

Forum Analysis

----- Background -----

- Identify the forum by name and organizational affiliation.
- Is there an expressed belief, editorial policy, philosophy? What purpose does the forum serve? Why does it exist?
- What is the disciplinary orientation?
- How large is the forum? Who are its members? Its leaders? Its readership?
- In what manner does the forum assemble (e.g., newsletter, journal, conference, weekly meeting)? How frequently?
- What is the origin of the forum? Why did it come into existence? What is its history? Its political background? Its traditions?
- What reputation does the forum have among its own members? How is it regarded by others?

----- Discourse Conventions -----

Who Speaks/Writes?

- Who is granted status as speaker/writer? Who decides who speaks/writes in the forum? By what criteria are speakers/writers selected?
- What kind of people speak/write in this forum? Credentials? Disciplinary orientation? Academic or professional background?
- Who are the important figures in this forum? Whose work or experience is most frequently cited?
- What are the important sources cited in the forum? What key works, events, experiences is it assumed members of the forum know?

To Whom Do They Speak/Write?

- Who is addressed in the forum? What are the characteristics of the assumed audience?
- What are the audience's needs assumed to be? To what use(s) is the audience expected to put the information?
- What is the audience's background assumed to be? Level of proficiency, experience, and knowledge of subject matter? Credentials?
- What are the beliefs, attitudes, values, prejudices of the addressed audience?

What Do They Speak/Write About?

- What topics or issues does the forum consider? What are allowable subjects? What topics are valued?
- What methodology or methodologies are accepted? Which theoretical approaches are preferred: deduction (theoretical argumentation) or induction (evidence)?
- What constitutes "validity," "evidence," and "proof" in the forum (i.e., personal experience/observation, testing and measurement, theoretical or statistical analysis)?

How Do They Say/Write It?

Form

- What types of discourse does the forum admit (e.g., articles, reviews, speeches, poems)? How long are the discourses?
- What are the dominant modes of organization?
- What formatting conventions are present: headings, tables and graphs, illustrations, abstracts?

Style

- What documentation form(s) is used?
- Syntactic characteristics?
- Technical or specialized jargon? Abbreviations?
- Tone? What stance do writers/speakers take relative to audience?
- Manuscript mechanics?