

Interviewee: Gerard Hauser [H]  
Interviewer: Eric Detweiler [D]  
Transcriber: Elizabeth McGhee Williams  
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### Transcript

D: This is Eric Detweiler. I'm speaking with Jerry Hauser, and it is 9:14 in the morning on Thursday, May 31, 2018. So I wanted to start, Jerry, by asking when you first joined RSA.

H: I think I joined it in 1973—'2 or '3. The organization was formed in 1968. I was a graduate student. I didn't know about it. I was at an ECA conference, Eastern Communication Association conference, in Boston, and I ran into a former teacher of mine from Wisconsin, Larry Rosenfield. And Rosenfield was very excited about this organization that had formed called the Rhetoric Society of America. He had a mimeographed page that he put in my hand that gave information about it, and so we had maybe three minutes of conversation, and then Larry ran off. So I joined, which cost about—it may not even have been \$5. It may have been \$2. Although that's when \$2 was \$2, back in 1973. So that's how I heard about it, and that's when I joined.

D: Out of curiosity, where were you a student at the time when you joined?

H: No, I was a faculty member.

D: Oh, you were faculty already.

H: Larry was my teacher at Wisconsin in the '60s, and I was a faculty member at Penn State.

D: Oh, okay. Out of curiosity—you may not, but do you remember any of the initial information from that mimeographed sheet?

H: No, I think it was just talking about basically a group of rhetoricians forming the Rhetoric Society of America, and I don't remember very much about it, other than it sounded like something that a rhetorician should be part of.

D: So how would you describe the organization when you first joined it? What did it look like? What kind of work was being done?

H: Well, at the beginning, it's hard to—the term “organization” is too large for what it was at that point. [chuckles]

D: [laughs]

H: Because when I joined, they sent me their newsletter, and I think they may have sent previous newsletters, and that was essentially the organization. They had an annual newsletter that eventually became a quarterly newsletter, as I recall. It was mimeoed and stapled, and it had some short essays and included in every issue an annotated bibliography on a particular topic. If you were interested in stylistics, for example, there might be an annotated bibliography on stylistics that might be included, or any topic in rhetoric that you could imagine. But it was maybe 20-25 pages, as my recollection. It was a small thing that came every once in a while, and that was the gist of it. There really weren't meetings. The quarterly did include some scholarly essays, but nothing like a refereed journal, and eventually that little newsletter turned itself into the *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. The *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* retained that particular form for a long time. I think it was—it had to be into the 80s before it became a bound volume.

D: So still stapled and mimeographed?

[00:04:56]

H: Yeah, mimeoed and stapled. It had white sheets of paper and it had black design on the cover, and that was the extent of it. And George Yoos was the driving force here. He was the person who edited this quarterly and got it out, and there was a board of directors who were people who had—well, the origin of the Society was at a 4Cs<sup>1</sup> meeting where a rump group adjourned to the bar—of rhetoricians—because they weren't finding any panels at the meeting that were addressing their interests. Corbett was in that group, and Donald Bryant from Iowa was in the group.

D: Edward Corbett, right?

H: Yes, Edward P. J. Corbett, and Winifred Horner and W. Ross Winterowd and some others were part of that group that was at the 4Cs meeting in '68. And they had a good time and said, "Well, let's do it again next year," and somebody said that we should write up the notes from this meeting and share them among the group. So they did, and it went that way—so sort of like a samizdat distribution, where somebody produces it, and then it goes out, and because it was mimeoed it could be, you know, duplicated in the arcane ways of duplicating in the 60s and early 70s. And that was it. So the quarterly would come out, and I'm not sure how they got their articles. I know that at one time they had—a lot of it was thematic. So for example, they would have a group of people write about the most significant passage in Quintilian or Aristotle or Plato or whatever. So four or five people would be invited to write something about that, and then they would publish those together in a volume. That gives you a sense of what the essays were like. It wasn't like a journal today where everybody's sending in submissions. And the organization had—you could join, and you had to pay annual dues. I think, by the end of the 70s, the dues may have been \$10 a year, and nobody was really paying much attention to whether or not you were paying your dues. So you would go for two or three years and there would be no dues collected. Or you might send in—"Oh, I owe the Rhetoric Society dues!", and you'd write a check in February

