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Contents:

I. Project description

II. Supporting information

III. Background/detail: Troutman, “Framing Humanities Inquiry: The Swales Moves Reconsidered,” paper presented at WRAB II, 2011.

IV. Possible alternate/additional project design (readers’ response)

**I. Project description**

Research questions:

How do historians signal scholarly exigency in their research article introductions (RAIs)? Do they follow the CARS (Create A Research Space) moves identified by Swales (1990; 2004) for the natural and social sciences? Do they deploy stasis and special topoi as identified by Fanestock and Secor (1991) and revised by Wilder (2005) in literary studies? Or some variation or mixture of tactics?

What is CARS?

Swales and others (e.g., Lewin, Young, and Fine) have identified three key moves normally made in English- language research articles introductions (RAIs) in the social sciences and natural sciences. Swales refers to this inquiry framing work as CARS: Creating A Research Space. The three moves are to:

1. Identify the scholarly field or sub- field (by citing scholarly literature).
2. Locate a gap or niche in that field (usually by citing scholarly literature).
3. Describe the means by which the writer will occupy that niche (perhaps with reference to scholarly literature).

Limitation of CARS

Scholars have studied CARS moves mostly in the social and natural sciences, fields with relatively predictable research article structures (e.g., IMRD: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) and usually with the purpose of reporting new research. CARS may have limited application in the humanities, where article structures vary and where narrative, exploration, and creativity may also be valued.

RAIs in the Humanities

Few scholars have studies inquiry framing in the humanities. Bondi and Silver, studying paragraph 1 of research articles in history, find that historians often ventriloquize, casting their own questions and claims in the voices of their primary sources. This can work to hide the historian’s role in interpretation and discovery, and thus in carving out research space. Fanestock and Secor show that literary scholars often establish the novelty or importance of their work through special topoi—e.g., deeper meaning vs. surface meaning— sometimes built into the structure of the article rather than made explicit in the introduction, and sometimes only recognizable to field insiders. Perhaps historians, too, use special topoi rather than staged moves along the Swales model. Indeed, my study of 63 RAIs in the interdisciplinary—but humanities-centric—field of comics studies revealed that only a minority (39%) performed Move #1 explicitly and by citing sources, in the ways the CARS model predicts; 19% performed move #2; and 17% move #3; some performed the moves partially or implicitly.

Research question

Therefore, to what extent do scholars in history employ the CARS moves? And in what other ways do they frame inquiry or establish exigency in their RAIs?

Research design

I will limit my study to RAs published in the following refereed journals, each a flagship in its field and each read widely by scholars in the United States.

* Journal of American History, est. 1914 by the Organization of American Historians, focuses on North American history.
* American Historical Review, est. 1895 by the American Historical Association, publishes articles on any era and geographic location worldwide.
* Journal of African American History, established 1915 by the Association for the Study of African American Life & History, focuses on African diasporic history in the Americas.
* Slavery and Freedom, est. 1980 and published by Francis Taylor, London, with a focus on slavery and anti-slavery movements worldwide in any era.

I will:

* Include the latest 15 RAs from each journal, excluding special issues, roundtables, and other types of articles.
* Limit my study to the first three pages of each RA if no Introduction section is defined.
* Code each RAI for the CARS moves, including the use of citations to scholarly literature, primary sources, or other texts.
* Code each RAI for any other recurring patterns or special topoi that may signal exigency, even if implicitly. For example, historians may open with historical anecdotes to introduce the topical question.
* Compare findings across the four journals and to prior findings on social and natural sciences RAIs.

Citations

Fanestock, J., and M. Secor. 1991. “The rhetoric of literary criticism.” In Textual dynamics of the professions: Historical and contemporary studies of writing in professional communities.

C. Bazerman and J. Paradis, eds. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 76-96.

Lewin, B., L. Young, and J. Fine. 2001. Repr. 2005. Expository discourse: A genre-based approach to social science research texts. London: Continuum International.

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Swales, J. M. 1990. Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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Troutman, P. 2010. “The discourse of comics scholarship: A rhetorical analysis of research article introductions.” International journal of comic art 12.2-3: 432-444.

