1998

Workplace genres: a sociohistorical study of communicative practices in a production company

Mark Randol Zachry
Iowa State University

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Workplace genres: A sociohistorical study of communicative practices in a production company

by

Mark Randol Zachry

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rhetoric and Professional Communication

Major Professor: Charlotte Thralls

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1998

Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Doctoral dissertation of

Mark Randol Zachry

has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

Signature was redacted for privacy.
Committee Member

Signature was redacted for privacy.
Committee Member

Signature was redacted for privacy.
Committee Member

Signature was redacted for privacy.
Committee Member

Signature was redacted for privacy.
Major Professor

Signature was redacted for privacy.
For the Major Program

Signature was redacted for privacy.
For the Graduate College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While working on this project, I have received assistance from several people. In particular, Charie Thralls has earned my deepest gratitude for her constant support over the last few years. During our hours of conversation, she has challenged me to think about rhetoric in more complex ways, especially at several critical junctures in this project. Discussions with David Russell, Dorothy Winsor, John Hagge, and Amy Bix also proved invaluable while completing this study. At conferences during the last year, I received helpful suggestions about the project from several others in the field, including Charles Bazerman, Kitty Locker, and JoAnne Yates. Members of a graduate research study group—Lee-Ann Kastman, Clay Spinuzzi, and Lee Tesdell—all spent hours reading and commenting on drafts of the text, providing me with relief from my routine in the archive.

I am also profoundly grateful to the English Department and Graduate College at Iowa State University for the financial support I received from a Frank E. Haggard Dissertation Fellowship. The fellowship made it possible for me to pursue my archival study, which I probably would not have had the time or resources to conduct otherwise.

The assistance of several people in Special Collections at Iowa State University Library made my research more enjoyable as I requested box after box from storage.

Finally, I offer sincere appreciation for my family, without whom I would not have been inspired to take on the challenges of graduate school or a project like this. My parents have encouraged me in countless ways for as long as I can remember. It is my wife, Tiffany, however, who provides the cheer and conversations that have made my life meaningful for years.

ABSTRACT

Studies of communication in the workplace have traditionally addressed a limited set of formal texts (e.g., memos, proposals, procedures) and described how those texts circulate in more or less predictable systems. Consequently, many of our assumptions about professional communication activities depend on simple transactional or rhetorical models that do not take into account historical factors and conceptualize too narrowly.

This study addresses social and historical variation in a single company's communicative habits from 1920 until 1985 to illustrate how rhetorical performances in the workplace operate in complex networks of activity. This study challenges formalist conceptions of professional communication by examining how communicative practices emerge, develop, and decay as professionals use texts to negotiate their work activities over extended periods of time. This historical study of the complex and often unpredictable interplay of workplace activities and communicative practices reveals how seemingly stable workplace genres are actually contested sites where communicators make decisions to vary and repeat prior practices.

Workplace activities at The Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa, form the background for this study. Focusing on the interplay between company activities and communicative practices, the study explores how management techniques, regulatory controls, and technological tools in the twentieth century affected workplace communication.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> The investigation of documentary practices makes visible many phases of . . . organizational and discursive processes that are otherwise inaccessible. In particular the formality, the designed, planned and *organized* character of formal organization depends heavily on documentary practices, which coordinate, order, provide continuity, monitor and *organize* relations between different segments and phases of organizational courses of action.
>
> Dorothy E. Smith[1]

For more than two decades, noted sociologist Dorothy E. Smith has been drawing attention to the essential roles that texts play in the constitution of everyday social organizations. An especially strong strand of her scholarship helps fill a void between sociology and textual studies, suggesting provocative connections between those fields for researchers: "recognizing document or text as a constituent of social relations also means being interested in the social organization of its production as a prior phase in the social relation rather than as the work of a particular author."[2] Smith's theory of richly textured organizations invites research that is particularly suited to rhetorical scholars invested in studying communicative practices in workplace organizations. It complements the work of several professional communication scholars who, since the mid 1980s, have been probing "the social organization" of document production.[3] Despite the contributions of these

---

[1] Dorothy E. Smith, "Textually Mediated Social Organization." *International Social Science Journal* 36 (1984). p. 66.
[2] Ibid., 72.
[3] See, for example, studies collected in Lee Odell & Dixie Goswami, *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985); Charles Bazerman & James Paradis, *Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Rachel Spilka, *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Nancy Roundy Blyler & Charlotte Thralls, *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993); Ann Hill Duin & Craig J. Hansen, *Nonacademic Writing: Social Theory and Technology* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996).

scholars, however, we have only begun to plumb the depths of workplace rhetoric. Tapping these depths poses a great challenge for researchers because, as Charles Bazerman has warned, the researchers must "gather a museum of the entire human life world" that will help us "understand how heterogeneous elements are yoked together into an apparently homogenous textual meeting place, a single representation that sits in the middle of complex realms of practice."[4]

Working from this premise, in the following study I examine the emergence, development, and decay of communicative practices in an organization from 1920 until the mid 1980s. My research is designed to account for some of the social practices of workplace professionals as they communicate to accomplish specific tasks. This approach emphasizes the pragmatics of workplace communication, calling attention to the stabilities and instabilities of organizational communicative practices over time. And while my research foregrounds communication, I have worked against the disciplinary tendency to bracket off communication as an autonomous object of study. Aligning myself more closely with Smith and those rhetorical scholars who have approached professional communication from a social perspective, I have examined communicative practices as they emerged in historically differentiated networks of activities. This approach challenges traditional assumptions about *professional communication* as a discrete activity, illustrating how the practices of *professionals communicating* are embedded in larger networks of workplace activity.

---

[4] Charles Bazerman, "Forward" in Nancy Roundy Blyler & Charlotte Thralls, eds., *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993): p. ix.

Although professional communication scholars employ a variety of techniques in their examinations of workplace texts—ranging from experimental usability tests[5] to critical theory analyses[6]—only a few have attempted to account for the changing roles such texts play in society at large and how they have become embedded in work practices over long periods of time.[7] Likewise, traditional rhetoric scholars have offered few historical studies of communicative practices in the workplace to date. Thus, while several scholars are now bringing sophisticated rhetorical perspectives to the study of workplace communication, we still lack a sufficient body of historical research.[8] With this study, I connect workplace texts with the time-space settings in which those texts were used by people to get things done. Viewing professional communication from this historical perspective requires scholars to avoid trafficking in abstract principles that can be generalized to all situations or in idiosyncratic localized events. Instead, this perspective leads to studies of typified communicative practices that people use to negotiate work activities in dynamic situational exigencies.

In this study, I work along the borders of genre studies, rhetorical theory, business history, organizational communication, and management communication. For example, at several points I have set events at the company I examine in the framework of American

---

[5] See, for example, Michael J. Wenger & David G. Payne, "Effects of a Graphical Browser on Readers' Efficiency in Reading Hypertext," *Technical Communication* 41.2 (May 1994): 224-233.

[6] See, for example, Marilyn M. Cooper, "The Postmodern Space of Operator's Manuals," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 5.4 (Fall 1996): 385-410.

[7] See, for example, A. D. Van Nostrand, *Fundable Knowledge: The Marketing of Defense Technology* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

[8] This void in our field's knowledge has been noted by several scholars. Spilka, for example, has argued that "before the discipline can mature further, it needs to determine where it has been" (p. vii). In the next chapter, I examine other instances of this basic argument.

business, connecting them to the work of business historians. Consequently, my study is not a company history in a traditional sense, though the company's history serves as the basis for my examination. In most professional communication scholarship, business history remains a type of black box that few scholars account for. The study that follows suggests a way of opening this box and locating the practices of professionals communicating in time and space. How do typified communicative practices emerge? How do these practices come to be modified over time? Why are some practices abandoned while others are reproduced for decades? How do some communicative practices come to be associated with specialized work activities while others are adopted for a variety of activities? I contend that historical studies that address these and other basic questions about the relationship between workplace communication and social actions will help us understand what constitutes the ill-defined activity called professional communication. They will also point to new directions for future researchers.

The diachronic historical approach I employ in this study allows me to illustrate the interplay of communication and other organizational practices in a way that a synchronic study would not. Workplace communication scholars have seldom examined the developments of communicative practices across extended periods of time, opting instead to view workplace communication in more fundamental rhetorical terms (speaker, audience, message) or in terms of traditional communication theory (sender, receiver, channel). The picture that emerges in this study poses significant challenges for those who would view workplace documents in such static and easily codifiable forms. Moving beyond these traditional organizing schemes, I examine the communicative habits that emerge, are reproduced, and are abandoned as workplace professionals negotiate their day-to-day

activities. I describe the *repetition* and *variation* in organizational communicative practices over time and as those practices are embedded in organizational networks of activities, creating a genre history of the company.

The genres at play within this company underwent constant change while people were engaged in their daily work. Over time, their work yielded a remarkable variety of typified textual forms. Rather than offering a catalog of genres in this study, however, I have focused on the interplay between the company's genres and changes in its (1) management, (2) regulation, and (3) technology activities. The interplay of genre habits and these activities forms the basis for three chapters in the second half of my study. Each of these chapters is arranged chronologically to provide a coherent sense of the give-and-take of genre habits over time. These historicized accounts are not, however, progressive tales of how the company perfected a system of communication; rather, they are examinations of how stabilized practices emerged and decayed in the face of constantly shifting organizational activities. My overarching concern is to identify patterns of typified communicative practices within this company so that additional researchers can work within these patterns to further study genre habits in the workplace.

To look at individual companies is a necessary first step in coming to understand the history of genre practices in the twentieth century workplace. In the course of this study, it has occurred to me how many questions about this history remain unanswered. Traditional company histories provide little insight into the development of communicative practices. Likewise, scholarly business histories seldom address the concerns of rhetoric and professional communication scholars. For these reasons, researchers in our field need to study the primary sources available in company archives. Such studies would allow us to

identify similar patterns at different workplace organizations and to understand overlaps and divergences between organizations in the history of workplace genres during the twentieth century. We know little, for example, about the genre practices of high-tech, charitable, governmental, and service organizations. While such studies are difficult to conduct because so few uncensored archives are available, researchers should begin pursuing access to the sources that would contribute to this history. In this effort, company and scholarly histories may provide valuable information about archival sources and significant workplace events to serve as the starting point for scholars in our field.

Subsequent scholars may want to overlay my study with more narrowly focused studies such as close rhetorical analyses of developments within specific genres. Scholars working from a traditional cultural studies perspective, for example, might want to investigate the role that gender differentiation played in the ways administrators and employees interacted, to examine the significance of class in the overtly hierarchical work environment that was perpetuated for so many years in the company, or to extend existing scholarship into the role that race played in company relationships with its labor force.

Overview of Research

Below I provide an overview of my research site, the archival record, and my research methods. Immediately after this overview, I provide a general introduction to the company's history. This general introduction is designed to help contextualize my later discussions of company genres, giving the reader a sense of the company's beginnings and factors leading to its demise. However, this portion of Chapter 1 is in many ways a diversion from the primary focus of my study, and many readers may choose to skip over it. If so, they

may want to turn to the end of this general introduction, where I outline the structure of subsequent chapters in this dissertation.

The Research Site

The organization I examine in this study is the Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa[9]—a meat production company that reached its organizational zenith in the late 1960s when it was the largest single meatpacking facility in the country and had branch facilities in twelve states. At this time, the company's operations were diversified into chemical and animal feed production, pharmaceutical supplies, and other manufacturing processes. With its extensive operations, Rath constituted what was popularly known as "big business." In the 1930s, the company had managed to expand beyond its regional markets, while many other companies across the country were struggling to survive in depressed economic conditions. Successfully competing with other national meatpacking companies, Rath became a prominent participant in the industry, and for the next several decades the company was actively involved in shaping the discourse affecting the meatpacking industry. Company representatives were personally communicating with legislators at the local and national level. Rath's industrial engineers were conducting research into safety tolerances for packing production methods. Marketing specialists were designing new ways to represent Rath products so they would appeal to discriminating consumers and comply with new consumer

[9] Rath, which was founded in 1891, began as a small, regional slaughterhouse. By the time the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 was issued, the company was large enough to be affected by that landmark regulation. Rath prospered during the first half of the century, and in the mid 1950s, it was the fifth largest meat producer in the nation with offices across the country. After facing a series of financial setbacks from the 1960s until the early 1980s, the company finally ceased operations in 1985.

protection regulations. Food scientists in the company were studying the health implications of Rath's patented products being produced by many other companies. As a large and active organization, Rath relied on an extensive and surprisingly diverse set of communicative practices to get things done. This complex network of communicative practices is the subject of the study that follows.

The Archival Record

To develop this historical account, I relied primarily on Rath's company papers. Company papers covering the period from 1891 until 1985 have been collected in a largely unsorted archive maintained by the Department of Special Collections at the Iowa State University library. The archive includes more than 300 linear feet of records that extend from Rath's beginnings in 1891 to its closure (see my bibliography for additional details about this archive). This rich and varied collection includes letters, memos, reports, manuals, production cards, and a variety of less studied forms of written communication—crib notes, audit findings, operational charts, time-motion studies, and employment records. In addition to this range of written texts, the archive contains other communicative artifacts valuable for understanding business activities at the company, such as photographs, prints, drawings, and ephemera.[10] These documents and artifacts were preserved for a variety of reasons: some were maintained in company libraries to preserve organizational knowledge, some were kept as legal records, and still others were serendipitously recovered from offices that were vacated when the company closed.

---

[10] For a discussion of how these artifacts are used in the construction of traditional business histories, see John Orbell, *A Guide to Tracing the History of a Business* (Aldershot, UK: Gower, 1987), pgs. 87-89.

This archival record is interesting not only for the variety and historical span of its written communication artifacts, but also for the connections between those documents and the social activities surrounding them. The record, for example, includes correspondence between Rath executives and executives at other packing companies in which the companies form strategies for affecting legislation (e.g., meat price controls in the 1940s) and shaping public opinion (e.g., structuring publicity campaigns in 1972 to counter a consumer group's push for bacon-packaging regulations). Labor disputes also represent an interesting strand in Rath's history—from the unionization of labor to the employee buyout of the company shortly before its end. The archive includes extensive evidence of the introduction and evolution of new forms of written communication over several decades as labor rules were negotiated and renegotiated.

Despite the volume and variety of texts in this archival record, however, it would be a mistake to think that it represents all the communicative practices at Rath. While the archival record offers a fairly detailed picture of the networks of communication that existed within the company, it is important to remember that there are also voids in the archival record. Some of these voids are obvious. There is a paucity of material, for example, from the company's financially troubled final four years when management was changing rapidly. Few of the most mundane texts (e.g., completed production forms) from any era have been preserved. Conversely, significant portions of the company's financial records and administrative correspondence have. To avoid focusing this study exclusively on the financial and administrative texts, I have used the available examples of mundane texts—plus the procedures and policies that mention those texts—to develop an account of communicative practices across the company.

Methods Used for Studying this Archive

To conduct this study, I examined primary archival texts from the Rath Packing Company and a variety of secondary sources. Surveying the archival record, I concentrated my reading on the company's varied forms of correspondence and reports, while selectively reading the more repetitive texts, such as time-motion studies, accounting records, and advertisements. During this surveying process, I constructed databases that would allow me to observe patterns in the communicative practices of the company as well as identify the location of specific documents.[11] In an indexical database keyed to the library's arrangement of the archival record, I recorded my observations about the contents of the archive. In a topical database keyed to my managerial, regulatory, and technological frames of analysis, I recorded connections between these organizational activities and the company's communicative practices. (These connections included both overt references to these activities and implicit evidences of those connections.) I arranged my observations within each of these topical categories chronologically to complement the historical perspective of my study. In addition to these databases, I compiled auxiliary information about select employees and company forms to provide background data for my historical analyses.

In my selection of materials to report in this study, I was guided by the integrity of the archive. That is, my observations about genres and individual documents are based on their relationships (i.e., similarities and differences) with other texts in the archival record so that I

[11] The collection of records was divided into general categories, including correspondence, reports, financial records, public relations, blueprints, films, and time-motion studies. These broad categories are not clearly defined and there are several overlaps between them (e.g., copies of Rath's annual reports are scattered throughout both the correspondence and reports sections of the archival record). For additional information about this archival record, see note in the References section at the end of the study.

can discuss patterns of communication within the company, using the rhetorical genre perspective that I outline in Chapters 2 and 3. Whenever I mention individual texts, I indicate their location in the archive so that they may be relocated easily. Throughout the study, I have opted to focus on descriptive patterns rather than quantitative analysis because it is impossible to determine the frequency with which genres were used in the company based on the incomplete archival record.

The brief introduction to the company's history below is based on the archival record as well as related published sources. Again, some readers may choose to skip this section, moving instead to the outline of the dissertation structure that follows it.

General Introduction to The Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa

For seven days in November 1985, curious onlookers watched as the property and assets of the Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa, were sold at an auction mandated by the United States Bankruptcy Court. The company, which had operated in the town for ninety-four years, was one of the ten biggest packinghouses in the US for several decades during this century. During the organization's best years, administrators had boasted that the company operated the single largest packing facility in the country.[12] Today, only a fraction of the original buildings remain intact, and most of the original site is bare.

In later chapters of this dissertation, I provide extensive detail about the company's operations from 1920 until the 1980s in terms of its management, regulation, and communication technologies. The purpose of this introduction to Rath is to fill in parts of the company's history that do not emerge in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 for readers who want

[12] John D. Donnell, *Why the Rath Packing Company Failed* (Waterloo, IA: Grout Museum of History and Science, 1993), p. 5.

to know more about Rath's history. I begin with an examination of the company's early years and then turn to a brief overview of several factors that contributed to its demise.[13]

Genesis of a Family Business

The history of the Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa, begins in another Iowa city 93 miles away—Dubuque, a river community on the banks of the Mississippi. In 1870, John George Rath, a German immigrant who had settled in Iowa and opened his own business, started slaughtering hogs to stock his retail store in Dubuque. He was soon processing hogs for other distributors in the region on a seasonal basis—his slaughtering operations were limited to the winter months when farm owners sold their livestock—and then only as weather permitted transportation on eastern Iowa's primitive roads. Within a few years, however, John George Rath had expanded his market beyond the Dubuque area by shipping dry salt meats, smoked hams, bacon, and lard on river boats to New Orleans and other southern cities. About 10 years later, his son E. F. Rath joined him in this business, and the two men expanded their operations under the name George Rath & Son. Together, they began selling to markets throughout Iowa and into Illinois and Wisconsin. Just as the business was gaining a reputation as a major regional supplier, however, a fire in 1890 destroyed their uninsured Dubuque operations. The company's tools, supplies, and records were all consumed in a single night, ending the meatpacking business for George Rath & Son. John George Rath—discouraged by the turn of events and citing his age (he was 69 years old)—decided to retire from the business and to continue operating his successful, but less demanding, mercantile business.

---

[13] Much of this history is recounted in regional newspapers and company documents that were saved as part of Rath's company history (R001/001). My account of Rath's early years is drawn primarily from these sources.

The Rath Packing Company Begins Operations in Waterloo, Iowa. Unlike his father, E. F. Rath was not prepared to give up on the family business after the fire. Looking for a way to restart his meatpacking career, E. F. traveled through eastern Iowa, considering places where he might rebuild. In 1890, when a progressive group of Waterloo citizens urged him to build in their city by arranging financing and offering him land just outside the city, E. F. made arrangements to move to Waterloo. The next year, he was joined there by his cousin, John W. Rath, who had been taking courses at a Chicago business college. The two men used $25,000 they had raised for the business to file incorporation papers in Des Moines for the new Rath company and then quickly built a small, brick building at their Waterloo site in time for the November 1891 slaughtering season. John W. Rath's father, a banker in Ackley, Iowa, was the company's first president, while E. F. Rath oversaw plant operations and John W. Rath managed the office, set up a bookkeeping system, and sold the new company's products.

Selling their products to Waterloo's growing population and then to other regional merchants—including John George Rath in Dubuque—the two cousins quickly became successful businessmen. In 1898, when John W. Rath was 26 years old, his father retired as the first president of the Rath Packing Company and he became president—an office he would occupy until 1943. As George Rath & Son had done in Dubuque, the Waterloo company extended its markets into more distant regions every year. The Rath cousins were aided by developments in transportation and improving roadways, which helped the company grow quickly because more farmers were able to bring their livestock to the plant and Rath was able to ship its products greater distances. The Raths constructed their second building

in 1901 and also hired their first clerical workers about this time. Such support was necessary to accommodate the company's growing workload—as were the new buildings added to the plant almost yearly during the first decades of this century. Spurred on by their financial success, John W. and E. F. Rath offered their first public stock in 1907 and used the money to expand plant facilities. Their operating capacity grew dramatically, and by 1908 the company was slaughtering more than 1,000 animals a year. In 1912, they completed construction of a multi-building packinghouse with all the features of a contemporary factory—the Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa, was now a firmly established packinghouse in the Midwest. By 1917, the office staff had grown to twenty-five, and the company erected its first administration building.

The Company Expands Beyond Waterloo. Business during World War I was good for Rath. The company was able to sell many of its products to the US government and overseas customers, leading to expanded meatpacking operations at the Waterloo facility. Building on this wartime boost, the company broadened its presence in the US by opening offices across the country during the 1920s.[14] The company also continued shipping its canned products to foreign countries, including Great Britain, Holland, France, Denmark, and Finland after the war via export agents. Two developments were key to Rath's expansion: production of canned products that would not spoil during shipping and successful use of the railroad to transport these products to remote markets. During the early 1920s, the company discovered a niche market for its canned meats and was able to expand this area of production several times in the decade to capitalize on consumer demand. The company

[14] Company expansion via the opening of new offices continued into the 1970s.

created a new division under its own management for these canned products and also experimented with vacuum-cooking techniques. Their success in developing these techniques led to the introduction of a line of vacuum-cooked meat products in 1928. Even as early as 1922, the company's shipments of canned products had become so frequent that the Illinois Central Railroad added four new lines at the Rath plant. Through its coordinated distribution and managed product lines, the company firmly established itself as a national supplier of meat products.

At the same time that Rath was expanding its Waterloo operations to support increased shipping activities, the company was opening its auxiliary offices in major cities throughout the country. By the end of the decade, the company had branch offices in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Antonio, Dallas, Houston, Monroe (LA), Galesburg (IL), Decatur (IL), and Des Moines. These sites served as distribution points for regional markets and as manufacturing facilities for Rath's processed meat products such as hot dogs and sausages. These operations were further supplemented by a complex "car route system" through which Rath's products were delivered to merchants in cities far removed from a Rath facility. These deliveries—based on orders placed by salesmen who canvassed large territories—became important to the company's financial success, helping make Rath a national brand label. By 1929, the company's net sales had reached $33.9 million and their profits exceeded $495,000, so that despite the deteriorating economic situation in the country, Rath officers ended the decade much as they had started it: constructing a new building with manufacturing areas and storage facilities, and creating new departments.

The Company Matures. While World War I market demands had helped Rath become a national meatpacking company, another set of unusual market conditions allowed the company to remain profitable during depressed economic conditions in the 1930s. As part of the federal programs and incentives enacted to support farming in the country at this time, the government encouraged meat production activities. A high volume of animals at low cost were available for meatpackers like Rath, and the company was able to sustain high profit margins. With the onset of World War II, the international demand for non-perishable meat products—like those that Rath specialized in making—also grew. This string of events allowed Rath to be a profitable and growing company every year from 1919 until 1948.

When the company came to its 50th anniversary in 1941, there was a great deal to celebrate. Recognizing this, the company hosted a week-long party in Waterloo that summer. It was the best of times for a company that, by the end of the decade, would see the meatpacking industry change dramatically. Beginning in 1948, business conditions that had allowed the company to flourish began shifting. Rath's profits no longer grew as they had for nearly three decades, and the company's financial situation gradually eroded (see Table 1.1). In fact, for several years the company operated at a loss before closing in 1985.

Factors Contributing to Rath's Demise

What happened after World War II to reverse the fortunes of the successful venture that John W. and E. F. Rath had started in Waterloo in 1891? Although the scope of my project does not allow for a detailed examination of the causes that led to the company's demise, I will outline a few of the factors that contributed to it. In a 1993 study of the

Table 1.1. Periodic Financial Data for Rath, 1929-1979

Year	Net Sales (in millions)	Net Profits/Loss
1929	$33.9	$495,005
1939	54.6	2,157,546
1949	206.7	2,329,661
1959	273.9	1,750,255
1969	265.3	101,811
1979	316.9	-1,485,000

company, John D. Donnell[15] suggests that several conditions conspired to bring about Rath's failure—a suggestion that is supported by other studies of the company. I have integrated these previous studies with observations from my own research in the brief discussion below.

Aging Facilities. The company's Waterloo facilities—the buildings that had been such a source of company pride in the first half of the century—became a liability after World War II. The multi-story buildings were not conducive to modern meatpacking processes because they required employees to use elevators to move raw materials between production areas. Rath's competitors at this time had all redesigned their production facilities as single-story buildings. Donnell's description of this problem provides some insight into the liabilities of Rath's aging facilities:

> Rath's huge Waterloo plant was a complex of buildings that had been built over many years to house burgeoning operations. Some of these buildings

[15] Donnell composed his study after retiring as a professor of business. Prior to teaching, he had served as an administrator at Rath from 1948 until 1962.

> were as tall as six stories, and often the floors in adjacent buildings were at slightly different levels. As a result there were 44 elevators and much hand trucking of meat between operations on different levels with the inevitable queuing up to get on the elevators. Later, when motorized trucks came into use, some of the elevators could not accommodate the weight of both the carrier and its load.[16]

In addition, Rath's competitors did not centrally locate all their packing facilities in a single location as Rath had. The trend in the industry was to open multiple, smaller facilities in several remote locations to give the companies greater flexibility in planning their operations at the national level. Although Rath attempted to diversify and modernize (e.g., they operated a small packing facility in Columbus Junction, Iowa, for a few years from the 1960s to the 1970s; and in 1974 they acquired Stark, Wetzel Inc.'s meat-processing operations in Indiana[17]) they could not compete with other major packers (e.g., Hormel and Oscar Mayer) or newly formed packing operations like Iowa Beef.

Labor-management Conflicts. A major strike in 1948 escalated tensions between labor and management at the company, ending the relatively amicable relationship that had existed before World War II.[18] As Donnell describes the strike, "it was a watershed event."[19] During this conflict, one striking worker was killed and the national guard briefly occupied

---

[16] Donnell, p. 6.
[17] John Portz, *The Politics of Plant Closings* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1990), p. 58.
[18] See Mary Beth Eldridge, *The Rath Packing Company Strike of 1948* (Waterloo, IA: Eldridge, c1990). See also a brief discussion of this event in Rick Halpren & Roger Horowitz, *Meatpackers: An Oral History of Black Packinghouse Workers and their Struggle for Racial and Economic Equality* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), pgs. 18-19.
[19] Donnell, p. 27.

plant facilities, heightening tensions on both sides. After a protracted standoff, an agreement was finally reached and strikers returned to work after 73 days. The agreement, however, satisfied neither management[20] nor labor,[21] and the unsatisfactory end to this strike for both sides meant that "from that time on there [would be] almost continual warfare between the management of the Company and the Union, and perhaps a majority of the workers."[22] This warfare translated into multiple work stoppages and extended contract negotiations that lasted into the 1980s.[23]

Market Trends. Rath's car route sales, which had helped extend Rath's business across the country, also became something of a liability with the rise of national supermarket chains after World War II. Company salesmen had traditionally focused on selling to local customers, and when the national chains emerged they received little training in how to sell to large accounts.[24] Coupled with this problem was the failure of the company's advertising and production departments to coordinate a sustained program that would keep the company competitive. As Donnell explains, the company did not

> get as much for [its] advertising dollar as the packers who had a more nearly national distribution. Oscar Mayer and Hormel had more complete distribution of the products they advertised than Rath did. In part[,] this

---

[20] Ibid., p. 25.
[21] Eldridge, p. 77.
[22] Donnell, p. 27.
[23] Portz, p. 81. For an overview of Rath's five-year experimentation with employee ownership (which began in 1979) and continued strife between company management and labor, see Charles R. Perry & Delwyn H. Kegley, *Disintegration and Change: Labor Relations in the Meat Packing Industry* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1989), pgs. 221-233.
[24] Donnell, p. 14.

> failure to gain national distribution was both cause and effect of the lack of success with the chain stores.[25]

In addition, while Rath's specialization in pork products made sense because of its location in Iowa, it did not prove beneficial when consumer demand for pork products declined in the 1960s.[26]

Financial Liabilities. When Rath was faced with serious financial constraints in the 1960s, company officials made budget decisions that, in retrospect, contributed to the company's failure. Company officials gambled on future improvements in the meat market and were disappointed when those improvements did not materialize. These difficulties began in earnest in the mid 1960s, when the company began financing its financial burden and a significant loss in 1965 with expensive lines of credit.[27] The company borrowed $20 million in 1965 and then $14 million in 1967 during a time that the company was only able to realize modest profits. In the mid 1970s, the company's union agreed to allow the company to defer its pension benefits contributions for two years, but the company continued to operate in the red. Further loans later that decade only exacerbated the problem. Despite the support of financial programs developed by local and federal government agencies, the company did not realize a profit again before seeking protection from the bankruptcy court in 1983.

In concert, these factors and several others beyond the scope of this study contributed to the company's failure. As my studies of management, technology, and regulation at the

---

[25] Ibid., pgs. 14-15.
[26] Portz, p. 56.
[27] Ibid., p. 58.

company later in this dissertation suggest, Rath was a complex organization in which many activities were concurrently at play.

Organization of this Study

The study that follows is organized into two major parts. In part one (Chapters 1, 2, and 3), I lay out a theoretical perspective for studying communicative practices in the workplace. In part two (Chapters 4, 5, and 6), I account for Rath's genre history in terms of three specific social practices. At the end of the study (Chapter 7), I discuss its implications and suggest how it might be used for additional scholarly work.

The theoretical perspective I present in part one begins with a synthesis of the multiple strands of contemporary rhetorical genre theory. As I discuss in Chapter 2, contemporary genre theory has been invigorated by the willingness of scholars to integrate the perspectives of other disciplines into the study of typified texts. Throughout the chapter, I locate my genre history in the ongoing discussion among these scholars. In Chapter 3, I borrow several ideas from this discussion and add still others to develop a framework for analyzing genres in the workplace. This framework—a cluster of four interconnected claims about genre in the workplace—provides a rationale for conducting a type of professional communication research that has been largely neglected to date. To illustrate this, I apply my analytical framework to a select network of genres at Rath. After this introduction to my theoretical framework, I turn to my more detailed study in part two.

In the three chapters of part two, I provide detailed historical accounts of the interplay of genre practices with social activities at Rath. The concept of interplay is crucial for understanding the role of genres in social organizations. As I explain in the study, viewing

genres simply as the product of socially organized activities *or* viewing organizations as a product of genre practices oversimplifies the connections between rhetorical actions and organizational activities. To illustrate these connections, in part two I focus on three telling forms of this interplay. In Chapter 4, I examine shifts in the company's approach to management, explaining how the company experimented with three major paradigms during this century. Chapter 5 focuses on governmental regulation, describing the implications of significant legislation—from the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 to the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1971. In Chapter 6, I account for the interplay between communication technologies, ranging from public address systems to mainframe computers, and genre practices. These chapters are primarily historical narratives, providing the reader with a way to understand genre practices as they exist in time and space. However, within these passages I integrate analytic discussions that underscore the significance of the narrative events and connect the historical account to the theoretical framework I present in part one of the study.

CHAPTER 2: GENRE, COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES, AND SOCIETY

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical arguments that underpin my historical study of communicative practices at The Rath Packing Company. This introduction is devoted to reviewing strands of contemporary rhetorical genre theory and discussing the investigatory work this theory helps make possible. Since the mid 1980s, several scholars have been discussing a theoretical perspective for studying the patterns of discourse that circulate in social organizations. The generic theory of rhetoric that is emerging from this discussion provides a starting point for answering questions about the origin, reproduction, and transformation of workplace communicative practices that I mentioned in the introductory chapter and that I further explain in this chapter. My exploratory review of current strands in rhetorical genre theory also sets the groundwork for my claims about genre in workplace organizations (Chapter 3) and for my studies of management systems, governmental regulations, and communication technologies at Rath (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

Studying Rhetorical Practices in the Workplace: Current Trends and Limitations

Professional communication scholarship during the last two decades has been marked by an increasing number of researchers conducting situated workplace writing studies to understand how professional activities affect (and are affected by) writing practices. Reporting the results of one such study, Barbara Couture and Jone Rymer explain the rationale for these examinations: "situational exigencies . . . are dominant factors which account for and explain how writers approach communication tasks in the workplace."[1] For

[1] Barbara Couture & Jone Rymer, "Situational Exigence: Composing Processes on the Job by Writer's Role and Task Value," in Spilka, p. 19.

several years, this important strand of scholarship has provided insight into the ways professionals use writing to negotiate tasks in settings that range from military research facilities[2] to hospitality consulting firms.[3] These studies, which examine writing in terms of the varied activities that characterize individual workplaces, have expanded our understanding of the rhetorical decisions professionals make at work. For example, we are now aware of how tax accountants use texts to structure their work[4] and how manufacturing line supervisors depend on varied textual forms to negotiate their daily tasks.[5] What is often missing from this research, however, is a historical perspective on the communicative practices of these professionals. We know little about how the rhetorical choices of professionals are enabled and constrained by prior communicative practices in their workplaces. How did the varied textual forms come to be used in these professions? How have the practices for producing and receiving those forms developed? And, what work do these communicative practices make possible and what do they delimit? As Armstrong and Jones observe in their overview of the origins of business documents, "very little has been written on [business documents'] origin and nature."[6] This void in our knowledge about professional communication presents a fundamental problem for scholars: we know too little about the reasons for the habits that are perpetuated by practitioners and instructors alike. We do not yet have a good sense of our genre history in the twentieth century. The potential

---

[2] Powell G. Henderson, "Writing Technologies at White Sands," in Patricia Sullivan & Jennie Dautermann, eds., *Electronic Literacies in the Workplace* (Urbana IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996): 65-88.
[3] Elizabeth Huettman, "Writing for Multiple Audiences: An Examination of Audience Concerns in a Hospitality Consulting Firm," *Journal of Business Communication* 33.3 (July 1996): 257-273.
[4] Amy J. Devitt, "Intertextuality in Tax Accounting," in Charles Bazerman & James Paradis, eds., *Textual Dynamics of the Professions* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 336-357.
[5] Mark Mabrito, "Writing on the Front Line: A Study of Workplace Writing," *Business Communication Quarterly* 60.3 (September 1997): 58-70.
[6] John Armstrong & Stephanie Jones, *Business Documents: Their Origins, Sources, and Uses in Historical Research* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1987), p. xiv.

work for researchers is staggering given the scope of professional communication and the long history of its practice.

On a smaller scale, the field lacks a historical perspective on how specific social practices (e.g., management systems, governmental regulations, communication technology) have affected communicative practices during specific eras—particularly the twentieth century. Many of our assumptions about effective professional communication activities depend on rhetorical or transactional models that contextualize narrowly, seldom taking into account the historical factors at play in all communicative exchanges. Recognizing this tendency, Bazerman has called for a more complex examination of professional discourse—one that recognizes that

> everything that bears on the professions bears on professional writing. Indeed, within the professions, writing draws on all the professional resources, wends its way among the many constraints, structures, and dynamics that define the professional realm and instantiates professional work. The more we understand about all aspects of the professions and their situation, the more we understand about the writing that creates intersubjective places of agreement, cooperation and confrontation in the middle of these elements.[7]

Communicative practices come not only from received discourse conventions, but also (and more importantly, as I demonstrate in subsequent chapters) from the dynamic social exchanges that communicators negotiate. To understand the rules at play in professional communication, researchers must be able to account for the emergence of "rules" from

---

[7] Bazerman, "Foreword," p. ix.

historical practices. We need to examine the social factors that affect (and are affected by) the evolution of codified (e.g., style guides and writers' manuals) and uncodified conventions.

The immense scope of these historical practices requires researchers to begin working out how the conventions of professional communication evolved at specific sites. And, to develop a sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical situations that underpin professional communication, researchers must identify patterns that emerge across individual historical investigations. JoAnne Yates, who contributed to this project with her acclaimed study, *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management*, observes that

> the theory of business communication (and rhetoric in general) has been studied more than the practice of business communication in organizations. . . . We need more studies of actual business communication practices within specific businesses and organizations. Such studies may look at practices in relation to other aspects of business or culture in the period or in relation to espoused theories of business communication.[8]

Examining "actual business communication practices," however, implies a theoretical perspective for articulating what occurs in the workplace—what merits scholarly attention. For several years, theories of context have provided a starting point for such examinations. Recent challenges to these theories, however, have led many researchers to abandon context altogether as an organizing principle in their investigations, as I explain below.

---

[8] Kitty O. Locker, Scott L. Miller, Malcolm Richardson, Elizabeth Tebeaux, and JoAnne Yates, "Studying the History of Business Communication," *Business Communication Quarterly* 59.2 (June 1996), p. 125.

Reconsidering *Context* in Rhetorical Studies

As my discussion thus far has implied, many scholars are now drawing connections between workplace society and communication in their situated studies of professional documents.[9] This line of inquiry, however, poses several challenges for researchers who are interested in defining contextual frameworks for their studies.[10] Some of these researchers advocate a type of generalized approach to studying "the practice of rhetoric in today's economic world"[11] or of thinking about "rhetorical context."[12] In contrast to such generalized theories of context are studies that define context by the institutional and organizational settings in which people communicate.[13] Defining *context* from an institutional perspective allows these researchers to focus their attention on limited—though still complex—sites of communicative exchange.

However, focusing on context in this way presents two theoretical problems for researchers. First, this approach is often built on the assumption that *context* can be identified by a known set of characteristics. Recognizing this challenge, Craig J. Hansen observes that the "context, in any setting, is layered: the difficulties in its characterization are

---

[9] For example, see Part IV ("Viewing Writing from a Social/Institutional Perspective") of *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (Odell & Goswami); *Writing in the Workplace* (Spilka); *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective* (Blyler & Thralls); and *Nonacademic Writing: Social Theory and Technology* (Duin & Hansen).

[10] For an overview of this scholarship, see Leslie A. Olsen, "Research on Discourse Communities: An Overview," in Spilka, p. 181.

[11] Mary Beth Debs, "Corporate Authority: Sponsoring Rhetorical Practices," in Spilka, p. 164.

[12] See, for example, Teresa M. Harrison, "Frameworks for the Study of Writing in Organizational Contexts," *Written Communication* 4.1 (1987), p. 10.

[13] See Charlotte Thralls & Nancy Roundy Blyler, "The Social Perspective and Professional Communication: Diversity and Directions in Research," in Blyler & Thralls, eds., *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), p. 31; Harrison, p. 3; and Lee Odell, "Beyond the Text: Relations between Writing and Social Context," in Odell & Goswami, eds., *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), p. 249.

exacerbated by unfamiliar value systems."[14] Studying communicative practices "in context" requires acquaintance with value systems that many rhetorical scholars may not be familiar with, and—more importantly—such an approach is built on the assumption that all such value systems are identifiable. Second, this approach assumes that context can be circumscribed or defined. Context has come to represent—for some researchers—a stable, explanatory framework for understanding communicative practices. However, such an approach reinforces the problematic structuralist idea that communicative practices exist apart from all other activities. Despite the efforts of multiple professional communication scholars to define the boundaries of context, researchers still struggle with the question of how broadly or narrowly *context* should be defined.[15]

Because of these inherent problems with the notion of context, in the following chapters of my study I avoid the assumption that context can somehow be separated from communicative practices. I examine communication as a situated activity, but resist the

---

[14] Craig J. Hansen, "Contextualizing Technology and Communication in a Corporate Setting," in Duin & Hansen, eds., *Nonacademic Writing: Social Theory and Technology* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), p. 306.