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<sup>1</sup> Conference on College Composition and Communication.

and then you'd forget about that, and then something would happen later in the year. Maybe they sent you a note or maybe there was something in the *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* about it, and you would write a check. So they got two checks from you that year [D laughs], and nobody seemed to have a record if it was one check or two checks or no checks or whatever, and they didn't know who their members were. The membership roles were complete and total mess. So that led to a kind of—my sense of it, if you look at the history of the organization, that there were in the late 70s, early 80s, it got some more structured organization with a board of directors and a president, and they were starting to codify things, and that pretty much took them through a good part of the 80s in this very loose fashion. It wasn't until we got near the end of the 80s when people like—well, Winifred Horner had been the president in that early part, and I'm doubtless that she had a great deal to do with getting things pulled together. And then Rich Enos and Michael Halloran and Kathleen Welch were the three people who at the end of the 80s were leading us to the point where we formed a constitution and then started to function as a more formal organization. So it was two decades before it really, I think, got gelled to the point where we had an actual constitution of sorts.

[00:10:43]

D: So I was curious—I want to talk a lot more, as you mentioned, about the people who were involved, but you said early on there was a thematic focus of the newsletter: Quintilian, Aristotle, things like that. Was classical rhetoric sort of the driving, central interest in that early moment that sort of some of those folks who were looking for things other than Cs were interested in?

H: That would be what I was interested in, but that was not necessarily the driving force. There would be other topics. Remember that this came out of 4Cs, so rhetoric and composition was pretty much it, at the core of it. Janice Lauer, for example, Winifred Horner, P. J. Corbett—all of these are folks who are more focused on rhetoric and composition, and that contributed a major flavor to I think at least the newsletter and the perception of it. So big books like Richard Lanham's book on composition<sup>2</sup> was featured in one of the issues, as I recall. I wouldn't say it was classical, or history of rhetoric. The history of rhetoric became a much more pronounced concern in the rhetoric and composition group in the 1980s. It had been a very deep tradition in the communication group of rhetoricians going back to the founding of the early departments of speech that were based on classical texts. And that's a real—that's always been a big divide: that in the English departments, there were people who were teaching rhetoric and composition—writing teachers—and then there were speech teachers. If the writing teachers were low on the totem pole, the speech teachers were even lower, which led them to leave the departments of English and form their own group. And when—the legend has it that at Cornell, where the first speech department was formed, the dean asked this group of rebels, "What is it that you'll teach?", and they threw classical texts onto the dean's desk and said, "These are our texts."

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<sup>2</sup> Presumably Lanham's *Revising Prose* (see volume 9.3 of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*), or perhaps his *Style: An Anti-Textbook*.

D: Sort of like Cicero, Quintilian, things like that?

H: Absolutely, Cicero. Quintilian, yeah. So yeah. That had always been a part of the tradition in speech. Not so much in writing until, actually, the benchmark book is Corbett's book which made the argument that, "Well, there are these principles of rhetoric that are our grounding in composition."

D: And is that *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*?

[00:14:26]

H: Yep. That's right. So that provided what was a really excellent bridge that would go to the speech people who were steeped in that tradition. But—you'd need somebody who was much more versed in the history of the curriculum of graduate education in rhetoric and composition to state definitively—but my perceptions by the kinds of papers I was hearing at conferences was that there was a great surge forward in work on and understanding of the history of rhetoric during the 1980s and early 90s, but mostly in the 1980s, among the rhetoric and composition group where they started to develop folks with a deep sense of history. There had always been people there who had that fascination, but I didn't have a sense that that was a really broad base of knowledge within the group. So the Rhetoric Society now had this flavor that was pretty eclectic, but most of the folks who were attracted to it were rhetoric and composition people. The speech people were still focused on National Communication Association.