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**II. Supporting information**

*Institutional Description*:

I teach at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., United States. GW is an R1 research institution with 10,141 undergraduates and 7,361 graduate students. The undergraduate population is approximately 63% female, 37% male (data on other genders not currently available) and approximately 50 % white, 11% Asian American, 11% Hispanic, 7% African American, and 13% international students (some categories may overlap). I teach primarily in the University Writing Program, whose multi-disciplinary faculty teaches UW1020, our required 4-credit topic-variable first-year writing and research course. I also administer our 6-credit upper division Writing in the Disciplines component, which is taught across all departments and schools. I occasionally teach upper division WID courses in the history department. This institutional setting inspired the need for this study by presenting me with problems students were having in reading and comprehending the goals of published research articles. My role in the UWP also means that I publish both in my home field of history and in my adopted field of writing studies. This project works towards both audiences of researchers and ultimately towards the scholarship of teaching as well.

*Key Theorists*:

Social linguist John Swales formulated the CARS model (Creating A Research Space), which identifies three key moves made in academic research article introductions in the social and natural sciences: **1. Establishing a territory or field of relevant scholarship. 2. Establishing a niche or gap in that scholarship. 3. Occupying the niche, articulating how the present study fills the gap in knowledge.** Often called the Swales Moves, they have been refined by Swales and others over time. **(**Swales: 1990, 137-166; **Swales:** 2004, 226-234; Lewin, Young, and Fine: 2001/2005, chs. 2-3)**.**

Fanestock and Secor (1991), examining articles in literary criticism, find that exigency is governed more by “special literary topoi” than by response to prior scholarly literature. These topoi—the most common being some form of appearance/reality (such as obvious vs. hidden meanings; or contemporary misunderstanding vs. historically contextualized understanding)—require only reference to some complexity or latent meanings within the text under analysis itself, not necessarily reference to prior literature on that text. This is because, Fanestock and Secor argue, it is the use of the topoi (and not reference to the field) that constitutes the signal of affinity with readers in that discourse community (one of the same functions Swales and others argue for the reference to the prior literature in the field). The idea has been both confirmed and revised by Wilder (2005).

Silver and Bondi (2002), examining only the first paragraph of research articles in academic history, have shown that many open with quotation of primary sources or descriptive narration of historical anecdotes, which they characterize as the “the representation of a dialogic event in the world of history [i.e., the actual past], which does not bear explicit traces of a disciplinary debate around the issue” (147). These apparently descriptive moves, they posit, have “an argumentational function” and ‘play a role’ “in the development of the writer’s [author’s] Discourse” (152). This appears to happen without the metatextual framework seen in the CARS model.

*Glossary*:

* CARS: Create A Research Space: the model formulated by Swales to describe the three key moves made in social science research article introductions (RAIs): define the field, name the gap or niche in the field, occupy the niche. Also called the Swales moves.
* Corpus: the defined body of texts being examined and analyzed.
* Special literary topoi or special topoi: as defined by Fanestock and Secour, a set of recognizable narrative moves or structures engendering certain modes of analysis and implicitly signaling to knowing readers the significance of the inquiry.
* Swales moves. See CARS.
* Research Article Introductions (RAIs): in the social and natural sciences, a formal section of a research article that lays out the purpose of the present inquiry. In the humanities, it may or may not have a clearly demarcated ending and its contents and format are variable and have not yet been thoroughly studied.

**III. Project Background: paper presented at WRAB 2011**

“Framing Humanities Inquiry: The Swales Moves Reconsidered”

Phillip Troutman, The George Washington University

Writing Research Across Borders II, George Mason University, 19 Feb. 2011

As with much research conducted in writing studies, I suspect, my project evolved out of a problem in teaching. As a Ph.D. historian teaching in a multidisciplinary writing program with an academic writing emphasis, one of my objectives is to move students out of the kinds of contextless analysis most of them have been asked to do in high school. To be fair, I might justify that pedagogy (“analyze this”) in terms of practicing analysis itself, but one of the shifts I want them to make in college writing is what has been called the “social turn” in writing studies—the recognition that scholarship is shaped within and responds to specific social contexts; it is forwarded by the particular values, methods, and venues articulated by the discourse communities that animate and sustain that inquiry.  **I am following David Bartholomae and others in wanting to see, in the words of Van E. Hillard, “Students awaken and orchestrate these conversations in their own writing, as they bring others’ texts into connection with one another and their own work. Such valuations of the social life of information are vital to students positioning themselves as active rhetorical agents whose responsibility as researchers is to access, define, and enter ongoing intellectual discussions and controversies” (Hillard, 2009: 17).**

With that in mind, then, I was happy to discover what many of you know as “the Swales moves” or the CARS model (Creating A Research Space), which identifies three key moves in academic research article introductions **(**Swales: 1990, 137-166; **Swales:** 2004, 226-234; Lewin, Young, and Fine: 2001/2005, chs. 2-3)**:**