[15] This problem has been described in terms of micro- and macro-level analysis by sociologist Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), p. 139. When writing is studied as a social practice, contextual scope also presents a problem for researchers. Bazerman has argued that this is one of the most significant "difficulties in characterizing social phenomena in writing." See "Difficulties in Characterizing Social Phenomena in Writing," *Constructing Experience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994): pgs. 123-130. The problem he outlines is that many scholars have tended to theorize communicative practices as coherent systems, suggesting that there are universal or at least foundational practices (he cites ancient theories of rhetoric as one example). Such theories, many have argued, provide less-than-satisfactory accounts of individual communicative acts. More recently, he contends, scholars have tended to study writing as individual performance, typically ignoring the generalized constraints that make social discourse possible. These micro-level approaches do not adequately recognize the patterns of discourse and the stable networks in which communication makes sense. Bazerman warns against moving too far in either direction:

> As we . . . begin to search for those regularities of written form and social interaction that help shape rhetorical situations and provide opportunities for responses, we need to avoid the error of looking for too firm a ground under our feet, trying to justify our work by claiming we have found pure and concrete objects, just as we need to avoid the error of not taking social regularity and structure seriously. (p. 130)

assumption that situation can or should be disentangled from communicative action. As I discuss below, rhetorical genre theory encompasses arguments that complement *and* conflict with this approach. Genre theorists, for example, use *communicative action* rather than *situation* as their unit of analysis, and thereby avoid investing context with too much explanatory power. Conversely, genre theorists have long debated the role of social entities in their work, with most taking the social constructionist position that *community* provides the necessary explanatory insight into communicative practices. Recently, however, theorists working from an externalist perspective have challenged this position,[16] arguing that community has merely replaced more traditional interpretive touchstones such as context—an argument that I explore in greater detail later in this chapter.

A Theoretical Perspective for Examining the Social Organization of Genre Routines

The social turn in communication studies[17] has led scholars to focus on both high-level social theories of communication and on much more narrowly focused individual practices. Contemporary studies of rhetorical practices in workplace organizations often reinforce this macro-/micro-level split,[18] though several scholars including Freedman &

---

[16] See, for example, David R. Russell, "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis," *Written Communication* 14.4 (1997): 504-554; and Thomas Kent, "Hermeneutics and Genre: Bakhtin and the Problem of Communicative Interaction," in David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman, and Richard Shuasterman, eds., *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991): 282-303.

[17] For an overview of this approach to professional communication, see Thralls & Blyler.

[18] Like Bazerman, others in professional communication have also objected to scholarship that moves too far in either direction. See, for example, Malcolm Richardson & Sarah Liggett, "Power Relations, Technical Writing Theory, and Workplace Writing," *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 7.1 (January 1993): 112-137. Richardson & Liggett call for a more sophisticated understanding of writing practices in the workplace. They object to "current rhetorical models" in communication textbooks "that assume an autonomous writer." To correct this problem, Richardson & Liggett call for a "macro" approach that accounts for "the rhetorical effects of larger-scale power relations" (pgs. 112-113). [note continued on next page . . .]

Smart,[19] A. D. Van Nostrand,[20] and Orlikowski & Yates[21] are now moving toward a more intermediate perspective. Rather than conducting close rhetorical analyses of individual texts or abstractly describing the flow of information in institutions, these scholars are examining the rhetoric of typified communicative practices in social organizations. Fusing social networks of activities at the organizational level with observable text-production habits, these scholars create a theoretical space for examining historicized patterns of workplace communication. Such an approach extends current scholarship by reconsidering communication as a set of practices embedded in a larger sociohistorical network of activities. This approach is particularly valuable for conceptualizing communicative practices in social organizations because it provides a way to theorize large-scale patterns of communication while focusing on the social purposes of individual practices.

[. . . note continued from previous page] The tendency to describe communication as a macro-level phenomenon has a long tradition in professional communication literature. At the turn of the century, for example, business communication textbooks popularized the notion that good business writing exhibited a specific set of textual characteristics—it was clear, concise, correct, courteous, etc. This tradition extends much further, as demonstrated by John Hagge, "The Spurious Paternity of Business Communication Principles," *Journal of Business Communication* 26.1 (1989): 33-55. Hagge shows that supposedly modern principles are part of a lineage that extends back through the rhetorical tradition over 2,000 years. Contemporary studies of professional communication are no less prone to assume a macro-level perspective. General writing principles such as coherence and cohesion, relevance, and arrangement are still studied and refined in both our pedagogical and professional literature. Many researchers, too, are still invested in developing macro-level strategies for more effective communication such as collaboration, expert systems, structured text, minimalist instruction, interactive technical communication, and audience analysis.

Recently, however, scholars have examined and described professional communication via micro-level analysis. Whereas macro-level studies have concentrated on describing widespread patterns of communication, micro-level studies tend to focus on individual writers or specific communicative events. This approach emphasizes the unique circumstances of professional communication, providing detailed information about what constitutes specific exchanges.

[19] Aviva Freedman & Graham Smart, "Navigating the Current of Economic Policy: Written Genres and the Distribution of Cognitive Work at a Financial Institution," *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 4.4 (1997): 238-255.
[20] Van Nostrand, *Fundable Knowledge.*
[21] Wanda J. Orlikowski & JoAnne Yates, "Genre Repertoire: The Structuring of Communicative Practices in Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39 (1994): 541-574.

Below I discuss the trends and characteristics of contemporary rhetorical genre theory and what it contributes to my study of communicative practices at Rath. As I argue later in this chapter, genre theory offers a way to theorize (1) how organizations are textually constituted, (2) how generic texts structure interaction, and (3) how communicative practices are shaped by the historical traces of prior practices.

Defining Trends in Rhetorical Genre Theory

Contemporary rhetorical theorists are careful to distance their conception of genre from the restrictive definitions used by many formalist literary scholars. These literary scholars have long relied on the concept of *genre* to define the formal characteristics of literary texts and to organize such works into categories (the beast fable, the epistolary novel, the epic poem, etc.).[22] However, many contemporary scholars reject such traditional definitions of genre—particularly formalist definitions—in favor of more active, dynamic conceptions. Several of these theorists align themselves with Carolyn Miller who, in 1984, presented a compelling argument for rejecting static definitions, insisting that a useful definition would be "fully rhetorical."[23]

The problem with formalist classifications of genre, Miller argues, is that they "lead to closed classifications, which sacrifice the diversity and dynamism of rhetorical practice to some theoretical *a priori*."[24] For example, "in the fields of literature and composition, classifications

---

[22] Genre has proven a valuable line of inquiry for several types of scholars—too many, in fact, to catalog here. For a discussion of this scholarship, see John Swales' discussion of genre in folklore studies, literary studies, linguistics, and rhetoric in *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[23] Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984), p. 153.

[24] Ibid., p. 154.

are commonly based upon formal rather than pragmatic elements."[25] In place of such restrictive classifications, Miller recommends a more flexible framework because a genre "does not lend itself to taxonomy, for genres change, evolve, and decay; the number of genres current in any society is indeterminate and depends upon the complexity and diversity of society."[26] Two seeds of contemporary genre theory are revealed in Miller's argument: genres are dynamic and they are locally defined. As I will discuss below, Miller's argument has significantly shaped contemporary rhetorical theory—particularly as theorists have emphasized the social contexts of genre production and reception.

Contemporary rhetorical theorists (in contrast to traditional literary theorists) are concerned with identifying the complex relationship between a genre's *form* and *action*—the two elements that constitute the dual nature of *rhetorical genres*. These theorists recognize that a genre possesses some shared textual characteristics—that is, a generic *form* that genre analysts can observe and describe. However, rhetorical genres are not defined by textual characteristics alone. They are also defined by the generic potential they carry to yield social *action*. That is, genres contribute to the dynamics of communicative exchanges as communicators draw on generic strategies to communicate *and* as they choose to deviate from what is typical in such exchanges.[27] The actions associated with a genre are never wholly the same in similar exchanges, but neither are they completely different. Examining

---

[25] Ibid., p. 154.
[26] Ibid., p. 163.
[27] For example, Yates & Orlikowski illustrate the play of the memo genre in the dynamics of organizational communication in "Genres of Organizational Communication: A Structurational Approach to Studying Communication and Media." *Academy of Management Review* 17.2 (1992): 299-326. They demonstrate how the activities of internal communication evolved to yield a generic form of communicative action. This form, in turn, introduced constraints (e.g., expectations about communicative behavior) that communicators either observed or revised. As the activities of internal communication evolved with the introduction of electronic technology, so, too, did the actions associated with the genre.

this social phenomenon, Bazerman observes, "Every utterance itself exists at the intersection of the typified and novel."[28]

Rhetorical genres can thus be defined by their potential to mediate between two sets of binary distinctions. They are composed of both form and action. And they appear both typical (of a type) and novel (appropriate for the specific, situated exchange in which they are employed). As several contemporary genre theorists discuss, the mediating characteristics of genres are useful for rhetorical scholars who wish to examine our social reliance on typical communicative forms without becoming entrapped in the essentialist, systematic claims of formalist and structuralist language theorists. Bazerman summarizes the rhetorical genre perspective when he observes that "any attempt to reduce speech acts to a speech system removes the activity from the act and reduces complex, interpretive, intelligent, motivated human behavior to a static set of signs, no longer responsive to human needs and creativity."[29]

The apparent complexity of rhetorical genre theory is due, at least in part, to the introduction of a social perspective to textual studies. Indeed, a central concern for rhetorical genre scholars is describing/illustrating the links between generic texts and the dynamics of situational motivation. Such a focus is in keeping with the social turn in other disciplines, moving rhetorical genre studies into the realm of interdisciplinary inquiry. Miller was among the first scholars to connect genre studies with sociological inquiry by drawing on the theories of sociologist Alfred Schultz.[30] Her lead was followed by Bazerman, who connected

---

[28] Charles Bazerman, "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions" in Aviva Freedman & Peter Medway, eds., *Genre and the New Rhetoric* (Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994), p. 88.
[29] Ibid., p. 88.
[30] See "Genre as Social Action," pgs. 156-7.

genre dynamics with the evolution of disciplinary scientific inquiry.[31] Extending the theoretical arguments of social constructionists, John Swales proposed an influential outline for genre analysis that features *discourse communities* as a central premise. Several subsequent genre scholars have turned to an even more explicitly sociological perspective, employing Giddens' structuration theory in their works.[32] The sociological approach to genre has been supplemented by rhetorical scholars who have added a Russian activity theory perspective.[33] Recently, too, scholars have introduced ideological and political questions to genre studies, calling for critical analyses of "the work a genre performs and the work that it limits or prevents"[34] and examining how "genres tacitly codify and channel thinking while [paradoxically] allowing for the possibility of resistance."[35] In addition to these social approaches, many genre scholars have turned to Bakhtin's explanation of genres as performative speech utterances grounded in social interchange.[36] Rhetorical genre studies have thus become a complex site of interdisciplinary social inquiry, thereby complementing current trends in academic research. These scholarly arguments have enriched genre studies beyond the staid classification formulas of formalist literary scholars, though they have made defining rhetorical genre theory a complex project.

---

[31] Charles Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
[32] See, for example, Yates & Orlikowski; Carol Berkenkotter & Thomas N. Huckin, "Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective," *Written Communication* 10.4 (1993): 475-509; and, Carolyn R. Miller, "Rhetorical Community: The Cultural Basis of Genre," in Freedman & Medway, pgs. 67-78.
[33] See Russell, "Rethinking Genre"; also, Berkenkotter & Huckin, "Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective."
[34] Catherine F. Schryer, "Records as Genre," *Written Communication* 10 (1993): p. 228.
[35] Freedman & Smart, pgs. 239-240.
[36] See, for example, Kent, "Hermeneutics"; Schryer, "Records"; and Berkenkotter & Huckin, "Rethinking."

Defining the Scope of Rhetorical Genre Theory

As I have suggested, rhetorical genre studies include diverse strands of theory that can be loosely grouped under the umbrella of *social inquiry*. Explicit attempts to identify and synthesize these stands have been made by Berkenkotter & Huckin; and Freedman & Medway.

Drawing on the work of previous genre scholars, Berkenkotter & Huckin propose a sociocognitive framework for rhetorical genre research. Their theoretical framework is a mix of structuration theory, rhetorical studies, interpretive anthropology, ethnomethodology, Bakhtinian speech genres, Vygotskian ontogenesis, and activity theory. In their synthesis of these different perspectives, Berkenkotter & Huckin propose "five principles that constitute a theoretical framework": dynamism, situatedness, form and content, duality of structure, and community ownership.[37] Individually, these principles correspond to established strands in rhetorical genre theory (some of which I have discussed above). And, although the explicit purpose of their synthesis is creating a framework for situated cognition studies of "genres of academic cultures,"[38] their summary of previous scholarship provides a valuable reference for scholars pursuing different purposes.

Also synthesizing contributions to genre theory, Freedman & Medway locate genre studies within a complex interdisciplinary network. They work through contemporary theories (sociology, rhetoric, social constructionism, rationality, speech act theory, and literary studies) that have influenced rhetorical genre theory to propose a composite portrait of *North American*

[37] Berkenkotter & Huckin, p. 478.
[38] Ibid., p. 477.

genre studies.[39] Based on their examination of developments in genre studies, Freedman & Medway identify the purposeful attributes of rhetorical genre analysis in the North American School tradition: it focuses "on unpacking complex relations between text and context," emphasizes "the dynamic quality of genres," conceives of genres as "provisional and fragile," and recognizes "the possibility of 'play' within genres" as well as the "*inter*play and *inter*action" of genres.[40] They also note the tendency for researchers working in the North American tradition to probe "systems of belief, ideologies, and values" but then to treat them "as relatively self-contained rather than as integrally related to economic and political formations."[41] Freedman & Medway consequently do not fully endorse the North American School of genre studies, suggesting that it —like other disciplines that have drawn on sociology—should move toward a critical studies perspective.

What Does Genre Analysis Bring to the Study of Social Organizations?

The synthesizing definitions offered by these theorists suggest the scope of rhetorical genre studies, the breadth of which is surprising because the line of inquiry has existed for such a short time. In the discussion below, I have drawn from these diverse strands to

---

[39] Freedman & Medway distinguish North American genre studies from those of the Sydney School, which has developed a distinctly different though influential field of genre studies based on M.A.K. Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. See, for example, Frances Christie & J. R. Martin, eds., *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School* (London: Cassell, 1997).

[40] Aviva Freedman & Peter Medway, "Locating Genre Studies: Antecedents and Prospects," in Freedman & Medway, eds., pgs. 9-10.

[41] Ibid., p. 10. David R. Russell draws a similar distinction, contrasting the North American approach to studying genres not only with the Hallydian approach, but also with that of "the recent European tradition of critical discourse analysis (CDA)" which "tends to rely on close textual analysis on political theorizing." In contrast, "the North American genre school tends to keep its analytical lens in the middle, on the interactions of people with texts and other mediational means" (p. 226) as I describe in this study. See Russell, "Writing and Genre in Higher Education and Workplaces: A Review of Studies that Use Cultural-Historical Activity Theory," *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 4.4 (1997): 224-237.

identify several ways that rhetorical genre studies can contribute to historical research into the rhetorical practices of social organizations.

Genre Theory Provides Insight into the Textual Constitution of Social Entities. As I have already suggested, rhetorical genre theory is an inherently social theory because it assumes a social entity within which generic texts circulate and a stable enough entity to make regular communicative practices possible. John Swales, in his widely cited 1990 book, *Genre Analysis*, argues that a discourse community *necessarily* implies genre(s)—whenever there is community discourse, there are genre routines for organizing that discourse. Several researchers have drawn on Swales' definition of *discourse community* to describe the social entities that participate in genre exchanges.[42] Swales' arguments have been expanded in subsequent research, which argues that the relationship between genres and communities is not unidirectional: communities are defined—even made possible—by the genres they facilitate. The identity of a social entity is inextricably linked to the texts that circulate within it, or, as Berkenkotter & Huckin explain, "genre conventions signal a discourse community's norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology."[43]

A fundamental problem for these researchers, however, is defining what constitutes a community. Like Swales, subsequent researchers have suggested ways of talking about genre that resist structuralist conceptions of community. The strongest movements in this direction come from researchers who argue against a Cartesian split between form and content. Their fundamental argument is that splitting a discourse community (a form) from

[42] For additional discussion of these connections as well as the social constructionist origins of contemporary rhetorical genre theory, see Freedman & Medway, p. 5.
[43] Berkenkotter & Huckin, p. 497.

its genre (content) is to posit a conceptual scheme—a dualism—as Donald Davidson argues: "a dualism of scheme and content, of organizing system and something waiting to be organized."[44] To avoid this problem, Miller, for example, denies that communities—that is, the virtual communities of interest to rhetorical scholars—have an absolute existence. Instead, she argues, communities are socially constructed: "A rhetorical community . . . is just such a virtual entity, a discursive projection, a rhetorical construct." In her formulation, no community/genre split exists because rhetorical communities are "constituted by attributions of characteristic joint rhetorical actions, genres of interaction, ways of getting things done."[45] This claim moves her theory beyond the position she took in her earlier work, where genre was still treated as mediated (embodied) thought: "As recurrent, significant action, a genre embodies an aspect of cultural rationality."[46]

More recently, David R. Russell has argued that genre researchers should abandon community metaphors altogether to avoid structuralist associations—particularly the tendency to equate community with context.[47] Such metaphors, he contends, often "reinscribe . . . structuralist views" and "suggest an underlying neoPlatonic or Cartesian

---

[44] Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1984), p. 189.
[45] Miller, "Rhetorical Community," p. 73. Miller treats community as one among many metaphors for collectivity; "society, institution, culture" and others are also used, though she argues for *rhetorical community* as the best metaphor for the social entities within which genres circulate (p. 72). Her definition revises Swales' with a more sociorhetorical emphasis: "th[e] inclusion of sameness and difference, of us and them, of centripetal and centrifugal impulses . . . makes a community rhetorical, for rhetoric in essence requires both agreement and dissent, shared understandings and novelty, enthymematic premises and contested claims, identification and division (in Burke's terms). In a paradoxical way, a rhetorical community includes the 'other'" (p. 74).
[46] Miller, "Genre," p. 165.
[47] Russell, "Rethinking," pgs. 505-509.

dualism."[48] In their place, he recommends an activity theory approach to genre analysis that draws on "activity systems" instead.[49]

Genre Theory Helps Explain How Texts Structure Interaction. With its emphasis on social entities, rhetorical genre theory foregrounds typified communicative exchanges as a subject of scholarly inquiry. Rather than focusing on individual texts, researchers working from this perspective are concerned with theorizing how (or to what extent) genres structure communicative interaction.

For generic communicative exchanges to exist, certain social conditions are necessary. As Miller observes in her groundbreaking work, social stability makes genres possible.[50] That is, typical patterns of communicative action cannot exist without a regular social network. The stability necessary for genres is evident in the sites examined by genre scholars: educational systems (Freedman & Medway; Russell), academic disciplines (Swales; Berkenkotter & Huckin; Schryer), a financial institution (Freedman & Smart), government departments and offices (Van Nostrand; Bazerman, "Systems"), and workplace organizations (Paré & Smart; Yates & Orlikowski). Genres proliferate in such settings.

The relationship, however, is more complex than the observation above implies. At the same time that social stability encourages genre production, genres, with their regularities, have a normalizing social effect. Genre sets play integral roles in the structure of complex organizational activities (Bazerman, "Systems"; Freedman & Smart; Yates &

---

[48] Ibid., p. 505.
[49] Ibid., p. 509.
[50] Miller, "Genre," p. 158.

Orlikowski). Giddens' structuration theory offers a way of explaining this reciprocal relationship, as Yates & Orlikowski explain:

> Structuration theory involves the production, reproduction, and transformation of social institutions, which are enacted through individuals' use of social rules. These rules shape the action taken by individuals in organizations; at the same time, by regularly drawing on the rules, individuals reaffirm or modify the social institutions in an ongoing, recursive interaction.[51]

Extending Giddens' theory to their examination of genres, Yates & Orlikowski argue that genres are themselves social institutions. Likewise, Berkenkotter & Huckin expand on structuration theory to describe the dual nature of a genre's relationship to social structures. They contend that genres constitute restrictive social structures, but that genre users also generate such structures via their participation in genres. They thus agree with Miller when she contends that "structure is 'both medium and outcome' of the social practices it recursively organizes . . . structure, in other words, is both means and end, both resource and product."[52]

Rethinking her earlier arguments about genre, Miller finds structuration theory a useful way to mediate between the micro-level focus of her initial work and a larger-scale, institutional examination. Thus, she extends Giddens' theory into an argument wherein genres are structures integrally connected to institutional power. These structures define many aspects of a communicative situation, though because of their dual nature, they are still sites of social action.[53] Within institutions, however, these genre actions (i.e., structures)

---

[51] Yates & Orlikowski, pgs. 299-300.
[52] Miller, "Rhetorical Community," p. 70.
[53] Ibid., p. 72.

typically entail the repetition of previous actions: "the instantiation of structure must also be the *reproduction* of structure"; "social actors create recurrence in their actions by reproducing the structural aspects of institutions."[54] Like Miller, Berkenkotter & Huckin avoid a deterministic view of genres, noting that, "Genres . . . are always sites of contention between stability and change"[55]; they "can, indeed must, change over time as community knowledge itself changes."[56]

Finally, social interactions are multiple and complex in the social organizations that researchers study. Within these organizations, researchers must account for the multiple genres that are all operating in concert to structure large-scale social actions. The genre clusters are labeled sets, systems, and repertoires in different theoretical frameworks. Miller suggests *genre sets* as a way to describe "a system of actions and interactions that have specific social locations and functions as well as repeated or recurrent value or function."[57] Bazerman recommends that scholars examine systems of genres: "the system of genres would be the full set of genres that instantiate the participation of all the parties."[58]

---

[54] Ibid., p. 71.
[55] Berkenkotter & Huckin, p. 481.
[56] Ibid., p. 490.
[57] Miller, "Rhetorical Community," p. 70. Genre sets, Miller contends, are the defining characteristics of different rhetorical communities because they draw together "material particulars, instantiations of a genre in individual acts, and systems of value and signification." Genre sets are also discussed by Devitt, who uses this concept to theorize intertextualities in the documents generated by accountants.
[58] Bazerman's conception of system avoids reductionism. He contends that "we can find system in speech acts without reducing them to a system" ("Systems," p. 99). Systems of genre, he explains, include the "interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings" defined by related actions (p. 97). His focus on social activity as the unit of analysis in genre studies allows him to avoid relying on community as an explanatory conceptual scheme. This approach has been further theorized and more fully articulated by Russell, who synthesizes Bazerman's systems of genres with activity theory. By focusing on the way(s) genres are operationalized in different locations (and for different objectives), Russell contributes a way to theorize connections between activities that would otherwise seem to occur independently (see further discussion in Chapter 2).

Table 2.1. Theoretical Concepts for Describing Genre Clusters

Theoretical Concept	Purpose	Characteristics
genre sets	identifying a rhetorical community	focuses on the material forms, acts of genre participation, value systems, and signification systems that define communities
systems of genre	identifying all the genres involved in a social system	focuses on genre forms, acts, and objectives that define activity systems
genre repertoires	identifying the interactions of a genre set in an organizational community	integrates organizational and rhetorical concepts to focus on communicative practices at different levels within institutions

Orlikowski & Yates have suggested that researchers examine genre repertoire: "the set of genres routinely enacted by a particular community."[59]

Genre Theory Helps Historicize Communicative Practices. The communicative practices that genre analysts examine are invested with historical traces.[60] Rather than being concerned with prescriptive formulas, rhetorical genre analysts focus their attention on evidence of existing generic practices—from reports generated during the previous week[61] to the history of the memo in the twentieth century.[62] Even those theorists like Schryer who

[59] Orlikowski & Yates, p. 546. Genre repertoires, a concept developed by Orlikowski & Yates to "investigat[e] the structuring of a community's communicative practices over time," are very similar to genre sets, though their emphasis is slightly different (p. 546). While Miller uses genre sets to help define communities, Orlikowski & Yates begin with already defined communities such as professional organizations and groups that are aligned by shared purposes. Their organizational communities, however, are internally differentiated by spatial and institutional factors, so genre repertoires are defined by practices that appear coherent at a high level of analysis (i.e., at the organizational level), but are actually contested and dynamic practices at the individual level.

[60] In her most recent work, Miller insists that genres are sites of historical meaning ("Rhetorical Community," p. 69). Bazerman makes this connection even more emphatically in *Shaping Written Knowledge* when he contends that "genre does not exist apart from its history" (p. 8).

[61] See Freedman & Smart.

[62] See Yates & Orlikowski.

focus on social assimilation via genre acquisition rely on historicized perceptions to define communal genre practices. That is, they look to the historical duration of a genre to examine how participation in that genre's reproduction has required social actors to adopt typified communicative practices. This impulse to historicize communicative practices is explicit in many contemporary studies, as I will discuss below.

Outlining a theory of rhetorical criticism that predates much of the scholarship I have examined thus far, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell & Kathleen Hall Jamieson suggest that genres are discovered in constellations of like responses to situations that are perceived as similar. Implicit in their definition of genre is the historical distance of the critic. They reject the notion that a genre can be identified before analyzing how it has operated in the lifeworld, thereby challenging formalist approaches that ignore the rhetorical practices at play in text production.[63] However, they also recognize what a historical account of those forces entails:

> A generic perspective is intensely historical, but in a sense somewhat different from most prior efforts. It does not seek detailed recreation of the original encounter between author and audience; rather it seeks to recreate the symbolic context in which the act emerged so that criticism can teach us about the nature of human communicative response and about the ways in which rhetoric is shaped by prior rhetoric, by verbal conventions in a culture, and by past formulations of ideas and issues.[64]

---

[63] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell & Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Forms and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction" in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell & Kathleen Hall Jamieson. eds., *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (Falls Church, VA: The Speech Communication Association, 1978), p. 23.
[64] Ibid., p. 27.

The "symbolic" distance Campbell & Jamieson recommend suggests a critically sophisticated historicism. Their theory is built on the recognition that historical telling is removed from "actual" events of genre production and that any account is necessarily symbolic.

With a slightly different focus, Bazerman has further theorized the links between historicism and genre analysis, insisting on the need for an analytical historical perspective in genre studies. His concern is with the articulations that analysts make between genre actions and the structures within which they occur. Genre history is comprised of moments in which textual typifications emerge from social dynamics: "Perceivable regularities . . . need to be seen as historically evolved resources of typified interpretation, in relation to other social regularities and institutions that help identify the nature of each social moment as enacted by the participants."[65] To understand a genre, an analyst must be attentive to "the dynamics of the moment" in which the typification was enacted.[66]

Complementing Bazerman's view, Yates & Orlikowski call for genre analysis that is articulated to material conditions: "Empirical research is needed to investigate the various social, economic, and technological factors that occasion the production, reproduction, or modification of different genres in different sociohistorical contexts."[67] Such historical research, they suggest, might be either synchronic or diachronic so long as it "take[s] into account the normative scope of the genres present in that context."[68] They, however, apparently favor diachronic analysis because it is concerned with "observing the processes of

---

[65] Bazerman, "Systems," p. 88.
[66] Ibid., p. 89.
[67] Yates & Orlikowski, p. 320.
[68] Ibid., p. 323.

genre emergence, maintenance, modification, and decay."[69] Such an approach gets at the "prior rhetoric" and "past formulations" that Campbell & Jamieson view as integral to genre criticism. It also examines the evolution that Bazerman contends is essential to genre history.

Conclusion

Rhetorical genre theory offers researchers a new perspective for studying rhetoric in social organizations. As I have outlined in this chapter, this theoretical perspective calls attention to patterns of discourse that mediate between individual rhetorical performances and abstract principles of communication. Rather than treating communication as a discrete act, genre analysis focuses scholarly attention on the play of communicative practices in broader social interactions. It helps researchers account for the emergence, reproduction, and decay of communicative practices over extended periods of time by calling attention to prior practices and the appropriation of typified forms. With its emphasis on patterns of discourse, organizational activities, and historical analysis, rhetorical genre theory provides a basic framework for my study of communicative practices at Rath. My study, however, is not designed to simply confirm the work of previous genre theorists. Instead, it introduces organizational and activity scenarios that have not yet been examined by genre scholars, extending prior theories and introducing new questions for researchers working in this area. I begin in the next chapter by exploring how a genre perspective can help us understand communicative habits in workplace organizations where professionals—engaged in diverse work activities—routinely circulate texts to get things done.

---

[69] Ibid., p. 322.

CHAPTER 3: GENRES AND WORKPLACE ORGANIZATIONS

In the previous chapter, I identified several trends in current genre theory and suggested that this perspective offers a way to study communicative practices in social organizations without reinscribing the text/context split that runs through many contemporary rhetorical studies. In this chapter, I develop this idea in greater detail by outlining an approach to studying communicative practices in the workplace from a genre perspective and illustrating it with examples from my historical study. My purpose here is to account for social and historical variation in the communicative practices at play in larger networks of activity at Rath. I begin by developing a set of interrelated claims about what a genre approach to studying workplace communication implies.

Communicative habits—as they emerge in organizations like The Rath Packing Company—resist overly rationalized descriptions such as those that sometimes appear in professional communication scholarship.[1] In this scholarship, workplace communication has traditionally been treated as a discrete activity that can be codified and logically perfected.[2] Researchers working in this tradition focus primarily on the *texts* of professional communication, bracketing them off from the circumstances that affect and are affected by those texts. Circumstances—often labeled *context*—are simply treated as a discrete unit in a

---

[1] See, for example, Joseph T. Emanuel, "The Executive Summary: A Key to Effective Communication," *Technical Communication* 43.1 (February 1996): 78-82. Emmanuel presents guidelines for producing "ideal" executive summaries, suggesting that "correct written information" and "appropriate form[s]" have a necessary correlation to "success."

[2] This impulse to codify forms and perfect guidelines for producing them underpins much of the field's current research. In Jamie Comstock & Gary Higgins, "Appropriate Relational Messages in Direct Selling Interaction: Should Salespeople Adapt to Buyer's Communicator Style?," *Journal of Business Communication* 34.4 (October 1997): 401-418, for example, the authors study communication styles and make recommendations about which is most appropriate for salespeople to use when communicating. In another case, Jan Scholz, "Developing Technical Documentation the Smart Way," *Technical Communication* 41.1 (February 1994): 94-99, the author advocates "a systematic process for developing technical documentation" (p. 94).

formulaic approach to competent communication. As I explained in the previous chapter, recent developments in rhetorical theory (particularly as they are coming into focus in genre scholarship) fundamentally challenge such limited approaches, while at the same time opening new inroads for studying the apparently mundane, quotidian, and routine practices of workplace communication.

Studying Communication in the Workplace from a Genre Perspective

The genre perspective on workplace communication I develop in this dissertation is built on a group of interconnected claims:

- Communicative practices in organizations emerge in clusters of interrelated genres
- Organizations derive stability and identity from their genre habits
- Genres carry with them traces of their own social history
- Genre habits are thoroughly entwined with other organizational practices

These claims bring together several strands of scholarly inquiry, including rhetorical genre theory, sociology, critical theory, and historiography, as I describe below. Blending these disciplinary approaches is appropriate, I argue, for coming to terms with the communicative practices at Rath from 1920 until 1985. Indeed, what professional communication studies lacks is a perspective on how organizational communication practices affect and are affected by the varied activities that they mediate. To study professional communication from this perspective, researchers would begin asking questions: What are the habits of communication in a given organization, and what is the significance of these routine exchanges? What role do these routines play in the constitution and reconstitution of organizations? How do these routines come to be varied? What is the relationship between these routine exchanges and the multiple other activities that surround them?

These four claims, which I develop below, suggest a way of addressing these questions. Throughout this chapter I use abbreviated examples from my study to illustrate these claims. In the final section of this chapter and in subsequent chapters of the dissertation, such examples are presented in more detail as I develop a more elaborate history of communicative practices at Rath. Taken together, these examples are designed to help illustrate the value of this alternative perspective for professional communication scholarship.

Communicative Practices in Organizations Emerge in Clusters of Interrelated Genres

A genre, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is a recognizable communicative routine that is distinguished by a typified form. Rather than being static, however, this generic form is dynamically remade in every instantiation and is thus inextricably tied to social action. This concept is useful for examining our social reliance on typical communicative forms without reproducing the essentialist, systematic claims of formalist and structuralist language theorists.

Genres, however, do not exist in isolation. They do not emerge intact without prior discourse, and they almost always provoke further communicative exchange. A genre can thus be understood as the analytic crystallization[3] of a portion of an ongoing dialog.[4] That is, discursive practices precede, parallel, and follow the texts that have been construed as a

[3] Miller makes a similar argument in "Genre as Social Action," observing that "what recurs [in rhetorical genre actions] is not a material situation (a real, objective, factual event) but our construal of a type" (p. 157).
[4] Bakhtinian dialogism—a pivotal concept for many genre theorists (e.g., Berkenkotter & Huckin; Kent)—offers a way to theorize this aspect of genre. Russell ("Rethinking Genre") has, however, noted that Bakhtinian dialogism is limited because it accounts only for oral and written utterances and not other communicative tools that organize actions (p. 507). Rather than dialogic interaction, he advocates a more expansive theoretical perspective to account for the multiple activities in which genres serve as mediating tools.

genre. Employee performance reviews, for example, emerge from several prior and diverse communicative exchanges—including the initial agreement to be hired—and are followed by additional exchanges, which may include a letter of commendation, a "bonus" paycheck, or a letter of resignation. Such genres, thus, *never* exist singularly; they derive both content and social force from a network of practices. They are the means by which individuals, to borrow from Bazerman, "create individual instances of meaning and value within structured discursive fields and thereby act within highly articulated social systems."[5] The modernist impulse to isolate an organizational genre such as a performance review for analytical purposes must thus be balanced with a recognition of the metaphoric conversation in which it is embedded. Within these conversations, in fact, researchers can potentially identify multiple communicative habits.

Genres are best understood as communicative practices that interact with multiple other communicative practices that constitute a larger totality—a set, a system, or a repertoire—as several scholars have demonstrated.[6] The thrust of all these theoretical concepts is to focus scholarly attention on the multiplicity of communicative practices that organizations use to make sense of their activities across time and space. Managed, institutional sites such as those that professional communication scholars study depend on multiple genres to shape perceptions about what is desirable and valuable. Reexamining professional communication through this perspective thus entails abandoning the modernist inclination to focus on universal types of text—memos, reports, proposals, etc.—and placing greater emphasis on how individual instantiations of these and other texts work in concert.

---

[5] Bazerman, "Systems," p. 79.

[6] See particularly Miller, "Rhetorical Community"; Bazerman, "Systems"; and Orlikowski & Yates.

As Freedman & Smart demonstrate, we need theoretical concepts like these to analyze the multiple—and sometimes contradictory—genre habits at play in the complex workings of an organization.

Organizations Derive Stability and Identity from their Genre Habits

Genres, as I discussed in the previous chapter, circulate in stable social organizations. Indeed, within the most stable social organizations—academic institutions, business organizations, government offices, etc.—genres thrive. Entrenched organizational routines provide a pattern of social interaction that encourages genre habits. In many business organizations, for example, the routines associated with employee compensation have given rise to complex genre clusters, extending far beyond the time sheets that record employee performance (in hours or some other measurable unit) and the paychecks issued to the employees. Routine organizational activities are now likely to include, for example, intricate accounting practices, which make it possible to oversee pension plans, vacation pay, tax withholding, cost analysis, etc. These routines—and countless others—are mediated by communicative practices that give the organization stability over time and define participatory roles for employees, managers, accountants, auditors, etc.

Following Giddens' line of argument, however, it is not completely accurate to say that organizations precede genres. Organizations do not exist apart from and prior to communicative habits; they do not provide an explanatory framework for completely interpreting the communicative practices with which they are associated. Rather, genre practices and organizations exist in a mutually complementary relationship that makes the existence of each possible. That is, organizations and genres are both structures that must be

repeatedly reproduced by the active participation of their mutual constituents. At the most fundamental level, this mutual constitution seems painfully obvious. Commercial organizations, for example, cannot exist without routine communicative exchanges to coordinate even the most basic business activities, *and*, without those activities, such routine communication can not be sustained.[7] Companies themselves are made possible by the actions of multiple employees working on incredibly diverse tasks—all of which are coordinated with texts such as inventory records, instruction sheets, and order forms that allow administrative employees to analyze and control the company's standard operating procedures.

Rather than focusing on organizational routines as things, I suggest that in keeping with rhetorical genre theory, they are better understood as *actions*. In each instantiation, routine practices are—however slightly—(re)produced through the actions of people in the organization. The modernist impulse in organizations toward rational control and predictability encourages the replication of practices that have contributed to realizing organizational objectives in the past.[8] Management (in its various forms) is largely defined by this inherently conservative goal. Despite this impulse, however, organizations are confronted by unpredictable exigencies that erode the possibility of replication as people's actions are inevitably varied in response to them. An organization can never become the perfect machine that modernist theorists have imagined.

---

[7] This does *not* mean that communicative genres and organizations are synchronized in simple behaviorist relationships. On the contrary, genres and organizations are frequently ill matched, leading to the "inefficiencies" that countless management consultants and gurus attempt to remedy.

[8] For a historical overview of this movement, see James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

Communicative practices—and the multiple social actions they imply—thus emerge from the nexus of *repetition* and *variation*. As Berkenkotter & Huckin observe, "Genres . . . are always sites of contention between stability and change."[9] Repetition, the act of (re)producing previous practices, is essential for achieving organizational stability. *Variation*, the act of altering routine practices to address contingencies, is the necessary complement to repetition for participating in the give-and-take of organizational life. Focusing exclusively on either repetition or variation in an examination of organizational genres yields a distorted view. Examining only the relentless lull of repetitive communicative habits, for example, suggests that organizational communication is a rote practice; conversely, looking only at individual rhetorical acts blinds the researcher to the play of conventions in the organization.

While it is a fundamental mistake to overlook variation in the (re)production of organizational practices, repetition is the guiding rule for structuring and stabilizing organizations. Organizational power and identity, for example, are at least partially derived from the repetition made possible by genre habits. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the repetition of communicative situations in organizations and the typified communication that is produced in those situations have a normative power that is manifest in the organization's genres. Communicators, however, are not trapped within those norms; in the act of communication, they participate in the (re)production of the norms that make power and identity possible.[10]

---

[9] Berkenkotter & Huckin, p. 481.

[10] This theory of norms and their reproduction is a major component of Giddens' structuration theory. For a more detailed discussion of its connection to genre theory, see Yates & Orlikowski and Berkenkotter & Huckin.

As participants in the (re)production of organizational norms, communicators possess a type of power within the workplace. Power—rather than being an intangible quality—is dispersed among organizational participants who engage in the repetitious activities that (re)produce order and stability in the organization. Such power is not equally dispersed, as some participants—managers, supervisors, etc.—are engaged in activities that extend further than those of other people employed in the company's business. A manager at Rath, for example, would oversee the work of several people *and* have access to the accounting activities that determined wages for those employees. In a real sense, then, organizational *power* was manifest through participation in the company's genres. The more genres a person commanded, the more organizational power he or she possessed. Thus, changes in organizational policy—statements about the ways things should be done—were marked by changes in genres to which only authorized people had access. As Yates & Orlikowski argue, "genre rules . . . function both as instruments and outcomes of organizational power and politics," for, as they explain, "new genre rules are outcomes of power play."[11] Although organizational change is certainly the most dramatic marker of power, power is at play, too, in the absence of change, as system and genre stability during the (re)production of organizational practices indicates a source of power. Freedman & Medway also discuss this phenomenon in genre practices, describing "genre maintenance as power maintenance."[12]

While participation in organizational genre practices (re)produces power and thus stability, it also marks organizational identities. Identities for individual employees emerge from the range of genres in which a person participates *and* from their performance with

[11] Yates & Orlikowski, p. 321.
[12] Freedman & Medway, p. 15.

those genres. At Rath, for example, only the highest level officers had the ability to communicate with the entire organization through official channels. When these officers sent out open letters to the entire organization, they became individual personalities in a way that a clerk working in a branch office never could.

Organizations as a whole also assume a type of identity defined by the communicative habits and other material practices (e.g., arranging office space, establishing work schedules, enforcing dress codes) of the entire organization. As Berkenkotter & Huckin observe, "genre conventions signal . . . norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology."[13] The "signal" sent by organizational genres, however, is more complex than this quote suggests. Despite the practices carried out under the modernist impulse to control organizations, large companies like Rath accommodate multiple, diverse—even contradictory—genres. For example, marketing and advertising personnel at Rath shaped a cultural image through varied forms of public discourse (e.g., vendor announcements, television commercials, newspaper advertisements, correspondence with stockholders), but this image clashed with the identity that emerged in the managerial genres that circulated within the company. The advertisements that Rath funded during the 1950s, presenting the company as the labor union's partner, for example, seemed to contradict the continued uses of time-motion studies that many employees strongly objected to during this period. Critiques of management practices inevitably yield such contradictory images, for, as management historian Mauro F. Guillén observes, organizations present a public image, but continue to be identified by their managerial practices.[14] Such contradictions, however, have

---

[13] Berkenkotter & Huckin, p. 497.