D: Was there any of the, sort of, similar feeling at the time with NCA, like there was with Cs, that there was a dearth of rhetoric, I guess, at all there? Or was that already pretty well-represented on the NCA side of things around that same time?

H: Well as a discipline, communication was changing radically, so when I was a graduate student in the mid-60s, it was near the end of the period where rhetoric was a defining perspective. Remember that these departments form in the 1920s. So let's say the 1930s, 1940s, speech departments are developing, especially in the Midwest because in the Midwest you have a large agricultural community. Grange played—was really supportive of forensic activity. Farmers needed to be able to argue their case, so this was in the high schools. It was something that was in the Midwest universities. Great speech departments in all of the Big Ten institutions and other institutions in the Midwest. At that time, Speech Association [of America] was dominated by the rhetoricians—early 60s. Mid-60s, the social scientists, who would be the other half of the organization, started to do more refined work. So you had, in communication, studies that were focused on public speaking, which could grow out of psychology or classical rhetoric as their knowledge base, persuasion, which mostly was related to psychology and grew as an area of study after the Second World War when the army had supported a lot of studies on persuasive messages. Psychologists were doing this at Michigan, at Yale, at Harvard, that were being used by the army to craft messages—both propaganda messages but also messages designed to influence the behavior of young men who were inductees. For example, on issues like hygiene. Their mother

wasn't there to tell them to brush their teeth, so how do we get them to take care of themselves? That sort of very practical use was there. So now you've got persuasion, you've got public speaking, you have a group that is interested in small-group discussion out of a Deweyan model where discussion is seen as an alternative to persuasion and an alternative to debate for extremist argumentation. So that was essentially it. There was very little that was done on organizations or interpersonal communication. That started to develop in the 60s. And by the end of the 60s, those social-science areas were now more robust, and they said, "We're not necessarily just studying speech; we're studying communication. We want to have that as our identification." That led to the hybrid "speech communication," eventually becoming the National Communication Association. Now, all of this is leading to an explosion of areas of research and interest that are mostly on the social-scientific side dealing with language and groups and organizations and interpersonal. And rhetoric's role changed from being a defining perspective to being one among many research areas. So to come back to your question, the perception in NCA from the time that I joined, which would have been in the mid-60s, to when we got to the 80s was one of steady erosion. When you went to an NCA meeting, you would have panels that were either public address or the rhetoric and communication theory division. And then there were panels that I believe were sponsored by the American Society for the History of Rhetoric, which would have formed in the 80s, that would be at the conference. So you would have, at any given hour, two or three panels on rhetoric. Now this is a conference that has 5,000 people, 4,000 people attending. So the rhetoricians were not really happy campers at that point. I don't know whether you want me to continue with this narrative, but—

[00:22:13]

D: No! Yeah, this is wonderful.

H: —but that discontent continued to grow during the 90s and led to, was *one* of the things that was an impulse towards the transformation of RSA.

D: Hmm. And that was around the early 2000s, late 90s when that transformation happened?

H: Mmhmm.

D: I want to get back to that, but I'll jump back a little bit further. You mentioned some of these key figures in the early formation of RSA—George Yoos, Winifred Horner, folks like that—but you mentioned sort of the 80s being a period where maybe things got a little bit more codified and standardized. Was it largely that same group of people continuing to develop it? Or who were some of the other sort of major folks during that period of the 80s who were driving the organization's development?

H: Yeah, I wasn't really involved in it deeply at that point, but I know, certainly, Rich Enos, Winifred Horner, Michael Halloran. Michael was very staunch and committed, as was Rich. Kathleen Welch. Kneupper at Texas A&M.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kneupper and the early RSA conferences were at The University of Texas at Arlington.