1. **Establishing a territory or field of relevant scholarship.**
2. **Establishing a niche or gap in that scholarship.**
3. **Occupying the niche, articulating how the present study fills the gap in knowledge.**

**Yet students in my first-year writing seminar—which uses comics studies to teach academic writing and research—are often struck by the absence or muted presence of such moves in research articles on comics. While I insist that students carefully distinguish between what an article is *about* (its subject matter or topic) versus what it *argues* (its claims or analysis), they frequently have difficulty finding not only the article’s claim, but sometimes even its aim: its central question or agenda. I, too, am struck by how often comics researchers themselves do not highlight these distinctions in their work, especially in their articles' introductions. One problem that has not really been identified in this area of genre studies is the fact that the CARS model (Creating A Research Space) has been articulated using analysis of the natural sciences and social sciences, not the humanities (and with one exception I’ll discuss, not history, which straddles humanities & social sciences).**

**This led me to undertake a study looking for the Swales moves in 64 articles in comics studies: 27 from the *International Journal of Comic Art* (which publishes exclusively in comics studies), 19 from the *Journal of Popular Culture* (which frequently publishes comics studies articles), and 18 from other journals indexed in the two major history databases (where comics studies articles appear only infrequently). What I found confirmed my sense of what was going on: Move One appeared in only 39% of these articles, Move Two in only 19%, and Move Three in only 17%. I did find that many articles did what we might call partial moves or implicit moves: In Move One, some articles used non-scholarly sources where Swales indicates scholarly citation defines the move. In Move Three, some articles name an agenda for the essay, but without any reference to any “gap” in prior literature, or perhaps without reference to prior literature at all. If we modify the model to count these, that does shift the numbers: Move One now appears in 64% of the articles, Move Two in 42%, and Move Three in 33%. But we are still left with those Moves missing from introductions in 1/3 to 2/3 of the articles (depending on the move).**

**Now: a number of peculiarities of comics studies as a field help explain these numbers: The field emerged out of popular criticism and even fandom, realms of discourse to which it still bears a now somewhat troubled relationship. Non-academic researchers with little interest in establishing their work with scholarly literature sometimes publish in the journals. Two of the major journals themselves emerged out of the American popular cultural studies movement, which explicitly rejected academic peer review and academic jargon in favor of a more open publishing process. Within the academy, it is relatively new and has relatively few foundational texts. More importantly, it is frequently entered by specialists from other fields (especially literary criticim) who have relatively little knowledge of the foundational texts that do exist and who, in some cases, seem to assume the field to be tabula rasa.**

**So questions of academic disciplinarity and levels of professionalization arise here.** Indeed, when I presented these findings as a conference paper to the International Comic Arts Forum, a very serious (and, I am happy to say, also affable and tolerant) group of scholars, some of them took it to be the very evidence they needed to argue for the creation of a professional society with its own peer-reviewed journal. But others cautioned that we needed to take into account the disciplinary characteristics of journal articles, not to assume that fields outside the natural and social sciences—the focus of most of the Swales-related studies—would follow the same patterns as those fields.

Indeed, some other work on academic discourse analysis should lead us to expect as much. In his 1981 article, “What Written Knowledge Does,” Charles Bazerman’s analyzed discourse in articles from molecular biology, sociology of science, and literary criticism, and found significant differences in the assumptions authors made about their subjects and audiences and the ways authors related their work (or didn’t) to prior literature. Because of the nature of their inquiry, neither the sociology of science nor the literary criticism articles, for example, could establish their topic by reference to existing literature. Instead, these articles in some sense called the very topic into being through their own analysis. In that sense, the article’s exigency itself may only be implied, or only made clear as the article goes on. These more essayistic introductory modes may represent well-recognized traditions within their respective fields, but they can be more difficult to break into conventionally recognized or generally applicable moves. It may be hard to see what they share with the natural science and social science articles Swales and others have used in the CARS model.

Jeanne Fanestock and Marie Secor, examining articles in literary criticism, find that exigency is governed more by “special literary topoi” than by response to prior scholarly literature. These topoi—the most common being some form of appearance/reality (such as obvious vs. hidden meanings; or contemporary misunderstanding vs. historically contextualized understanding)—require only reference to some complexity or latent meanings within the text under analysis itself, not necessarily reference to prior literature on that text. This is because, Fanestock and Secor argue, it is the use of the topoi (and not reference to the field) that constitutes the signal of affinity with readers in that discourse community (one of the same functions Swales and others argue for the reference to the prior literature in the field).