[14] Mauro F. Guillén, *Models of Management: Work, Authority, and Organization in a Comparative Perspective* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 4.

received little attention in genre theory, leading to calls for additional study into "the role of genres as carriers of ideologies or cultures at the organizational level."[15]

The role genres play in organizations—particularly as they help stabilize norms and create identities—has gone largely unexamined in professional communication scholarship. This neglect is unfortunate because such a perspective offers a way to theorize the conventions of professional discourse. That is, organizational genre practices help explain why repetition is such a dominant characteristic of technical and business documents. They also, though, underscore the rhetorical nature of professional communication, as writers must choose how their communicative actions will vary from *and* reproduce genre norms.

Genres Carry with Them Traces of Their Own Social History

My discussion thus far has been predicated on the claim that genres are social actions manifest in more-or-less repetitive forms. This claim implies that *every* material instance of a genre is evidence of an individual's choice to reproduce prior practices. Such reproduction, however, is never exactly the same as the prior practice because the reproduction occurs at a specific, distanced time and in a unique material situation. Borrowing from Giddens, I would say that a genre event is differentiated from other instances of the same genre by being distanced in time and space. This point is important because it offers a way to discuss the interplay of repetition and variation in organizational communicative practices. In every instantiation of a genre, an individual is deciding which elements of prior practice to repeat and which to vary. As my discussion in the previous section implied, variation is typically subtle in stable organizations because they are governed by actively reproduced systems that

[15] Yates & Orlikowski, p. 321.

are designed to ensure predictability and control. Despite the apparent inflexibility of workplace communication practices, however, organizational genres are constituted by multiple, individual communicative acts through which individuals repeat *and* vary prior practices, subtly changing the genre with each act. Through the presence and absence of prior practices, organizational genres thereby carry traces of their own history-in-use.

Defining genres in terms of their history-in-use undermines formalist conceptions of genre that attend to idealized forms such as *the* memo, *the* letter of transmittal, *the* bulletin, etc. In light of recent examinations of memos, letters, and bulletins across historically and spatially differentiated instances, idealized forms seem to be an impoverished way of conceiving the habits of workplace communication. Rejecting formalist conceptions, genre researchers should account for the role of intertextuality in the constitution of genre habits.[16] Genres do not emerge *ex nihlio*, but, instead, (re)form prior communicative habits to address new exigencies. In historical examinations of the material habits of organizational correspondence, for example, Yates & Orlikowski illustrate the significance of intertextual traces in the emergence of new genre habits, examining the transformation of the business letter into the inter-office memorandum, and the subsequent emergence of the email message from the memorandum.[17] And, in a second study, they describe textual "overlap" between genres and genre systems in the computer-mediated communication of professional work.[18] In many ways, their work with these genres of organizational communication complements Bazerman's examination of the evolution of the scientific article from experimental reports beginning in the 17th century in which he illustrates how evolving genres perpetuate and

[16] See, for example, Bazerman, "Systems," and Devitt.
[17] See Yates & Orlikowski.
[18] See Orlikowski & Yates.

remake prior communicative practices, constituting a type of logical continuity for genre participants over time.[19] Additional scholars working in this vein have examined intertextualities in different financial reporting genres,[20] accounting documents,[21] and the genres associated with government-funded defense contracts.[22] Each of these studies adds support to Bazerman's contention that genre does not exist apart from its history. Within all genres, intertexts link individual instantiations of communicative practice to prior practices.

As many of these scholars have suggested, when genres are (re)produced they begin to take on the logic that guided prior instantiations. Thus, the habits associated with a genre become embedded in the act of communicating with that genre and are only slowly modified over time. The annual report to stockholders at Rath, for example, became layered with habitual practices borrowed from diverse sources. From the late 1920s, the report included the mandatory accounting texts (a balance sheet and a profit-and-loss statement) and a letter to stockholders from the company's president, John W. Rath. In these early instantiations, both the accounting texts and the letters were abbreviated, as in the 1934 letter to stockholders, which includes only a single sentence—performing the minimal transactional task of transmitting the accounting reports. Over time, however, Rath's presidents used the letter text within the report to accomplish multiple and diverse tasks. For example, the obligatory letter of transmittal became a venue for framing stockholder perceptions about the company. In 1941, the same company president who had written the brief letter years earlier, used his letter to announce the company's 50th anniversary ("we set aside a week for the

---

[19] Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge*; see particularly Part 2, pgs. 59-150.
[20] See Freedman & Smart.
[21] See Devitt.
[22] See Van Nostrand, *Fundable Knowledge*.

observance of our Fiftieth Anniversary"), to explain the company's debt structuring and other financial transactions ("As a result of the refinancing, our interest rates were reduced and we secured the additional advantage of a satisfactory loan"), to announce a new pension plan ("the entire cost of which will be borne by the Company"), to unveil building projects ("the business continues to grow, and . . . a contract was recently let for a new Beef House which when completed will increase our capacity considerably"), and to explain the company's cooperation with the government's Defense Program ("practically every department in the plant is operating at full capacity to take care of Government requirements and the additional domestic demand"). This same year, the company's annual report also accommodated more explicit advertising text, reproducing graphics used to promote the company's bacon and hams, as well as including a partial list of "The Hundreds of Delicious Fine Quality Rath Products." In subsequent years, the company's annual report took on additional texts and abandoned some of the conventions that had defined the genre in its earliest instantiations. By 1957, the "letter" from the president no longer began with a salutation and the personal tone had largely given way to a more distanced presentation of the "Year in Review." The only obvious trace of the text's origin in the epistolary tradition is the signatures at the end of the report narrative. Even with these variations, however, the company's annual report genre maintained traces of the 1929 communicative practices; the signature blocks and the modified accounting texts recall the earliest instantiations of the genre.

As genres such as annual reports are (re)produced in differentiated time/space instances, they link prior communicative practices with current exigencies and thus perpetuate the organization in which they are embedded. Indeed, without such reproduction,

organizational systems would cease to exist.[23] Rath's annual reports, for example, not only recorded organizational activities during the previous year, but also helped create some of the conditions necessary for the organization to continue those activities for another year. For example, Rath's annual reports were a means for (1) keeping the company in compliance with regulations, (2) encouraging investors to keep their money in the company's stocks, and (3) establishing an agenda for the future. With every instantiation of the annual report genre—even as the reports varied over time—Rath thus (re)constituted its organizational identity *and* the genre itself.

Genre Habits are Thoroughly Entwined with Other Organizational Practices

Like annual reports, the routine communicative practices employed by individuals within organizations exist as part of larger networks of activities that help organizations realize objectives. However, I have yet to explain how these activities cohere—that is, what connects genre participation to other practices in an organization? When researchers bracket off communication from other actions (i.e., "context"), they give it a special status in discussions of social interaction. That is, they treat communication as something that exists above or beyond other human activities. Privileging communicative action in this way obscures the material basis of communication, overlooking the tools people use in the act of communicating. Nonformalist genre theorists, on the other hand, are committed to the idea

[23] See Giddens' theory of action, structure, and power in Anthony Giddens, *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory* (London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1982), pgs. 28-39. In this and subsequent chapters, Giddens examines the dialectic of control through which even those in "weak" organizational positions exercise a type of power that makes organization possible.

that communicative exchange is a type of material-mediated social action[24]—much like the many other actions that occur within and around organizations. And, more importantly, patterns of communicative exchange (i.e., genres) emerge in integrated formations with other routine actions.

Activity theory offers a way to theorize the connections between genres as social action and the multiple other actions that constitute society.[25] Originating in the writings of Lev Vygotsky and his associates, this cultural-historical theory of social interaction calls attention to how people, tools, and objectives come together to yield specific outcomes. Within the analytical framework, these three elements (people, tools, and objectives) form an activity system that carries with it historical traces for all three elements (i.e., people bring prior experiences, tools have a history of use, and objectives are formed through previous social interactions). Activity systems are also never singular—as Russell explains, "with the social division of labor, a range of ongoing systems or networks of activity arise and proliferate."[26] Genres, as a type of mediating tool, are thus employed in concert with other tools as people work. At Rath, for example, workers on the loading dock used a variety of written genres (order sheets, shipping records, transportation schedules, etc.) plus other material tools (pallets, hand carts, elevators, trucks, trains, etc.) to complete the departmental task of transporting products to market.

---

[24] The emphasis on social action originates in Miller's widely cited "Genre as Social Action." Subsequent scholars have further theorized the connections between the artifacts and actions through which genres operate. Russell's activity theory approach, for example, theorizes genres as tools-in-use, operationalized in purposeful activities.

[25] See, for example, Russell, "Rethinking"; Freedman & Medway; and Berkenkotter & Huckin. See also Russell's description of studies that address writing and genre from an activity theory perspective, in "Writing and Genre."

[26] Russell, "Rethinking," p. 511.

Within activity systems, many individual actions may be at play, as the example above suggests. The multiple individual genre performances that contribute to the loading dock's activity system are routine operations that emerge from the repetition of communicative actions.[27] When these communicative actions first occurred, they were novel; however, as these actions were repeated, they became habitual operations—genres. Order sheets thus became an organizational genre as Rath's employees systematized a type of communicative interaction for getting products from the production areas onto vehicles for shipment. And, as this system changed, so, too, did genre performance.

Multiple activity systems exist within any given organization. Large organizations such as Rath certainly depend on multiple activity systems to accomplish complex organizational goals. As I have already suggested, this multiplicity produces large genre clusters. And, disentangling these clusters is complicated because a single genre may be operationalized for different purposes in several activity systems. At Rath, for example, the single genre of employee performance records contributed to multiple activity systems, as individuals in different locations across the organization used this genre as a tool to accomplish different tasks (see Table 3.1 below).

The information collected on these performance records was thus operationalized in different ways to accomplish varied tasks. This is an important point because it helps illustrate how meaning is not defined by the physical arrangement of text on a page (i.e., form), but by how a given text is interpreted and put to use (i.e., action). The data collected in more-or-less stable textual forms about employee performance became meaningful only as

[27] See Russell, "Rethinking," pgs. 515-516.

Table 3.1. Activities Associated with Employee Performance Records at Rath

Genre Tool	Individuals	Objectives
Performance record	Supervisors	to measure employee contribution to departmental goals and ensure its adequacy
	Accountants	to determine employee wages and issue a paycheck
	production planners	to (re)schedule the flow of operations and meet customer orders
	industrial engineers	to grade worker performance levels and calibrate pay scales and improve production methods

it was interpreted by individuals pursuing objectives. For the accountants producing paychecks, the performance data became a multiplier for determining a number to be placed on a paycheck and in the company's accounting records. For the production planners, on the other hand, the same data became a tool for analyzing and adjusting work activities via schedules that would determine what would be done on the following shift. The accountants, production planners, and still other individuals within the organization thus used performance records as a type of intertext as they engaged in their own communicative practices. As this example suggests, in complex organizations, multiple genres are strung together in the organizational pursuit of macro-level objectives.

An activity perspective on macro-level organizational objectives offers a way to theorize connections between the texts that individuals produce in their routine activities (e.g., generating paychecks) and the routine activities that help define the organization. This perspective is particularly valuable because it offers a way to examine professional communication as social practice without becoming trapped in a text/context binary. Within any organization, people are engaged in multiple activities that (re)produce the structures that

help define the organization. The mutual constitution process is a central proposition in Giddens' theory of structuration, leading to the argument that "social systems only exist in and through structuration, as the outcome of the contingent acts of a multiplicity of human beings."[28] Communicative practices are deeply embedded in the networks of contingent acts that define organizations. They are among the most powerful tools for organizing social systems because they have the potential to orient multiple people toward the same objectives. Indeed, to organize people's work activities so that their work yields valued objects (e.g., a smoked ham or an annual report) and then to coordinate networks of such activities, organizational participants rely on long chains of more-or-less routine communicative exchanges. Genres are thus evidence of people's participation in the lifeworld of an organization.

In the following chapters, I illustrate how such structuration operates in organizations by focusing on three types of activities—management, regulation, and technology—as they were practiced at Rath from 1920 until 1985. I examine each of these as a network of activities mediated by communicative practices that changed over time. Consequently, management is not simply the people who hold designated organizational offices or a paradigm for organizing behavior. Regulations are not merely rules that must be observed or violated with predictable consequences. And, communication technology does not determine the communicative practices that organizational participants use. Instead, as my study suggests, management, regulation, and technology are all activities produced and reproduced through communicative practices—practices that are reshaped as communicators are engaged in multiple, overlapping networks of activity. Before beginning my detailed examinations of

---

[28] Giddens, *Profiles*, p. 35.

these activity networks, I offer a focused example in the remainder of this chapter that illustrates how my four claims work together to help make analytical sense of the practices of professionals communicating in organizations.

An Example: Rath's Genres for Communicating with Employees Working in Remote Locations

To further illustrate the four interrelated claims I have presented in this chapter, I now examine the genre practices employed at Rath to facilitate communication between employees at the main plant and those working at remote locations. This example is designed to show how these claims work together to form a genre perspective on the habits of professionals communicating before I begin my more detailed examination in subsequent chapters. With this example, I demonstrate that a genre perspective in professional communication studies is useful not only for organizing and describing multiple communicative practices, but also for making sense of how those practices work together to coordinate organizational activities. As I discuss below, this perspective provides a way of understanding how genres proliferated within a specific, geographically dispersed organization, and how individual participation in these genre practices (and their related activities) helped define the organization. Rather than explicitly focusing on the four claims I have developed thus far in this chapter, I embed them in my examination of how Rath used this particular collection of genre practices.

From the early 1920s until the mid 1980s, The Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa, operated regional branch offices in several major cities. Like many other national

companies that had expanded into multi-unit operations,[29] the Rath organization was not defined by a single facility location. Indeed, as the company grew from the 1920s until the 1970s, the number of organizational employees working in remote locations steadily increased. Always searching for the best way to control and coordinate company activities outside Waterloo, Rath's administrative employees experimented with different means of communication. The network of communicative practices they used is remarkable for its complexity and the extent to which it taxed the company's managerial and communicative resources. As I discuss below, this large, dynamic network provided a type of common identity for the geographically dispersed employees by repeatedly articulating their individual activities within an organizational framework.

Communicating with Employees in Remote Locations: The Proliferation of Organizational Genres

As Rath's operations expanded to facilities across the country, and as the company's sales agents canvassed large regions between these facilities, employees depended on frequent and reliable communicative exchanges. These exchanges brought together employees working in three type of locations: (1) those at the main facility in Waterloo (2) those at the company's several branch houses who were manufacturing limited lines of Rath processed meat products, and (3) those who worked from satellite offices to sell company products to retail stores and institutions throughout a geographical region. The company's ability to transact and coordinate its business across this dispersed organization hinged on the employees' abilities to exchange information. The employees working from remote

[29] For an overview of this general trend in business history, see Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), pgs. 455-483.

locations, for example, needed to know when to expect orders and what they were authorized to manufacture and sell. Conversely, Waterloo employees depended on communication from the employees dispersed across the country to plan manufacturing activities, schedule shipments, develop regional product lines, issue billing statements and paychecks, etc. Thus, Rath's participation in interstate commerce—a large-scale activity system—led to many diverse communicative exchanges. For the most part, these exchanges were accomplished through highly repetitious routines that are evident in the organization's genre forms. Orders were issued almost daily to the sales office in Waterloo. Manufacturing specifications were sent to branch offices as the company altered its products. Product announcements were delivered to salespeople from several departments in Waterloo. Policies for governing branch operations were dictated by administrators in Waterloo. Reports of sales and manufacturing were regularly sent to the company's central accounting offices. Information about national and regional market trends was frequently exchanged by people throughout the organization.

As these information exchanges became entrenched in the day-to-day operations of the company, Rath's employees developed habits for handling their repetitious tasks. Over time, many of these habits became so standardized—so much a part of the structure of work—that employees developed forms to facilitate their routine exchanges. Salespeople, for example, used a standard form to request shipments to retailers from Waterloo. Product planners specified manufacturing processes and ingredients on forms designed for such information (and easily recognizable by those performing the processes in branch houses). Product announcements were made via bulletins that were issued to salesmen on an almost daily basis. Procedures and instructions were typically transmitted on official forms, which

employees were instructed to keep in accessible binders. Employee sales and manufacturing activities were reported on various types of productivity records. National market trends were reported in newsletters sent to remote employees, while regional market trends were reported via data collection forms sent to Waterloo. In concert, these routine exchanges (and several more not mentioned here) supported a network of activities that enabled Rath to extend its markets across the country. The company's success in constructing and maintaining this network, in fact, led company administrators to boast that Rath moved meat as efficiently as the postal service moved mail.[30]

Rath was able to coordinate activities across its dispersed organization through frequent generic exchanges. These exchanges, however, were not discrete activities. The genres that employees circulated across the organization were linked to still other—and often more elaborate—networks of genre-mediated activities. That is, the several generic exchanges I identified above were intertextually[31] coupled with previous *and* subsequent activity systems. A product announcement issued to salespeople across the country, for example, marked the end of a research and development activity that may have taken years. Such was the case when Rath began marketing a meat product called Chopettes.[32] Prior to introducing Chopettes to salespeople via bulletins and sales meetings, people throughout the organization had been engaged in communicative exchanges that made selling such a product

---

[30] Company officials made this comparison in a self-published book for the company's 50th anniversary in 1941: *Waterloo Packer: The Story of the Rath Packing Company* (Waterloo, Iowa: Rath Packing Company, c1941).

[31] I am drawing on the notion of intertextuality developed by Devitt. She identifies three type of intertextuality: generic intertextuality based on types of texts, referential intertextuality based on how one text uses another (via citation, etc.), and functional intertextuality based on how texts interact within organizations. In my example, I am primarily discussing functional intertextuality.

[32] Chopettes were a breaded and frozen meat product formed in the shape of a more traditional meat chop. Chopettes were comprised of the beef, veal, or pork pieces that were left after the production of traditional meat cuts.

feasible. Administrators had considered the financial benefits of selling product trimmings. Company engineers and scientists had studied potential uses for such trimmings. Managers and process engineers had planned methods for combining the trimmings into a product. Marketing professionals had tested proposed products to predict sales potential. Advertising professionals had considered ways to promote the formed product to consumers. Planners had developed specifications for manufacturing the product. Company lawyers had patented the process and copyrighted the product name. Production employees had drawn supplies from inventory, performed a series of operations recorded on various forms, and sent their completed Chopettes to the company's shipping storage area. Through a long, intricate chain of genre-mediated activities, the organization was thus drawn together. People across the organization were linked not only by the genre types they routinely shared, but also by the intertexts those genres carried with them as they linked organizational activities.

Becoming Part of the Organization: The Consequences of Genre Participation

The extensive network of communicative practices that linked organizational activities also created more-or-less stable identities for organizational participants. People derived their organizational identities through their participation in communicative exchanges with others. As I have suggested already, most of these exchanges became routine and were accomplished through the paperwork that is typical of bureaucratic work arrangements. Despite the importance of these exchanges, however, texts were not the primary objective of most employees' activity systems. Employees were more clearly identified with the material activities they performed than with the genres in which they participated. Such identities are evident in many of the organization's job titles (salesman,

loader, cutter, buyer, etc.). However, it was primarily these employees' participation in genre practices that made their activities cohere with others in the organization (e.g., salesmen were linked to loaders through shipping statements and receipts).

Through their active participation in repetitious communicative exchanges, employees (re)constructed their organizational identities. With every decision to repeat or vary prior communicative practices, the employees participated in the (re)production of the organization. For the most part, employees opted to reproduce prior practices in their daily activities. Because of the strong linkages between organizational activity systems, however, most employees had little control over the habits that were deeply embedded in the way things were done in the company. Written correspondence between branch offices and Waterloo, for example, was a practice defined by the participation of several parties and did not readily accommodate individual variation. Over time, habits for conducting such communication had developed, and participation in this organizational genre was governed by rules. Extreme variation, in fact, was subject to discipline. Such was the case, for example, when a branch office manager in Decatur, Illinois, sent a salesman training report to Waterloo on the wrong form in 1959. Responding to this variation in the organization's communicative habits, the Waterloo manager in charge of branch operations replies: "[We] notice you used the Rath letterhead stationery in your report on sales trainee Richard Tomlinson's first week of sales training. . . . it is suggested that you use inter-office stationery for this type of correspondence and use the Rath letterhead only for outside correspondence."[33] Such direct disciplining of employee genre participation was more the

[33] February 17, 1959, B. L. Akers to W. O. Lipscomb, C005/049.

exception than the rule, however, as most communicative exchanges simply reproduced prior practices.[34]

At the same time that employees were (re)constructing their organizational roles through their individual communicative practices, others were engaged in activities that impinged upon them. Management and supervision activities, for example, were primarily directed toward organizing employee activities. Administrators in Rath's Waterloo offices were particularly concerned with the public identities that employees at remote locations were constructing through their activities. The company's corporate identity was largely defined for the public by these employees, so administrators devoted a great deal of attention to communicating corporate values to them through regular exchanges. The remote offices, for example, were all supplied with intra-company letterhead memo forms (mentioned above) that identified the satellite office as part of The Rath Packing Company. Communication with the regional salesmen who canvassed large territories was even more elaborate to ensure effective (re)presentation of the organization.

Rath's Satellite Offices. In many ways, administrators in Waterloo exerted direct authorial control over the communicative practices of employees in satellite offices. In both written and oral forms, sales managers in Waterloo kept branch house managers accountable for their production activities and the training of workers, including the regional salesmen. Production, expense, and inventory reports, for example, were regularly sent to Waterloo where they were analyzed, forwarded to other departments that needed the information (such

[34] Rath's management devoted much of its attention to encouraging such reproduction in their pursuit of predictability and control. The company's managers, in fact, encouraged the solidification of genre habits into rules by defining systems for communicating; such rules were codified in the company's official policies and procedures.

as accounting), and filed. On-site training produced still another set of texts as trainees were required to summarize their learning and activities on a weekly basis in reports they would send to Waterloo, and also as they were evaluated by regional supervisors on forms supplied by company administrators in Waterloo.

Waterloo administrators were often no less obtrusive as they intervened in the day-to-day practices of the managers overseeing the satellite offices. This heavy-handedness is evident in many of the directives sent to the offices from the sales manager in Waterloo. Such was the case in 1943, for example, when the managers at remote locations were directed to study the possibilities for expanding their operations after World War II. To conduct such studies, the managers were directed to initiate new communicative tasks:

> You will hear from us occasionally as we develop our thinking on the kind of information and recommendations we want. In the meantime, please keep this letter before you and discuss various phases of it with employees in your organization.
>
> It might be in order to suggest you have a separate notebook and label it "Post-War Planning." It is important that you make notes as these thoughts come to you as you study the post-war situation. We would like to suggest that you occasionally spend a couple of hours by yourself in studying some of the things mentioned in this letter and make notes about them or any other ideas you might have. Establish a post-war file in your desk. Keep all records that you make and correspondence we have in this file.

> We are not asking for a report to be made at any particular time, but we don't want you to delay your research work on it, as none of us know just how soon we will want to ask you to make such a report to this office.[35]

As I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter, such explicit, paternal oversight was common during this time in Rath's history. The directives sent to satellite offices after the war tend to be equally explicit. Following this pattern, sales managers in Waterloo attempted to manage advertising at remote locations by directing employees in branch offices and salesmen to execute specific practices. Sending, for example, instructions and photographs to ensure that new types of store displays were constructed as planned. Such detailed correspondence was common practice throughout the company's history as the sales office in Waterloo took an active role in defining model communicative practices for accomplishing an expanding range of activities. Decades later, this pattern was still evident in correspondence issued by the sales manager, as in a 1973 letter that directs managers and accountants around the country to use their list of delinquent accounts "as an asset" and as "a tool for sales and promotion rather than thinking of it only as a restriction of sales and deliveries."[36] Attempts like these to directly control even the minute communicative practices of employees working at satellite offices suggest that the sales managers in Waterloo used written communication primarily as a tool for exerting control. This tool, however, took different forms as the example below suggests. For whereas the sales managers used blunt directives to communicate with employees in satellite offices, they relied on different genre practices to influence the behavior of company salesmen.

---

[35] October 29, 1943, J. A. Muth to all district and office managers, PR017/023.
[36] October 12, 1973, C. H. Parker to Branch Managers and Accountants, C010/014.

Rath's Salesmen. In contrast with the employees working in satellite offices, Rath's salesmen worked outside clearly defined organizational settings. The company's communication with them, in turn, was less directive and more frequent. Although all salesmen owned a basic policy manual that they were given as part of their training, most communication with them was not as authorial as the correspondence sent to satellite offices. Instead, the Waterloo sales office had two primary means of communicating with the salesmen: (1) a large yearly sales meeting at which an annual Sales Program Manual was distributed, and (2) an almost daily barrage of bulletins mailed across the country.

At Rath's annual sales meetings, which began in the 1930s, employees from the sales office in Waterloo met with salesmen from across the country. During these meetings, speakers presented new company products, company news, and sales goals to Rath's most geographically dispersed group of employees. It was during these meetings that salesmen across different regions of the country came together and associated with the managers and administrators that they otherwise knew only through the bulletins they received regularly throughout the year. At these meetings, the salesmen were presented with their sales manuals. The first Sales Program Manual was produced in 1940, consisting of little more than an extended text, structured in epistolary form (a series of paragraphs addressed to the readers) and bound in a paper cover. By the mid 1950s, however, the company had developed its Sales Program Manual into a more elaborate structure (with clearly identified sections and metatextual cues to guide the readers through the text). By this time, the manual was clearly a tool for ensuring that the sales force drew on a similar pool of knowledge as they represented the company to the public. This basic structure was repeated decade after

decade, as manuals were published into the 1970s for distribution at the company's annual sales meetings.

Between annual sales meetings, the sales office at Waterloo communicated with these salesmen through bulletins that were mailed from the Waterloo plant several times every week. These bulletins served a variety of purposes—from announcing new products to defining company sales policies. And their forms varied significantly, though they were always dated and numbered sequentially (within each year). In most cases, the bulletins were signed as if they were a letter, although they only occasionally began with a salutation. Many included headlines, giving them the appearance of a newsletter, and some included pictures or other graphic images.

The variation between bulletins can partly be explained by their origins. Some bulletins were issued by departments within the organization to promote a product line, such as the Thuringer bulletins issued by the Dry Sausage Department in 1934. Other departments would use bulletins to announce the available stock of a specific product and to discourage salesmen from pushing a product that was out of stock. In these instances, the bulletins were treated as a type of forum for educating salesmen. In 1942, for example, the salesmen were introduced to "push items":

> You will note in the Vacuum Cooked price lists this week large stars opposite the prices on several products. These are what might be known as "push items," meaning that we have reasonable stocks on hand and if sold at our listed prices they will be filled. Large orders, of course, are subject to confirmation.

> This does not mean that we are necessarily out of stock or that the quantity we have to sell is low on other items. But it does mean that we would like to have you give special attention to the items which are starred.[37]

In other cases, the bulletins were issued directly from the sales office, providing the remote salesmen with information that defined organizational practices. During World War II, the sales office used bulletins to explain government policies related to regulatory controls, such as the amount of canned goods that could be sold to a given store. On other occasions, bulletins included procedure-like instructions, exhortations to sell more or in a certain way, a story about a salesman who had exceeded his quota, and reproductions of customer letters sent to Rath about a specific product.

Much less frequently, bulletins were used as information-gathering forms, requiring the salesmen to record data on the bulletins themselves and return them to the sales office. In 1935, for example, the salesmen were sent a bulletin with a questionnaire form asking them about South American corned beef. Managers at Rath wanted to know whether the sales people thought they could distribute such a product in their territories, what competitors were already selling such a product in their areas, what sizes consumers would desire, and sales estimates.[38] Though rare, this type of bulletin was repeated during subsequent decades, as managers at Rath used their salesmen to conduct small-scale market surveys.

While the sales office used its annual Sales Program Manuals and bulletins to communicate with salesmen, the salesmen had their own genres for communicating with the branch managers who oversaw their daily activities. A 1958 job description for Rath's sales

---

[37] June 15, 1942, PR001/008.
[38] May 7, 1935, PR001/008.

employees suggests the range of communicative practices the salesmen employed. They were directed to carry record cards in binders for recording every sale, retail calling lists for recording their specific contacts, itineraries for outlining the following week's work, reports to be sent to their branch offices every day, and weekly sales and merchandising reports to be sent to their branch offices each Saturday (with duplicate copies to be sent to Waterloo). All of these texts were recorded on forms designed and registered by the company sales office and procedures for completing all of them were described in the policy manual issued to every company-trained salesman. These written forms of communication formed the backbone of information exchanges between salesmen and Waterloo. They were, however, supplemented by more ad hoc communication forms including telephone calls, telegrams, and teletype messages. These electronically mediated forms of communication offered particular advantages for communicating over long distances and in shorter amounts of time. (I discuss these communication forms and their influence on Rath's genre practices in greater detail in Chapter 6.)

Summary of Genre and Communication within Rath's Dispersed Organization

For much of this century, Rath operated a successful interstate business that included multiple satellite offices and a large sales force that represented the organization to retailers and consumers across the country. To organize the activities of these employees, the company relied on several communicative practices that through habit and managerial discipline became routine genres. Participation in these genre practices gave employees a type of organizational identity that linked them to other employees working in remote

locations. Indeed, the organization itself was primarily constituted by the routine communicative interactions of individuals employed in the company's business.

The genres these employees used in their day-to-day activities had histories of use within the company, giving current practices a sense of coherency with the prior practices of the organization. The ritual participation in genres such as the intra-office memorandum, the Sales Program Manual, and the sales bulletin ordered organizational activities over time—even as employee participation in these rituals varied slightly in each instantiation. As I have suggested, the genres-in-use at Rath were embedded in activities that changed frequently; thus, it is useful to examine these communicative practices from a theoretical approach such as the nonformalist genre perspective I outlined above.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that studying communication in the workplace from a genre perspective will help researchers account for social and historical variation in the communicative practices of professionals. I have presented four claims about communicative practices in the workplace and used illustrations from my study to support them. In an extended analysis of the communicative practices that allowed Rath to conduct business across its geographically dispersed organization, I demonstrated the work that a genre perspective can do for researchers.

In subsequent chapters of this dissertation, I extend my investigation of communicative practices at Rath by examining the interplay between those practices and three varied networks of workplace activities: management, regulation, and technology. As I will discuss, these workplace activities are closely tied to the communicative habits of the

organized workplace. My purpose is not to conclude which organizational activities scholars should examine; I am simply focusing on three types of activities that seem illustrative in this case to contribute to our historical understanding of how communicative habits become embedded in organizations.

Examining genre routines within Rath from 1920 until 1985, I demonstrate how—as Giddens would suggest—"social practices [were] ordered across space and time."[39] Longitudinal studies such as this are necessary for examining genre dynamics that emerge over time. My overall purpose in the following chapters is to investigate the generic patterns of communication that emerged in Rath and the nature of the company's organizational genre configurations. Each chapter, however, is guided by a more focused question:

- *How did the interplay between management systems and communicative practices manifest itself in Rath's organizational genres?*
- *How did governmental regulation during the twentieth century affect Rath's communicative practices—and, in what ways did those communicative practices affect legislation?*
- *As communicative practices and communication technologies evolved at Rath, how did they affect each other?*

[39] Giddens, *Constitution*, p. 2.

CHAPTER 4: MANAGEMENT

> Management functions achieve objectives by the use of managerial tools. They consist of policies, organization structure, budgets, plans and programs, job descriptions, standards, [and] reports.
>
> Rath Packing Company training manual[1]

From its first days in Waterloo, The Rath Packing Company was primarily a family business. Even as the company expanded rapidly in the early twentieth century, members of the Rath family assumed key leadership roles in the bureaucratic structure they had developed to facilitate expansive and increasingly diverse operations. During this time, men from outside the family also occupied important positions in Rath, though these officers were always drawn from a group that had been with the company for several years. These men, most of whom had prepared for their business careers in college, helped create one of the largest independent meatpacking companies in the country. Indeed, for most of the company's history, Rath was managed at its highest levels by this closely knit group of family members and associates who were steeped in the company's ways of operating. The succession of these men in key management positions helped perpetuate the company's traditional approach to management, affecting not only the types of decisions administrators made, but also the communicative practices they encouraged. When faced with increasingly difficult economic conditions in the 1960s, however, Rath's Board of Directors began turning toward professionals trained outside the company. In 1966, for example, they brought in a new President from another industrial company, accelerating the professionalization of management within Rath. New managers brought with them current ideas about how

[1] No date (internal references suggest late 1970s), "Principles of Management," TM015.

company operations should be organized, ideas that led to variations in the company's traditional communicative practices. In this chapter, I examine the history of management activities at Rath in terms of the interplay of those activities with the company's communicative practices.

Management and Communication as Linked Networks of Practice

Communicative practices at Rath emerged from complex organizational activities—many of which were repeated over time and by different people, giving daily routines within the company a type of coherence. Managers at all levels fostered this *repetition* as a way of stabilizing the interactions of people and thereby achieving their business objectives. Such repetition, however, was constantly challenged by the flux of unpredictable exigencies that led to *variation* in organizational activities. Negotiating a course of action between the *repetition* and *variation*, Rath's management advanced a large and sometimes unwieldy collection of communicative practices.[2] The term *management* at Rath was often associated with those individuals who occupied positions of organizational authority such as the president, officers, foremen, and supervisors. In my analysis, however, I have expanded the meaning of this term to acknowledge that organizational participants without such positions also contributed to regulating the ways things were done at Rath. Their activities, too, contributed to the collection of practices I examine under the rubric of *management*.[3]

---

[2] For example, production operating standards in the 1960s were mediated and enforced through several genres that management introduced to the organization when they instituted industrial engineering as a part of the company's routine activities. The genres that supported industrial engineering at Rath during this decade include check sheets, standard bulletins, time studies, posting sheets, job descriptions, and production sheets. The complex interactions of these genres are described in the company's *Industrial Engineering Procedures* (TM003). I examine this large collection of genres in Chapter 6.

[3] Tony J. Watson, *In Search of Management: Culture, Chaos and Control in Managerial Work* (London: Routledge, 1994) addresses the difficulties with defining management solely in terms of organizational positions. Watson notes multiple senses in which the term *management* can be used (p. 35).

Management at Rath encompassed a range of organizing activities mediated by communicative practices. There was, for example, the plotting of business operations (e.g., new product lines, day-to-day production activities) via planing documents such as research proposals and statements of work. There was the monitoring of work activities, including the flow of meat products, via routine records such as purchase orders, slaughter reports, production accounts, inventory sheets, and sales receipts. There was also the disciplining of organizational activities via procedure and policy statements. This complex mix of communicative practices was under constant revision as administrators introduced new ways of doing business.[4] A work measurement program introduced by administrators in the late 1940s, for example, led to the creation of detailed job descriptions that defined production employees' roles in terms of discrete job functions. These descriptions, in turn, led to changes in a much larger collection of documents—from performance analysis reports to weekly paychecks—that specified how employees were evaluated and compensated for their work.

As I discuss in this chapter, the arrangement of work activities into complex managed systems frequently gave rise to overlapping genre sets within the company. Rath's intricate

[4] The company's rapid expansion during the 1920s and 1930s complicated the management of finances for Rath and led to significant variations in the company's accounting-related communicative practices. This variation occurred as the growing pool of employees posed challenges for the accounting system that John W. Rath had developed in the 1890s before there were even clerical workers at the company. Calculating, documenting, and dispersing payrolls involved a specialized genre system that had to be carefully managed to ensure the company's financial stability. When Rath introduced its group life insurance program in 1925, for example, the general payroll accounting system had to be modified. The group life insurance program introduced new records to be kept, new correspondence to be maintained with the insurer, new data to be recorded on payroll statements, new budget categories to be calculated, and new legal documents to be processed. A seemingly minor change in employee benefits such as the addition of life insurance would trigger adjustments in the entire accounting genre system—a phenomenon that would be repeated in different forms throughout the company as management sought to alter activities that they had earlier arranged into systems defined by series of inter-related genres.

accounting system, as I have suggested, was sensitive to more than changes in the handling of payrolls: the administrators of Rath's accounting system had to document the company's buying and selling operations as they were executed by Rath's agents at sites often far removed from the accounting office. This accounting system had to accommodate payroll genres, purchasing genres, and still other genre sets, such as those connected with bank transactions, investors, and insurance.[5] Each of these genre sets, in turn, was linked to still more texts circulating around and through the company. The genres associated with buying and selling livestock, for example, were linked to a network of related activities—governmental inspection—as I discuss in Chapter 5. To begin to understand the scope of communicative practices at Rath, it is thus necessary to consider the ways by which organizational activities were organized.

The bureaucratic arrangements that developed at Rath during the first decades of this century played a large role in the structuration of organizational activities and their related communicative practices. These arrangements began after World War I, when the company's expanding production operations were categorically divided by the types of animals being processed—hogs, sheep, cattle, and birds—and by the ways that the meat was processed—fresh meat, canned meat, salted meat, and vacuum-cooked meat. To order the diverse activities associated with each of these product-based operations, administrators at Rath created departmental divisions, which (in various configurations) would exist in the

[5] See Chapter 6 for a description of how accounting technologies encouraged specific genre routines at Rath during this era.

company from that point forward.[6] These departmental divisions were made concrete by the spatial separation of managed groups into their own floors or even into separate buildings. The need for coordination between these localized groups of functional activities and the dispersed layers of management that helped organize them gave rise to communicative practices such as the interoffice memo and the interdepartmental procedures that supplemented departmental procedures.[7] These functional bureaucratic arrangements extended still further as the company's several branch offices were opened to manage the selling of company products to remote locations. Bureaucracy thus underpins my examination of management at Rath.

Systems of management[8]—the underlying sets of activities for ordering Rath's bureaucracy—were under constant revision in the company. Much like John Law describes

---

[6] It was during this period of expansion that Rath needed to extend authority to a small group of men who would manage and supervise the newly created departments. Like other companies, Rath had discovered that the complexities of factory production created a need for the first "full-time professional managers" to oversee operations. See Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), p. 24.

[7] The archival records for this period are the least complete part of The Rath Packing Company collection. However, the few existing documents do suggest the general practices employed during this decade.

[8] *Systematic Management* identifies a set of managerial practices that emerged with the organization of factory work in the later nineteenth century. Faced with the chaos of the factory foreman system, factory owners were receptive to recommendations about how to improve industrial production. From 1870 until 1900, several people—though primarily a "new professional group of engineers [who had] started to gain power and influence in managerial spheres"—advanced ideas for improving factory systems (see Stephen P. Waring, *Taylorism Transformed: Scientific Management Theory Since 1945* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991], p. 40). Their collective efforts are now discussed as the principles of *systematic management*, though when these ideas were first being advanced, they were viewed as discrete ways or systems for addressing specific problems (Joseph Litterer, *The Emergence of Systematic Management as Shown by the Literature of Management from 1870-1900* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1986], p. 123). These individual systems included cost accounting procedures, wage plans, inventory operations, and production methods. As these systems became more widespread, professional managers trained to oversee them began to replace shop foremen. In the new, increasingly complex factory systems, foremen could no longer draw on their experience to produce a known product. The manufacturing jobs were more rigorously engineered, and traditional, "rule-of-thumb" knowledge of production—the type of expertise most foremen possessed—became less important. [note continued on next page . . .]

in his study of ordering in formal organizations, order at Rath was "never complete"—"there [was] order*ing*, but there [was] certainly no ord*er*."[9] These continuous changes in the company's managerial activities were marked by variations in the communicative practices that sustained them. As Giddens suggests in his discussion of modern bureaucracies like Rath, documents are both "records of the past" and "prescriptions for the future."[10] Documents, as tools for ordering organizational activities into temporal systems, thus suggest a great deal about how work is managed in an organization.

Communicating to Manage Activities in Waterloo

From the 1920s until the 1980s, the frequency of written communication at Rath increased exponentially. In part, this growth paralleled the expansion of company operations as Rath steadily increased its market volumes for many years during this period. More significant, however, were the managerial practices being employed. During these decades, the company experimented with a variety of managerial practices, extending and amending its existing systematic management habits to address shifting business conditions.

[. . . note continued from previous page] New communication tools (e.g., job cards and time clocks) eliminated some of the foremen's responsibilities, and trained engineers revised or eliminated other foremen functions. Foremen slowly became subordinate to the new factory systems. The systems, although seldom integrated into a single managerial program by the new managers, did lead to new levels of organizational standardization. This standardization altered traditional labor habits (i.e., the skilled manual activities of production) and produced information-intensive communicative practices such as production reports and inventory records to complement the new managed systems. In addition, standardization also led to routine communicative exchanges that would encourage the emergence of workplace genres. In fact, many of the communicative practices we now identify as *professional communication* originated with the principles of systematic management. Yates has drawn out the implications of systematic management for workplace communication in far greater detail than any other scholar, contending that the relationship between management thought and communication practices was not simply a matter of practices conforming to systems. Communication did not only result from management programs; rather, it drove and shaped those programs as much as it was used by them. Her study leads her to argue that networks of communication hold modern organizations together. See *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. xv.