D: Charles Kneupper—is it Charles Kneupper?

H: I think so. Charles Kneupper, yeah, who was the organizer of the first RSA conference that was held at Texas A&M in the 80s. There had not been a conference, so you didn't have—there wasn't any place to gather. If you had a gathering, it would have been, you know, a group of people informally gathering at a conference. You didn't have any panels or anything of that sort—at least none that I was aware of. So it wasn't until that meeting occurred that there was any formal gathering. I can remember getting in the mail the proceedings from this first conference, and I wasn't really paying close attention to it because it was a mimeographed thing that came every quarter, and it was part of the flow of paper into our offices at that time, and so unless you were dutiful in reading it, it was probably something that, "I'll get to it when I get the chance because I'm worried about getting promoted. So they had a meeting—that's interesting."

[00:25:15]

D: And when did you start attending those meetings or conferences or whatever they were called at the time.

H: I think the first one that I attended must have been around 1990, '92? I think '92. Yeah, I think it was around then. It was at Pittsburgh.<sup>4</sup> But it wasn't high on my radar, partly—and this is, I think, an important part of the association's history. The meetings occurred Labor Day weekend—or, Memorial Day weekend, and so timing was awkward, and you didn't necessarily have travel support because you were at the end of the budget cycle, and meetings are expensive to go to. For me—I was an associate professor at that point—

D: Still at Penn State?

H: Yeah, with a family we were raising. There was not a lot of incentive to go to it, number one. Two, is that there was a perception that, "Well, there's a lot of people there who I don't know who are in English departments. So the meeting is really a meeting of rhetoric and composition people." And there was a kind of narrative, and that narrative is still in some respects alive. I don't think as strong as it had been—I hope not as strong as it had been: "Well, this was the second meeting of the rhetoric and composition people."

D: With Cs being the first, I guess?

H: Yeah, right. And so the communication people would say, "Well, there may be some stuff there for me, but I'm not sure there's a lot there for me." So there really wasn't a big incentive to attend the meeting, not because of any lackluster experience so much as the convergence of some circumstances that were really not—that created an

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<sup>4</sup> The conference was held in Arlington in 1990, Minneapolis in 1992, and Pittsburgh in 1998.

appearance, a perception. And then when I started to attend the meeting, I discovered that it was somewhat different from what I had anticipated.

D: And was that sort of perception, that scuttlebutt around NCA or things like that? Do you have a sense of where that sense of this was a kind of second English conference—

H: It wasn't really high on the horizon of people at NCA.

D: Yeah.

H: I mean, it was kind of there. You were aware of it, but it wasn't like you were talking about it in an active way. It really required some people in NCA to begin actively talking about it for it to penetrate the consciousness of that organization, of that population of scholars.

D: And so when you did start attending in early, mid-90s, what exactly was it that you saw going on that began to draw you in? I mean, did it look somewhat like a smaller version of the RSA conference happening now? Was it sort of dramatically different? Like, what did the conference look like at that time?

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H: Well, there would be about 200 people attending. I was invited to respond to a panel in Pittsburgh, and so my wife and I drove to Pittsburgh on a Sunday so I could respond to the panel, got in the car and drove home. That was my first experience. The papers on the panel were okay, didn't really rattle me. And then I guess I was encouraged to submit a proposal for the next conference. I had been invited to participate in one of these special significant passage groups, and so it became a little bit more prominent in my mind. At first when I really attended in earnest, what I noticed was that people attended panels. When panels started, there weren't a lot of people in the halls. There weren't a lot of people in the lobby. There weren't a lot of people in the bar. People were in the rooms listening to papers, so this was very different from what I was experiencing at the *huge* meetings of NCA. The panels were—there were a lot of panels to choose from, so my areas of interests were being addressed almost every hour. There was a panel that I was interested in almost every hour, which is why I was attending the panels. Second thing I noticed was that there was a lot of cross-generational interaction, whereas at a meeting with four or five thousand people in attendance, you're standing there and you're having a conversation with somebody and you have the sense that they are always looking over your shoulder and watching who's passing by and who they recognize or who they want to be seen with or whatever. There wasn't as much real focused exchange on work, whereas the conversations at RSA were pretty much research-focused, interest-focused, and that they were cross-generational so that established scholars would be attending a panel with a junior person. And quite commonly you would go up afterwards and say some words to the younger person and ask if they had time to talk some more about it and then find a time to talk some more.