As for history, Marc Silver and Marina Bondi (2002) have shown that a great many articles open with quotation of primary sources (sometimes in an epigraph) or descriptive narration of historical anecdotes, which they characterize as the “the representation of a dialogic event in the world of history [i.e., the actual past], which does not bear explicit traces of a disciplinary debate around the issue” (147). Silver and Bondi restricted their corpus to the first paragraph only, but they are concerned with the ways these descriptive moves have “an argumentational function” and ‘play a role’ “in the development of the writer’s [author’s] Discourse” (152). We will have to look beyond the first paragrah, though, to see how those links are made.

To begin to map some of these as introductory moves in the humanities, I looked at a very small sample—eight articles published last year in the *Journal of American History* and in *American Literary History*—marking them for introductory moves that did not fit into the Swales model but did seem to follow patterns indicated by Fanestock & Secor or Silver & Bondi.

First, I have to say that I was surprised to see that the literary history articles were much more likely than the history articles to follow moves that the CARS model would recognize fairly easily. Two of the history introductions gave extended narrations of events from primary and secondary sources without any explicit reference in the text to how the present article was introducing new information or bringing new light onto what was already known. Without these explicit rhetorical cues, we have difficulty finding the Swales moves.

In one of these articles (Turk on NOW), though, the moves appear in the footnotes, where specific limitations in the existing scholarship are identified and, when put together with the narrated events in the text, do make clear how the article aims to use the known event to challenge the existing interpretation of the larger issues. Moreover, it is in light of these rhetorical cues given in the footnotes (and only in the footnotes), can we also begin to identify the author’s claims within the introduction, which within the text appear to be fact-statements summarizing or synthesizing the events narrated.

A second reason the history articles don’t seem to be making the explicit “gap” move is that they often cast the interpretative work of the author in terms of the historical events themselves, granting “the story” the agency in challenging the scholarship by making it (instead of the author) the grammatical subject. For example, this article, on the 1975 women’s equal rights campaign against Sears, includes phrases like these: “The NOW Sears campaign dramatizes a crucial turning point…” “It challenges narratives that typically point to identity politics…” Only in the footnotes do see phrases like “Historians have argued that…” or “but the case should also be understood as…”

Another problem we have in identifying the “gap” move is that the historical articles sometimes cite numerous sources in one footnote without making distinctions among them. Two articles did this with most of their citations, so that we are not clear on which ones they are relying on (uncritically or approvingly) and which ones they are extending or working against. We might get an indication in the text as to how this article is relating to that scholarship—for example, an article on smuggling that largely narrates events in its introduction states that “These stories illustrate Gilded Age American’s ambivalence toward what we call ‘globalization’ and complicate notions of …”; and then “This policing also clarifies our picture of the nineteenth-century state.” Citations then are simply listed under the leadout “On globalization in the Gilded Age, see…” One would have to know that literature to see whether and how the present article’s emphasis on ambivalence did in fact complicate the existing literature. Interestingly, in this case and others, it is the historians who seem to be playing the complexity topoi: that the act of showing that something was more complex than it first appeared to be, or by asserting that narrating these events (researched) will complicate what is known may be enough to indicate the exigency for a knowledgeable insider audience.

The literary articles, by contrast—although they did not use the CARS language of a gap, did tend to make all three broad moves in fairly explicit ways. The main exception here was in an article providing an against-the-grain reading of Black Hawk’s biography: the introduction—which was only one paragraph—asserted that there was a conventional reading but did not indicate what that was or who held that reading. The author also asserted that his re-reading would be useful to the project of re-reading other American Indian autobiographies, but did not cite any scholarly literature on other such texts nor cite any other such texts until the conclusion. It did introduce a concept for doing that re-reading, but it did not offer any other reason for doing it, not noting, for example, whether it had been done on that text or other ones, or whether this author would extend or revise the concept by applying it to this text. Here, the complexity topoi seems to function as exigency.

This very brief look at a very small group of articles has led me to start rethinking the CARS schema, which I’d like to introduce to you to invite further thinking on it as I go forward. My aim here, I should make clear, is one of generalization by analogy. I am not equating all these variations of moves but rather thinking of them as distinctive moves that perform analogous functions within different disciplines, which work to accomplish these three broadly important introductory tasks: indicating the issue at hand, the reason for writing about, and the specific aims of this piece of writing. This works out nicely into the acronym TEA: for Topic, Exigency, and Aim. [SEE HANDOUT. Note what it has done to CARS model: my footnote.]