[9] John Law, *Organizing Modernity* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994), pg. 1 (Law's emphasis).

[10] Giddens, *The Constitution*, p. 152.

Throughout these years, company officials were motivated to improve organization, efficiency, and control in their efforts to ensure Rath's financial stability and growth. As I demonstrate below, communication—mediated in various genres—was *the* primary tool they used.

The actual communicative practices employed by Rath's managers were borrowed from several different sources, reflecting contemporary trends in professional management. At times, managers drew on practices associated with engineering, science, accounting, psychology, welfare, and even democracy. Traces of all of these influences tended to linger in the company's communicative practices after management had abandoned a given practice in favor of another. The accounting practices that were introduced early in the century, for example, were adapted as cost accounting management techniques in the 1960s. As the century progressed, existing management practices were configured in several different ways to address tensions that emerged in the company—sometimes producing conflicting practices that would operate concurrently. Such a contradiction was evident, for example, in the late 1950s when administrators attempted to layer the company's existing bureaucratic controls with a participatory management program.

The story of management and communication at Rath during this period is also a story of professionalization. As the company matured, it placed more and more emphasis on management practices endorsed by professional and academic institutions. This trend was signaled in the company's 1930 decision to recruit college graduates to fill non-production job vacancies—a practice that would continue for several decades. In 1951, Rath's culture of managerialism was further reinforced with the formation of the Rath Management Club—an exclusive organization in which managers at all levels socialized and participated in

educational programs. These educational programs included special training seminars and programs, during which managers were exposed to current trends in management and to the ideas of business theorists such as Peter F. Drucker.[11] The organizational practices introduced by the professionalized managers at Rath were often text-intensive. New ways of organizing operations, improving efficiency, and controlling company activities all led to the institution of communicative practices that were without precedent in the company's history, as I describe below. With these practices came the regularity of organizational activities—the repetition—necessary for the emergence of workplace genres.

The management approaches I examine in this chapter were all variations of the company's efforts to systematically order its activities. Systematic management controls—the building blocks of modern corporate enterprise—would influence company operations for Rath's entire existence, though they would take varied forms. To examine the complex managerial activities affecting communicative practices at Rath from 1920 until 1985, I identify three management approaches that were designed to order organizational activities during this sixty-five year period. I examine each of these approaches in some detail to show their significance in the repetition and variation of the company's genre routines. The management approaches I discuss are borrowed from the work of management historians like Mauro F Guillén, Judith A. Merkle, Andrea Tone, and Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., who have

[11] Papers from the Rath Management Club's programs suggest the breadth of material managers were exposed to from the 1950s to the 1970s, including seminars on communication and handling employee grievances. The management club sponsored management training programs for the growing number of college-trained professionals at Rath after World War II. From 1959 until 1963, the club offered programs called "Principles of Managing," "Management Case Problems," "Issues in Modern Management," "Action Course in Practical Politics," "Group Discussion," and "Conference Leadership." (See record in June 26, 1963, John H. Stevens to Harry Slife, R009/015). The professionalization of management was not limited to club activities. During company-sponsored communications training in the 1960s, managers were given a descriptive bibliography of management literature produced by the National Management Association, recommending that they read the work of management theorists such as Drucker and communication specialists like Stuart Chase (R004/015).

examined the emergence of contemporary business enterprise in far greater detail than I do here. The approaches—paternal management, scientific management, and structural analysis management—are analytical categories I have selected for organizing my examination because a detailed description of every individual managerial technique at the company is beyond the scope of this study. My examination of each of these approaches is designed to offer insights into different aspects of the complex interplay between managerial activities and communicative practices. The observable patterns of genre that emerged from this interplay are the focus of this chapter.

My discussion is divided into three sections outlined in Table 4.1 below. While these categorical approaches suggest that Rath's management evolved through definite periods, that is *not* the case. Systematic management, for example, was practiced at the company during its entire history. Other management approaches were layered on existing systematic controls—and frequently on each other. As I have argued, too, traces of prior management practices tended to linger in the company long after management had shifted its focus. Thus, I offer these categorical distinctions simply as a way to conceptualize management trends at Rath during different eras.

Table 4.1. Management Approaches and Communicative Practices at Rath

Management Approach	Dates	Typical Management Activities	Associated Genre Practices
Paternal Management	1890s-1979	• centralized authority and top-down controls • patriarchal management succession • creation of corporate welfare programs	• open letters • bulletin boards • employee newsletters
Scientific Management	1948-1979	• wages based on measured work performance • separation of "brainwork" and labor • division of work into specialized tasks • pursuit of the "one best way"	• standard data sheets • time-motion studies • manning studies • capacity charts • statistical analysis • forms control
Structural Analysis	1959-1985	• focus on long-range planning • organizational changes via "initiatives" • organizational decisions based on cost accounting • flexible bureaucratic structures • management by objectives • improvement of "channels" and "systems" for communicating	• cost-benefit analysis • objective analysis statements • internal audit reports • strategic plans • exploratory studies

Management Approach 1: Paternal Controls for Rath

For the first half of this century, a paternal approach to management dominated the relationship between administrators and employees at Rath.[12] Control of organizational decisions was concentrated in a small group of officers (most of whom were members of the Rath family), and company officials initiated programs to ensure the welfare of employees. Communicative practices within the company largely reflected this approach to management: correspondence was directed primarily down the chain of authority, employee needs were addressed in administrative texts, and company officers functioned as spokesmen for the entire organization.

Several communicative habits at Rath emerged during the company's earliest years when E. F. and John W. Rath oversaw all administrative activities. As I describe below, many of these habits were perpetuated for decades as male family members succeeded one another in key administrative positions.[13] In fact, John W. Rath oversaw the company as its president until 1943, when he became chairman of the board—a position he filled until his death in 1951. His son (Howard H. Rath), son-in-law (A. D. Donnell), and E. F. Rath's son (R. A. Rath) all filled the organization's top leadership positions, bringing their own sons and other family members into the organization. This management-by-family-members approach at Rath encouraged the reproduction of traditional management techniques in the company

---

[12] Paternalism in management manifests itself in forms of corporate welfare and in the authoritarian hierarchies that the familial metaphor suggests. As historian Andrea Tone has noted, paternalism in the management of industrial enterprise "has assumed multiple guises" (p. 2), making it difficult to identify a definitive set of characteristics. However, he notes, it is "anchored in the reality of employer provision and the expectation of employee deference" (p. 1). Industrial paternalism is thus evident in management-initiated programs ranging "from the Sunday schools of early New England mill towns to the benefit packages of present-day corporate America." See Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[13] Donnell, p. 15.

for years, as members of the younger generation, steeped in company nostalgia, moved into positions of authority. In the 1950s, large portraits of E. F. and John W. Rath were mounted on opposing walls in the company's executive boardroom where they loomed over the decisions made by subsequent organizational leaders. Even after E. F. and John W. Rath were dead, they held sway in the company, as symbolic space was allocated to them in the company's administrative building and operations were run by their descendants.

The strong tradition of family management at Rath had some advantages for the company: stable and consistent leadership proved particularly beneficial during the challenging economic conditions of the 1930s and early 1940s. However, after World War II, family leadership came to be a liability rather than an asset, as the company faced labor and consumer challenges unlike those in previous decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, the company's traditional approach to management often conflicted with the more progressive controls necessary for operating such a large plant. For example, the systematic controls that had emerged with the company's functional bureaucracy were often undermined by co-founder and president, John W. Rath, who continued to behave like the hands-on manager he had been when the company first started. Into the 1940s, he continued his practice of touring the plant with a notebook in hand, micro-managing the operations in which he took an interest,[14] thereby overriding the authority that had been dispersed to functional mid-level managers.

This family approach to management, however, sometimes fostered good working relationships within the company, as administrators assumed a kind of paternal relationship

[14] Donnell, p. 8.

with the employees. In their annual reports to stock holders, Rath's family executives boasted about not laying off company employees during the Depression[15] and about extending its corporate welfare programs. Below I discuss how this managerial approach to ordering company activities gave rise to (1) genres that encouraged company employees to adopt a common, shared identity and (2) genres for overseeing the welfare of those employees.

Defining Common Identities for Employees: Open Letters to the Organization

Against the backdrop of an administrative structure unified by strong familial ties, communicative practices developed that encouraged employees to identify themselves with the organization. Communication with the entire organization—a practice that had been easily negotiated when the Rath's employed only a few people—was not a practice that company administrators were willing to abandon when the company grew rapidly after World War I. No longer able to use oral communication to deliver company-wide messages, the company experimented with forms of written communication.

These practices for communicating with the entire organization supplemented the other, more public, communicative practices the company engaged in during the 1930s. While adverse economic conditions were negatively affecting many other businesses during this decade, Rath remained profitable—allowing the company to continue advertising in national publications such as *Good Housekeeping* (where readers were reminded of "the finest sausage you ever ate!") as well as paying professional photographers to take pictures of

[15] The other major employer in Waterloo, John Deere Tractor Works, was closed for part of the depression. Crowds of unemployed people would gather outside the Rath plant during these years when there was a rumor that the company might be hiring (Donnell, p. 5).

their new branch facilities and equipment so that those in Waterloo could see the company's progress. The majority of Rath's communication during this period, however, is notable for its relative sobriety. Concerned with remaining profitable, Rath's managers approached their tasks conservatively[16]—typically staying with the administrative approaches that had worked during prior years to ensure the repetition of practices (at least in principle) that had made them profitable throughout the 1920s. While steering the company through the economic instabilities of the 1930s, company administrators relied on "open letters" sent to the entire organization to encourage employee participation in shared organizational goals. Through this practice, the administrators reproduced a form of centralized control that had been practiced in the company since its earliest days.

Open letters were an ideal genre practice for perpetuating centralized controls in the organization because they reinforced the hierarchy of company authority. Letters distributed to the entire workforce carried with them an authoritative ethos because only the organization's top managers were in positions to communicate with such an extended audience. Employees and functional supervisors could not command such attention and certainly could not shape organizational attitudes to the same extent as the company's founding father—who had the institutional means to write to everyone. In 1930, for

---

[16] The company took pride in its conservative approach to management, noting their "conservative practice," for example, in the company's 1936 annual report (R001/009). In a 1937 speech detailing the history of the company, a Rath representative touched on this topic, too. After noting that the company was "not affiliated with any other group or large corporation" and that it "remain[ed] one of the few successful independent packers in the country," he explained the reason:

> "This [success] is due to a very conservative management. The officers of the company are sound and practical business men. Other packers may speculate in various ways, but The Rath Packing Company does not speculate, at any time. It is managed and operated strictly on a business basis. . . . every attempt to speculate is discouraged, and a conservative policy is pursued." ("The Rath Packing Company," typed script, R001/001).

example, John W. Rath contributed to this genre with a letter to the entire organization that has strong familial undertones. In his letter "To All in the Rath Packing Company Organization," Rath enjoins employees to think of their shared fortunes in the company's prosperity and to encourage their friends and grocers to purchase Rath products. He suggests that "We should talk this matter over with our families . . ."[17] (See entire letter in Figure 4.1.) The familial impulse in this open letter emerges again during the following year when the plant's General Superintendent also sent a letter to all employees—encouraging them to purchase Rath products. In subsequent years, the open letter genre would evolve into the plant bulletin—a routine form of correspondence posted on boards throughout the plant. As a means of mass communication in the plant, managers discovered that strategically placed bulletins yielded nearly the same results as open letters distributed through other means, and they were less costly. When these bulletins gained prominence in the company's communicative system, the open letter genre died away. In 1971, however, after a string of unprofitable years that had threatened the company's solvency, the open letter genre was resurrected to send a message to Rath employees across the country. In a letter "To All Rath Employees at all Locations," Rath's president, Harry G. Slife, notes the novelty of this genre (mistakenly suggesting that this is the first time such a letter had been sent) and congratulates employees for working through the recent economic hardships. He notes that Rath had been "a company that was headed for bankruptcy," but that working together, they had changed the company's course.[18] Whether it was in a letter or a posted bulletin, the company's management tended to assume a caretaker role in its relationship with employees. These two

[17] June 19, 1930, John W. Rath to company employees, R001/001.
[18] January 1, 1971, Harry G. Slife to company employees, C010/020.

THE RATH PACKING COMPANY

PORK AND BEEF PACKERS

WATERLOO, IOWA

June 19, 1930

TO ALL IN THE RATH PACKING COMPANY ORGANIZATION:

Your job and our job depends upon the sales that we make of the product produced in The Rath Packing Company's plant.

We all admit that we make good product and the fact that we sell so much of it gives us ground for the belief that the public is also of this opinion.

In these times when there is a lack of employment it seems to us that the least we can expect of the people from whom we purchase our groceries and meats is that they buy from us the product that we produce.

We should talk this matter over with our families and they in turn should put the case before the dealers with whom they trade. Surely it is only fair to ask that if we, who make our living at The Rath Packing Company, trade with them, they in turn should give preference to The Rath Packing Company products which we all help produce and distribute.

If your family and friends as well as the men you deal with are interested in you they can show it in a practical way by furthering the sale of your products.

In our mutual interest,

THE RATH PACKING COMPANY

By John Rath
President

Figure 4.1. Open Letter to Organization (R001/001)

forms of correspondence were the most direct ways management at its highest levels communicated with employees, though other, less direct communicative practices would emerge—particularly as these managers took on additional responsibilities for the welfare of Rath's employees.

Tending to Employee Needs: Communicative Practices and Corporate Welfare

Management's paternalistic relationship with company employees also gave rise to an enlarged scope of communicative practices when the company escalated its corporate welfare programs in the 1940s. In 1941, for example, Rath's management instituted a pension plan,[19] stringing together a whole new collection of accounting genres and ensuring a life-long series of communicative exchanges between the company and its employees—albeit in the form of checks and other financial genres. To administer the multiple communicative exchanges that such welfare programs required, management expanded the pool of administrative employees in the 1940s and created yet another functional department in the bureaucracy, Human Relations. Implementing welfare programs such as the pension plan or the expansion of employee health care in 1953 created more administrative paper work, but it was also cause for management to celebrate how it was taking care of its employees, which it did in the company's most widely distributed public document—the annual report.

Annual Reports: Management as Spokesman for the Company. During the late 1930s, management slowly modified the purpose of the annual stockholders' report, using it

[19] The announcement of this new employee benefit was timed to coincide with the company's week-long 50th anniversary celebrations, during which company tradition was a central theme of the celebratory events—including the induction of John W. Rath into the Sac Indian Tribe from which Rath had taken its Black Hawk brand name.

to frame management-employee relations in addition to reporting financial matters. It was with the expansion of corporate welfare programs in the early 1940s, however, that John W. Rath firmly established the practice of representing management's paternal relationship with employees in the report's opening letter to all stockholders, where managers and employees were part of "our organization," and company executives were the benign, guiding spokesmen for the entire workforce. Annual reports thus became a tool for Rath's management to represent manager-employee relations in the public's view—a practice that would become particularly important during labor disputes in later years. In the 1940s, however, statements in the annual report were used more to establish management as a benefactor of employee welfare. In 1941, this practice begins with John W. Rath noting the company's generosity with its employees:

> During the past year the Board of Directors adopted a pension of annuity plan, and made arrangements with the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company that will provide for annuities for our employees. . . . The cost of this plan is paid in part by the employee and a larger part by the company. . . . Our employees have had a group life insurance plan since 1925, and they also receive vacations with pay each year, after one year's service.

In 1942, he points to the company's collective support for members of the workforce who are supporting the war effort:

> Our organization was awarded the United States Treasury Department's Minute Man Flag in recognition of the employees' regular purchases of War

> Bonds. From our ranks more than 1200 employees have gone into the service of our Country. It is our intention to re-employ them upon their return.

The 1943 report (which is co-signed by John W. Rath who has become chairman of the board, and R. A. Rath, the company's new president) continues with this tone of shared organizational pride, noting high employee involvement in the War Bonds program and the

> twelve men, represented by gold stars on our service flag, who have made the supreme sacrifice for their country. These men, and all the rest in the service, are a constant challenge to the men and women of our organization to do their part in the War effort.

In 1944, the Raths confirm management's support of company employees who are away to fight the war, assuming a corporate voice for all those who are still working at the company:

> A separate department has been set up to keep in touch with the 2,540 men and women from our organization who have joined the armed forces. We are proud of the service record of the Rath regiment. Of the above number 43 men have made the supreme sacrifice in the service of their country. Our entire organization pays tribute to these men.
>
> We are looking forward to the return of our Service men when this war is over. They have been promised their jobs when they come home, and we hope it will not be long before they are back in our organization.

When the war was over in 1945, Rath again notes the organization's pride in those who participated, particularly "the 76 men who made the supreme sacrifice." In later years as the

relationship between management and employees was strained by labor disputes, Rath's management would continue to assume its paternal tone. In the 1948 annual report, for example, Rath's president presents an extended and violent strike as a shared problem:

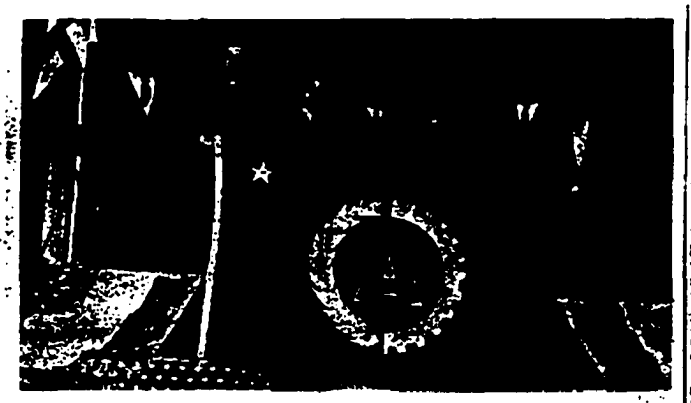
> The year of 1948 resulted in reduced profits for your Company, due in large measure to a Strike. . . . This resulted in a great majority of our plant employees losing from ten to eleven weeks' pay. Losses were incurred not only by our employees but by the producers and your Company as well.

Management Initiatives for Overseeing Employee Relations. Annual reports were a managerial tool far removed from day-to-day operations of the plant. Open letters and bulletins served useful purposes, though they were too routine for combating the monotony of the workplace and did not do enough to engender good worker attitudes after the war. Drawing managerial techniques from the Human Relations movement,[20] Rath managers instituted new practices based more on the psychological and social sciences that were being discussed more frequently in management courses and popular journals. In the mid 1940s, for example, management published the *Land O' Corn News* (see Figure 4.2), primarily an employee relations document with news about Rath people in the services. This newsletter features stories about company employees (primarily heroic war stories during the first year) and benefits available to them. Photographs of employees were also featured prominently in the newsletter, helping create a kind of social identity for individuals who were part of the

[20] Guillén explores the development of the movement in management literature from 1933 until the mid 1960s Its emphasis on "stability, security, work[er] satisfaction, and recognition," he explains, contrasts sharply with scientific management (pgs. 10-11). The titles of the books that helped define this movement suggest the issues that occupied the attention of its followers: *Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (1933), Elton Mayo; *Personality and Organization* (1957), Chris Argyris; *Motivation, Productivity, and Satisfaction of Workers* (1958), Fritz Jules Roethlisberger; and *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), Douglas McGregor.

Vol. 2, No. 3 THE RATH PACKING CO., WATERLOO, IOWA December, 1945—January, 1946

RATH PRESENTED ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Displaying "A" Award Flag. Left to Right: Otis Gooch, Chief Boehm, Beatrice Reichert, H. A. Rath, Etta A. Paulsen, Maurice Casey and Bi Pusey.

See pages 2 and 3 for Pictures of "A" Award

The "A" Award, symbolizing outstanding production of processed foods for the nation at war and comparable to the Army and Navy "E", was awarded to The Rath Packing Company, November 30th. The presentation was made at an inspiring ceremony, attended by a large number of employees, in the garage adjoining the main office.

Lieutenant Commander Herryman, of the United States Naval Pre-Flight Training School, in presenting the Award, expressed the gratitude of the Navy to both employees and management of the Rath organization for the splendid work in supplying food for the war. He also paid tribute to the 2,689 Rath employees in the service and to the 76 men who made the supreme sacrifice for their country.

H. A. Rath, president, accepted the Award on behalf of Rath's, paying tribute to the farmers for carrying on in spite of handicaps and help shortages, also paying tribute to the Rath men and women in service and those who gave their lives.

Maurice Casey, of the U. P. W. A., responded in behalf of the employees.

Ben Fiffe, Assistant Chief of the Production and Marketing Administration, Information Service, United States Department of Agriculture, emphasized the importance of keeping up food production to win the peace and prevent out-break of new wars.

Mayor Ralph B. Slipp, J. W. Rath (Chairman of the Board of Directors), A. H. Donnell (Secretary of the Company) and "Rusty" Coffin (Plant Superintendent) were presented.

"A" Award pins were presented to Bi Pusey, Etta Paulsen, Otis Gooch, Chief Boehm, Beatrice Reichert and Maurice Casey who were representing the employees.

Captain Howard Kelley, a discharged veteran now returned to the Personnel Department, presented the "A" pins to the employee representatives and H. A. Rath. Pins were later presented to every Rath employee.

Joe DuMond, president of KXEL, was master of ceremonies for the program. Rev. H. E. Diefenfield, pastor of First Presbyterian church, gave the invocation. The East High School Band played "America" and "Star Spangled Banner". Charles Walker, Sam Guyan, Clarence Weick and Albert Kaser, of the American Legion, were color guards.

The Award program was broadcast over radio station K X E L.

LT. HIGH DESCRIBES DESTRUCTION OF JAPAN

Lt. (jg) Harold High (Salesman) writes, "We arrived at our objective on the twenty-second of September and proceeded with the initial landing at Sasebo. Sasebo is located in the northwestern part of Kyushu Island and is surrounded by very high mountains and all sorts of bays and inlets. Everything seemed much too quiet when we entered the outer harbor and from here into the inner harbor. However, we landed all of our occupation troops and unloaded all of our twenty-eight ships in less than three days. We had no hitches at all in our initial occupation here.

"All of our Squadron left this area and set sail for the Philippines. We stopped briefly at Subic Bay and then went on to Manila. We again refueled and obtained more provisions here. The officers and men were allowed one liberty in Manila, which, to me was indeed interesting. This once-great city is nothing but rubble and ruin, but the natives seem to be very happy that they are now free again. We left Manila harbor and proceeded to Lingayen Gulf to load the 32nd Army Division. We were in Lingayen Gulf about a week and then sailed for Sasebo again. By the time we arrived at our objective the second time, the Marines had moved inland to occupy a large portion of the western side of Kyushu.

"We lay in the inner harbor for about a week, and during this time liberty was granted every other day. I went ashore at each opportunity, and the things I saw interested and sometimes amazed me. Most of Sasebo is in ruins from but one large B-29 raid. They dropped many fire-bombs there, and hundreds of the Japanese, crudely-built, thatched-roof dwellings went up in flames. It was once a city of over two hundred thousand population, but it is now much less. The Japs are very oppressive, and most of them, I am certain, are overjoyed at having the war ended. Their communications, transportation facilities, factories, and homes have been bombed almost out of existence. Two other officers and I rode the Jap train down to Nagasaki one day to look over the city where we dropped the second Atomic Bomb. This train had one car set aside for Allied personnel and the other cars for native travelers. The trip itself was immensely interesting. We rode through valleys and tunnels and around some large mountains. The train stopped at every little village along the route, and the sixty-mile trip took some three hours. We saw many Japanese planes that had been strafed on the ground and which were almost utterly ruined. We saw large bomb craters,

(Continued on page 4, col. 3)

Figure 4.2. *Land O' Corn News* (R001/022)

company family. Indeed, the newsletter seems to encourage readers to see communal experience as part of Rath employment. The company's debilitating strike in 1948 further heightened management's interest in improving employee relations.[21] As disputes between management and employees became increasingly frequent at Rath, some in company management pushed for increased use of a human relations approach to controlling company activities. They wanted management to behave as an amiable figure rather than a dictatorial patriarch. For example, in a 1958 memo about "Company-Plant Employee Relations," one manager considers how to shape workplace relations in light of perceived union practices so that the company will be better positioned in future debates. As part of the human relations approach, he suggests the use of an information campaign (via a variety of genres) to persuade employees about the good intentions of management. Portions of his proposal were in fact implemented as management developed its bulletin posting practices.

> "Putting aside the things that we are legally able to do and considering devices we can actually employ to have things come out our way, how strong a stand can we actually take should management and the union reach complete and unyielding disagreement on an issue? With our high fixed costs, the perishability of our products, and the speed with which our competitors would win away our customers in the event of a prolonged shut-down, can we really hold out for long in a prolonged dispute?

[21] It was shortly after this strike, for example, that the company's executives began plans for enriching the employee's work experience by modernizing company facilities and increasing salaries. In 1957, the company made further moves in this direction by expanding its Employees' Building with two new stories. This new space housed a first aid department, employee lockers, and an expanded superintendents' office, engineering department, and personnel department. The personnel department, which was expanded in 1951 to include professionals who were invested in human relations, was directed by administrators to oversee the organization's social system.

. . . .

> Assuming these conclusions are right to this point, wouldn't it be to our advantage to promote actively our own cause with unit employees? Rather than let the company be interpreted to the employees by union representatives, can't we gain a lot by ourselves explaining our actions and policies, the basic economics of business, and the meat packing industry in particular? The ultimate goal of such a program should be nothing more than self-interest as far as management is concerned—an effort to create a respect for management and a feeling that its aim is to be fair. The result of such a program would not be measurably evident for some time, several years no doubt, and then maybe not until a difficult labor situation arose.
>
> The kind of program suggested for consideration could be mapped out for a definite period and then during that period, specific things would be done on a scheduled or predetermined basis. Things of the moment would be handled as they now are, but in the light of attitudes directing the over-all plan. This is the kind of program which would be public relations in techniques and public and industrial relations in goals."[22]

Motivated by the urge "to create a respect for management," the author of this memo is interested in making the psychological tools of human relations fit the familial agenda of Rath's management. In retrospect, this managerial confidence in the ability to manipulate

[22] December 19, 1958, Dick Lyons to John D. Donnell, C003/015.

and control organizational behavior seems terribly naive. The distance that management insisted on in its paternal relationship with employees would hinder labor negotiations for the rest of the company's history. It would also make implementing new work arrangements such as an incentive-based pay system in 1948 difficult because as the company grew, the employees were less and less inclined to accept top-down controls—particularly as these controls were dictated from a distant group of management executives who did not have the presence and ethos of a John W. Rath.

Management Approach 2: Oversight via Scientific Administration

From its earliest days until 1945, the company had been primarily guided by a type of benign paternalism. After the war, however, Rath management—like management in other industrial organizations—experimented with different administrative approaches,[23] though they would continue to observe the company tradition of family-focused management at the highest levels of company authority. To order organizational activities after the war, company administrators layered their old administrative approaches with the techniques of scientific management. During this new era in the company's history, administrative controls expanded dramatically, and this expansion was marked by the introduction of new levels of management and systems for organizing work routines. In this section, I describe how this mix of old and new administrative approaches at play in the company during this time gave rise to a network of overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, genres. I begin,

---

[23] In a study of developments in management since 1945, historian Stephen P. Waring traces the rise and fall of several disciplinary attempts to supersede Taylorism: "mathematicians, natural scientists, economists, computer programmers, artificial intelligentsia, and even human psychologists"—all bringing "new tools" to management thought (Waring, *Taylorism*, p. 203). He identifies two significant trends in industrial management—corporatism and bureaucratic reformism—that are particularly applicable to developments at Rath, as I explain later in this chapter.

however, with a brief discussion of events leading to the company's turn to scientific management.

Worldwide demand for provisions in the 1940s helped Rath continue its steady growth as a large-scale meat supplier. During the first half of the decade, the company had supplied meat products to support US Government programs related to World War II; during the second half of the decade, they again expanded their profits by selling to the growing consumer market. The decade also marked the beginning of a *slow* transition in the company's dominant management philosophy. The building projects completed in 1940 suggest the prevailing managerial priorities as the decade begins. In that year, the company completed work on several new structures, the most significant of which were a new employees' building[24] and an expanded administration building. Until the end of the war, management stressed its partnership with employees in a joint effort to address the common challenges arising in the turbulent social climate. As I suggested earlier, supporting the welfare of Rath employees with new facilities was one way Rath management expressed itself. At the same time, however, the administration of company operations was growing into such a complex network of practices that added space was required. Management's decision to erect two distinct buildings—one to accommodate its own activities and one to house employee activities—is symbolic of a split that was emerging in Rath's organizational culture and which would become increasingly significant after the war—the employees had their space and the administrators had theirs.

---

[24] The company's 1939 annual report explained that this building would "be used for the purpose of affording more conveniences to our employees in the way of locker rooms, shower baths, cafeteria, etc." The report also notes that "additional land has been purchased adjacent to the plant for the purpose of affording more parking space for our employees' cars." (R001/015)

With the end of World War II, Rath's managerial practices became increasingly occupied with division and control—concepts closely aligned with the practices of scientific management. Rath's management had started planning for such changes in 1944, issuing memos to mid-level managers that asked them to develop strategies for the post-war period and announcing in the annual report that "management has given considerable study to post-war planning." The plans that emerged after the war were inherently cautious, as company administrators looked to scientific management principles developed earlier in the century. Scientific management was certainly not a new idea at this time,[25] though its ideals were reinvigorated during the 1930s and 1940s because they formed the basis for progressive governmental reforms and the management of military personnel and operations during the war.[26] It was, perhaps, from these social occurrences that Rath's management drew its

---

[25] Rath, like other meatpacking companies in the early twentieth century, experimented with systems of control associated with a new approach to management—one based on the scientific model. As the processes of meat production had come under closer public and governmental scrutiny in the early 1900s, major meat producers had looked for ideas to help control their activities. They not only needed to meet consumer demands for edible products, but also to do so in a financially sound manner. The emerging marketplace required regular production yields at stable prices. Thus, when the Institute of American Meat Packers was organized in 1919, their goals included such things as increased cooperation between packers and government, the promotion of meat's "economic worth" to the public, and encouraging "the study of the arts and sciences connected with the meat-packing industry." See Institute of American Meat Packers, *The Packing Industry* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 4. This interest in a scientific approach to meat production led not only to partnerships between packers and academic institutions, but also to the implementation of scientific management programs like those advocated by Frederick Winslow Taylor. These programs led the meat packing industry to become more like the production companies that had already embraced the principles of scientific management, including the increased use of written communication to plan and control organizational activities.

[26] Judith A. Merkle, *Management and Ideology: The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1980) notes that "Scientific Management made good political propaganda long before its principles were incorporated to any great extent in government itself" (p. 247). Herbert Hoover, a trained engineer, capitalized on public enthusiasm as he drew the principles of scientific management into his campaign speeches, winning the presidency in 1928. Many other government officials were likewise drawn to these principles and would later contribute to the "rational" development of the country's expanding bureaucracy under the New Deal plan. [note continued on next page . . .]

inspiration as it developed post-war plans for the company. Indeed, management had been correct to assume plans would be necessary, as the market for Rath's products grew dramatically after the war. The company's rapid expansion—both of its workforce and plant operations—to meet this demand created an organizational crisis for management in the mid 1940s. From 1946 to 1947, for example, the number of employees grew by 38 percent, and the company began operations in its new Beef Slaughtering, Dressing, and Chilling Building. To address this crisis, Rath's management committed itself to the principles of scientific management, creating an Industrial Engineering department, instituting an incentive-based pay system based on "scientifically" measured work, and further dividing labor into specialized, task-based activities. They quickly added these new measures to the company's existing managerial controls in an attempt to monitor the new employees and their operations. For many years after this, the principles of scientific management encouraged management to introduce new technical and communicative systems in their pursuit of "the one best way" for controlling work at Rath—even appropriating the language of Taylor.

Management's decision to adopt the principles of scientific management had many organizational consequences. The most obvious, as I mentioned above, was the arrangement and oversight of work practices by the Industrial Engineering department. However, more subtle developments occurred as the number of managers grew significantly to ensure

---

[. . . note continued from previous page] The economic and social preparation for the second World War also depended on advocates of scientific management "for the extensive development and improvement of applied systems of planning, statistical control, direction of contract production, and operations research, as the products of the business and engineering schools of the nation were drawn into military service" (Merkle, p. 271). After the war, the government and its newly developed bureaucracies continued to draw on scientific management as a rationale for their operations. For additional background information, see also the discussion of progressivism, the government, and mass culture in Guillén, pgs. 45-47.

oversight of the organization's increasingly specialized activities, and as management sought to control the flow of information more scientifically. The following examples illustrate how the adoption of scientific management principles led company employees to order their activities with text-intensive communicative practices that often seemed to take on a life of their own.

The Growth of Administrative Controls to Order Company Systems

One manifestation of the company's developing scientific approach to management was the development of systematic controls for coordinating and controlling organizational activities. By the 1940s, the systematic controls had grown so extensive that the company had to expand managerial oversight to keep pace with the systems. A self-perpetuating cycle developed in which expanding systematic controls needed to be administered by additional managers, and the additional managers introduced additional systematic controls to accomplish their jobs. As this cycle progressed, the population of managers of Rath increased dramatically so that functional areas of the bureaucracy could be overseen by managers dedicated to a single function and focused on a definable set of objectives. These managers' activities, in turn, were coordinated and controlled by a smaller group of executives trained in company traditions. Management of managers had become necessary with the bureaucratic growth of the company. This development was a "rational" extension of the company's developing scientific approach to administration.

In many ways, Rath's modernist arrangement of management practices was similar to that which had emerged at companies decades earlier when they had grown into what

business historian Alfred D. Chandler Jr. calls "integrated, multidepartmental enterprise."[27] During this earlier period, other meatpacking organizations such as Swift and Armour—as well as most other large-scale enterprises—had arranged their managerial functions into a "centralized, functionally departmentalized form."[28] While Rath was implementing such organizational arrangements during the 1930s and 1940s, the number of mid-level managers grew significantly, creating a more extensive management culture at the plant.[29] The number of executive positions at the company, for example, grew from four in 1939 to eleven in 1949, as shown in Table 4.2. Members of the Rath family occupied the most important executive offices throughout this period, thereby creating a management system that was uncommon in twentieth century America—a family-centered bureaucracy.

The communicative practices that emerged from these organizational arrangements at Rath presented problems for managers. Frequent communication was necessary to coordinate activities between the functional groups and between the levels of management. In addition, the strong central controls at the top of the company minimized the authority of lower-level managers whose domains were discrete. While each of these functional groups employed its own, discrete systematic controls, conflicts between systems would begin erupting during the decade. Such was the case with the proliferation and chaos surrounding forms—a problem management would attempt to address scientifically.

---

[27] Chandler, *Strategy and Structure*, p. 24.

[28] Ibid., p. 42. Many companies at this time, however, had started diversifying into multidivisional structures. Rath would attempt to reorganize its management into a multidivisional, decentralized structure much later than most other companies, as I discuss later. For an extended discussion of this trend in American business history, see Chandler, *Strategy and Structure*.

[29] In 1951, these mid-level managers organized the Rath Management Club to support their mutual interests. The need for such a group arose because these mid-level managers were somewhat isolated by institutional arrangements. They were neither part of the regular workforce nor of the tightly-knit executive management group.

Table 2. Executive Offices at Rath, 1936[a]-1949

1936-1939	1940-1942	1943	1944-1947[b]	1948-1949
• President • Vice-President • Treasurer • Secretary	• President • Vice-President • Treasurer • Secretary • Assistant Secretary	• Chairman of the Board • President • Vice President/ Treasurer • Secretary • Assistant Treasurer • Controller/ Assistant Secretary • General Counsel	• Executive Committee • Chairman of the Board • President • Vice President/ Treasurer • Secretary • Assistant Treasurer • Controller/ Assistant Secretary • General Counsel	• Executive Committee • Chairman of the Board • President • First Vice President/ Treasurer • Second Vice President/ Secretary • Vice President • Vice President • Vice President • Vice President/ Controller • Assistant Secretary • Assistant Treasurer • General Counsel

[a] This is the first year that Rath's executive officers are identified in the company's annual report.

[b] The four members of the Executive Committee provided controlling oversight for other Rath executives. The Committee was comprised of Rath family members who had also served as long-term company officers—John W. Rath, R. A. Rath, Howard H. Rath, and A. D. Donnell. These family members also filled the company's key officer positions: Chairman of the Board, President, Vice President/Treasurer, and Secretary.

The Ordering of Communicative Practices via Forms Control

As a variety of communicative practices were introduced at Rath to support the expanding managerial controls and their associated scientific systems, a new type of organizational problem emerged—controlling the circulation of company information. Indeed, organizing the information generated within the company became increasingly

difficult—even with the new technologies being used to store and retrieve texts.[30] As a remedy for this problem, an ongoing effort was made to scientifically control the most routine texts used at Rath—the forms.

The scientific approach to management is predicated on the idea that with analytical studies and careful planning, human work activities can be made optimally efficient. Mastering operations at Rath typically meant creating a procedure that detailed the "one best way" to accomplish a task and then enforcing that procedure. Following this general principle, mid-level management at Rath became preoccupied with introducing repetitious systems of work and communicative exchange. Discrete systems for work activities were easier to define, however, than systems for communicating. The need to communicate both in *and* across functional areas at the company created tensions for the bureaucratic controls that reinforced divisions and discouraged connections between functional groups. However, such connections were necessary, so management attempted to scientifically systematize these activities, too. To ensure stability and predictability of cross-bureaucracy communication, management attempted to codify communication habits with pre-printed forms. They designed these forms to reduce the variables in communication by materially shaping the communicative exchange with preset text and limited space for written communication. Forms, of course, had existed since the earliest days of the company. The increasing interest in making the organization work more scientifically, however, led management to rely on these codified documents even more heavily.

With the proliferation of forms to accommodate changing management practices, yet another management problem emerged: how to coordinate the practice of using forms. In

---

[30] For a detailed discussion of communication technologies and genre at Rath, see Chapter 6.

keeping with the prevailing management approach, Rath's management instituted *forms control* as a systematic control for the company. Official forms were registered and identified with a number as if they were a specimen. Iterations of a given form were tracked with sequential alpha characters or with some other change in the numerical identifier.[31] The registration of forms was governed by its own administrative procedure, as was the appropriate use of each individual form. Directives for using forms were established in official company procedures and were sometimes printed on the backs of the forms themselves.

In the 1940s, more than 400 forms were registered at Rath as management sought to control organizational activities through forms control; by the 1960s, there would be more than 800 registered forms. Over time, management's interest in forms control would occasionally ebb, though it would become keen again at times when the company was challenged by severe organizational problems. Indeed, forms control became a type of habitual remedy for organizational chaos. In 1966, for example, top-level management attempted to improve organizational efficiency by assigning forms control to the Methods & Procedures Department—which, in turn, published new procedures for issuing and canceling forms, and also established new policies to govern form control numbers.[32] Management's efforts to control communication as a material process that could be reduced to forms and procedures were supported by their faith in the principles of Scientific Management.

---

[31] For example, the numerical designation for a widely used pre-printed form called "Intra-Company Correspondence" changed several times as management redesigned the form. From 1959 until 1960, it carried the identifier "Form 200." When the form was revised in 1961, it became "F-800." Then, again, it changed in 1966 to become "F-800A."

[32] This episode is documented in papers in C004/036.

Imposing control, however, was difficult because unpredictable, shifting exigencies made it necessary to periodically revise forms and reorganize procedural activities around them.

Shifting exigencies created slippages between existing forms of communication and organizational activities. These slippages occurred when existing forms failed to match the organizational activities that had developed since the forms were instituted—the repetition of existing communicative practices was causing problems. Such instances are marked by the periodic complaints of managers and employees that existing forms and procedures are too confining or complicated. These complaints were typically addressed with revised forms. This was the case, for example, in the mid 1960s when managers were finding it difficult to meet departmental goals because it was taking too long to fill vacancies in their areas. From a managerial viewpoint, the problem had emerged because of an inadequacy in the existing forms, as their solution to the problem suggests. In a memo sent to managers across the organization (see Figure 4.3), Harry G. Slife, vice president of finance and operations, notes that "form 1177 'Requisition for Personnel' has been revised to provide more flexibility and to simplify staffing requests."[33] As was the case during this period, management used forms in its pursuit of the one best way to structure communicative exchanges.

The Engineering of Industrial Activities via Text-intensive Practices

Rath's move to scientific management was definitively marked by the institution of a measured work and incentive-based pay system in 1948,[34] administered by the company's

---

[33] August 9, 1966, Harry G. Slife to all department managers, C004/036.