There was a lot of introduction of younger people to more established scholars, so there was a kind of induction character to it—that is to say, you're being welcomed into the group. You would be there talking to somebody and I would see someone who was prominent going by, and I would call them over and say, "I want you to meet Eric, who has just presented this paper on blah blah blah, and this is Professor I'm-A-Big-Shot," and the person would shake their hand and they would join the conversation. So there was this real sense of intellectual engagement which was far richer and more satisfying than what was happening at a big meeting. Those were some of the things that I noticed about it: very much more intimate and intellectually engaged conference than what I had experienced at the large meetings of NCA, and subsequently experienced in the large meetings of 4Cs. 4Cs wasn't any better. Rhetoric wasn't any better represented. Dissatisfaction among rhetoricians with things that were happening at NCA led some of us to think, "Well, maybe 4Cs would be an alternative," but after a couple of times at 4Cs we saw, "Well, it's the same old, same old. In fact, it may even be a little worse."

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D: And so this might sort of lead us back to where you began to go earlier. In the late 90s, early 2000s when RSA got maybe redeveloped—I'm not sure exactly what the word would be—in certain ways, what did that process look like? 'Cause it sounds like you said part of that was a burgeoning dissatisfaction with what was happening at NCA. What was involved in that sort of redesign of RSA? What prompted it? What did you all want to accomplish with where you took that?

H: Yeah, well, there was a sense of dissatisfaction, and then I was encouraged by Rosa Eberly, who had been a student of mine at Penn State, to be part of a panel at the 4Cs. And so we submitted a proposal, and it was accepted. This had to be around '94, maybe '95. And at that meeting, Mike Leff was also in attendance, and Mike and I had some conversations in which we were hoping that we would find a more receptive audience for our work and the traditions that we were representing in 4Cs. And so we attended, Mike and I—not in any collaborative way, just happenstance; we both happened to be thinking along the same lines—attended 4Cs for a couple of times. Then once it was cut out, there were no rhetoric panels at 4Cs. So the thought was, well—and we started to focus a little bit more on RSA. Around '96 or '98 I became a board member of RSA. Then I was named the president elect in 2000, responsible for the 2002 conference. I was also president—running for president of NCA in 2001. I thought well, "This will be rich if I become president of NCA and president of [RSA]. I would be the emperor of rhetoric."

D: [chuckles]

H: Part of running for office in NCA is you go to four regional conferences—you and your opponent—and you make presentations to all of the interest groups at their meetings and introduce yourself and what you hope to accomplish and whatnot. So in April of that year, I was at the Eastern Communication [Association] meeting in Portland, Maine. I believe it was Portland. And Mike was there. We had lunch at some



hotdog joint. We hatched the idea of making RSA a home for rhetoricians: how could we do that? We felt we needed to overcome this perception, get more of the communication types into RSA, and that RSA was small enough that if we got more people involved, it could become a real haven for the broad range of rhetoric. It all sounds so conspiratorial.