**TEA model: Topic, Exigency, Aim[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Any of the variations of these three broad categories of moves may appear in any order, including cycling between topic, exigency, and aim. Some variations may be made more explicit in the footnotes or endnotes than in the main text. Citation is possible for all variations and likely for many of them, but does not always appear.

**Topic**

* Subject matter named or described
* Subject matter indicated by anecdotal narration, quotation, or epigraph
* Topical problem or issue named or topical question posed
* Topical problem, question, or issue implied from subject matter
* Increasing specification or elaboration of topic
* Nesting or linking of related topics
* Topical status quo: state of existing knowledge, conventional wisdom, research, scholarly consensus, or current discourse about subject or topic (may include summary/quotation of others’ research or claims and/or author’s synthesis of status quo)
* Defining key terms or concepts

**Exigency**

* Relevance or importance of topic indicated
* Assessment of topical status quo
* Identification of a problem with topical status quo: a gap in existing knowledge or a limitation in the current discourse
* Introduction of new information or overlooked phenomena pertinent to topic
* Introduction of new complexity within topic (perhaps within subject matter itself)
* Introduction of new discourses or methods pertinent to topic
* Application or import of aim (below) indicated

**Aim**

* Agenda or line of inquiry of the present article indicated
* Author’s larger project indicated
* Structure of the present article described
* Description of research methods, theoretical methods, or key concepts of the present article
* Central claims or principle findings stated

**References**

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**IV. Possible alternate/additional project design**

A second phase of the project could document reader responses. Ideas for that project are sketched out here:

* Maybe a much smaller corpus, history only, say 3-5 articles. Should ask each reader to read at least two. (Can I combine results if all readers don’t read the same articles?)
* Choose for specific variety of introduction, some more social science, some less so, some w/ historian as subject, some w/ dead people, etc. Maybe this is just two or three articles total.
* Choose 3 articles on 3 unrelated topics (so there’s no priming happening from one article to the next. Assign them to be read in random order (let reader choose order so there might be a motivation difference happen there that they can report).
* Maybe choose articles whose authors I could also survey/interview.
* Do the linguistic analysis.
* Survey expert readers: historians.
* Survey novice readers: freshmen.
* Survey intermediate readers: history grad students &/or senior majors.

Readers would complete each survey immediately after you read the article.

Can refer back to the article as completing the survey (not a memory test).

Maybe assign them to choose 1 article to ready by a certain deadline & collect that survey; then a break; then the 2nd article; then the 3rd.

Questions to consider on survey (need to be the same for both; but maybe some distinctive for each group):

* What order did you read them in?
* What do you expect reading a history article to do for you?
* Who do you think the audience is for this article?
* Does the article have an introduction; if so, where does it end?
* What was the author’s purpose in writing the article, and where do you see that in the article? Quote w/ page number, please. (make these each a fill in box).

Questions for historians:

* Who was your audience when you wrote your most recent research article?
* What did this audience need from you and how did you address these audience needs in that article? (and where in the article?)

Questions for students:

* What is your motivation when reading history articles? (This might include simply reading because assigned.)
* What have you been taught about how to read history articles?
* What have you learned own your own about reading history articles?
* What have you been taught about how to write history research papers?
* What have you leaned on your own about writing history research papers?

Numeric questionnaire:

* Was the author’s purpose in writing this article clear to you? (1-2-3-4-5)
* Do you think you were a member of the target audience for this article?
* Who do you think were among the author’s intended audience for this article?
  + High school students.
  + College students who are not history majors.
  + History majors (freshman/sophomore).
  + History majors (juniors/seniors).
  + History graduate students.
  + Graduate students outside of history.
  + Professional historians.
  + History writers outside of the academy.
  + Policy makers or other public officials.
  + The general public, history buffs.
  + Others (please name)

Who do you think could understand this article, whether the author had them in mind or not?

(same as above).

1. TEA represents my revision of the CARS model, removing the required status of some CARS “steps” (sub-moves), renaming them all *variations*, re-categorizing some variations, and including variations seen in the humanities. The *Aim* category is a nod to Harris 2006. For CARS, see Swales 2004, fig. 7.3 (227); fig. 7.4, (230); fig. 7.5, (232); and Lewin, Young, & Fine 2005, table 3.1 (40-41). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)