[34] See Donnell, p. 25. With this system, Rath's management further divided organizational culture because only manual labor jobs were subject to the pay controls. After 1948, there were two classes of employees: those whose pay was based on performance and those who were "exempt" (managers and administrators).

E. X. Conrad

7

8-9-66

To All Department Managers

Form 1177 "Requisition for Personnel" has been revised to provide more flexibility and to simplify staffing requests. The form is stocked in Office Supply. As of this date, all requests for personnel must be made on this form as outlined below.

Form 1177 is to be used for staffing in the following areas:

All exempt and wage-hour salaried personnel regardless of location including managerial, sales, professional, clerical, etc.

All office personnel.

Form 1177 may be used at plant locations for hourly paid employees where personnel requisitions are used, however, its use is not required. Mechanics for use under these circumstances should be established by the Plant Manager.

The form is in four parts and is routed as follows:

The originator will complete all the items on the top copy and secure approvals according to policy for the class of opening. Originator will retain the first copy.

Staffing authorization is mandatory for all exempt, wage and hour salaried and office openings. Send copies 2, 3 and 4 to the General Personnel Department. When staffing authorization is completed, copy 2 will be returned to the originator as a signal that the staffing request is approved.

Copy 3 will be routed to the Management Development Department for a search of available personnel for transfer only for requisitions for exempt salaried openings.

Copy 4 will be retained by the General Personnel Department who will fill the opening according to procedures described in the General Personnel instructions.

Harry G. Slife

Figure 4.3. Informal memo procedure describing use of new company form (C004/036)

Industrial Engineering department. This department, staffed by professionals trained to employ the tools and practices of scientific management, initiated large-scale organizational programs and reshaped communicative practices throughout the company. The importance of scientific communication in Rath's genre history is best exemplified by the practices initiated and controlled by this department; Industrial Engineering was the invocation of analytic management controls—stringing together a whole chain of genres that were without precedent in the early history of the company.

Earlier in the century, when Frederick Winslow Taylor popularized scientific management with the publication of *Shop Management* (1903) and *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), he had helped make organization, efficiency, system, control and other concepts guiding themes in the industrialization of America and in the emerging communication structures. Indeed, as he popularized the notion that "brainwork" could be removed from labor and called for text-intensive practices to oversee work, he had opened the way for new genre practices to emerge in the industrial workplace. When the Industrial Engineering department at Rath instituted Taylor's fundamental system, they had to become proficient in the use of varied textual tools.

This text proficiency is particularly evident in a 1960s Industrial Engineering department publication, "Principles of Management"—a short charter for organizing the department's activities. In this charter, the writer outlines the department's rational, scientific basis for its practices, which are broken into four steps: planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling. To execute these steps of "the management process," the writer identifies the appropriate "tools"—which are interestingly nearly all text-based: "policies, procedures, organization structure, budgets, plans and programs, job descriptions, standards,

[and] reports."[35] These control genres were the currency that Industrial Engineering exchanged with other functional groups in the organization. Although the Industrial Engineers were not responsible for generating all of these texts, they had a hand in them all. To support this network of control documents and to ensure the efficient operation of organizational activities, Industrial Engineering used many sub-genres.

These sub-genres are conspicuously absent from the "Principles of Management." Missing, for example, are the time-motion studies upon which the department expended so much of its effort. Missing, too, are the cost data analyses used to gather information for the department's labor cost control programs. There is no mention either of the "Standards Bulletins," "Procedures & Methods Analysis Recapitulation Sheets," the "Capacity Charts," the "Labor Standards," the "Plant Improvement" studies, the "Cost Savings" analyses, the "Operational Descriptions," the "Manning Studies," the motion films, the "Annual Labor Cost" studies, the "Tech Data Files," the "Daily Production Summaries," and a host of other documents used to perform the scientific management activities that Industrial Engineering was responsible for overseeing.

Industrial Engineering's diverse sub-genre practices were primarily data documents, and they represented some of the most repetitive communicative acts in the company. Data collection for creating pay standards was an on-going activity that kept several industrial engineers busy year after year. Time-motion studies—analytical, data-based examinations of work practices—were also executed year after year, particularly when operating practices changed or when new manufacturing tools were introduced. Most of the work for Industrial

[35] With the exception of budgets, these documents were typically text-intensive—constructed with descriptions, narratives, and directives.

Engineers at Rath entailed converting labor practices into analytical units and constantly measuring employee performances against predicted patterns. The numbers generated by these industrial engineers were embedded in genres produced by diverse groups at Rath. Executive managers, for example, used these numbers to develop plans for hiring or expansion of facilities; alternatively, they used them in reports to understand organizational problems. Mid-level managers used the standards to plan department activities. Union representatives used the standards and data collection sheets as a point of negotiation in the dealings with the company.[36] Company accountants used the industrial-engineering-generated numbers to determine employee pay and benefits. The personnel department used portions of these documents to develop job descriptions and performance reviews. The company's process planning division, which wrote specifications for every Rath product—carefully detailing the exact method of producing the product—used Industrial Engineering's data to define actual work practices for labor employees. In interesting and varied ways, the entire organization was caught up in the scientific management practices executed by the Industrial Engineering department. Rath's Standard Methods Manual (an Industrial Engineering publication) provides some insight into the nature of these communicative practices.

The Standard Methods Manual—a common point of negotiation in labor disputes—largely defined the ways in which Industrial Engineering would interact with wage-incentive employees. In 1967, the manual was 13 pages long, though it included appendix items

[36] Union representatives were required to send the Industrial Engineering department a "Notice of Receipt of Standard Descriptions" when new or revised standards were issued—a common event in the normal course of business.

(labeled "exhibits") such as the forms used for conducting time-motion studies. The manual itself begins with some "General Principles":

> Labor standards based on time study are the basis of the Wage Incentive program. They serve as an unprejudiced and equitable measure of productive effort and provide the opportunity for extra compensation to workers who, of their own volition, accomplish their assigned tasks in less time than required by the applicable standards.

These principles go on for three pages, in which terms such as *method*, *task* and *incentive* pay are defined, policies about timing work tasks and compensation are outlined, and exceptions (such as reassignment of an employee) are discussed. In the next major section, "Measurement Methods," the manual presents the procedure for conducting time studies—including the multiple forms generated during the process. The next major section, "Standards Bulletins," details the procedure for creating a "Standards Bulletin" that will become an official part of that large genre set in the company. The final major section of the manual presents "Incentive Pay Calculation." It begins,

> Qualified workers, when not subjected to machine or other limitations which are beyond their control, can be expected to surpass standard performance requirements by thirty per cent or more.

This section then continues with an explanation of how pay is calculated based on formulas that measure employee effort against statistical standards. Statistical methods, in fact, shape the form of many Industrial Engineering documents, which include formulas that render labor in numerical terms. Such practices, of course, complement a "scientific" approach to

management. The statistical standard with which incentive pay was calculated came from the "Standard Data" generated by other Industrial Engineers. To create this data, the engineers divided a given job into incremental elements and measured a given worker's performance of those elements (for example, see Figure 4.4). As discussed above, this standard data was developed for most manual tasks at the plant and in the field offices, including such diverse tasks as pushing hand carts from machine to machine, loading boxes on the dock, stuffing sausage, hanging hams in the smokehouse, forming bacon, making boxes, putting finished products on pallets, and even waiting for elevators.[37] Once these data were collected, they were translated into sheets used by supervisors, recording clerks, and wage accountants. As an Industrial Engineering manager explained in 1965, "The main benefits in using standard data is [sic] to minimize costs in establishing standards plus maintaining consistency of standards. The latter is probably the primary [benefit] . . . for without such an approach, the standards program would be utter chaos."[38] Confident in the value of this scientifically managed genre, this manager seems unaware of the circular logic of his explanation of the need for standard data sheets.

Scientific management at Rath introduced text-intensive organizational activities unlike those that the company had practiced in its earliest years. The proliferation of genre routines during this era did not abate, as administrators in the company experimented with more contemporary management techniques in later years. New routines were layered with old routines, as some genres were displaced and some were varied. This layering of genre

[37] June 2, 1965, Don Brickley to Lee Davis, TM 003.
[38] Ibid.

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

6/4/62

STANDARD DATA - MAKE UP SNAP-LOCK CARTONS

Element #1 — Pick up one knocked down carton from stack of cartons on table. Open carton and fold down four interlocking flaps. Push fourth flap down to interlock the four flaps. (This element ends with carton upside down on table.)

Element #2 — After forming carton, turn carton over on packing table and position for packing.

Carton Volume Plus Bottom Area	Standard Minutes/Carton Element #1-Various Bursting Strength 200 psi	275 psi	350 psi	Element #2
0- 250	.074	.082	.091	.018
250- 500	.077	.086	.095	.018
500- 750	.080	.089	.098	.019
750-1000	.083	.092	.102	.020
1000-1250	.087	.096	.105	.020
1250-1500	.090	.099	.108	.021
1500-1750	.093	.102	.112	.022
1750-2000	.096	.106	.115	.023
2000-2500	.101	.110	.120	.024
2500-3000	.107	.117	.126	.025
3000-3500	.114	.123	.133	.026
3500-4000	.120	.130	.140	.028

Example: Carton #B-4 — Carton Size: 12½" x 5 5/8" x 5 5/8" - 200 psi burst.str.

Bottom Area = 118 sq. in.
Volume = 664 cu. in.
Total 782

Element #1 - Form carton - - - - - - - - - .083 Std.Min./Ctn.
Element #2 - Turn carton over on table - - .020 Std.Min./Ctn.

NOTE: If cartons are nested after forming, omit element #2 above and add credit for nesting as shown below.

After forming cartons, turn carton over and nest carton on floor. Build up stack approximately 6 feet high. The data below is from Graph "A" of Std. C-16, Box Shop Dept. (Time study book)

Carton Volume Only	Std.Min./Carton
0- 250	.038
250- 500	.041
500- 750	.043
750-1000	.046
1000-1250	.048
1250-1500	.051
1500-1750	.053
1750-2000	.056
2000-2500	.059
2500-3000	.064
3000-3500	.069
3500-4000	.074

Figure 4.4. Explanation of Standard Data Sheets for Rath's Industrial Engineers (TM003)

routines became increasingly complex in the late 1950s with the introduction of new management techniques by managers who had been professionally trained.

Management Approach 3: Structural Analysis

By the 1950s, many of Rath's managers had college degrees and had brought with them new ideas about how a business should be run. The existing paternal and scientific management operating methods at Rath, however, were still firmly entrenched, so these men found little support for their ideas, despite the company's growing need to modernize management practices to better address changing market situations. Change occurred slowly at Rath, but by the late 1950s the company was beginning to integrate a new management approach in which diversity of company operations, long-range planning, and goal setting would become more common. These management activities are all characteristic of a structural analysis approach to management, which is predicated on the assumption that well designed organizational structures are the key to realizing business objectives. With this approach, "unobtrusive control devices such as job specifications, internal career ladders, programs, procedures, guidelines, classifications, routines, scripts, and schema [are] used to monitor the performance of both workers and managers."[39] Work activities are organized into departments, divisions, matrix structures, and profit centers, while individuals are expected to fill roles defined by their location in the organizational hierarchy.

Instituting a structural analysis approach to management was a slow process at Rath because Rath's paternal and scientific management traditions pulled so strongly in the opposite direction. It was only after weathering bleak economic conditions in the mid 1950s

[39] Guillén, p. 14. For further discussion of this approach to management, see Guillén, pgs. 7-20.

that Rath's top executive officers were willing to consider alternative ways of ordering organizational activities. After rejecting a merger with Morrell in 1958 that might have made the company more competitive, Rath's administrators attempted to restore profit margins by making dramatic organizational changes. The company developed its own research department, opened additional food processing centers, expanded animal feed manufacturing operations, and built a new slaughtering facility in Columbus Junction, Iowa. As part of their efforts to modernize the organization, Rath's top managers also introduced high-level changes to the communicative practices of the company. In keeping with the systems-level focus of structural analysis, they introduced management initiatives to vary genre routines throughout the organization—often layering new practices on top of the many genres associated with paternal and scientific management. This tendency to supplement rather than replace earlier practices yielded a sprawling and diverse collection of genres.

In piecemeal fashion from 1959 until the early 1980s, managers at different levels in the organization attempted to reform the company by altering its bureaucratic structure. When Rath began experiencing severe financial challenges in the mid 1950s, the company's college-trained professional managers began examining management activities at companies across the country. They read professional trade journals and other national publications—frequently making marginal notes in their copies and sometimes forwarding them to others in the company. On some occasions, they discussed national management trends explicitly in their internal memos, corresponding about other companies' programs for managing labor, increasing profits, or structuring organizational activities. This correspondence typically addressed stories in national publications, noting ideas that "might spark an idea for us as a

followup."[40] Appropriating management techniques from other companies, Rath's managers developed a structural analysis approach to management that had significant effects on the company's communicative practices. These effects were most clearly evident in management initiatives introduced during this era, though they were also evident in the cost accounting and corporate restructuring activities I discuss later in this section.

Structural Analysis via Management Initiatives: Unsettling Communicative Habits within the Organization

Appropriating ideas from other organizations and widely discussed management techniques, administrators at Rath introduced several large-scale initiatives from 1959 until the mid 1960s. These initiatives added new communicative practices to those already entrenched in organizational activities, as Rath's management sought to address company problems by reordering its bureaucratic arrangements. The new practices—ranging from employee suggestion contests to the widespread publication of departmental goals and periodic progress reports—were often designed to unsettle organizational routines in a way that would focus the organization on improving its processes. Such was the case, for example, with the first management initiative in 1959, which included an employee suggestion contest, wherein ideas for improving work activities were solicited from the employees themselves.

Operation R in 1959. At the suggestion of John D. Donnell (son of the company's president, A. D. Donnell) in 1958, Rath's executive management began planning for a company-wide program that would increase employee interest in work at Rath and in

[40] August 26, 1959, Joe Gibson to John Donnell, C003/023.

increasing company sales. John D. Donnell, who had studied at the Harvard Advanced Management Program, saw the program as a move to "promote 'bottom-up' thinking and responsibility."[41] The company's executives, however, were motivated to try this program because of Rath's generally flat sales and declining earnings during the decade. They were also intrigued by the widely publicized success of a management-labor cooperation program at General Electric in 1958. The national program, called Operation Upturn, invited labor to contribute ideas for helping the company become more competitive in the marketplace. GE featured the program in company advertisements that appeared in trade journals, in television spots, and in *The Wall Street Journal*.[42] Administrators at Rath collected information about the program and corresponded with their counterparts at GE that year as they developed plans for a similar program at Rath.[43] They then borrowed freely from GE's publications to develop their own program, including cartoons used in company publications (see, for example, Figure 4.5).

While planning their program, Rath's managers haggled over a name, calling it "Operation X" for several weeks because they could not reach agreement. Shortly before 1959, they decided on "Operation R," preferring the ambiguity of the letter *R* to any specific word (they failed to reach consensus, even after drawing up a long list of *R* words on a sheet of legal paper during a meeting).[44] Together, however, they were able to decide on a number of projects to manage the campaign. These projects entailed a widely diverse set of genres including presentations with colored slides and sound recordings, plant posters, an open letter

---

[41] Donnell, p. 30.
[42] May 15, 1958, advertisement in *The Wall Street Journal*.
[43] See letters and related documents in C003/026 and C003/029.
[44] An anonymous handwritten note sent to Gibson asks, "Will the "R" in "Operation 'R'" become the last letter in the word BLUNDER? (signed "The Bird"). C003/030.

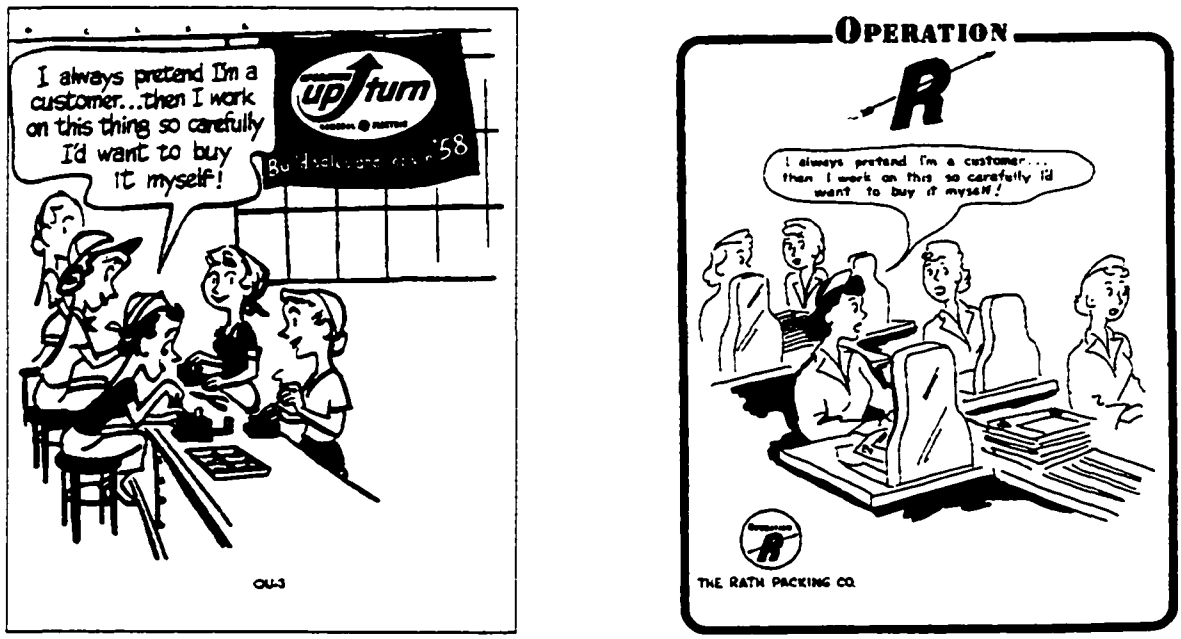


Figure 4.5. The cartoon on the left appeared in promotional materials for General Electric's 1958 Operation Upturn. The cartoon on the right is an appropriated version of the General Electric cartoon used for Rath's 1959 Operation R program (C003/029)

from the president to all employees announcing the program, a suggestion contest (see Figure 4.6), postcards that employees could mail to their friends, a new supervisory newsletter, a series of bulletins for employees, a series of community relations advertisements for the local paper, a letter to stockholders announcing the program, open letters to the public announcing the program in the local and state newspapers, pins and stickers for employees to wear, letters to branch managers and office managers outside Waterloo, a memo to stockholders asking for their cooperation in buying Rath products and encouraging friends to do so, a plant tour for shareholders, an open house for employees' families, displays of competitors' and Rath's products in the plant, displays of good and bad Rath product for comparison, bulletin board notices (see Figure 4.7), and photos of Rath's

livestock personnel to encourage selling of farm animals to Rath.[45] Not all of these projects were carried out, but several were, and additional communicative strategies were employed during the campaign, including the distribution of Rath automobile window stickers so that employees would advertise the company's brand name while on their family vacations—an overt attempt to create a shared organizational identity for employees (see Figure 4.8).

Encouraging employee participation in this management initiative was a text-intensive process that operationalized several existing communicative practices to create organizational enthusiasm. In a cover memo that introduces the Operation R handbook, Howard H. Rath, chairman of the board, explains the purpose of the new program: "to revitalize our Company and regain for us the reputation for growth and profitability which long was held by The Rath Packing Company"[46] (see Figure 4.9). The nine-page handbook that accompanied this memo provided the rationale for Operation R, identifying Operation R as "an opportunity" to build on existing long-range programs and "give the Company's business a real upward boost."[47] The focal texts of Operation R, however, were a set of three forms used to collect information from supervisory employees throughout the organization. In February, at the beginning of the Operation R campaign, management issued "Operation R: Department Objectives," to all departmental supervisors with instructions about brainstorming changes to improve their areas, recording their best ideas, returning the form to John E. Cash (the secretary for Operation R), and beginning working on those objectives. Then, in April, these same supervisors received a "Report on Status of Department

[45] January 13, 1959, "Projects," C003/015.
[46] January 27, 1959, Howard H. Rath to "those for whom this handbook is written," R003/022. See the entire text of this memo in Figure 4.9.
[47] January 27, Joe Gibson to all officers and certain major department heads," R003/022.

THE RATH PACKING COMPANY
GENERAL OFFICES: WATERLOO, IOWA

2-27-59

"This information about the OPERATION "R" suggestion contest for usage and your employees is for your information. Be ready to assist contestants in preparing their entries."

DEAR RATH EMPLOYEE:

The enthusiasm shown for OPERATION "R" in all parts of the Company has been heartwarming. I am convinced that OPERATION "R" will be the great chapter in the growth history of The Rath Packing Company which we hoped for when this program was planned.

I am particularly pleased with the great number of suggestions made for improving our service to our customers, consumers, and livestock producers. To stimulate creative thinking of this type is one of the goals of OPERATION "R".

In order to give recognition to the best of these suggestions and ideas the Company is announcing a suggestion contest for office and plant clerical, production and maintenance, and other hourly paid employees. The contest will close on March 28. Three grand prizes and nine additional prizes will be awarded. The three grand prizes will be deluxe all-expense weekends in Chicago for two people, or if a winner prefers, he may choose a week at a Northern resort instead. The nine additional winners will be given a choice of valuable merchandise prizes.

Enclosed is a brochure describing the prizes, also the official entry form for the OPERATION "R" Suggestion Contest. On the back of that form you will find the rules of the contest and also some tips on how to develop ideas to submit in the contest.

I hope you are already thinking of an idea which may win that trip. Write it up before it gets away from you and submit your entry. Remember, the contest closes March 28, 1959.

Yours truly,

Executive Vice President

Figure 4.6. Memo Announcing Operation R Suggestion Contest (R002/028)

Here's Teamwork...

RATH PERSONNEL & LOCAL BUSINESS MEN

Teamwork within a company and a community is a wonderful thing. Through the joint efforts of the Rath Management Club and Local #46 UPWA-AFL-CIO, we are able to see the first concrete example of teamwork right here.

The first big ad sponsored by the above organizations and pledging the Rath support of more than 200 local business men appears in the Waterloo Courier Wednesday, March 4 and the Evansdale Enterprise Thursday, March 5.

Many teams of Union and Management Club members helped kick this effort off by calling on all of the local food businesses. These local merchants have enthusiastically indicated they will buy more Rath products and feature more Rath products.

The purchase of Rath products by each Rath employee helps these local food businesses and ourselves. Each of us determines the success of this effort—now and in the future.

OPERATION R

HELP YOUR COMPANY... HELP YOURSELF

Figure 4.7. Bulletin Board Notice Issued during the 1959 Operation R Program (R002/028)

Figure 4.8. Operation R Bulletin Announcing New Company Automobile Stickers (R002/028)

January 27, 1959

TO THOSE FOR WHOM THIS HANDBOOK IS WRITTEN:

In this booklet you will find a program which can revitalize our Company and regain for us the reputation for growth and profitability which long was held by The Rath Packing Company.

It is a program which seeks the cooperation and enthusiasm of every employee. It cannot be completely successful unless employees at every level participate. However, the greatest challenge lies with you since you are the ones the rest of the organization look to for inspiration and guidance. You also are the ones who stand to gain the most from Company growth and prosperity.

If you can inspire in those whom you supervise dynamic enthusiasm and an imaginative, resourceful approach to their jobs, OPERATION "R" will be successful beyond our hopes. As you well know, no really tough goal can be accomplished without this kind of team spirit, and with it, few, if any, goals are impossible.

I know you will meet this challenge magnificently.

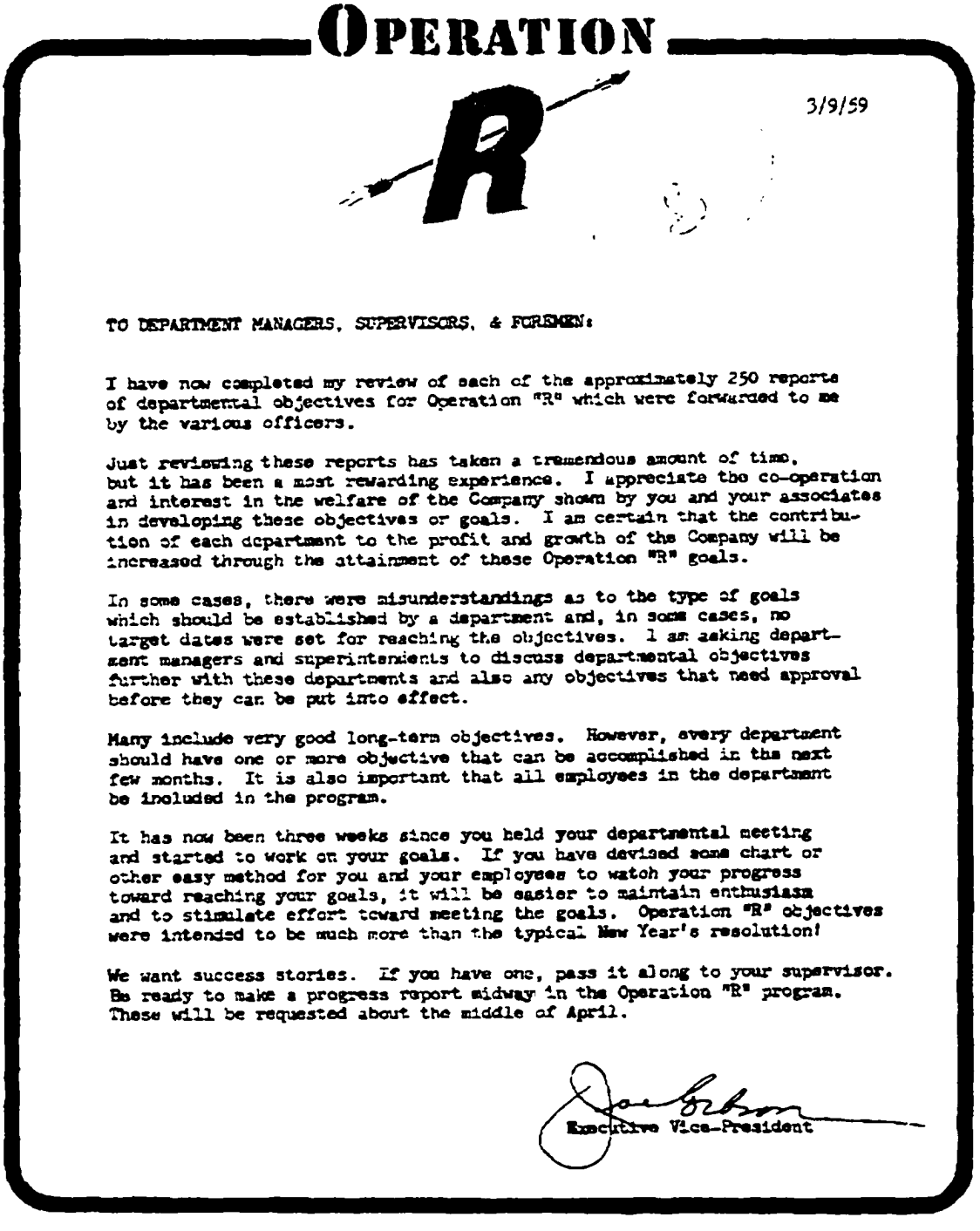
Howard H. Rath

Chairman of the Board

Figure 4.9. Cover Memo for 1959 Operation R Handbook (R003/022)

Objectives" form and were asked to record their progress on meeting their earlier concrete objectives. In July, they then received the "Final Report on Status of Department Objectives" and were asked to report their department's successes. Failure to complete any of these forms resulted in a memo from the campaign administrator (and next company president), Joe Gibson, requesting cooperation. Memos issued to managers throughout the campaign encouraged widespread participation in the new communicative practices instituted by the company's top administrators (see, for example, Figure 4.10). The midterm progress and final results of these objective-driven projects were widely published within the company, appearing in management circulars and on plant bulletin boards. More general announcements appeared in newspaper ads, correspondence with other businesses, and in the 1959 annual report.

The objectives that department supervisors identified for Operation R were often focused on changing communicative practices. Improvement, for many departments, meant managing their communication practices more effectively—disciplining their current practices to effect change in the department. For example, the manager of the general office staff at the Fort Smith site identified twelve goals that included conducting a time study "to determine the time spent in preparing each report and thus its approximate cost." This study was followed by an evaluation "with those to whom they are distributed to determine whether the report should be continued or dropped." As a second communication-focused objective, this manager suggested beginning "a constant study . . . to devise new reports that will keep the management better informed." This manager's objectives extended beyond examining the types of documents produced; another item on his list called for restudying filing procedures to save time and checking the files "for unneeded material that may be



OPERATION R

3/9/59

TO DEPARTMENT MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS, & FOREMEN:

I have now completed my review of each of the approximately 250 reports of departmental objectives for Operation "R" which were forwarded to me by the various officers.

Just reviewing these reports has taken a tremendous amount of time, but it has been a most rewarding experience. I appreciate the co-operation and interest in the welfare of the Company shown by you and your associates in developing these objectives or goals. I am certain that the contribution of each department to the profit and growth of the Company will be increased through the attainment of these Operation "R" goals.

In some cases, there were misunderstandings as to the type of goals which should be established by a department and, in some cases, no target dates were set for reaching the objectives. I am asking department managers and superintendents to discuss departmental objectives further with these departments and also any objectives that need approval before they can be put into effect.

Many include very good long-term objectives. However, every department should have one or more objective that can be accomplished in the next few months. It is also important that all employees in the department be included in the program.

It has now been three weeks since you held your departmental meeting and started to work on your goals. If you have devised some chart or other easy method for you and your employees to watch your progress toward reaching your goals, it will be easier to maintain enthusiasm and to stimulate effort toward meeting the goals. Operation "R" objectives were intended to be much more than the typical New Year's resolution!

We want success stories. If you have one, pass it along to your supervisor. Be ready to make a progress report midway in the Operation "R" program. These will be requested about the middle of April.

Executive Vice-President

Figure 4.10. Memo Encouraging Managerial Participation in 1959 Operation R Program (R002/028)

wasting time and space." He even called for greater care of the material objects of communication, setting goals for procuring fireproof storage for office records, reusing carbon paper from invoices to reduce office costs, and redesigning a form so that it could be used with carbon paper.[48] Although the extensive scope of this manager's objectives was unusual, his focus was not. During Operation R, the internal auditing department, under Howard Dexter, reviewed interdepartmental procedures and created a new index, canceling obsolete procedures to improve the department.[49]

It is difficult to measure the effects this campaign had on the organization, though the departments claimed more than $300,000 in savings. Changes in communicative practices—particularly at the level they were instituted during Operation R—are impossible to measure. However, it is evident that the campaign was a disappointment to some in management. It was never repeated during subsequent years and was seldom acknowledged in company documents after the 1959 annual report. Perhaps these managers had anticipated more remarkable results—such as those reported after General Electric's Operations Upturn campaign. The employee suggestion contest during Operation R is an example of how the campaign ran. This expensive part of the campaign (three winners were sent on all-expense-paid vacations, and nine additional winners were given prizes) promised to engender widespread employee participation in the management project. Anticipating this employee response, eight Rath executives held their own contest in which they tried to guess the number of employees who would enter the suggestion contest. Their guesses ranged from 500 to 3,000.[50] When the suggestion contest was over, management had actually received

[48] February 11, 1959, Glen Summy, C004/005.
[49] July 6, 1959, John Cash, C004/014.
[50] March 4, 1959, John E. Cash to Bea Brown, C004/003.

only 71 suggestions.[51] A letter from a supervisory employee to R. W. Rath explained one reason for lack of enthusiasm among employees—which interestingly was tied to the ongoing scientific management practices at Rath. This supervisor wrote that the organization could not expect too much from Operation R unless management was willing to change "some current policies: namely, time study or job loads."[52] He explained,

> Employees are afraid to suggest new ideas because they will directly affect their job load or a fellow employee's and result in less take-home pay. The writer thinks this is a serious problem and a very important one as far as OPERATION "R" is concerned.
>
> As we all know, when there is a change in an operation, the usual procedure is to re-time or study the operation. In most cases, the standards and job load is [sic] set tighter. With a new idea, it becomes tighter, resulting sometimes in a high percentage pay-out for the employees.
>
> . . .
>
> We cannot expect employees to bring up or suggest new ideas if they will, when put into effect, result in less take-home pay for them. This is just plain human nature and certainly a human relations problem."

The cynicism surrounding Operation R discouraged Rath's executive managers from attempting another such large-scale program for several years. The company, however, needed stronger leadership to reverse negative trends that were becoming increasingly

---

[51] No date, John E. Cash to B. Burrell et al, C004/003.
[52] February 11, 1959, L. R. Letney to R. W. Rath, C003/030.

apparent—particularly to the Board of Directors. In 1962, they were advised by Robert Heller & Associates, a Chicago-based management consultant group, to bring in an outsider who could work as a Vice President and then assume the company's top executive office in a couple of years.[53] The Board selected William M. Cameron, an executive vice president from one of Rath's packaging suppliers, Continental Can Company. In 1965, Cameron became president of Rath, and as one of his first actions he initiated a new management campaign called the Target Achievement Program or TAP. He followed TAP a year later with a new initiative called Work Improvement Program or WIP, thus bringing his managerial training to bear on solving Rath's economic problems during the mid 1960s.

1965: Targets Achievement Program. Cameron's first management initiative was designed to make those directly reporting to him—that is, the rest of the company's executive management—more accountable, and thus reduce Rath's operating costs. Such reporting techniques were typical of a structural analysis approach to addressing organizational problems. To achieve a new level of accountability, Cameron required company executives to file their managerial objectives with his office and to report periodically on their progress (see, for example, Figure 4.11). After receiving all their objectives, Cameron periodically compiled master lists and sent them with cover memos like the one below, which is notable not only for its strong managerial tone, but also for its mention of communication training—a common theme in the structural analysis management movement.

---

[53] Donnell, p. 19.

"A" Item
B. TARGET PLAN—Multipliers

Dept. _____ Name Edward L. Conrad Period 1966 Fiscal Year

TARGET CODE #	TARGET DESCRIBED	DATE COMPLETED	PROOF OF PROGRESS
060-1M	Arrange for all appropriate tests, identify that course of action deemed to offer the highest economic gain and publish a recommendation regarding the optimal use of the floatation grading system and the disposition of "floaters".	August 1, 1966	Publication of report.
060-2M	Investigate and evaluate the benefit, if any, of promoting a Zero Defects program for the Waterloo plant with follow up applications in all other producing and processing facilities.	July 1, 1966	Summary report.
060-3M	Determine the possibility and proceed to set up system of reporting weekly fresh and dry sausage sales and plant production levels against plant capacities.	July 1, 1966	Publication and distribution of Fresh and Dry Sausage Weekly Capacity Utilization Report.
060-4M	Arrange for the collection, reporting and coding of extra costs associated with purchased hams and bellies that must be "pre-trimmed" to Rath's specifications prior to processing. Major goal here is to highlight and then identify and pursue an optimum course of action leading to a significant reduction of these excess costs.	September 1, 1966	The setting of identifiable amounts of our Cost and Variance Statements.

Figure 4.11. Periodic Management Report Used During 1965 Targets Achievement Program (C007/030)

> Herewith a set of targets of our officers' group. Some targets reach across functional lines, and you may want to discuss them with the author and perhaps others.
>
> Total number of targets written by and checked by the supervisors in manufacturing now total 290. Targets fulfilled to date number 105.
>
> The current schedule calls for completing the two-day courses for all members of Waterloo management by July 30.
>
> The attached excerpts from "Clear Communication for Chief Executives" by McMurry recall some of the points made at our officer meeting by Hugh Gyllenhaal.
>
> If you think it would be helpful to receive, say once a month, reasonably brief material that will remind our managers of their two-day course, sign this and return to Madeline. Fred Rudge will show you some examples and check your thinking about what you would like to have.[54]

In addition to setting targets, Cameron required his "officers" to establish measuring tools and set firm completion dates for their projects—a subtle reappropriation of the work analysis practices that had been introduced under scientific management. Coordinating this management initiative required a steady flow of written communication. Memos sent to managers during this time reminded them of the purposes for the new quarterly reports genre:

---

[54] June 1, 1965, William M. Cameron to W. W. Jennings et al, C006/031.

"This is your opportunity to compare goals set with actual results and to replan goals and targets for the next quarter."[55] In addition to introducing new genres, management initiatives such as Targets inevitably led to variations in existing communicative practices. In a memo in which he encourages managers "to accomplish good results" with their departmental targets, Cameron calls for more timely reporting by the managers and "a news story about T.A.P progress in the next Rath News Letter."[56] Following up on this request, in August a new "Progress Report on Targets" form is instituted, a new type of master analysis report is created, and a "story [is] prepared for the Black Hawk News Letter."[57] The power of Rath's top administrator to affect organizational activities was evident in the way he could affect a string of interrelated genres. The communicative exchanges between Cameron's office and the offices of these executives were supplemented by a much larger collection of texts that the officers used to manage operational practices related to their own professional targets. There was, for example, the effort to reform sausage operations, which called for the appropriate managers to "evaluate, revise, and implement the necessary paper work (data sheets, graphs, and reports) to properly reflect the Sausage Operation and to intelligently communicate the compiled data to Sausage Supervision."[58] An even larger task endorsed by Cameron was the complete reworking of Rath's quality control program, which encompassed multiple genres as well as "training and indoctrination programs."

With its genre-intensive activities, Cameron's management initiative was designed to help alter the organizational identities of managers. The new routine activities associated

---

[55] May 18, 1966, William M. Cameron to W. W. Jennings et al, C007/030.
[56] June 10, 1966, William M. Cameron to E. L. Conrad et al, C007/030.
[57] August 17, 1966, R. B. Faxon to E. L. Conrad, C007/030.
[58] "Targets to Complete Within Six Months," C006/031.

with the initiative (setting goals, measuring progress, and publishing results)—and the communicative practices that mediated them (quarterly report forms, analysis reports, newsletter articles)—helped define what it meant to be a manager at Rath during that time. In a real sense, managerial identity was largely constituted in the company genres that structured management's activities and represented them to other people in the organization. Managers were clearly intended to associate themselves with the new genre routines—Cameron not only required them to engage in these routines, but also to keep their Targets documents—from their training materials and their quarterly reports—in a three-ring binder supplied by his office.

1966: Work Improvement Program. Rath's communicative practices were again reconfigured via a structural analysis management initiative in 1966. When the Targets program was in its second year, Cameron began yet another large-scale initiative. Whereas Targets was focused on executive managers at Rath, Cameron's 1966 Work Improvement Program required lower-level supervisors throughout the facility to realign their work practices to fit the contemporary goal-setting, problem-analysis techniques associated with the structural analysis approach to management that had been popularized by management gurus like Peter F. Drucker after World War II.

As part of the Work Improvement Program, Rath's supervisors attended four training sessions administered by the Industrial Engineering department. During the session, they were given a Work Improvement training text that called for them to help Rath take the lead in "quality of its output" as well as "cost of production."[59] To achieve this goal, supervisors

[59] See training text in C007/028.

and foremen would have to take additional responsibility for what occurred in the organization, the text explained. The purpose of the Work Improvement Program, it declared, was "to train our foremen in the organized use of common sense to find better ways of doing work." Thus, supervisors were instructed to mine the "treasure of ideas" that their foremen had—they would learn how to do so through an initial training program and "a permanent follow-up system providing for continuing guidance, evaluation and recognition." Interestingly, these supervisors were told that the Work Improvement Program "does not involve a so-called scientific approach. Rather, it will entail the orderly use of common sense to find better ways of doing over work."[60]

Cameron's management initiatives were short-lived programs. They were not continued into 1967, and at the end of that year, Cameron resigned as president of Rath. His attempts to restructure the organization by opening communication channels and making all levels of supervisors more accountable in the bureaucratic hierarchy failed to improve the company's financial situation. In fact, the year Cameron resigned, the company reduced its salaried workforce by 28 percent, refinanced its debt, and auctioned off a Waterloo facility it had operated for years. The management initiatives attempted from 1959 until 1966 all ended abruptly. Other techniques associated with structural analysis, however, continued to play a part in management practices at Rath, as I describe below.

---

[60] Additional portions of this training informed supervisors that the Work Improvement Program had "the purpose of indoctrination" and that "the end product will not be the usual type of suggestion plan."

