide range of examples to develop and illustrate the features so that the resulting description might support the practice of interpreting other arguments, either individual texts or groups of related ones. Our position is thus similar to Jack Selzer's, who writes that rhetorical analysis "involves studying carefully some kind of symbolic action, often after the fact of its delivery and irrespective of whether it was actually directed to you or not, so that you might understand it better and appreciate its tactics" (Selzer 2004, p. 281).

Critics and scholars can use this framework of written argument for detailed description, commentary, and analysis of individual arguments that merit close attention, such as a historically important Supreme Court decision or *Origin of the Species*. Another approach would be for a scholar to focus on one or a few features, for example on the writer's voice, or text features such as the time frame or figures of speech, or on what the writer expects of the reader. Comparing or generalizing about patterns of features in texts from the same genre, or charting changes over time (e.g., the role of the physician-writer in medical journals over the past century), can enhance our understanding of how argument works as a cultural phenomenon. The choices by groups or individual writers might also be studied (and critiqued) for their preferences for particular features, as well as the interplay between their choices and the social and cultural climate surrounding the argument.

Our data-driven analysis is not meant to draw the scholar away from what the argument is about. On the contrary, owing to the potential for written argument to change the world, not only its strategy, but also its content should be considered carefully. For example, written arguments in favor of slavery abounded in Southern writing before and during the Civil War. These men's rational arguments were supported by evidence that that slavery was built into the Constitution and justified by Scripture; they used comparison to argue that slavery conditions were better than those of English factory workers, and appealed to money concerns by stating that it benefited not only the financial situation of the slave owners, but also the national economy. Analyzing such arguments objectively and in precise detail, showing how well or poorly they are crafted, and pointing out gaps and fallacies in reasoning does

not absolve the scholar from expressing her or his values and ethical standards, from being appalled by what the argument means.

Finally, we have limited our approach only to what is in the text. It is, however, possible to use the framework in combination with evidence concerning readers' understanding from writing that exists subsequent to and outside of the argument itself, such as private writing, reports or reviews in newspaper or magazines, and public reaction through polling results. It is also important to note that the articulation of separate features is not meant to suggest that written argument is fully understood through the study of its parts. We appreciate that considering the features holistically allows one to view features and meaning as inseparable elements of an argument that (ideally) complement one another. It may be that such harmony among the parts is a sign of a writer's skill in putting an argument together.

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