[00:40:26]

D: [laughs]

H: And certainly we were conspiring. [pause] Let's back up a second because I'm ahead of myself. In 2000, Fred Antczak was president of RSA, and he had appointed a committee to be concerned with how we might better advance the study of rhetoric. Robert Gaines, who was at Maryland at the time, chaired the committee. I served on the committee. There were some others, but Gaines was the guy who was doing the hard thinking here. We came up with a report that pointed out a couple of interesting things. Number one: Rhetoric was being studied in a lot of places, but there was no way in which those various places came together to talk to each other, which meant that we sometimes found ourselves at cross-purposes in scheduling meetings. For example, the Burke Society meeting being scheduled at the same time as RSA is being scheduled. Couldn't we do a better thing with them? We had no way of linking—knowing about, much less linking—research that was being done by scholars in other places where rhetoric was being studied that connected to what we were studying. And so was there a way in which you could have some kind of information exchange—now remember, internet is still not what it is today—could we have a way in which we could have an information bulletin board where people would say, "Okay, I'm studying Philodemus. Who else is studying Philodemus?" And then those of you studying Philodemus, all three of you, could connect with each other and share bibliographies and whatnot. If we had a meeting for all rhetoricians, how many should we plan for if they all came? Well, nobody had any idea of how many of us there were because we are a diaspora. So that conversation, that report, called for there to be some coordinating activity, and at the 2000 RSA meeting—at that time RSA had a business meeting, a plenary business meeting—this report was a topic of discussion. As that report was discussed, the group voted that they wanted us to move forward to establish connections with other organizations where rhetoric was being studied. That posed a political problem because RSA was initiating this, and smaller organizations were concerned that RSA was starting to act like it wasn't one of these small boutique organizations and we were trying to steal their members.

D: Were these, like, Burke Society and groups like that? Those kinds of—

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H: ASHR. So that led to the formation of ARS.<sup>5</sup> Now ARS didn't work for a variety of reasons, but it did establish the sense—what *did* happen was there was a meeting at

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<sup>5</sup> Alliance of Rhetoric Societies.

Northwestern. Not the meeting everybody knows about. This was a planning meeting. It occurred in the summer of 2000, I think, in which we gathered people from a variety of organizations—it may have been in the summer or spring of 2000 or 2001—gathered people from a variety of organizations, and so there was a representative from the women’s caucus and such and such, or whatever. Thirteen or fourteen of us. And the question was, “Do we have anything to say to each other?” And many people began that weekend thinking, “Okay, I’ll give it a try, but I really don’t expect anything to come from it.” And Leff saying, “There was really productive discussion, and we have a lot to share with each other.” So that became the impulse for establishing ARS, writing a constitution, having RSA vote to approve their participation in it. RSA really was serving as the organizing force behind all of this. That effort, I believe, led to a discussion about RSA becoming an umbrella organization. That’s really what Leff and I were talking about: “We don’t have an umbrella organization for rhetoricians. Could there be such a one? Let’s imagine what it would look like.” And we always came back to, well, “RSA is the only one that’s broad in scale enough to serve that function.” So we started to think in that way, talk in that way, plan in that way, and that meant we had to grow the society’s size, at least in terms of the conference. We had to start doing things that an umbrella organization did for members, provide services. Think in terms of how we were going to grow the organization, essentially emphasizing young scholars, mentoring activities, things of that nature. All of that was a part of what we were doing. Now, there were other things that were happening that predated this. For example, Jeff Walker became the editor of *RSQ* and really professionalized that journal and made it into a respectable scholarly journal. As we were doing this, others like Andrea Lunsford were saying, “Why aren’t we members of ACLS?”<sup>6</sup> “Well, I don’t know why we aren’t members of ACLS.” “Well, let’s become a member of ACLS.” “Well, in order to become a member then you have to have a couple of things. First, you have to be incorporated.” “Well, Jesus, we’re not even incorporated.”

D: Hmm.