Structural Analysis via Accounting Controls and Restructuring Plans: Righting the Organization with Analytical Communicative Practices

The management initiatives I described above were designed to involve varying levels of employees in remedying company problems. During the company's final years, however, Rath's management turned to structural analysis techniques involving accounting controls and executive plans that could be executed only by high-level management. Rath's senior managers seemed more comfortable with these techniques, though the company's bleak economic conditions during most of its final years kept them unsettled. Before hiring Cameron, the company had turned to outside professional consultants in 1962 to remedy its "policies, procedures, and programs."[61] And, following their advice, it had instituted a new administrative cost control procedure.[62] Revising this procedure—a type of management by the numbers—would become a standard practice through the early 1980s. Attempts were made, too, to dismantle bureaucratic arrangements that were seen as harmful. In short, Rath's managers became increasingly willing to experiment with contemporary management techniques as they tried to reverse the company's downward spiral. The multiple programs they instituted—and frequently had running concurrently—yielded a disparate collection of communicative practices.

Accounting Controls. The tools of accounting, which had been a vital part of company operations since John W. Rath established Rath's books in 1891, were constantly revised and re-operationalized to serve management during the company's history. It was

[61] The Rath Packing Company Annual Stockholders' Report, 1962.
[62] May 22, 1962, J. D. Donnell et al. to all department managers, C004/036.

these tools to which management turned in the mid 1960s and again and again until the early 1980s as they sought to reverse the company's economic decline.

In 1965, Cameron instituted a direct standard cost accounting system[63] running in the company's mainframe computing center (see discussion in Chapter 6). This new system allowed management to assess how different aspects of the organization were performing (based on numerical data they supplied to the computer), and thus to address problems more efficiently. For example, the new system allowed management to determine costs by product, customer, and sales region, extending high-level managerial oversight to remote parts of the organization. To accommodate these new managerial tasks, Cameron consolidated departments such as quality control, process planning, industrial engineering, and maintenance engineering, which had once been divided into functional groups in the company's bureaucratic structure. To oversee this new management system, Cameron also added a manager to supervise the new Internal Auditing Department and Systems and Procedures.

This reconfiguration of administrative activities around accounting reports elevated the importance of budgets in the communicative practices of managers at Rath. As Cameron explained to a group of bank officials who were carrying Rath's debt, accounting-based management had allowed the company to "decentralize the corporate structure along product lines of responsibility, delegating decision making to the responsible officers but still maintaining tight central control over performance against budget."[64] The new system, too,

[63] December 2, 1965, Morris Y. Kinne to John A. Sands, Jr., C005/045.
[64] December 2, 1965, C006/035.

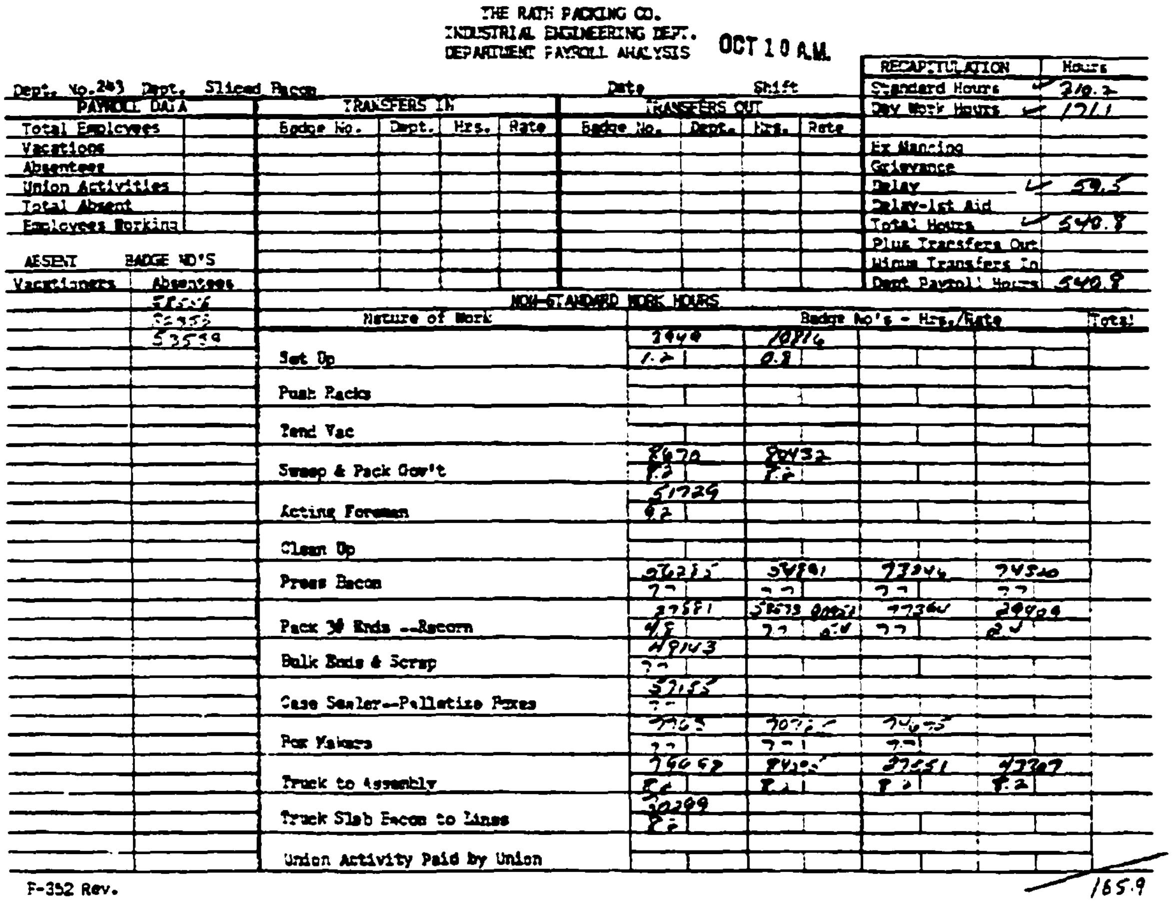
had consequences for the genres associated with the company's scientific management activities. Using the new accounting reports, managers were able to conduct extensive studies of foreman pay rates and employees who were "making out" under the standard methods and pay rates system.[65] The new cost accounting methods thus provided increased scrutiny of human resources, leading management to introduce analytical production sheets in which worker performance was measured like the products manufactured in the plant (see Figure 4.12).

Even as Cameron was leaving the company, Rath's managers continued to use this accounting system as a tool for administering cost reduction programs. In 1967, for example, company administrators conducted an account review for profitability, reduction of direct labor costs, and reduction of communication costs. During this program, accounting numbers provided by the company computer were transcribed to a report, "Analysis of Cost Reduction Program by Cause and Function," in which all business operations were converted into numerical data presented in a tabular forms.[66] In 1973, the same system would be used to support organization-wide budget reductions, as financial data and statistics—combed from a variety of inter-related accounting genres—were translated into long typewritten reports.[67]

Strategic analysis and planning activities were thus largely mediated by communicative practices associated with accounting. A 1973 memo sent to the company's top administrators from John E. Cash, the organization's budget co-ordinator, suggests the extent to which administrative activities were oriented toward accounting genres. Calling for

---

[65] See papers in C006/030.
[66] See report in C006/032.
[67] See several examples of these reports in R010/017.



THE RATH PACKING CO.
INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING DEPT.
DEPARTMENT PAYROLL ANALYSIS OCT 10 A.M.

Dept. No. 243 Dept. Sliced Bacon Date Shift

PAYROLL DATA	
Total Employees	
Vacations	
Absentees	
Union Activities	
Total Absent	
Employees Working	

TRANSFERS IN				TRANSFERS OUT			
Badge No.	Dept.	Hrs.	Rate	Badge No.	Dept.	Hrs.	Rate

RECAPITULATION	Hours
Standard Hours	310.2
Day Work Hours	171.1
Ex Mancing	
Grievance	
Delay	59.5
Delay-1st Aid	
Total Hours	540.8
Plus Transfers Out	
Minus Transfers In	
Dept Payroll Hours	540.8

ABSENT BADGE NO'S

Vacationers	Absentees
	[illegible]
	[illegible]
	53559

NON-STANDARD WORK HOURS

Nature of Work	Badge No's - Hrs./Rate				Total
Set Up	3440 / 1.2	10816 / 0.8			
Push Racks					
Tend Vac					
Sweep & Pack Gov't	8670 / 8.0	20432 / 8.0			
Acting Foreman	51729 / 8.2				
Clean Up					
Press Bacon	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	
Pack 3# Ends --Recorn	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	
Bulk Ends & Scrap	49143 / [illegible]				
Case Sealer--Palletize Boxes	[illegible]				
Box Makers	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]		
Truck to Assembly	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	
Truck Slab Bacon to Lines	30299 / [illegible]				
Union Activity Paid by Union					165.9

F-352 Rev.

Figure 4.12. Form for Analyzing Employee Work Performance (TM025)

the "serious personal attention" of administrators in developing a profit plan for the following year, Cash notes that their cooperation in preparing a variety of strategic budgets and forecasts will help "bring both organization and personal goals into harmony so there is unity of purpose."[68]

[68] March 8, 1973, John E. Cash's "1974 Profit Planning Procedures," R011/009.

Restructuring Plans. Before the financial demise of Rath was evident, management made several attempts to right the organization by modernizing and decentralizing the company's operations. Recognizing the liabilities of running such a large plant (the biggest single-site packing house in North America), management opened a second slaughtering facility in Columbus Junction, Iowa, and a string of processing plants to complement the smaller branch house offices that had existed since the 1920s. This diversification—which was widely recognized as necessary, though it was extremely taxing on the company's strained budgets—became a focal point of management programs through the mid 1970s. In the 1963 Annual Stockholders Meeting, both H. H. Rath's and Joe Gibson's speeches emphasized the importance of modernization and decentralization of Rath operations. The following year, they would repeat this theme in the Annual Report, making it a commonplace in Rath's most public documents until the later 1970s, when it was financially inconceivable that Rath could expand its operations. Even then, efforts to decentralize the organization continued to be a part of management's practices.

Management's efforts to decentralize the company gained momentum in 1965 when Cameron restructured the management hierarchy in an attempt to focus managerial controls on key areas in the company. He saw this organizational upheaval as a way to make the company more efficient, noting that the new organizational arrangements would allow Rath's management to "giv[e] more attention to the yearly budget and profit planning functions as well as to long-range planning."[69] Such radical change in the company's bureaucracy was a management technique advocated by the gurus of structural analysis, because such changes

[69] The Rath Packing Company Annual Stockholders' Report, 1965, R005/011.

unsettled the systems (and their associated communicative practices) that were causing the company to stagnate. Rath's management, however, was never able to find an appropriate and financially sound organizational arrangement, though their efforts would result in several more upheavals. The very next year, for example, Rath's board would create three new executive vice presidencies in an attempt to streamline the organization's structure. Confident in this new restructuring program, Rath officials issued a press release announcing the changes. In this public document, Cameron explicitly connected organizational control to communication: "new officer positions and the realigned organizational structure w[ill] make for shorter lines of internal communication and closer administrative control." The release continues by explaining how these lines of communication would complement "the new management policy of decentralized responsibility and authority which, in total, would speed up the decision-making process and was designed to enable Rath to react much more swiftly to changing market conditions for its products, to better control production in order to achieve planned profit objectives, and to take corrective action to soften the cyclical effects of fluctuations in the available livestock, the company's basic raw material."[70] This tightening of administrative controls that shortened the "lines" of communication failed to return the company to profitability, as did several subsequent short-lived restructuring efforts before the company closed.

Conclusion

With this historical overview of management approaches at Rath, I have attempted to demonstrate an integral relationship between how people at the company ordered their activities and their communicative practices. The long succession of family members in key

[70] July 1, 1996, Rath press release, C007/001.

administrative positions helped perpetuate many traditional ways of getting things done, including practices for communicating to the entire organization and paternal oversight of the welfare of employees. The administrative decision to institute scientific management principles and the participation/resistance of employees introduced new and frequently contested communicative practices—ranging from time-motion studies to labor contracts. Administration-driven management programs associated with structural analysis provided yet another layer of communicative practices, some of which complemented existing genre routines (periodic reports) and many that were short-lived.

Some of the communicative practices that emerged from these different management approaches became entrenched routines, as the repetition of certain genres over decades suggests. Many others, however, were significantly remade as communicators appropriated prior practices in their efforts to re-order organizational activities. The intermingling of repeated and varied communicative practices at Rath illustrates the pull of tradition and the contradictory push of innovation in the organization. Management, however, was not the only set of activities in the company producing this tension. Governmental regulatory controls also deeply influenced the ways in which communicative practices developed at the company—an interplay that I explore in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: GOVERNMENTAL REGULATION

> All Rath products are produced under the rigid inspection of the United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Animal Industry. A permanent staff of twenty-one men has charge of this work. They inspect every carcass and every part of every carcass, as well as the facilities under which the product is handled and the manner of packing, shipping, etc., so that the product will arrive in the hands of the customer in perfect, sanitary condition.
>
> from speech delivered by Rath official in 1958[1]

The meat packing industry has been subject to public and governmental scrutiny for most of the twentieth century. Since the early 1900s, federal and local regulations have controlled the industry and have been reinforced with on-site inspections and severe penalties for failure to comply with industry-specific legal requirements. From their inception, these regulations have been closely tied to public concerns. During this century, additional federal, state, and local regulatory controls applicable to commercial activities in general have also emerged, making companies like Rath accountable for a wide range of operating practices—from inventory reporting techniques to documentation of employee training. Throughout this period, company administrators and employees alike learned to modify their work practices to comply with this constantly changing body of regulation. Compliance in most cases involved altering work routines, and, in almost all instances, these alterations were accompanied by revised communicative practices. There were, of course, the mandatory government forms to be completed for governmental agencies. But the changes in the company's communicative practices were more profound than that. Compliance with regulations often translated into revisions of existing company genres or the introduction of

[1] No date (internal references imply 1958), speech manuscript titled "The Rath Packing Company," R001/001.

new habits of communication. In this chapter, I examine several instances of this interplay at Rath to illustrate how specific communicative practices at the company were integrally linked to external regulatory controls.

Regulatory Controls and Routine Communicative Practices

Like the administrative controls I discussed in the previous chapter, regulatory controls at Rath were tied to patterns of repetition and variation in the company's communicative practices. Both types of controls were oriented toward the standardization of organizational activities. Both regulators and administrators relied on forms of oversight as their primary tool for ensuring that activities met defined standards. And disciplinary measures were sometimes taken by both regulatory agencies and company administrators to correct deviant practices. Regulatory controls, however, held more sway in defining the company's general practices, which had to comply with the law. Administrators thus modified the company's communicative habits when regulations changed, as was the case in 1962 when the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a policy statement in the *Federal Register*[2] about the use of promotional programs used by meat packers and in response administrators at Rath had to revise their national distribution campaign.

The regulations that affected communicative practices at Rath were diverse, arising from significantly different circumstances and leading to a range of organizational responses. Regulatory controls that focused on sanitary operating practices led to new operating procedures. Regulatory controls that focused on financial transactions led to new inventory records. Regulatory controls that focused on taxation led to new executive expense reports.

---

[2] *Federal Register*, August 16, 1962 (27 F. R. 8173). See C005/029 for Rath's response to this regulation.

Regulatory controls that focused on workplace safety led to new training manuals. Sometimes, too, individual regulatory controls were suspended, allowing employees to abandon a mandatory reporting form, as was the case when wartime price controls were lifted in the early 1950s. Throughout the century, existing regulatory controls were also revised and supplemented to close loopholes or update the code according to changing social circumstances.

Because company administrators and employees were generally motivated to comply with regulatory controls, they tended to develop genres that would allow the company to account for its compliance with the law. That is, many of the company's communicative practices that emerged around these regulatory controls were designed to provide documentary proof of compliance. Production forms, for example, were more than tools for communicating information to employees further down the assembly line; they also served as a record that a given lot of meat had been processed according to government standards. Accounting documents were not only tools for making administrative decisions and coordinating departmental activities within the organizational bureaucracy; they also came to be a record of the fiscal controls that were mandatory for publicly traded companies after securities regulations were enacted in the early 1930s. Training manuals and procedures were not only instructive for employees; they came to be doubly instrumental after workplace safety regulations were passed in the early 1970s and such texts were used as evidence that company administrators encouraged safe working practices. In response to regulatory controls, Rath administrators and employees used these and a variety of other documentary forms to account for their compliance.

Although regulatory controls profoundly affected communicative practices at Rath, it would be far too reductive to say that the regulations determined company practices. Administrators at Rath, like those at many other big businesses, actively tried to shape pending legislation—frequently exchanging correspondence with lawmakers to express their views on proposed regulatory controls (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The company's administrators also viewed regulation as a process in which they could participate by arguing about the interpretation of existing regulations.[3] Regulations affecting day-to-day operations at Rath seldom specified details about how the company should comply with any given law. While governmental agencies sometimes mandated the use of specific forms, more often company employees devised their own genres based on their interpretation of the regulations. Because regulations affecting the meatpacking industry were so complex, however, Rath administrators did not completely rely on their own interpretations; they relied, too, on the interpretations and experiences of others in the industry that were reported in professional bulletins.[4] When developing routine communicative practices that would allow the company to account for its compliance with loosely-defined regulations, Rath often translated the practices of other businesses into their own. The fundamental financial information contained in annual reports to stockholders, for example, was defined at the federal level by regulatory controls instituted in the 1930s. A great deal of ambiguity, however, surrounded

---

[3] As business communication historian JoAnne Yates has argued in her account of legislation affecting American railroads, an interplay between business and regulators had long been a part of the structuration of business law in America. See Yates, *Control through Communication*, pgs. 136-137.

[4] The American Meat Institute, a national organization founded at roughly the same that most significant legislation affecting meatpackers was enacted (the Meat Inspection Act of 1906), was the most reliable source of industry information for Rath. AMI had been created by industry representatives (including J. W. Rath) for communicating legislative and regulatory information between the industry and the federal government. Rath received weekly—sometimes daily—bulletins from AMI, reporting proposed legislative and regulatory changes and how those changes would affect the daily operations of meat packing organizations. They also actively supported the AMI's legislative efforts (see Figure 5.4).

June 14, 1972

Hearing Clerk
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C. 20250

Dear Sir:

The Rath Packing Company hereby submits comments on the proposed amendments to Federal Meat Inspection regulations to govern sliced bacon package design, published in the Federal Register April 21, 1972 (page 7902).

We endorse the concept that packages giving the consumer a view of sliced bacon should display "a substantial portion of a representative slice." In fact, we are already marketing bacon in a package that does show the consumer over 70% of a representative slice of bacon.

The regulations as proposed do present some serious practical compliance problems and we endorse the suggested change in (ii) (a) and (ii) (b) proposed by the American Meat Institute.

Very truly yours,

Morris Y. Kinne
Secretary

MYK/bb

copy to Mr. Chester Adams, AMI
" Harry Slife
" Herb Williams

Figure 5.1. Rath Comments on Pending Legislation (C009/024)

Copy sent to: H. G. Slife
H. E. Williams
Chester Adams

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE
MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION PROGRAM
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250

JUN 20 1972

The Rath Packing Company
P. O. Box 330
Waterloo, Iowa 50704

Dear Mr. Kinne:

Thank you for your June 9 letter expressing your views on the packaging of sliced bacon, a proposed regulation published in the Federal Register on April 21.

Your comments will be carefully considered when we make the final decision on the regulation.

Sincerely,

J. C. deHoll

J. C. deHoll, Chief
Labels and Packaging Staff
Technical Services

Figure 5.2. USDA Response to Rath Comments on Pending Legislation (C009/024)

the annual report genre. Observing the practices of others in the industry as these regulations changed, Rath accountants and administrators formed their own interpretations of how they should modify their genre-production habits.

Interpretation was also important as Rath administrators and employees negotiated compliance with governmental auditors. Because communicative practices at Rath were largely guided by employees' best guesses about how to account for compliance, inevitable questions and controversies arose as auditors with different interpretations reviewed company practices. When an employee could justify that a given practice met regulatory requirements, such practices were continued. If, however, a governmental representative could not be convinced, the consequence for Rath might be the mandatory institution of a new practice, a legal citation, the condemnation of company inventories, or the closure of plant operations.

As a general rule, Rath administrators encouraged cooperation with the inspectors as they sought to avoid costly confrontations. On some occasions, however, Rath administrators were less than cooperative as they resisted regulatory controls. Over time, compliance with new or controversial regulations turned into a sort of give-and-take negotiation. In some cases, Rath's interpretation of regulatory controls would prevail; in other cases, the company would receive a notification of noncompliance letter from the USDA (see Figure 5.3) and be compelled to modify their practices. These negotiations became, in fact, a more-or-less common routine in conducting business. At the end of World War II, for example, the company resisted submitting detailed financial statements to a government agency that had requested the information in a specific format. Following the advice of their accountants, company administrators opted to give "limited compliance with

cc: Jerry Rose

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CONSUMER AND MARKETING SERVICE
MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

CERTIFIED MAIL-RETURN RECRIPT REQUESTED

JAN 18 1972

The Rath Packing Company
Attention: Mr. Louis Pottkotter
6830 Mykawa Road
Houston, Texas 77033

Gentlemen:

We believe you have violated the Federal Meat Inspection Act by using the official mark of meat inspection without authorization. This concerns the supplying of containers and/or labeling material bearing the mark of Federal meat inspection for use at a location other than your official plant. A representative of this Department discussed this matter with your representative on November 23, 1971.

Section 11 of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) prohibits the unauthorized use of the marks of Federal meat inspection. Section 406 of the Act provides criminal penalties for violators. A copy of the Act is enclosed.

In order to give you an opportunity to show voluntary compliance it has been decided that no legal action shall be taken against you at this time based on this alleged violation. However, you are on notice that if future violations occur, all violations, including any earlier violation, may be sent to the Department of Justice for appropriate legal action.

Sincerely,

Ralph S. Kletcott

Program Review and Compliance Staff

Enclosure

cc: The Rath Packing Company
Elm & Sycamore Streets
Waterloo, Iowa 50704

Figure 5.3. Notification of Noncompliance Letter from USDA (C009/024)

the request of the Office of Price Administration for income data" in an effort to avoid "the beginning of numerous future requests."[5] Such resistance was not uncommon in subsequent years, either, as the number of regulatory controls grew significantly. In the late 1960s, company administrators challenged the USDA's interpretation of what types of advertising were permissible,[6] and in the early 1970s, the company conducted "quite a running battle with the USDA" about product names and labels.[7] Rath administrators finally conceded this "battle" by revising their product labels and product specifications to be in line with the USDA's interpretation of the governing regulations. In an episode two years earlier, however, company administrators prevailed in a different dispute. They succeeded in their efforts to have a USDA inspector removed from his duties at Rath's Columbus Junction, Iowa, facility by documenting that this inspector's interpretations of regulations were stricter than prevailing standards and by writing to elected officials in the US Congress and the USDA.[8]

Patterns in the Interplay of Regulatory Controls and Communicative Practices

The most significant governmental regulations for Rath were certainly those which came out of the Meat Inspection Act passed early in the century. In addition to these industry-specific regulations, however, there were multiple other regulatory controls that affected the company's business, covering such areas as financial operations, advertising, and plant safety. Below, I explain these regulations in some detail below to illustrate how deeply they became embedded in the day-to-day operations at the company. Rather than citing

[5] April 10, 1945, Frazer and Torbet to J. W. Rath, F084/012.
[6] See C009/008 for documents related to this ongoing controversy.
[7] July 23, 1971, James Steely to George Hawk, R007/017.
[8] See R006/020 for documents related to this incident.

every legal code that affected Rath's operations—a task certainly beyond the scope of this study—I have focused my discussion on selected episodes that illuminate how the company responded to regulatory controls through new and modified communicative practices. After my overview of the 1906 Meat Inspection Act and daily work routines at Rath, I turn to the financial regulations enacted during the first half of the century and then to the consumer and labor regulations enacted after World War II.

These episodes illustrate individual moments in the complex interplay between regulation and communicative practices at Rath. As I have suggested already, however, observable patterns emerge across this ongoing interplay, revealing interesting turns in the company's genre history. My examination of these patterns suggests that

- In their efforts to demonstrate compliance with regulations, Rath instituted several genres that might not have emerged otherwise. Communicative practices were developed within the company to provide documentary evidence of efforts to comply with legal requirements. Entire genres were developed for the purpose of accounting for company activities and were sometimes used as proof when auditors questioned workplace practices.
- Regulations were dialogic rather than monologic. Rath's administrators worked in several ways to shape legislation as it was being created by elected officials and bureaucrats, and company employees participated in conversations to argue for different interpretations of legal standards.
- The company's communicative practices underwent a process of structuration, whereby (1) some existing genres were appropriated to meet regulatory requirement and (2) some

of the genres created solely for the purpose of meeting regulatory requirements were also operationalized in new ways to accomplish company-specific goals.

- While compelled to comply with regulations, company administrators sometimes experimented with forms of textual representation. Regulations were grounded in the assumption that documentary forms represented reality. Rath's administrators, however, discovered that there was a great deal of variation possible between what a document reports and what individuals do. They exploited this slippage on occasions, using documentary forms to represent a reality that did not necessarily square with actual practices in the company. Government inspectors were not mere dupes, however; they were well versed in the slippages that could exist and often compelled company officials to bring their practices into line with their documentary forms.

The 1906 Meat Inspection Act and Routine Work Practices at Rath

Before the twentieth century, almost all of the meat consumed in America was produced locally. However, increased commercial activity, improvements in interstate transportation, and rapidly growing populations in metropolitan markets at the end of the nineteenth century led to the emergence of regional and national meat production companies. Local butchers became increasingly scarce. Rath was one of the many companies that emerged to distribute products in these growing markets. As large meat companies and food suppliers were beginning to dominate the market late in the nineteenth century, small groups of concerned consumers and politicians attempted to regulate these companies' activities at

the local and state level.[9] It would take several years, however, before a national consumer movement would be organized. The turning point came in 1906 when Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*—a book which he had intended to elevate social consciousness about the deplorable working conditions for poor laborers in Chicago's packinghouses, but which instead created consumer outrage at the practices of the meatpacking industry. Consumers, including President Roosevelt, were horrified by the revolting conditions under which meat was prepared for the market.[10] When a commission appointed by President Roosevelt began developing legislation later that year, some meatpackers attempted to shape the proposed legislation by releasing "false propaganda to the press."[11] The tide of public opinion, however, ensured that the 1906 Meat Inspection Act would become law.

With passage of the Act, meat production was placed under the regulatory control of the federal government, permanently reshaping business practices of meatpackers like Rath who were shipping their products to remote markets. Whereas the local butchers in operation before the Act were essentially autonomous, in 1906 meatpacking processes were subject to extensive on-site inspections:

> On July 1, 1906, the Meat Inspection Act took effect, conferring upon the Secretary of Agriculture greater power, and increasing . . . to three million dollars the appropriation to pay the cost of inspection. The Meat Inspection Act applied not only to the live animals before slaughter, but beyond that to

---

[9] See Mitchell Okun, *Fair Play in the Marketplace: The First Battle for Pure Food and Drugs* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986).
[10] Robert N. Mayer, *The Consumer Movement: Guardians of the Marketplace* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1989), pgs. 17-18.
[11] Harry Edward Neal, *The Protectors: The Story of the Food and Drug Administration* (New York: Julian Messner, 1968), p. 19.

> the meat and meat products in all stages of processing. It further applied to the premises in which livestock was slaughtered and meat was produced.[12]

The costs of inspection were carried by the government—one of the several concessions the packers were given during the legislative debate that preceded the law.[13] In turn, however, they gave up some of the autonomy under which they had operated. Permanent inspection teams associated with the newly created Meat Inspection Department (MID) were stationed at every plant covered by the law, and their written approval was required at critical junctures in the meat production process. As I describe below, multiple genres had to be developed to facilitate correspondence between company employees and government inspectors at these junctures. As loopholes in the original law[14] became evident over time and as government inspectors worked out genre routines for overseeing Rath's compliance with the regulation that was revised during subsequent decades, a large and complicated network of communicative practices emerged within the company.

Inspection and Compliance: The Emergence of Text-Rich Routines

Rath, like all packers involved in interstate commerce, needed the approval of government inspectors on every meat product manufactured in its facility. While such

---

[12] Bertram B. Fowler, *Men, Meat and Miracles* (New York: Julian Messner, 1952), p. 109.

[13] For an overview of the compromises made by both the government and the industry, see Mary Yeager, *Competition and Regulation: The Development of Oligopoly in the Meat Packing Industry* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1981), pgs. 210-213. As Yeager notes, historians like Gabriel Kolko have argued that "the fight for meat inspection was not a battle at all. It was a subtle game designed by rational-minded packers and played for profits. Government was merely the vehicle through which packers obtained their ends" (p. 211). See also, Kolko's *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle, 1967). Yeager's study, like mine, concludes that the compromises required by this legislation were not exactly one-sided.

[14] Herbert Burkholz, *The FDA Follies* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pgs. 8-9.

approval was mandatory, it was not automatic.[15] Rath's administrators had to apply for inspection and maintain compliance in order to be an "official establishment." From the day the Meat Inspection Act was first enforced until the company discontinued operations, the company was identified as Establishment 186. Every food product manufactured by the company for American consumers was marked: "U. S. Inspected and Passed by Department of Agriculture, Establishment Number 186." Behind this officious line—this marker of governmental approval—there was a complex and always changing network of activities strung together with routine texts.

Inspection of products and compliance with regulations were consuming activities that directly accounted for the work routines of dozens of people working at Rath—from government inspectors and their clerical support to company managers and a cadre of clerks who moved paperwork around the plant. On a broader scale, inspection and compliance activities spiraled out to touch everyone employed in the company's business because all plant operations were in some way oriented to the production of meat. Documents produced throughout the company were evidence of operating practices that must produce safe and sanitary food for consumers. Consequently, the governmental meat inspection service included not only observation of all slaughtering and processing activities, but also identification of products, packaging and handling, plant sanitation, disposal of inedible animal parts and condemned animals, and the company's weighing and labeling processes.

To monitor all the areas of the company they were responsible for examining under the law, the permanent group of government inspectors stationed at Rath relied on several

---

[15] The act specified that intentional or frequent violation of the regulations by any meat packinghouse could result in complete withdrawal of the inspection services, essentially ending all operations at the plant.

forms of documentation. Tucked away in an office on the back side of one of the company's many buildings,[16] the inspectors maintained an office, and, with the help of a secretary, they kept an extensive collection of records that documented their activities at the plant. The inspection office regularly received production schedules and notifications of the volume and nature of production work planned for the facilities, so that the inspectors could devote the time and resources necessary for conducting their own work. In turn, these documents, which the company was required to produce for the inspectors, became administrative genres that production managers used to better coordinate their own activities. Such overlaps became common during subsequent years as documents originally produced to comply with regulations came to be used for the company's own administrative purposes. Proposed floor plans submitted to the inspection office, for example, became specifications for construction work upon being approved.

When the inspectors left their office—dressed in their obligatory long white lab coats and white caps—they became active participants in the day-to-day operations of the company. While observing employee practices and auditing an array of production-related genres, the inspectors were responsible for determining if Rath's practices complied with regulatory controls and for notifying the company administrators when operations violated the law. Upon discovering non-compliant practices, the inspectors were required to withhold their approval, making it impossible for Rath to sell its products. The company could only operate with a literal stamp of approval from the inspectors on key company documents.

[16] In keeping with regulations, Rath was required to supply its inspectors with office space as well as their basic tools (e.g., work tables, writing instruments, and secure storage areas). The federal government paid the inspectors' base salaries, though Rath had to pay overtime and holiday wages if they scheduled production activities that would require additional inspection services.

From the earliest days of these new regulatory controls, Rath administrators viewed the legal requirements as "complicated" and associated them with "red tape."[17]

Tracking Documents in the Give-and-Take of Production and Inspection Activities

The complexity that the administrators perceived in the controls can certainly be traced, in part, to the increased requirements for coordinating their production activities with the company's on-site inspectors. This coordination, which rapidly evolved into a network of genre-mediated exchanges, was inevitably viewed as "red tape" by managers because they were accustomed to relying on their own judgments about the appropriateness of their packing operations and the fitness of their meat products for consumers. In the company's first years of operation, administrators had loosely tracked their inventories and production operations; with the new regulations, however, they found themselves relying increasingly on documentary forms to track their work activities. From the time a Rath agent purchased an animal until the time that portions of that animal had been packaged and delivered to retailers, the company maintained a system of documentary records, tracking the purchase through disassembly, processing, packaging, and shipping activities. The array of records did indeed become complicated, growing to include purchasing receipts, production work orders, stock room inventory reports, disposition orders, chemical analysis sheets, packaging specifications, and shipping dockets—to name just a few. Employees developed many of these genres for coordinating their daily transactions at work. The genres took on additional significance, however, as they came to provide documentary proof of compliance with regulatory controls.

[17] December 15, 1906, John W. Rath to C. H. Lawrence & Co., C001/002.

At critical junctures along the way, government inspectors would pass judgment on company activities, recording their findings in their own government records and with a mark on the company's documents. These marks, created with a special set of authoritative tools wielded by the inspectors, signaled the mandatory concurrence of production and inspection activities. The inspectors' tools included stamps applied to production documents, official seals placed on finished packages, and a large collection of tags that were attached to carcasses, waste products, cart loads of meat parts being transported around the plant, freezers full of partially-processed meats, boxes of meat cuts for local butchers to process, and train cars carrying Rath products away from Waterloo. With these official markers, the inspectors indicated that individual lots of the company's meat were either (1) inspected and passed, (2) passed for cooking, (3) passed for refrigeration, or (4) inspected and condemned.

Rath employees and government inspectors began producing their records and inspection texts for every animal that would be slaughtered at Rath long before those animals became a company product. Whenever the company purchased live animals for meat production, the give-and-take of production and inspection documentary forms began in the company's stockyards. Rath employees separated the live animals into lots that were defined with lot control numbers and inventory documents. The inspectors,[18] in turn, would examine the lot and ensure that the animals were fit for regular slaughtering.[19] Such animals were identified and passed on for slaughtering operations. Diseased and crippled animals,

---

[18] The senior inspectors working at Rath—those with final authority in the enforcement of regulations at Rath—were licensed veterinarians and drew on their professional training to make decisions about these animals. A group of lay inspectors also worked at the facility, performing many routine inspection tasks.

[19] After 1958, the inspectors were also responsible for ensuring Rath's compliance with the Humane Slaughter Act passed that year. Company officials, consequently, had to institute written procedures for slaughtering animals that met the new statutory requirements and be audited for compliance with those procedures.

however, were identified as "U. S. Suspect" or "U. S. Condemned" and separated from the others, causing Rath employees to alter their definition of the lot by revising their inventory documents.

To merit a "U. S. Suspect" tag from the inspectors, an animal typically had to exhibit externally observable deficiencies—slow movement, swollen joints, or shipping injuries. Once removed from the original lot of healthy animals, the "U. S. Suspect" animal was processed via its own set of documents; the animal became, in effect, a lot of one. After preparing slaughtering records for the animal, Rath employees began their killing and carcass dressing activities under the immediate direction of a trained government inspector who would analyze the carcass and identify the edible and inedible portions. After tagging these portions so they could be easily identified, the inspector's job was finished. Rath employees would then generate their own texts for processing all of the animal's parts. Data about the weight and types of edible meat cuts were recorded so that production yields and available raw stock could be calculated. Cuts not passed by the inspectors for standard processing were also recorded and marked for further handling, depending on whether the inspectors had condemned the parts or approved them for being treated by the company's cooking processes so that they could be used later in a processed meat product. Company employees then generated handling orders to have the meat cuts and waste carried away to the appropriate locations for further processing. Records were generated for animals identified as "U. S. Condemned," too, though the process was much less elaborate. The animal simply had to be removed to a completely separate facility so the killing could take place apart from the "edible areas" of the establishment.

Once the animals were slaughtered, company employees began their more elaborate disassembly and production activities, which at all times involved tracking of the multiple raw materials they were transforming into meats. As employees broke animal carcasses down into smaller and smaller parts and others shuttled those parts to different areas of the plant so that still other employees could execute their various manufacturing techniques, the flow of raw materials had to be traced in company documents. The inspectors relied on this documentary trail so that if disease was later discovered, all the animal's parts could be located. Such reconstruction activities were, of course, easier to accomplish early in the production process when the heads of cattle and their corresponding carcasses, for example, were identified with matched tags marked with identical numbers so that inspectors could readily establish the correspondence between body parts. When an inspector discovered a potential disease problem while examining the head, carcass, or viscera of an animal early in the initial stages of meat production, he or she would simply place "U. S. Retained" tags on all the animal's parts, so that a veterinary inspector could determine how the parts should be processed (and the necessary paperwork would then be generated). In more advanced stages of meat production, when employees had delivered portions of the carcass to locations throughout the plant, the number of documents generated to trace those parts grew exponentially. Without a trail of documents identifying where an animal's different parts had gone, however, the company might have to destroy its entire inventory if a single diseased meat cut was identified—a more costly option than creating documentary controls for coordinating and tracing the parts of animals as they wended their way through plant operations.

Activities for manufacturing processed meats were in general subject to more regulatory controls than the production of standard meat cuts. Rath's production planners had to create detailed product specifications and processing procedures so that the inspectors would not find excessive preservation or flavoring ingredients in company products. Production workers, in turn, had to document that they had followed procedures to provide an audit trail for assessing potential production problems. These production records as well as company specifications about cooking temperatures, additives, and refrigeration processes were all subject to the scrutiny of inspectors. In addition to ensuring that Rath maintained sufficient specification and production records for processed meat operations, government inspectors would also periodically verify the accuracy of these specifications through chemical analysis of the company's products.

While packaging and shipping the company's meat products invoked its own set of documents, it also marked the culmination of the extensive network of documentary forms that had preceded it. The contents of any given lot of meat products for shipment were defined by the lineage of texts created by employees and approved by inspectors. Product labels that carried regulated terms such as "meat food," "imitation," "artificially colored," and "flavorings" were validated by a collection of stamped production records. Product weights were guaranteed through a network of specifications, procedures, inspector test reports, and scale records. When it was time to ship company products, then, both the government inspectors and Rath employees could quickly certify whether a given lot of meat products qualified for shipment because the documentary forms developed by employees and overseen by the inspectors were all in place—or not. In either case, the genre practices that

the employees and inspectors had exercised throughout production converged as the company prepared to ship its products to consumers.

Re-Operationalizing Genres to Comply with Regulatory Controls

Genres that employees had originally developed to facilitate their own work took on additional purposes when the Meat Inspection Act became effective on July 1, 1906. Purchasing hogs, for example, was an activity the company had engaged in for years and around which a set of documentary forms had evolved. When such purchases became subject to regulatory controls, those documentary forms took on new uses to help the company avoid violations.[20] Purchasing forms, for example, were re-operationalized as tools for specifying requirements that must be met to ensure compliance with regulations. If a farmer sold a dressed hog to a Rath agent and the carcass's viscera was detached or missing, Rath's inspectors would condemn the carcass before it could be processed. Conversely, if the farmer left the viscera attached, Rath's inspectors could conduct their regular examination of the carcass, place an acceptance stamp on Rath processing papers, and tag the carcass with a traceable number. Bills-of-lading, likewise, took on new roles when regulatory controls were put in place. These documents, which had been designed for transacting company products through the shipment process, came to operate as proofs that government inspectors had approved a shipment of products for transportation and purchase across state lines. Every carload of meat that Rath shipped from Waterloo for delivery to retailers was accompanied by multiple copies of a bill-of-lading that contained the company's establishment number and a company stamp:

---

[20] December 14, 1906. John W. Rath to G. C. Rath & Sons, C001/002.

> The following described meat or meat food products have been inspected and passed according to act of Congress of June 30, 1906 and are so marked.

When shipping meat products to another government-certified abattoir, a government inspector would indicate approval with a single seal for the entire carload of unprocessed meat. In such cases, company employees marked the bills-of-lading accompanying the shipment with yet another stamp:

> The following described meat or meat food products have been inspected and passed according to act of Congress of June 30, 1906. They are not marked "Inspected and Passed," but have been placed in car No. _____ under the supervision of an employee of the Bureau of Animal Industry, and the said car has been sealed by the said employee with official seal No. _____.

The 1906 Meat Inspection Act thus affected communicative practices at Rath in both overt and subtle ways. It led company employees to develop new genres and to re-operationalize others to ensure compliance with the regulatory controls. Over time, the communicative practices came to be firmly entrenched in the way business was conducted at the company. As the century progressed, however, these fundamental regulatory controls for the meatpacking industry were overlaid with new sets of regulations, leading to further changes in communicative practices at Rath.

Financial Regulations and the Rise of Accounting-Based Genres

Whereas the meat inspection regulations that emerged early in the century focused on consumer safety issues, by the end of the roaring 1920s, a new collection of regulations—explicitly focused on financial transactions—was about to change Rath's genre practices. When the government began regulating financial reporting methods in the early 1930s, several genres emerged at Rath that allowed company administrators to better account for

work activities. Additional regulatory controls for governing market activities while the country was engaged in the second World War and then during adverse economic conditions led to further changes in the company's genres—even genres that circulated well beyond the company's accounting offices. Below I examine three types of these financial regulatory controls to illustrate how they interacted with communicative practices at Rath. First, I look at the securities exchange acts that governed financial reporting activities, including the production of annual reports. I then turn to the company's response to governmental market controls during the middle of this century. Finally, I briefly examine the Revenue Act of 1962 to illustrate the often unpredictable consequences of regulatory controls.

Enactment of Securities Exchange Acts in the 1930s

Unlike the company's production activities, which had been regulated since 1906, the financial accounting methods used at Rath during the company's first decades were largely self-defined. During the 1920s, when security markets were essentially self-regulated,[21] Rath's accountants defined their own methods for keeping the company's books. They had, over time, slowly revised the bookkeeping practices J. W. Rath had initiated in 1891. By 1929, the accountants had begun to have their books certified by a public accounting firm to prepare an annual statement for the company's common and preferred stockholders.[22] With the passage of two controversial federal acts in the early 1930s, these external accountants took on additional responsibilities for ensuring that Rath's books were kept according to prevailing industry standards—a turn of events that would have far-reaching effects on

[21] Robert Chatov, *Corporate Financial Reporting: Public or Private Control?* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 28.

[22] As early as 1918 the company had secured the assistance of external financial auditors to review the company's books and prepare an audit report (F086/025).

communicative practices within the company. After the Securities Act in 1933 and the Securities and Exchange Act in 1934 were enacted, financial accounting activities became an increasingly prominent thread running through many of Rath's genres.

The Securities Act of 1933, which introduced federal regulatory controls to the exchange of securities, addressed some of the problems that had led to the stock market crash in 1929 and to the depressed economic conditions afterward. The act required companies to register their publicly traded securities with the Securities and Exchange Commission and to provide full disclosure of all material facts related to the securities. The act further required companies to publish public documents such as registration statements and prospecti so that investors would have information that they could use make financial decisions. Several additional acts were passed to refine the 1933 regulation, including the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 that required additional forms of information disclosure by publicly traded companies, which included periodic reporting of the company's financial activities.

The effects of these legislative acts were first and most prominently felt in Rath's accounting documents. Financial reports, earnings reports, financial statements, stockholder reports, ledger books, and internal reporting standards were now all subject to external scrutiny, and the company itself became accountable for the management of these genres. The company's internal and external accountants, with their expertise in communicating in these complex genres, thus became extremely influential after these acts were passed. Their elevated significance within Rath coincided with the expanding role that the accounting profession as a whole would play in the country's financial system from this era forward.[23]

---

[23] Chatov, p. 39.

As was the case with many regulations, the legal controls governing the production of the accounting genres were not absolutely defined and were subject to negotiation. Such ambiguity was sometimes a source of frustration for Rath's administrators, who were attempting to avoid incurring penalties for producing flawed texts. Soon after the securities acts became law, company administrators would discover that interpretation of legal intent and precedents played an important role in the production of compliant genres. In 1937, when Rath was attempting to issue 100,000 new shares of company stock, company administrators were confused about the applicable regulatory controls and took it upon themselves to find the necessary information. A. D. Donnell, the company's secretary, wrote to the Chicago Stock Exchange, asking if they were indeed required to register their new stock issue with the recently formed Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), as their accountant, Mr. Brady, suggested.[24] The next day, Charles F. Duvall, assistant to the secretary of the Chicago Stock Exchange, wrote back to A. D. Donnell, telling him that he must have been confused about the applicable regulations.

> Your perplexity as to registering with the Securities and Exchange Commission doubtless arises from the fact that your attorney must have been alluding to registration for the purposes of the Securities Act of 1933, having to do with original offerings of securities to investors. The registration which we discussed with Mr. Brady and herein referred to pertains entirely to the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. The statutes are entirely separate but

[24] March 11, 1937, A. D. Donnell to K. L. Smith, C001/006.

> happen to be administered by the same governmental agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission.[25]

The process of registering stocks required Rath to obtain SEC approval even before having a banknote company print their stock certificates.[26] On March 16, the SEC informed J. W. Rath that the 100,000 shares would be admitted for trading on the floor.[27] Three days later, A. D. Donnell wrote back to Duvall at the Exchange, asking for information that might help the company avoid further misunderstandings of SEC regulations. "Gentlemen" his letter begins,

> No doubt, The Chicago Stock Exchange has from time to time promulgated Rules and Regulations and will from time to time make further such Rules and Regulations.
>
> We are wondering if you could furnish us with a recent copy of such Rules and Regulations and put us on a mailing list which will keep us up-to-date on any new regulations made. We feel that we need such a file in our office to refer to rather than to bother the Exchange with every question that arises.[28]

Duvall replied that what Rath probably wanted was a copy of a book, "Rules and Regulations under the Securities Act of 1934," available from the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D. C.[29] The difficulties that Rath administrators experienced in negotiating their new stock issue underscore the difficulties that non-accounting experts had interpreting

---

[25] March 12, 1937, Charles F. Duvall to A. D. Donnell, C001/006.
[26] March 15, 1937, Charles F. Duvall to A. D. Donnell, C001/006.
[27] March 16, 1937, Charles F. Duvall to J. W. Rath, C001/006.
[28] March 19, 1937, A. D. Donnell to Charles F. Duvall, C001/006.
[29] March 22, 1937, Charles F. Duvall to A. D. Donnell, C001/006.

the new legal codes and producing texts that complied with them. After this episode, company administrators withdrew almost completely from direct interaction with the SEC and stock exchange officials as they came to depend on their accounting firm to converse in the regulated genres.

The communicative practices affected by securities regulations were not limited to the genres that the company exchanged with external institutions. Reporting practices within the company provided the data necessary for the company's certifying accountants to do their work. Noticing some potential problem or limitation with the company's internal reporting practices, these accountants on several occasions proposed that Rath reform its documentation system. When SEC guidelines were expanded in the 1940s, for example, Rath accountants routinely issued correspondence to company administrators, recommending changes in the company's communicative practices that would allow the company to remain compliant with prevailing accounting principles. The company procedures addressed in this correspondence cover a range of organizational activities, from handling subsidy claims, liquidating and replacing inventories, and structuring departmental organizations, to the scheduling of routine administrative meetings.[30] Although many of these recommendations were far removed from traditional accounting concerns, they were all tied to techniques for the systemization of accountability in corporate financial reporting that developed in the early 1930s after the securities acts were passed. The accountants' recommendations for altering Rath's "system of internal control"[31]—and all the genres that circulated within those

[30] For documents related to these and many other recommendations from the company's accounting firm during the 1940s, see F084.

[31] November 2, 1946, Frazer and Torbet comments to The Rath Packing Company, F087/001.

systems—were almost always followed, in fact, because they were explicitly tied to prevailing SEC standards.

While some effects of the securities acts were certainly expected, other effects were felt in areas of the company that administrators would not have predicted.[32] As was often the case with regulatory acts, communicative practices surrounding the newly regulated activity shifted in sometimes surprising ways in the efforts of administrators and employees to avoid the penalties that the company might incur otherwise. This time, it was a regulated change in the company's annual reporting to stockholders that reverberated throughout the company. Recognizing that standardization of annual reporting procedures would affect more than just the year-end statements sent to stockholders, corporate accountants throughout the country resisted federal regulation of annual reporting.[33] When the acts were finally passed, the difficulties with standardizing practices across organizations became evident, as accountants differed on which reporting techniques were most valuable.[34] Rath accountants, like those at several other companies, negotiated some of this ambiguity by including explanatory notes with the company's annual report figures to avoid violations of the federal law. These notes identified organization-specific accounting practices so that the company and its certifying accountants would not be liable for misrepresenting the company's reporting techniques. Not all companies, for example, documented their inventories with a last-in, first-out (LIFO)

---

[32] As I demonstrate elsewhere in this study, accounting documents and methodologies existed in discrete departmental nooks of Rath. From management by the numbers to the widespread use of accounting technologies, the company was heavily invested in the tools of accounting and therefore felt the consequences of these acts and revisions of them throughout the company.

[33] Yates, *Control*, p. 129.

[34] Joel Seligman, *The Transformation of Wall Street: A History of the Securities and Exchange Commission and Modern Corporate Finance* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), p. 200.

system.[35] The decision of Rath's administrators to use this practice of counting inventories affected entire sets of inventory-related genres, including the annual reports submitted to stockholders.

The company's annual reports, in fact, were intricately connected to many textually mediated communicative practices within the organization. Around this document circulated a set of genres practiced to make the report possible. There were first the multiple routine reports the company used to track production activities, sales activities, purchasing activities, capital investment activities, etc. But then there was also a collection of genres more immediately tied to the annual report: notices of annual meetings to stockholders, proxy statements, annual addresses to stockholders, and stockholder ballots—all of which existed to comply with regulatory requirements. A change in SEC regulations thus often had significance for a network of company genres, some of which were far removed from the annual report to stockholders that was the original focal point for the regulatory controls. Stockholder voting via proxy cards, for example, was constrained by legal requirements governing the notices that had to be sent to stockholders, the timing of such notices, and the mechanisms by which the stockholders could respond. To prevent fraud in this process in the late 1950s, the company secretary instituted an elaborate procedure[36] for issuing proxies on pre-punched IBM cards and sending them with an annual report, a verification form, and a return envelope to the stockholders eighteen days before the annual meeting. Signatures on

---

[35] This inventory method affected the valuation of company assets. Inventory records had to be maintained to ensure that when employees withdrew inventories from storage, they were selecting stock that corresponded to the company's accounting sheets so that administrators would be able to track the costs of production and the value of company sales. Alternative inventory systems, such as the first-in, first out (FIFO) system Rath used during a different era, entailed variations of these same genres.

[36] See January 19, 1959, John D. Donnell to Harry G. Slife and related documents in C003/021 for an overview of this procedure in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

returned proxies were then verified by people in the secretary's office, and, if necessary, by the company's legal department. Six days before the annual meeting, a second envelope with the same materials was sent to stockholders who had not responded to the first mailing—all in an effort to comply with the legal requirement that the company provide stockholders with a reasonable opportunity to vote on company business.

Compliance and Resistance: Rath's Responses to Governmental Market Controls

During the New Deal era, governmental market controls became a routine part of doing business for large production companies like Rath. Regulated inventory and production volumes, for example, were mandated as the government attempted to correct depressed economic conditions in the 1930s.[37] These temporary regulatory controls—the 1933 National Recovery Act overseen by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration,[38] the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Revenue Act of 1936, and several others—significantly affected the development of communicative practices within the company. As administrators focused on complying with the mandates and conducting business successfully, the company became increasingly reliant on its accounting-related genres, documents that the company used to exchange information about expenditures, debts, inventories, etc. These genres became the means whereby Rath administrators ensured compliance with the law, *and* they

[37] J. W. Rath was himself intimately involved in the development of some of these regulations. As chairman of the Board of the Institute of American Packers in the early 1930s, he worked with President Roosevelt's administration—particularly Secretary Wallace and General Hugh Johnson—to reform the legal codes governing the packing industry. Later in the decade, President Roosevelt also placed J. W. Rath on the United States Chamber of Commerce (which had only six business representatives at this time), a position that gave Rath even greater influence in the development of government policies regarding business practices. For company documents related to J. W. Rath's participation in government, see R001/001.

[38] December 20, 1933, 1933 annual statement to stockholders, R001/006.

became the objects of scrutiny during potential external audits. The temporary economic regulatory controls during the New Deal era, then, like the more permanent securities regulations, helped to make accounting tools and methodologies a permanent fixture in the company's communicative practices.

Economic regulatory controls from the New Deal era were replaced in the 1940s and the early 1950s by new controls that the government enacted to manage economic resources during its war programs. A series of maximum price regulations instituted during this era was of particular interest to Rath. These developments, perhaps predictably, led to the company's continued reliance on accounting-based genres to negotiate compliance with the finance-focused regulations. Gradually, information about regulatory controls—particularly those related to the company's financial operations—became a more and more common feature in Rath documents, from administrative correspondence and sales bulletins to annual reports to stockholders. For example, after the creation of a federal Office of Price Administration (OPA) by a presidential executive order and the extension of its duties with passage of the Emergency Price Control Act of 1942,[39] several company genres became forums for discussing the new regulatory agency's actions. Company employees and administrators—like nearly everyone else in the country—were already keenly aware of OPA because it administered the government's rationing programs. The information they exchanged in company documents thus extended conversations that many people were having outside the workplace.

---

[39] For background information from this period, see Harvey C. Mansfield, *A Short History of OPA* (Washington, DC: Office of Price Administration, 1947); and, Victor A. Thompson, *The Regulatory Process in OPA Rationing* (Columbia, NY: King's Crown Press, 1950).

Focused on ensuring company compliance with OPA regulations, Rath administrators looked to the practices of other companies when making decisions. Like all other major meatpacking companies, Rath was a member of the American Meat Institute (AMI), which kept its members informed through periodic bulletin publications. These bulletins, published at least weekly (sometimes daily), informed administrators at Rath about frequent changes in the regulations, how to comply with them, and the experiences of others in the industry with those same regulations. A May 1945 bulletin,[40] for example, offered help in how to track the multiple regulatory texts already published and the revisions that would be forthcoming (see Figure 5.4). Although administrators at Rath did not find it necessary to follow all of the suggestions that the AMI offered in this bulletin, they often carefully read the AMI reprints of OPA regulations, entering checkmarks in the margins to indicate compliance or notes about issues to be pursued.[41]

Information about OPA regulations that Rath executives gathered from industry bulletins often filtered down through the company's bureaucracy via mundane workplace genres. Product specifications, for example, had to be altered when the government assigned point values to all raw animal parts to regulate meat purchases by consumers and institutions so that there would be adequate supplies to support war activities. Under this system, a ham in 1943 was worth seven points, while pig hearts and brains were worth only three each. *Every* raw edible animal part was assigned a value from one (e.g., swine ears) to ten (e.g.,

[40] May 11, 1945, American Meat Institute bulletin no. 300, C002/021.
[41] See file C002/021.

American Meat Institute

59 East Van Buren Street, Chicago 5

Bulletin No. 300
May 11, 1945

ENCLOSED IS PRINTED COPY OF CONTROL ORDER 1

To the Members:

We are enclosing a printed copy of Control Order 1 (Livestock Slaughter and Meat Distribution). This copy of the order includes the revision effected by Amendment 1 and also includes a copy of Supplement 1 to the order.

Space has been provided on the inside front cover wherein member companies may record additional amendments as issued by the Office of Price Administration from time to time. Space has been provided also for recording the numbers and dates of Institute bulletins relating to such amendments.

Member companies frequently have asked the Institute to suggest methods of keeping copies of regulations up to date or of keeping track of provisions of various amendments. In this connection, we should like to suggest member companies revise their printed copies of the regulation provided by the Institute to show the changes made by each amendment as issued. This can be handled either by writing in such changes, or by clipping or copying the several provisions from the amendment and pasting them into appropriate position in the regulation. Notations also should be made in the margin opposite the revised provision, showing what amendment made the change and the effective date of such change.

If the text of the regulation in the printed copy thus is revised to show the changes made by each amendment immediately on receipt of the Institute's copy of such amendment, working copies of regulations can be kept consistently up to date at all times.

If, also, the proper notations are made in the space provided on the inside front cover as amendments are issued, member companies can make ready reference at any time to the Institute bulletin in which the provisions of an amendment are discussed.

All major maximum price regulations are now being prepared for reprinting by the Institute. New, up-to-date copies of Revised Maximum Price Regulation No. 148 (Pork) now are being printed and will be sent to member companies in a few days.

Additional copies of Control Order 1, up to five, will be provided without charge to any member company of the Institute. Quantities in excess of five copies may be purchased from the Institute at low cost.

Very truly yours,

AMERICAN MEAT INSTITUTE

Wesley Sandenbergh
President

Figure 5.4. AMI Bulletin Recommending Ways to Track Regulatory Texts (C002/021)

a tenderloin steak).[42] Where less valuable meats could be substituted for those with a higher point value, company specifications were often revised so that consumers and institutions who had been rationed an allotment of buying power had a supply of products that they would be allowed to purchase. Operating procedures, too, were revised as economic regulations made it illegal to use certain materials (e.g., metal tins) in the company's production processes. Even purchasing documents, which had originally developed as tools for the company's field buyers, were re-operationalized as records for proof of compliance with maximum price controls placed on the company's purchasing activities. The bulletins that Rath's sales manager routinely issued frequently announced changes to OPA regulations and interpreted those changes for sales employees. These bulletins—a mix of policy changes and news announcements—ranged from instructions about how to code order forms according to OPA categories for canned meats in 1944[43] to a discussion of political rumors in 1946:

> About May 1 we will see the regular, seasonable, nominal increase in beef and hog receipts, but it is strongly rumored that the Government requirements will be increased. No doubt you have read of President Truman's conference in Washington, [and the] fact that ex-President Hoover is taking a trip to Europe to investigate food needs and the fact that a voluntary "eat less" program will be instituted with the American people because of the reduced supplies available. Rumor has it that this will mainly include products made from wheat, meats, fats and oils.

---

[42] Processed and canned meats such as Canadian bacon, knackwurst, and Vienna sausage were assigned composite point values based on the costs of production.
[43] August 19, 1944, sales bulletin, P001/008.

> Even with the seasonable increase of receipts, it would appear that the available supply of Vacuum-Cooked Meats will be on a restricted basis for the next several months.[44]

As these incidents suggest, by the end of World War II, the government's economic regulations had affected genres circulating throughout the company. Indeed, to the extent that textual practices can be seen as evidence of workplace culture, the culture at Rath was defined by the multiple economic regulations governing meat production at this time. It was perhaps inevitable then that talk about these regulations would spill over into the genres that the company used to communicate with the public. Company advertising campaigns asked customers "To *fight inflation*—to buy only what you absolutely need . . . to pay no more than ceiling prices . . . to accept no rationed goods without surrendering ration stamps."[45] The company's annual report also became a forum for commenting on governmental regulations, providing a sense of how the responses of Rath administrators to these controls changed over time. Price controls—rather than the multiple other regulations that affected day-to-day operations at Rath—were the catalyst for the company's public complaints, as the following examples suggest.

At the end of the war in 1945, Rath optimistically reported that "Government restrictions, relating to meat products, are gradually being removed, which will be reflected in improved business for your Company." They also used this public forum to report "cooperat[ing] wholeheartedly in the rationing of meat for the domestic trade."[46] By the

---

[44] March 6, 1946, sales bulletin, P001/008.
[45] January 2, 1944 advertisement in the *Waterloo Courier* (emphasis in original document).
[46] December 10, 1945, 1945 annual report, R001/026.

following year, however, their tone had shifted, as they registered a lengthy complaint in the annual report:

> During the year 1946, the packing business underwent a series of extreme changes that were without parallel in the history of the business. The temporary release of O.P.A. controls brought on a supply of livestock that was difficult to handle. Next followed a period in which controls were re-established and when livestock receipts were at an extreme minimum. During this time, your company was able to keep the majority of its employees on the payroll. Then followed the suspension of controls, during which time a flood of livestock was put on the market, and, again, much difficulty was encountered in handling the volume of business.
>
> The relaxation of controls occurred in the latter part of the year and each week business is approaching more closely a normal situation; we feel it is an encouraging picture for the coming year.[47]

At the end of the report, they return to the topic of regulation, suggesting the extent to which the company had become focused on these external controls: "We expect to make greater progress in the coming year, in view of the relaxation of controls."[48] In contrast to this complaint, in the following year's report the company president makes only a parenthetical allusion to regulatory controls and does not mention them at all in reports from 1948 to 1950. At the end of the first year of a decade that would prove financially difficult for the company,

---

[47] December 9, 1946, 1946 annual report, R001/028.
[48] Ibid.

objections to new price control regulations—this time connected to the Korean War—once again become a focal point in the company's annual report:

> The Company's business in the year 1951 was affected by some unusual conditions: namely, the imposition of government price controls which were placed in effect in January. Ceilings were placed on the selling prices of our products but the prices of live hogs, cattle, lambs and calves were not controlled. This had the effect of putting the beef, veal and lamb business in a loss position which adversely affected the profits of the Company. The fact that compliance regulations were issued in June did not correct the loss position on beef. However, this not only continued a severe loss in the beef operations but put us in a position of not filling orders for some customers from whom we had received regular business and, of course, made difficult the good will operations that we had built up over the years with such dealers. In addition, it restricted the buying of beef for our manufacturing departments.[49]

This line of complaint continued in 1952, with Rath executives reporting that "several adverse factors affected this year's results."[50] First, "government price ceilings and restrictions continued to prevent the normal business operation." Then, "the sudden removal of government support prices on wool resulted in a condition where wool was practically unsalable and the resultant decline in wool prices was drastic, as was the decline in prices of live lambs in the feed lots of the Company." They end their message on a more hopeful note,

---

[49] December 29, 1951, 1951 annual report, R001/036.
[50] December 31, 1952, 1952 annual report, R001/038.

however: "Indications are that the industry may be relieved of government controls and restrictions." Indeed, in 1953, when manufacturing controls were lifted, the executives reported that "freedom from government controls should react favorably for the industry."[51]

The Unpredictable Consequences of Regulation: The Revenue Act of 1962

As financial regulatory controls were extended to new areas of company operations after the 1950s, Rath's administrators frequently introduced new procedures to modify existing communicative practices to ensure compliance with the shifting requirements. The effects of this practice extended deep into the communicative practices of the company, touching some of the most mundane genres. Passage of the Revenue Act of 1962, for example, translated into new habits for Rath employees who went on business trips for the company. The Act, which included new restrictions on the taxable expenses of operating a business, meant that Rath would have to institute new controls on how travel expenses were documented so that such expenditures would count as a deductible cost of business for the company. For travel expense costs to qualify as deductible business expenses, the company needed to document the cost, time, place, purpose, and relationship of participants involved in business travel. After devising a system that would allow Rath to comply with the law, the company's treasurer issued a policy memo, describing his revision of the company's "Executive and Administrative Expense Report"—which now had an official policy and procedure printed on the back side of each form.[52] Employees who had previously documented their travel expenses in other forms (e.g., a travel log) objected to this new form however, so the treasurer offered a slightly modified policy. Three months after issuing his

[51] December 31, 1953, 1953 annual report, R001/039.
[52] January 8, 1963, W. R. Nesbitt to George Hawk, C004/036.

original policy memo, the treasurer sent a second one, providing even more extensive instructions about record keeping and warning employees that they must "record [their] expenses at least once each day on Form 930R, [or] maintain a separate diary from which [they] can later prepare Form 930R for accounting to the Company."[53] With this, the company treasurer effectively ended the company's reliance on travel diaries as an official record genre. While employees might still choose to keep such a diary, Form 930R became the sanctioned form of communication. Company compliance with a new regulation had thus first translated into a system (the reporting routine established by the treasurer) and then a genre (Form 930R) and then a habit of communicating which superceded earlier habits. It was a pattern of change that would be repeated many times in the following years.

Finance regulations—from the securities acts in the 1930s and price controls in the 1940s and 1950s to revenue reporting in the 1960s—affected communicative practices at Rath in complicated and unpredictable ways. Entire sets of interrelated genres emerged to ensure compliance with these regulations—genres that were sometimes far-removed from the mandatory forms of interaction between the company and regulatory agencies. This expansion of communicative practices to accommodate regulatory requirements was in many ways similar to what had happened after passage of the Meat Inspection Act. It is a pattern that would be repeated again as additional regulations were introduced. During the 1960s and 1970s, new types of regulations addressing consumer and labor issues were introduced that would lead to the development of additional routine communicative practices.

---

[53] April 15, 1963, W. R. Nesbitt to George Hawk, C004/036.

Consumer and Labor Regulations from the 1960s to the 1970s

Throughout the century, regulatory control of the industry increased, leading to new antagonisms and significant changes in the practices of meat packing organizations. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, the industry underwent changes unlike any since the first decade of the century. Rather than health concerns, these later changes were driven more by a combination of Cold War economic issues, labor reforms, and consumer concerns.[54] As one historian notes, this rash of changes began with legislative interest in improving control over the domestic economy:

> In 1964-65 Congress provided for an extensive two-year investigation of the entire food industry by a National Food Commission. In addition to holding public hearings, the commission staff conducted detailed economic studies of several phases of the food industry, including meat processing and distribution, and scheduled its final report for June 30, 1966.[55]

This investigation eventually led to the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1967, also called the Wholesome Meat Act. In turn, this major revision of the federal code began a flurry of legislative activity that extended into the 1970s. These legislative activities were largely driven by a growing consumer movement, which recalled the conditions under which the original 1906 Meat Inspection Act had been passed.

---

[54] Historians Colston E. Warne and Richard L. D. Morse argue that consumer groups had in fact influenced OPA policy during World War II and that the successes of OPA led to the more active consumer movement after the war. See Colston E. Warne and Richard L. D. Morse, *The Consumer Movement* (Manhattan, KS: Family Economics Trust Press, 1993), pgs. 108 and 263.

[55] Russell J. Ives, *The Livestock and Meat Economy of the United States* (Chicago, IL: AMI Center for Continuing Education, American Meat Institute, c1966), p. 105.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were what one historian of American consumer history calls the third "period" of consumer activism in this country.[56] During this period, consumer groups were often successful in their calls for regulatory controls that would make companies like Rath more accountable for the products they sold. For example, in 1972 a consumer group led by Virginia Knauer successfully lobbied legislative officials to include regulatory guidelines in the *Federal Register* for the packaging of sliced bacon. The consumer group contested the misrepresentation of bacon in packages that did not allow the purchaser to see the fat content of the bacon slices. Federal regulations were enacted that year, causing Rath to issue packaging statements to ensure company compliance with the regulation. Four years later, consumer groups called for stricter definitions of what manufacturers could include in their meat products to supplement existing regulations covering the contents of processed meats (e.g., lunchmeats such as bologna and frankfurters). While Rath held a patent for an approved meat blending process used to prepare meat products made from partially defatted chopped pork and beef, the industry as a whole was being scrutinized for its use of blending processes because such processes allowed manufacturers to include animal parts considered undesirable (e.g., lips, snouts, and ears). Responding to consumer pressure for governmental control of the ingredients in blended meats, federal standards for defining meat classes (and thus the list of ingredients on processed meat packages) were finally revised in 1976. Administrators at Rath subsequently issued documents to change their production, packaging, and labeling procedures.

---

[56] Robert N. Mayer argues that consumer activism has been most influential during three periods in this century: (1) at the turn of the century when food and drug safety became a widespread public concern, (2) in the 1920s and 1930s when consumers desired more objective advertising practices, and (3) in the 1960s and 1970s as consumers became concerned about product safety. See Mayer, *The Consumer Movement*, pgs. 10-33.

The new regulations that emerged during this time eventually touched on practices ranging from production rates to advertising; from the contents of bologna to production machinery noise levels. As described in a Rath publication, after the passage of these new laws and regulations, the

> scope of the Meat Inspection Service not only include[d] inspection of animals at the time of slaughter and processing, but [also] such items as plant layout and design, purity and adequacy of water supplies, proper identification of food products, packaging and containers, chemicals used for processing ingredients, general plant sanitation, yields of finished product relative to moisture and processing ingredients, disposition of inedible by-products and condemned or unwholesome product and prevention of unfair commercial practices relative to weights, labeling etc.[57]

The responsibilities for agents of the Meat Inspection Department (MID) at Rath had thus greatly expanded since passage of the Meat Inspection Act in the first decade of the century. These inspectors, in fact, were also responsible for overseeing Rath's compliance with regulations originating from government organizations such as schools and welfare agencies that purchased the company's products. For much of the century, the military also purchased Rath's processed meat products—once again, under the auspices of MID agents. By the mid 1970s, regulatory controls had thus led to the development of a complex system of on-site activities and legislative negotiations. Deeply embedded in this system were the authorized documents that proliferated as administrators attempted to make compliance

[57] No date, "Regulations Governing Meat Inspection," TM003.

systematic. The administrator's efforts to comply with workplace safety regulations passed during this era illustrate the difficulties they had instituting a well defined system of communicative practices that would ensure compliance with the law.

New Genres and Altered Organizational Routines: Enactment of the Occupational Safety & Health Act of 1970

While the company was modifying its communicative practices to comply with the consumer-focused legislation enacted during the 1960s and early 1970s, it faced another challenge—developing strategies for complying with changing workplace safety regulations. Like leaders of the consumer movement, labor safety advocates at this time lobbied for regulatory controls that would make safe working conditions a standard in the workplace. In December, 1970, they realized many of these goals when President Nixon signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), placing all businesses engaged in interstate commerce under federal regulatory controls. This legislation meant that inspectors from new and different government offices would begin visiting Rath, periodically joining the MID inspectors, though not setting up a permanent office at the plant. The meat packing industry was targeted as one of five industries for early inspection, leading to industry-wide concern about how the new standards would be shaped and enforced. Within a few weeks of the law being signed, Rath management created a committee for developing its mandatory plant safety program—a program that would be mediated via several organizational genres.

The Act, which specified that employers had a "general duty" for operating a workplace that was both safe and healthy for its employees, posed challenges for the committee. Creating such a work environment, for example, involved more than adding safety guards to tools and machines. Rath, like other companies, was required to post notices

and warnings about safe operating procedures around the plant, maintain records of how they had informed employees of their rights under the law, and record accident information and the corrective actions the company had made in response to previous violations. The program that the company's safety committee developed over the next few years was thus obviously constructed around a set of organizational genres. They instituted a collection of documentary practices to ensure that the proper controls were in place *and* to prove that these controls existed when inspectors visited. They also developed a campaign to improve employee awareness about safety and health issues—once again, depending on a network of genres to educate employees and change their attitudes about safety issues.

Sharing Industry Information. When the Occupational Safety and Health Act became law on April 28, 1971, companies became accountable for enforcing the new regulations. In August of the year, OSHA field inspectors began conducting routine plant safety inspections, making surprise visits during business hours to survey compliance with the regulations. These inspectors had the authority to levy fines of $1,000 for each violation of the law and fines of $10,000 for repeated violations. While auditing the plant, these inspectors were allowed to take employee testimonies under oath and to view all company documents related to plant safety. The initial enforcement of the Act thus created many questions for administrators at Rath and many others in the meatpacking industry. They had questions about exactly which standards would be enforced because the law validated standards published in several professional and government documents without collecting those standards into a single document. They wondered, too, about how strictly inspectors would interpret those standards and how much understanding they would show when

auditing industry-specific circumstances. In short, this new regulation created anxiety for company administrators that their safety committee attempted to alleviate.

To develop company policies that would ensure compliance with the new regulation, the committee began circulating among its members whatever type of trade documents they could acquire. A month before the regulations became binding, for example, Howard Rebholz, plant safety director at Waterloo, sent a summary of the Act to managers and supervisors at "All Plant Locations." His cover memo was attached to "a digest of the act as published by the National Manufacturers Association."[58] As he explained, this twenty-five-page document—covering such varied topics as training and employee education, accident statistics, labels and warnings, and toxic standards—was "must reading for anyone concerned with plant administration." Such reliance on externally produced documents to inform administrative employees became common at Rath during this period.

After OSHA regulations began to be enforced in the late summer of 1971, company administrators learned more about them via stories shared by companies that had been audited. The American Meat Institute, of which Rath was a long-time member, regularly published information about OSHA audits via bulletins and solicited such information from packinghouses undergoing inspection. Rath safety administrators, anxious to know what was occurring during these safety inspection audits, routed the AMI bulletins to each other.[59] A September 1971 bulletin included a "list of items cited or noted by US Department of Labor inspectors conducting safety inspections in several plant locations."[60] An October bulletin included a reproduced copy of an actual citation report issued by the US Department of

---

[58] March 30, 1971, Howard Rebholz to all plant locations, TM015.
[59] See TM015 for examples.
[60] September 29, 1971, AMI bulletin no. 69, TM015.

Labor.[61] Rath continued to receive bulletins like these during 1971. Periodically after that, they received bulletins with news about changes in the OSHA regulations and enforcement practices from the AMI. The stories and documents shared by AMI were supplemented by the participation of Rath administrators in professional and trade organizations. It was from these inside sources that Rath administrators developed a sense of how the regulations were being interpreted and, thus, how the company could comply with the law. Prevailing interpretations of the law were, in fact, the explicit message that the Safety Committee's secretary reported upon returning from a National Safety Meeting in the fall of 1974. During general discussion in the meeting, the secretary reported that "OSHA is getting away from strict interpretation of regulations and leaning towards safety of individual[s] as [a] deciding factor." The implications of this inside information for Rath were significant, as the secretary explained: "If [an] employer points ou[t] to OSHA [that a work] method is as safe or safer than [the] regulation method, OSHA will agree."[62] Circulating industry information—a habit that the safety committee depended on during this period—was a genre defined less by standardized forms of written communication than by repeated rhetorical performances. It was vital to company interests that such information be shared, though the means by which this sharing was done might involve forwarding an external document to committee members with a routing slip or orally reporting conversations and presentations during committee meetings.

Documenting Company Practices. OSHA regulations required employers to develop a system of documentation and record keeping. Rath's system, like those developed

[61] October 11, 1971, AMI bulletin no. 2, TM015.
[62] October 17, 1974, M. J. Andera to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.

at many of the companies with which they shared information, included an extensive collection of administrative control genres. In their efforts to avoid being cited by OSHA inspectors, Rath's safety committee responded to the new regulations with a varied and voluminous network of documents: "communication . . . [w]as central to the organizing process,"[63] as the committee initiated "multiple, different, and interacting"[64] documentary practices to represent their official accounts of compliance.

The documentation and record-keeping system required by the Congressional Act passed in 1970 was vague. Rather than specifying the requirements for such a system, Congress charged the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare with interpreting the law and developing the necessary regulations.[65] The system that these agencies developed made employers responsible for four types of records:[66] first, any records that the oversight agencies deemed necessary for enforcing the law; second, records deemed useful for research into job safety and health issues; third, reports of deaths and injuries related to the workplace; and fourth, records of employee exposure to potential harm. In addition, they specified that these records had to be retained for several years so that employees could have access to them.[67] Finally, the regulation required employers to notify employees of the law via the use of posters prominently displayed in the workplace.[68]

While some aspects of the required documentation and record-keeping system remained unclear, by July of 1971, Rath's safety committee was discussing three report

---

[63] Orlikowski & Yates, p. 541.
[64] Orlikowski & Yates, p. 542
[65] Bureau of National Affairs, *The Job Safety and Health Act of 1970: Text, Analysis, Legislative History* (Washington, DC: Bureau of National Affairs, 1971), p. 63.
[66] Ibid., p. 50.
[67] Ibid., p. 51.
[68] Ibid., p. 51.

forms that OSHA regulators required. First, businesses were required to keep a log of illnesses and injuries related to occupational hazards. This log genre would eventually become OSHA 100, a form published by the government. Second, employers had to keep records of compensation to employees who had fallen ill or were injured at work. This record became OSHA form 101. And third, employers were required to create annual summaries of safety and health incidents and to post those summaries in public areas around their facilities. These annual summary reports were later recorded on OSHA form 102. Whenever an inspector visited Rath, the company was responsible for making these three types of accident reports available.

While these mandatory reporting genres were the safety committee's first concern, they quickly had to develop other genres in their attempt to comply with the regulations. A variety of documents had to be developed or revised in effort to have employee work practices reflect safe operating procedures. Policy, procedure, and training manuals were all necessary for educating employees about safe practices and to show inspectors that the company was committed to such safety education. The committee thus identified safety issues that inspectors were most likely to investigate and began focusing their attention on informing employees about the uses of walking and working surfaces, means of egress, hazardous materials, personal protective equipment, medical first aid, fire protection, material handling and storage devices, machine guards, power tools, and hand-held equipment.[69]

[69] July 19, 1971, Howard Rebholz memorandum, TM015.

Unsure about what would occur during a plant audit, the safety committee tried to anticipate areas within the company where they might be subject to a finding of noncompliance. Using the existing safety standards on which OSHA interpretations of safe procedures would be based, Howard Rebholz identified potential problems for Rath. He found, for example, that "many of the plant toilet rooms do not comply" with existing federal requirements for sanitation.[70] Guessing that the inspectors would follow patterns they had established during audits conducted at other plants, Rebholz recommended that "we should take steps at this time to facilitate compliance" with the sanitation guidelines.[71] Anticipating a plant audit "in perhaps the next 60 days,"[72] Rebholz was also concerned about Rath's compliance with codes detailing the safe use of powered industrial trucks. Specifically, he wondered if the company was in compliance with "work rules and training requirements"[73] outlined in the standards. The company had distributed all of its existing manuals designed to educate their industrial truck drivers, and no more were available for new employees. Those manuals also needed to be updated to include new information about safe operation of the equipment. Beyond this, even if the company used newly revised manuals to educate operators, Rebholz was uncertain that Rath would be in compliance with the regulations. "I'm not sure how stringent the government requirements will be relative to operator training," he wrote to other administrators. "If they insist on certain standards of training we are familiar with, we are in trouble."[74] The company's truck drivers did not have much experience—turnover rates for the job were high—and there was too little time to conduct

[70] July 7, 1971, Howard Rebholz to J. S. Oberman, M. F. Meier, M. J. Andera, and H. D. Heise, TM015.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

the training before the anticipated audit. Faced with this dilemma and with the visit of OSHA auditors quickly approaching, Rebholz recommended a solution that compromised the intent of the regulations. Hoping to avoid a negative audit finding, he proposed that "perhaps a good training manual will satisfy these requirements." If Rath had the correct genre in place—a training manual with safety instructions—perhaps the auditors would not discover the employees' lack of training. Or, even if they did discover that the company's truck drivers were not versed in the safe operation of their equipment, perhaps they would be more lenient in their findings and the penalties they might levy because the company had gone to the trouble of creating an updated manual. Whether it was because Rebholz's plan worked as he had hoped or because the auditors did not include industrial truck driver training in their audit, the company was not cited for noncompliance in this area.

The sheer number of documents required to keep the company compliant with OSHA regulations often led to compromises in administrative practices. Three years after the company had relied on a training manual to avoid being cited by inspectors, they again decided to use a partial solution to address regulatory specifications. In 1974, the company needed to issue copies of its plant "Emergency Manual" to supervisors and foremen who had started work since the manual had originally been published. Failure to provide these managers with a manual would violate OSHA regulations and lead to fines being levied against Rath in the next unscheduled audit. In February, H. D. Heise balked at issuing the manuals, however, because they were out-of-date. Rather than updating the manual, the safety committee notified Heise he must issue copies of the old manual "without

updating . . . as 90% of [the] data is applicable even if not updated."[75] By the time the committee met three weeks later, Heise had issued "old copies of [the] emergency manual to be read by all superintendents who have not had opportunity" and Heise had been assigned to updating the manual.[76]

To ensure an ongoing exchange of information about plant safety, as well as to demonstrate good-faith compliance with the intent of OSHA regulations, administrators at Rath held monthly plant safety meetings that lasted until at least the mid 1970s. During these meetings, the company's safety committee (which included company and union officials) discussed recent plant safety problems that they were notified of via "Safety Mechanical Orders" or "Safety M.O.s," which supervisors were responsible for creating to demonstrate that the company was actively improving the safety of its work environment. Whenever too few "M.O.s" or other safety-related genres were being written, a committee member would call for increased activity as was the case for a period in 1974. In a May meeting that year, the chair reminded participants that "we all know violations do exist . . . [so] these M.O.'s must be issued."[77] The following month's meeting brought a second complaint: "In May, 26 M.O.s were written. This, we know, does not reflect violations existing in the plant."[78] Feeling that too few M.O.s were being issued, the committee chair commented on the mounting company "data [that] seems to indicate a lowering in interest on safety by all supervision." This data included a lack of activity in the use of safety-related genres—accident investigation reports, written responses to safety investigations, and safety M.O.s.

---

[75] March 26, 1974, M. J. Andera to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.
[76] April 17, 1974, M. J. Andera to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.
[77] May 23, 1974, M. J. Andera to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.
[78] June 27, 1974, M. J. Andera to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.