H: “Secondly, you have to have an annual meeting. We only have a biannual meeting, so what are we going to do about that?” After the 2002 conference, where we expanded our attendance from 300 to 400—I think we had 425 at that meeting—we had enough of a surplus to have a board retreat. So we had a board retreat, and at that retreat, we thought about how we were going to transform the society to create an administrative infrastructure, which led us to Kathie Cesa and operating in a virtual way. Kathie lives in Columbus, but she’s been our administrator for member services since 2002 or ‘3. It allowed us to—we had to raise dues, and the interesting discussion there was, “Well, what are you gonna raise dues from? It’s \$30 a year. What are we gonna charge?” “\$50.” “Oh my god, you can’t do that.” “No, we have to do that because if we’re not charging enough money, nobody will take us seriously.” So you have to charge more money for them to really see you as a serious organization. They had a big fight about that. Forces of good or evil, depending upon your perspective, won. And so we doubled the dues. We talked about our web presence, and so we had a committee that was just worrying about developing a website, or improving the website because it was really,

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<sup>6</sup> American Council of Learned Societies.

really clunky. And so that developed. We needed an annual meeting, and out of that came the idea of the institute. And so all of those structures, you know, grew out of this initial conversation that is spawned by the Gaines report. How could we better serve the interests of the research work or the work of rhetoricians, and then conceiving of ourselves as an umbrella organization.

[00:50:33]

D: Do you have a little bit more time by chance?

H: Sure.

D: I wanted to take a little time at the end to jump forward to present and future of RSA, but before I got to that, I was curious: you mentioned with the 2002 redesign trying to focus on things like mentoring opportunities for younger scholars, things like that. Were there any concrete outcomes that sort of shaped where the organization went after that meeting that feel especially worth noting?

H: Sure, absolutely. The first thing we did was we reorganized it administratively so that we had an administrator of member services which meant that we could now do the following things: We could (a) keep track of our members and send timely renewal notices. We had accurate counts of how many there were. We could—we had more comprehensive management of our books. We had internet capacity that allowed us to communicate with all of our members. We had a professionally managed website, which was a vast improvement over what we had before and set us on a course where people wanted that website to be continually revised and renewed and improved. We became incorporated; we became members of the ACLS. We instituted the institute which has been a fantastically successful organization—or, ah, event. We initiated a flight of awards which were important for us to recognize and celebrate the excellent work being done by our people. Up to that point, we had two awards—the Kneupper award for the best article in *RSQ* and the Yoos award for distinguished service. That was it. So we got a book award, a dissertation award, fellows, and subsequent awards have been established since then. We made a conscious decision about mentoring, and so that decision led to the research network. It led to the formation of, at the conference, the graduate reception. Doing lots of things that we felt were geared towards the needs and interests of junior people. That was a conscious effort on our part, and it's interesting how many people with bright ideas will frame it in terms of, "in RSA's tradition of mentoring younger people." So very much concerned about young people, about midcareer people, about mentoring, about professional growth. We were concerned about our journal and how our journal was—thinking about our journal in terms of getting out from under it being self-publishing, and so finding a publisher for the journal, which we believed would provide us with additional revenue but also increase our reach. That led to the contract with Taylor & Francis. So there are a number of things. And embarking on a specific mission of growing the membership. Trying to think in terms of how do we become bigger. A large part of that was a decision to say, "Well, we're just going to grow the conference." And while we don't do as well as we would like

in retaining the people who come to the conference, it does mean that we have gone from a low point of maybe three or four hundred members to low points of around 1,000 members, but we get as high as 1,700 members. We would like it to be in the range of 1,700 as our high, and we'd like more of that, but there's only a fluctuation of maybe 300 between high and low points. Whether we can achieve that is a good question. So all of this movement has been the result of decisions that we made at that retreat in 2002 because it laid the blueprint, and the rest of it was growing the conference, growing member services, mentoring young people, doing things that provide a greater sense of professional recognition and professional scholarly accomplishments.

[00:56:12]

D: Out of curiosity, when you talk about focusing on growing the membership, what were the particular things that you all set out to do to attract more people to the conference in terms of how you approached promotion, advertising, outreach, things like that?

H: Well, initially, I think it was simply the increasing the size of the conference itself. I think that the publication of the journal by Taylor & Francis has certainly helped us in that respect. That there has been the providing of member services, like the research network and panels at the conference that were aimed at emerging issues. And certainly the institute was a very—especially once we figured out how to do it right—was a very big contributor to the growth of the society. We're still in the stage of learning about how to expand our reach, but those were some of the things. The web presence also, which allowed us to communicate on a fairly regular basis. We're now just getting our feet under us with social media, so we have an electronic communications officer. We had a membership officer. Our membership officer is being expected to be more proactive in terms of recruitment and retention. Electronic communications officer, we have a public outreach officer now. We've got on a temporary basis or experimental basis, a public humanities officer. So there are specific things that we're continuing to do to create a greater awareness of the society and what it can do for its members.

D: Yeah. That's good to know. Well, I wanted to turn a little bit now towards the present and future of the organization. You have talked through a rich history of RSA here, but I was wondering how you sort of anticipate the organization changing in the years to come? And this can be either more practical, "Here's what I think RSA is going to do," or if there are any aspirations or hopes that you have for the organization going forward. What would those look like?

[00:59:11]

H: [sighs thoughtfully] Well, I certainly would like it to continue to be an inclusive organization that is open to the rich traditions within rhetoric. It's a very complicated terrain with many strands into it, and RSA provides the home for those. So I think continuing that, it would be an aspiration. I think a sustainable expansion of

opportunities that are like the institute. In 2019, we will have our first summer project.<sup>7</sup> My hope is that that will be an idea that gains traction, doesn't detract from the institute, and provides another way in which we are fostering a very rich discussion to advance the scholarly interests of our members. That we are continuing to focus on mentoring of our younger members—graduate students, junior faculty members—and be of assistance in their careers in whatever ways we can, which way be in some instances symbolic, but also can be in terms of opportunities for dialogue with others who share their interests. I would—my aspiration is to see the membership stabilize at a relatively firm number which allows us to make important organizational decisions which are dependent upon financial realities. If you can't count on your membership base, then your dues structure becomes iffy, and the sources of revenue that you have are limited. It's not like we're in history where we can produce books that the general public wants to rush in and buy. Everybody's interested in history, but not everybody's interested in rhetoric because they don't even understand what the hell you're talking about other than, "Well, rhetoric is BS, isn't it?" So there you have it, right? Some of these efforts are going to, like public outreach and public humanities, are going to produce a greater awareness of what we do. I would love to see a person from our society who was a regular contributor to television magazines and news panels talking about public discourse, as would we all. Well, you have to really keep plugging away and figure out a way to call attention to what we do, and you have to have the right kind of person who is able to get in front of a television camera and speak in sound bites and say compelling things. That's going to take a while, but that would be something I think really aspiring towards: having us a greater voice among public intellectuals. And that's not something necessarily the society—the society, I don't know that we can groom public intellectuals, but we can do things to advertise "here's what rhetoricians do" and hope that that begins to attract attention. So those would be some of the things that I would like to see happen for the society. Yeah.

[01:04:03]

D: Well, thanks for that. I want to leave just a moment here at the end before we wrap up. We've covered a lot of territory here, but any people, events, developments, things like that, that you want to make sure you get a moment to mention that you haven't already? Key things or folks from the history and development of the organization.

H: I think that, really, RSA has been blessed with a talented membership that has served well on its board of directors, and its officers who have continued to move the Society forward and not gone off on a toot, and that's not always the case. A lot of societies have problems with presidents coming in and they have their own agenda and then they go off on a tangent. The executive director is trying to keep everything herded and moving in a direction that's within the framework of the traditions and mission of the organization. That's kind of the job I feel I have, is to keep us focused on what it is that we have as our primary mission. So I would say all of the people who have served as well as presidents, as conference planners, as editors, all deserve mention and credit

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<sup>7</sup> I.e., the RSA Project in Power, Place, and Publics, held in Reno, Nevada, in May 2019.

for the splendid work that we've done and that we, I hope, are going to continue to do.  
Yeah.

D: Okay?

H: Okay.