His complaints had the desired effect. By the following month, committee minutes report that there was now "a continuing flow of M.O.s on safety"; "many of [the] violations noted have been handled"; and a new procedure for processing accident investigation reports had "accelerated and improved our reporting program."[79]

Raising Employee Awareness about Health and Safety Issues. To encourage widespread compliance with OSHA requirements, company administrators instituted a range of communicative practices that would alert employees to safety concerns and procedures. OSHA inspectors looked for evidence of a culture that emphasized safe practices, and they often randomly interviewed employees during their plant visits to assess general attitudes at the plant. This aspect of OSHA inspections was part of the routine from the very first year of enforcement when it was reported in an industry bulletin that, "In every inspection, the first thing the inspector did was to inquire about the location of the OSHA poster. Even in the case of [a] special investigation relating to a possible fatal accident, the inspector was concerned with the placement of the poster."[80]

In addition to the government-mandated poster, Rath employees were reminded of safety issues through company genres such as the *Safety News* monthly publication, bulletin board postings for the safety slogan program, and mandatory safety discussion meetings within small work groups. The *Safety News* sometimes included narratives about plant events or accidents; in other instances, the *Safety N*ews might include a poster or some other tool that would lead the recipient to think about safety issues. The April 1974 *Safety News*, for example, was a form with twelve questions that supervisors could use to assess their

[79] July 18, 1974, M. J. Andera to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.
[80] September 29, 1971, AMI bulletin no. 69, TM015.

effectiveness in conducting accident investigations in their areas (see Figure 5.5). The plant's safety slogan program involved the posting of aphorisms meant to encourage thought about safe behavior. To encourage employees to read and remember these slogans, the safety committee facilitated a contest wherein if an employee could recite the current slogan, they would win a five pound ham.[81]

Periodic safety meetings were an important part of the committee's campaign to educate employees about safety. The mandatory safety discussions required by the safety committee focused on single-page texts that the committee published for supervisors to discuss with their employees. These sheets sometimes dealt with domestic safety issues like opening the damper when operating a fireplace at home and attending to curious children who may get too close to the flames.[82] More often, however, the issues focused on workplace safety, warning employees about a single potential problem and then illustrating the idea with several anecdotes. In June 1974, for example, plant safety discussions focused on the idea that "rings can be dangerous," and employees were told that "a worker jumped off the back of a truck, [and] his ring caught on a nail and the finger was pulled out by the roots (tendons)."[83] To further ensure that all areas of the company were making progress in creating a safer workplace, the safety committee sometimes conducted their own audits within the company. Such audits were then punctuated with the exchange of internal correspondence in which safety committee members would remind administrators to keep their OSHA forms up-to-date, conduct and document regular safety meetings, etc.[84] A large

---

[81] September 24, 1974, R. D. Bryant to L. H. Grittmann, TM015.
[82] December 11, 1974, subjects for safety, TM015.
[83] June 26, 1974, subjects for safety discussion, TM015.
[84] See, for example, the post audit review memo sent to the Columbus Junction plant (October 9, 1972, M. J. Andera to J. S. Oberman, R010/002).

SAFETY NEWS APRIL 1974

PRODUCTIVE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

SUPERVISORS SELF RATING SHEET

	RATING	
	GOOD	POOR
1. Do I hear about all accidents in my department?		
2. Do I investigate each one as promptly as possible?		
3. Do I get a detailed story from the injured employee?		
4. Do I actually investigate all minor cases thoroughly enough to find causes?		
5. Do I check all witnesses so as to get a complete story?		
6. How completely do I fill out the accident report form?		
7. Do I call in Maintenance, Engineer, Medical or other departments when required to assist in developing suitable corrective action?		
8. Do I use as many tools as possible in order to make a factual accident investigation such as camera, tape measure, light meter, etc.?		
9. Do I use the occasion of accident investigation to provide safety education and stimulation to the employees involved and all other employees in my department?		
10. Do I have repetitive types of accidents which indicates I have not really eliminated or controlled certain hazards?		
11. Do I periodically review all accident reports so as to spot trends, accident repeaters, problem areas and operations?		
12. Do I follow through to see that corrective action is taken?		

Figure 5.5. Checklist from *Safety News* (TM015)

variety of communicative practices was thus used throughout the company to create a culture of safety.

Command Media: The Emergence of an Interrelated Cluster of Genres

As regulatory controls expanded during this century, the company developed a large and unwieldy collection of communicative practices. Periodically, company administrators would attempt to exert control over company communication by introducing systems to shore up the company's traditional formal genres. In 1975, for example, the company's vice president and general operations manager issued a policy to the entire organization, requiring that all control documents be approved by his office (see Figure 5.6).[85] Such policies, however, were typically short-lived and new communicative practices would proliferate as employees attempted to keep their activities in compliance with changing regulatory requirements. The communicative practices they used to ensure compliance with the deeply layered regulations included everything from conventional administrative procedures and policy statements to far less formal, ad hoc instructions scribbled on notes passed between administrators or discussed over the telephone. They relied on "multiple, different, and interacting"[86] communicative practices (see Table 5.1) to enact widespread behavioral changes and to demonstrate the company's commitment to compliance. So although conventional administrative genres such as procedures and policy statements were frequently used in the organization, many other communicative practices (both written and oral) were used to shape the organization's activities.

---

[85] July 16, 1975, J. S. Oberman, C012/009.
[86] Orlikowski & Yates, p. 542.

Doug - File in policy book.
/Bo

Rath

Intracompany Correspondence

July 16, 1975

Moss

CLARIFICATION OF PROCEDURES, SPECIFICATIONS AND PRACTICES -- WATERLOO AND OUTSIDE LOCATIONS

In an effort to maximize corporate control as per the above subject, we are instituting the following policy.

Effective immediately all matters pertaining to in-plant operations such as equipment, maintenance, new products, production supervision, product specifications, operating instructions, yields, etc. and also significant changes in procedures and packaging are to be cleared through this office.

This does not in any way change or relieve the managers of the various units of the responsibility for the operation of their unit in line with corporate policies, objectives, and goals. Nor does this in any way lessen the responsibility of the area Vice Presidents or the reporting of unit managers to the area Vice Presidents. The operating people within a given unit will still report to the manager of the unit as has been the past practice but at the same time operate within the framework of the policy as stated above.

J. S. Oberman

J. S. Oberman
Vice President and General
Operations Manager

bm

IOWA SENDS HER BEST 75

f-6064

Figure 5.6. Policy Memo Instituting Centralized Control of Documents (C012/009)

Table 5.1. A List of Administrative Control Genres Issued Within the Company, 1960-1980

Genre	Purpose
Check Sheets	Operation sequence definitions published to control production operations.
Interdepartmental Procedures	Operating directives issued to departments across multiple offices of the company.
Internal Control Procedures	Procedures issued across departments by Rath's financial controller.
Intracompany Correspondence	Directives issued by upper management to enact a policy change.
Meeting Discussion Lists	Lists of topics to be covered in group meetings. These lists were issued to supervisors throughout the organization.
Personnel Manual	A collection of policy statements issued by the director of personnel to individuals within the company.
Policy Bulletins	Policy statements issued to general personnel and authorized by upper management.
Policy Memos	Upper-level management directives to production supervisors.
Product and Process Specifications	Directives issued by the process planning division to every department affected by the specification.
Production Management Manual	Definition of company operations for production supervisors.
Quality Standards	Procedures defining the company's quality assurance program.
Standard Data Sheets	Time studies prepared by Industrial Engineering to define operating standards for production operations.
Standards	Operating instructions for production.

Regulatory texts issued by external legislative bodies were thus often diffused into a myriad of interrelated documents—sometimes exhibiting the formal characteristics of administrative documents, but often violating such restrictive constraints. When existing communicative practices were not sufficient for shaping new organizational activities, new practices emerged (e.g., meeting discussion lists) that allowed management to respond to changing regulatory pressures. Together, these communicative practices constituted what I call the *command*

media within the company—a collection of interrelated genres united not by shared forms but by goals.[87]

Rath used its command media to respond to regulatory forces in part because the organization's activities were too diverse to be documented in a single procedure manual. In addition, many regulatory and strategic business changes occurred too frequently to be formally documented. Consequently, the company came to rely on its flexible command media system to structure operating practices. Unconventional means of communicating were effective because they were embedded in a recurring pattern of events in the organization. Using all the communicative practices implied by the term command media, the organization could more effectively respond to regulations and satisfy the requirements imposed by on-site inspectors.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored Rath's reliance on various genres of written communication to ensure the company's compliance with the law. As I have demonstrated, organizational activities at all levels were oriented around regulatory controls. In many cases, these regulations had explicit requirements about communicative practices. There were, for example, the multiple forms that company accountants had to complete to comply with financial regulations. On the other hand, company administrators and employees developed many genre habits without explicit directions to fill loosely defined legal requirements. Interpretation thus played a significant role in the interplay of regulations and

[87] See Russell's argument for defining genres by their ability to operationalize the actions of participants in a given system of activity rather than strictly by their formal features ("Rethinking," pgs. 512-519). See also Orlikowski & Yates, p. 544.

communicative practices as company administrators and governmental auditors periodically engaged in negotiations about whether the company's communicative practices demonstrated a sufficient interpretation of regulatory requirements.

In their efforts to comply with regulations, company employees often appropriated existing genres to do an additional type of work. Such re-operationalizing of genres was common practice in the company as regulatory requirements shifted over the century. By the 1970s, the company had come to rely on multiple, interrelated genres to ensure compliance with the layered regulations passed during previous decades. In concert, these genres formed the company's command media—a concept that suggests both the diffusion of communicative practices and the material forms which they assumed. In the following chapter, I discuss several of these material forms as I examine the interplay of communicative practices and several types of technology at Rath.

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

> The fruits of technology are being applied to ALL of our plant locations, as resources allow—because it is folly to do otherwise.
>
> H. H. Rath's address at the 1963 annual stockholders' meeting[1]

As The Rath Packing Company became a nationally prominent packinghouse, company administrators were quick to adopt emerging communication technologies. Like other major meat distributors, Rath successfully learned how to coordinate and control its rail-based distribution network via telegraphs, telegrams, and correspondence sent through the mail.[2] Within the company offices, employees—particularly those engaged in administrative work—embraced increasingly sophisticated machines for transacting business. These employees often experimented with new office machines to discover better ways of collecting, organizing, storing, and distributing information. After World War II, company administrators became particularly interested in state-of-the-art technology, automating several communication tasks at the Waterloo plant and processing company information on mainframe computers. The company's increasing reliance on these machines was certainly marked by a growth in the volume of written communication, but it was also marked by changes in the fundamental communicative practices of professionals employed in Rath's business.

---

[1] No date, typed script for presentation at 1963 stockholders' meeting, C005/039.

[2] The telegraph, in conjunction with refrigerated railcars, made it possible for Rath to set up a network of branch houses serviced by a single slaughtering plant like Gustavus Swift had done in the 1870s. The extent to which large packinghouses depended on transportation and communication technologies to conduct their business has been partially documented in Chandler, *The Visible Hand*. He notes, for example, the benefits of the telegraph for coordinating and scheduling time-sensitive meat production processes—the shipping of livestock to centralized packinghouses and distribution of fresh meat to remote markets. The rise of large, national businesses was due, in part, to the communicative opportunities offered by the expanding network of telegraph stations (pgs. 209-210).

Technology and Habits of Communication

As I argued in previous chapters, management and regulatory practices provide insight into the repetition and variation of communicative practices at Rath. Likewise, the communication technologies that became so common in day-to-day activities at Rath also led to the standardization of several material forms by which people communicated. Typewriters, for example, gave much of Rath's formal correspondence a more-or-less uniform appearance that persisted from the company's earliest days until it ceased operations. However, company employees often radically altered their communicative habits when they were introduced to new technologies, as was the case in 1966 when Rath shifted to a television-intense advertising campaign and had to hire technical specialists trained in the use of video technologies.[3] The history of technologically mediated communication at Rath can thus be viewed as a story in which both repetition and variation are strong but competing subplots.

As I suggested in my examination of management at Rath, many company administrators were committed to ensuring systematic stability for the organization's communicative practices. Consequently, policies and procedures related to using communication technology were frequently published within the company. Situational exigencies, however, eroded such systematic controls of communicative interaction. The introduction of new technologies, for example, often led employees to experiment with new communicative practices to accomplish their work.

---

[3] See related documents in file R005/018.

Following the activity focus I used in previous chapters, my examination of technology below emphasizes how various devices or tools were operationalized by Rath's employees to communicate. These tools did not determine how employees communicated—in fact, they were often refashioned to fit the employees' communicative objectives (e.g., forms were modified on the fly to be used in ways their designers never intended; computers were reprogrammed to produce data reports that complemented changing business needs). The availability of these tools, however, did make certain communicative practices possible. Video films could be used to show company property to stockholders at their annual meetings. Messages could be broadcast to plant employees over an amplified public announcement system. The company's research and development data could be indexed on an automated punch card system for later retrieval. And correspondence could be dictated for typists through an automated telephone recording system. Multiple technologies thus played significant roles in Rath's genre history as employees engaged in and remade the company's communicative practices over time.

The rapid introduction of new communication technologies during the twentieth century—and the willingness of Rath employees to experiment with many of them—makes it difficult to distinguish categorical and distinct periods in this account. Stable systems for communicating with new technologies never emerged because practices were constantly being remade. Proliferation, rather than revolution, is the best way to understand this strand of Rath's genre history. New technologies led to alterations in communicative practices at Rath by increasing the range of genre practices used in day-to-day transactions. Early in the century, Rath employees were interested in mechanizing the tools of communication; this interest then shifted to electrifying those same tools. Older communication technologies,

however, tended to be used in conjunction with newer technologies rather than being abandoned. Telegrams, for example, continued to be used for communication between salesmen and administrators in Waterloo, even after telephones and teletype were available. These new technologies were simply added to the repertoire of communication tools so that salesmen and administrators corresponded in a variety of ways. The varied repertoire of communicative practices was an intrinsic part of company operations. So much so, in fact, that in a self-published history of the company in 1941, a company writer features the organization's ability to coordinate varied communicative practices in a description of how the company's "meat must move like mail":

> Four hundred and fifty salesmen, most of whom have actually worked in the Rath plant in Waterloo, hustle for orders all over the country. By telephone, telegraph, and teletype—as well as by mail—their orders flow into the administration building. There they get action as carefully planned and executed as an order on a battleship would receive. Taking full advantage of refrigerator cars moving on today's fast freight schedules, the company has perfected a method of assembling orders good enough to be patented and copied by many other shippers.[4]

As this passage suggests, employees at Rath combined varied communicative practices to coordinate organizational activities. The dynamic assemblages of practices at play within the company emerged from the pragmatic needs of individuals to get things done. In ad hoc fashion, employees used the technologies at hand to communicate with each other about their

[4] Rath Packing Company, *Waterloo Packer*, p. 21.

work. Most short interoffice correspondence, for example, took on the appearance of a memo—regardless of whether it was produced with a typewriter, with a fountain pen, or with the typesetting assistance of a local printer. Either scribbling their messages on scratch paper or having secretaries type them on one of the many official stationary forms authorized by the company, employees used written memorandum to exchange information. For several decades, employees generated memorandum with all of these technologies, keeping multiple communicative practices at play all at once. Nor was there ever any neat, linear progression from one practice to another as new technologies were introduced. Old genre habits were reproduced as new ones emerged, creating long periods of overlap: the production of handwritten accounting ledgers went on for years after a system of typewritten reports had been established; personal travel logs were being kept for tax purposes years after a form for reporting travel information was authorized. The slow pace of change in the company's communicative practices was further exaggerated by the relative stability in the company's fundamental business activities. Business activities at Rath changed slowly, creating more-or-less repetitious situations wherein employees simply reproduced communicative practices that had worked before. Below I elaborate on these patterns of variation and repetition at Rath, paying particular attention to the technologies that supported the employees' genre habits.

To examine these genre habits, I have organized my discussion into a more or less chronological sequence to give the reader a better sense of the events as they unfolded at the company. In addition, I have used the company's anniversary in 1941 as a somewhat

arbitrary dividing point to define two epochs in my discussion.[5] I begin with a look at the adoption of new communication technologies from 1920 until 1940. During this period of rapid growth at Rath, the company was incorporating many new office technologies (accounting machines, visual media, and advanced forms of wired communication) into its work practices. I then turn to the period from 1941 until 1985, discussing the accelerated integration of electronic technologies—from card punch systems to automated dictation machines—with nearly all aspects of work at Rath.

The Adoption of New Communication Technologies: 1920-1940

The communication technologies being used at Rath during the 1920s were in many ways fairly typical of those used by other big businesses engaged in interstate commerce at this time.[6] The company relied heavily on telegraphs for communicating over long distances—particularly with remote salesmen and livestock buyers.[7] At the Waterloo plant, documents were being produced on typewriters and in multiple copies with carbon paper and mimeographs. Frequently during this decade, machines were being used to capacity, and the administration had to purchase new equipment to ensure the steady flow of information required to meet growing market demands. Likewise, the pool of clerical and office employees operating these document production technologies expanded steadily during this time as employees throughout the company came to rely on documents to coordinate their

---

[5] It was, however, 1941 when Rath initiated its formal business relationship with IBM—the first in a series of relationships with advanced information system manufacturers that would develop over the next four decades.

[6] For a description of communication technology in business at this time, see Yates' *Control*, chapter 2.

[7] During this decade, telegraph and telephone costs were considered part of the company's selling expenses and were debited to the sales portion of the company budget—an accounting practice that continued into the 1960s (F086/024). On the other hand, the cost of written correspondence (e.g., stamps and paper supplies) were treated as part of administrative expenses. Rath's investment in wired communication was significant. In 1924, for example, the company spent $21,045 on telegraph and telephone services, nearly twice the amount they spent on sales department salaries and advertising combined (1924 fiscal year accountant's report, F086/024).

activities. Organizational requirements for increased amounts of information led company administrators to invest resources in technologies such as tabulating machines that would support analytic, data-based business decisions. The communicative practices that emerged at this time—particularly those associated with machine accounting—significantly influenced the company's genres for decades.

The Institution of Machine Accounting: Working to the Numbers

When the country's economy began its "roar" through the 1920s, Rath, too, expanded rapidly. As the company's business grew quickly in the 1920s, administrators kept control over busy plant operations through increased systemization of the communicative practices employees used to exchange information. And when the company had the Illinois Central Railroad install new tracks to the Waterloo facility in 1922, the need to coordinate expanding interstate commerce activities compelled company administrators to develop new communication tools. Sales orders received via telegraph and telephone had to be translated into production orders and inventory debits. Shipping lists had to be compiled, and railcars had to be scheduled. Receipts had to be processed and accounts had to be debited and balanced. Each of these communicative exchanges, in turn, extended out to additional exchanges (associated with their own genre practices) in other parts of the company, as buyers purchased more livestock, lawyers wrote more contracts, and office personnel placed more advertisements in regional newspapers. These multiple exchanges, which were almost always mediated in textual forms, created a flood of paperwork within the company. The information being exchanged in these transactions was primarily numerical. Order takers needed to know how many canned hams, tins of potted meat, and jars of pickled pork to send

on a given shipment. Labor supervisors made decisions based on the amount of production required in their areas—"How many packages of bacon need to be bundled during today's shift?" Dock hands needed to know the number of boxes and crates to load on railcars bound for Birmingham, Alabama. Transportation supervisors needed to know the date and time that a truckload of "corn-fed" hogs would arrive from Decorah, Iowa, and when today's load of specially wrapped Easter hams would depart for San Francisco. Accountants needed to know how many boars had been slaughtered, how much to pay coal suppliers, and the amount of money outstanding to distributors in New York.

To process the increasing paperwork associated with this commercial activity, company administrators created a machine accounting department in 1923.[8] The creation of this department gave a sense of order to the multiple communicative practices that had emerged so quickly. By locating all the people generating this number-based paperwork and the machines they used in one place, the company instituted many of its communicative activities as part of the rational-bureaucratic organization that company administrators embraced. A variety of machines supported this new order in the company's communicative practices. There were first tabulating machines that mechanically processed numerical data and printed the results on narrow bands of paper—much like a contemporary calculator. Then there were the punch card machines, which became increasingly sophisticated during the first half of the century. Punch cards, which could be used to process numeric and alphabetic characters,[9] were used at Rath for decades to process accounts and inventories. Card punchers recorded data on standardized forms. Verifiers checked the data punches.

---

[8] January 13, 1960, slide show presented at 1959 annual meeting of stockholders, C004/031.

[9] James W. Cortada, *Before the Computer: IBM, NCR, Burroughs, and Remington Rand and the Industry they Created, 1865-1956* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pg. 44.

Sorters shuffled cards into categories based on the information they recorded. Reproducers transferred data from one card to another. After the 1930s, interpreters typed information on cards based on the punches that had been made earlier and collators inserted and removed individual cards while ordering entire stacks of them.

With the emergence of this new order, the informal system of penciled-in ledger sheets that J. W. Rath initiated and had sustained since 1891 was slowly replaced with increasingly sophisticated, machine-produced forms and records. Numerical data from across the company were collected and processed in the new department, giving rise to new types of information for making administrative decisions. Despite the organizational resources that were dedicated to processing numerical information in 1923, company administrators were not satisfied that information was being processed adequately. At the end of every month, departments were unable tc report their operating results because they were too busy keeping pace with changing business conditions. To assess the company's use of its machine accounting technologies as well as the departmental records being produced, J. W. Rath arranged for an external accounting and auditing firm to conduct a "survey of the accounting methods and records . . . in operation at the general offices of The Rath Packing Company."[10] In their findings report, the auditing firm noted that despite recent expansions in Rath's clerical staff, the company personnel devoted to office work were still too limited and that "the present system of primary records [could] be improved by the introduction of certain summaries and distribution sheets" (3). Following this accounting firm's advice, Rath's administrators developed a system of record-keeping that included monthly

[10] July 30, 1924, Marwick Mitchell (for Marwick Mitchell & Company) to J. W. Rath. F086/024.

statements prepared by each department and used by managers to make decisions. This system of monthly statements helped formalize the sporadic, incidental reports that supervisors had produced on special occasions in previous years. With this new, mandated genre, internal accounting and statistical reporting became a routine part of the company's operations. Together, the creation of the machine accounting department in 1923 and the institution of internal reporting in 1924 made the early 1920s a watershed era in the history of communicative practices at Rath.

The numerical data being generated became so extensive by the early 1930s that administrators in the accounting area developed several genres for controlling the flow of information.[11] They created, for example, a branch instructions manual that detailed management and accounting responsibilities at remote facilities. This manual included the personnel, purchasing, inventory, and cost recording procedures necessary to ensure regular exchanges of numerical information between the Waterloo offices and regional branch houses. Within the Waterloo plant, the general accounting department began periodically publishing accounting instructions bulletins that defined systems for handling new types of financial transactions—particularly as new governmental regulations were introduced to control economic activities during the pre-World War II era. These bulletins were supplemented with operating instructions for the clerical staff. Operating instructions covered office routines and the proper use of new tabulating equipment that was periodically being introduced to the department. Check lists were yet another genre that emerged to

[11] For a broader view of factory accounting practices during the first three decades of this century, see John Whitmore, *Factory Accounts* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984). For additional sources, see also R. H. Parker, *Management Accounting: An Historical Perspective* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969).

support the machine accounting activities that became so much a part of the company's routine at this time. These checklists were detailed inventory sheets that listed the accounting reports that departments throughout Rath had to submit to the machine accounting department on a regular basis to construct the internal reports that company officers and managers were beginning to use more and more frequently to make decisions. With their lists of due dates, report titles, and responsible parties, these checklists were operationalized for administrative control of internal accounting data.

From its inception, the machine accounting department became the center for commercial communication at Rath. The department's practices gave rise to a collection of genres that framed company activities in financial and numerical terms for administrative control. Following the advice of their external accounting agency, Rath's administrators instituted genre habits that seemed distinctly different from those at play in the organization a decade earlier. As these genres habits become entrenched in the company's day-to-day activities, company employees would begin extending the tools of numerical analysis to other areas of work. Over the next couple decades, the machine accounting department would evolve into a center for processing various other types of numerical information, from records for tracking the cost of and value added to meat in company inventories to compilation reports of branch office expenses. While accounting methods had been introduced to coordinate the increasing flow of financial data during the company's expansion in the 1920s, data analysis would come to play a role in the coordination and control of diverse company activities, as I describe later in this chapter. Accounting machines, however, were certainly not the only technologies influencing communicative

practices at Rath during this era. New technologies were allowing communicators to move beyond the alpha-numeric texts that they had relied on since the company's beginning.

The Rise of Visual Media: Working with Graphic Ideas

While Rath's adoption of accounting machine technologies early in the century signaled an important change in communicative practices at the company, written texts were beginning to be supplemented with graphic images, signaling another minor revolution.[12] The company's adoption of new document production technologies was altering the communicative practices of company employees. Expert typists, for example, were producing documents[13] with embedded tables (see Figure 6.1). Photographic images began appearing in company documents. Professional printers were preparing Rath documents designed for public readers (e.g., annual reports). The company invested in specially designed writing surfaces (e.g., pre-printed forms, letterhead, and envelopes) to shape the communicative practices of employees. These designed writing surfaces, in concert with several other emerging technologies, introduced new ways of communicating visually within the company.

---

[12] See Yates for an overview of the use of communication graphics in business documents prior to 1920 (*Control*, pgs. 65-100).

[13] Most typists at Rath—as at many large companies—worked in an administrative center where they worked in concert as part of a text production center. This industrial arrangement for producing texts created a class of administrative workers who were engaged in communicative practices in a limited way. They developed professional expertise for operating specific communication technologies (e.g., typewriters and dictating machines). However, while these typists were responsible for producing textual objects, the production of ideas was primarily the role of the administrators who consumed the texts produced by these typists. For a social history of the typist profession in business during this time, see Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

November 1, 1930

Mr. J. W. Bath:

The attached reports are a comparison of the fiscal year, 52 weeks, ended November 1, 1930 and the fiscal year, 53 weeks, ended November 2, 1929. It is rather difficult to make the proper comparisons due to the uneven number of weeks and therefore in the special reports we are showing an average increase or decrease per week ascertained by dividing the total amount by 52 and 53 respectively.

Referring to report No. 1, you will note there has been a substantial decrease in the average selling price of 72.3¢ per hundred, however, there has been a decrease in the cost of the livestock and supplies of approximately the same amount, that is, 72.4¢ per hundred. There was a decrease in labor and manufacturing expenses of 4.4 cents per hundred, which will be accounted for in the gross profit.

Report No. 2 reflects an approximate decrease of 1,500,000 pounds between the 52 weeks sales and the 53 weeks respectively; however, on the basis of average sales per week, it shows an increase of 47,000 pounds per week for the year 1930 as compared to 1929. The foreign sales have decreased a considerable figure or 22% over last year and this amount plus the decrease in the car lots accounts for the total decrease in sales. City Sales have decreased 5.39% over last year and on an average tonnage per week Report 2 reflects a decrease of 3,300 pounds per week. The major increase is in the Branch Sales of 37% over last year and the Route Cars of 2% over last year. Referring to Report No. 10, the comparison between 52 weeks and 53 weeks reflects a decrease in Fresh Pork 232,000 pounds, Sausage 72,000 pounds, and Sliced Bacon 35,000 pounds.

From Report No. 3 it will be noted Fresh Meats increased 196,000 pounds due to a large increase in Beef and Mutton Sales of 7,884,000 pounds less a decrease in Fresh Pork of 7,688,000 pounds. Lard, Smoked and Cured meats have decreased whereas Canned Goods and Jobbing items have increased. Report No. 11 lists the comparison of sales by departments.

Based on tonnage, the selling, Delivery and General Administrative expenses have increased as reflected in report No. 4. The following are the chief items:

	Per Cwt.	Average increase per week
Salesmen's Salaries	1.60¢	$ 716.48
Traveling Expenses	1.01	460.50
Bonuses, Prizes, 10% profits	.26	110.57
Advertising	.27	113.61
Drayage	.25	188.69
Office Salaries	.33	206.78
Office Supplies	.21	91.34
Life Insurance Premiums	.27	108.86
Export Expense	.38	157.61

The decrease in production costs are reflected in Report No. 5 and 6. On a percentage of total labor costs, labor shows an increase and livestock and manufacturing expenses a decrease. However, on an approximate head killed basis, labor reflects a decrease of 6¢ per head and manufacturing expense a decrease of 6¢ per head.

Figure 6.1. Embedded Table Produced with a Typewriter (F092)

Photographic Images. In the early 1930s, photographs became a more common feature in company communication. Although photography had existed for decades, employees at Rath began exploring its potential as a communication tool after World War I. Within the company, this exploration began with the occasional practice of coupling text with photographs to illustrate messages. Although photographs quickly became a tool that communicators could use, they were used only in limited situations because of the expenses involved (e.g., equipment, supplies, time). One such situation developed as Rath expanded its remote facilities between the World Wars. Managers at these remote sites experimented with ways to use photographs to supplement their communication with administrators in Waterloo. Throughout the 1930s, for example, Rath's managers across the country paid professional photographers to produce prints of the company's remote facilities and then sent those photographs with text descriptions to Waterloo. These photo-enhanced messages provided visual confirmation of how the company's remote facilities were being kept and documentation of recent acquisitions, including the new delivery trucks that Rath's branch house managers routinely purchased. The potential for communicating with photographs was much greater than communicating with text alone, as a 1933 letter suggests. When the branch office in Houston wanted new scale equipment to weigh the frankfurters and other Rath products being manufactured at the branch, the office manager sent his request with a picture of the scales they hoped administrators in Waterloo would procure for them (the photograph was taken at another local packinghouse). As the manager's letter mentions, the photograph was added to the request to clarify what type of scale he was talking about: "This

is the kind of equipment that we have been corresponding with you about, and certainly appreciate your securing one of these scales for us."[14]

Photographs proved a valuable technology for communicating visual information over long distances, though additional uses became more prevalent—particularly in expertly produced, high-cost documents produced for the public, such as the company's annual reports beginning in the 1940s and in increasingly complex advertising campaigns. As these commercial applications of photography emerged, administrators created a company art department to handle nearly all photographic communication at Rath. Photographic communication thus became the responsibility of experts with their own place in the company bureaucracy.

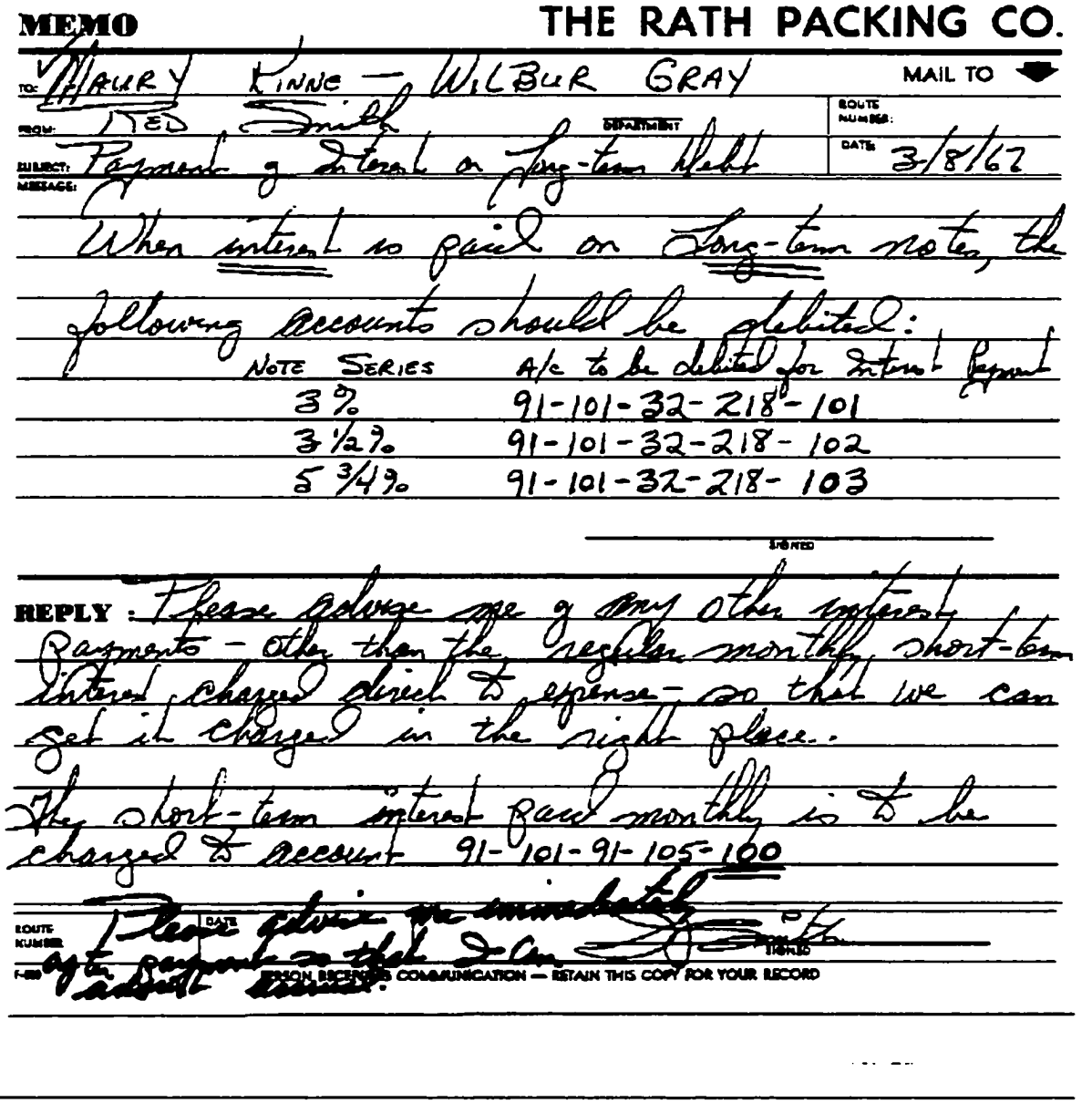
Designed Forms. In addition to enhancing routine genres, some visual technologies developed early in the century added an element of disciplinary control to Rath's communicative practices. Because so many of the company's communicative practices were highly repetitious, designed forms became a widely used tool for making communication more efficient. Pre-printed envelopes and letterhead, for example, were introduced as early as the 1890s, [15] eliminating the need for company correspondents to add elements to every missive they composed. Such basic forms became increasingly sophisticated as the company invested money in improving its writing surfaces for communication. In the 1920s, for example, company letterhead was printed on paper that contained the Rath logo as a watermark.[16] In 1931, company administrators were using an internal correspondence

[14] April 20, 1933, A. V. Horn to C. E. Wheeler, PR017/024.
[15] See F083 for examples.
[16] Stationery printed on paper with the Rath watermark was widely used by 1925 (see F092 for examples).

stationery designed with high-quality color drawings of company products—canned hams and chickens, loaves of spiced pork tongues and spiced pork loins, as well as pickled pigs feet packed in glass jars—all within a pastel framing border.[17] As countless messages were communicated on these visually enhanced surfaces, a new type of cultural identity emerged in company correspondence. The repetitious connection of company-designed images with individual correspondences created a company ethos valued by Rath's administrators.

While designed forms eliminated some of the repetition inherent in routine communicative exchanges, the forms also helped regularize the content of those exchanges, thereby making the content of routine communication more repetitive. By 1930, administrators at Rath had registered hundreds of forms that were used to ensure regularity between instances of routine communication. Integrating repeated textual elements with graphics (e.g., grids and boxes), these forms shaped communicative practices by presenting set text to the user and limiting the user's responses. The designed spaces of communication oriented company employees to write on administrative forms in specific, predictable ways. Preset text and circumscribed spaces for communication also tended to emphasize the material nature of communication. Forms were designed with a limited space for responses in some instances (see Figure 6.2), and some forms limited responses to pre-defined choices (see Figure 6.3). As bureaucratic tools for facilitating more efficient routine communication, forms played an important role in the genre practices at Rath. Designed forms were used for analytical control of organizational activities in the company, thereby operating as a type of engineered technology for shaping communicative exchanges. When Rath administrators

[17] See R001/001 for examples.



MEMO

THE RATH PACKING CO.

TO: MAURY KINNE — WILBUR GRAY

MAIL TO

FROM: TED Smith

DEPARTMENT

ROUTE NUMBER:

SUBJECT: Payment of Interest on Long-term Debt

DATE: 3/8/62

MESSAGE:

When interest is paid on long-term notes, the following accounts should be debited:

NOTE SERIES	A/c to be debited for Interest Payment
3%	91-101-32-218-101
3½%	91-101-32-218-102
5 3/4%	91-101-32-218-103

SIGNED

REPLY: Please advise me of any other interest payments - other than the regular monthly short-term interest charged direct to expense - so that we can get it charged in the right place.

The short-term interest paid monthly is to be charged to account 91-101-91-105-100

ROUTE NUMBER

DATE

Please advise me immediately after payment so that I can adjust accounts.

SIGNED

F-000 PERSON RECEIVING COMMUNICATION — RETAIN THIS COPY FOR YOUR RECORD

Figure 6.2. Form with Limited Space for Responses (F092)

REQUISITION FOR PERSONNEL

Department or Location _____ Date _____

Class of Opening: ☐ Exempt Salaried ☐ Wage-Hour Salaried ☐ Hourly Paid ☐ Temporary ☐ Regular Part Time ☐ Irregular Part Time

Shift _____

Job Title _____ Rate of Pay _____ Date Needed _____

For Exempt Salaried Positions, attach a copy of position description for existing positions or draft for new position.

Special Qualifications _____

☐ Replacement for _____ ☐ New Opening (explain) _____

Approved:	DEPT. MGR.	OFFICER

Upon approval of Dept. Mgr. and Officer in Charge, retain Copy 1 and route Copies 2, 3, 4 to the Gen. Personnel Dept. Copy 2 will be returned when staffing authorization is confirmed.

Copy No. 1
P-1177

Figure 6.3. Form with Responses Limited to Pre-defined Choices (C004/036)

STORE PROGRESS REPORT FORM

RETAILER ____________ ADDRESS ____________ CITY ____________ STATE ____________
STORE NUMBER ________

MARKET MANAGER ____________

WEEK OF												
[illegible] BACON V.P. 24/[illegible]												
[illegible] Maple Bac VP 12/1[illegible]												
E.S. Bac Thick 12/1#												
A.M. WIENERS 24/1#												
P.S. WIENERS 24/1#												
GRILL WIENERS 24/1#												
[illegible] SAUSAGE . 24/1#												
[illegible] 24/1#												
[illegible] LINKS 12/8oz.												
[illegible] E.S. CAN HAM 12/[illegible]												
[illegible] E.S. PLASTIC 12/[illegible]												
[illegible] E.S. CAN HAM 6/[illegible]												
[illegible] PLASTIC 6/[illegible]												
[illegible] Bolo 12/6 oz												
" [illegible] Bolo 12/6 oz												
" [illegible] 12/6 oz												
" [illegible] 12/6 oz												
" [illegible] Bolo 12/12 oz												

Use following code to record activity on items each call:

1. Item Stocked
2. New Item Recommended
3. Order Sold
4. Ad Feature
5. In-Store Promotion
6. P.O.S. Material Placed
7. Sample Carried
8. If Authorized Item Not In Case, Indicate Why On Back Of This Form

P-2937-B

MORE THAN ONE CODE NUMBER COULD APPLY TO AN ITEM.

Figure 6.4. Stores Progress Report Form (R011/010)

developed these forms and the procedures for using them to ensure routine communication practices at all levels in the company, the form became a type of device for producing information. Managerial programs often became material through the use of forms, as was the case in 1974 when company administrators implemented a growth market program for improving sales. To facilitate this program, managers created a "Stores Progress Report Form" (see Figure 6.4). This simple form used a grid structure to record codes tracking the activities of salesmen activities at grocery stores. Analytical control of sales activities was made possible as salesmen reviewed these forms with their supervisors and as administrators at Waterloo reviewed them later. Data entered on these grids provided a type of picture of how Rath products were being marketed throughout the country. This form, like many others in the company, was thus a tool—much like a carcass scale, a tensile resistance meter, or a desktop calculator—for producing information.

Ad Hoc Communication and Wired Technology: Working with Current Information

At the same time that Rath was developing habits of working with new technologies to improve the company's written communication, whole networks of practice were developing around the wired technologies that connected office to office and that made rapid communication with remote facilities possible. Telegraphs, teletypes, telegrams, and telephones offered new potentials for communicative interaction that allowed company employees to coordinate and control activities over great distances—and to do so without the inherent delays associated with transmitting the traditional forms of written communication. The communicative habits that developed around these wired technologies suggest how valuable nearly instant communication was in the transaction of daily business at Rath.

For market reasons, administrators at Rath spent significant amounts of money on the wire technologies that would facilitate rapid communication. The meatpacking business has been an inherently time-sensitive operation since its inception in the nineteenth century.[18] As the economics of the livestock marketplace became increasingly complex in this century, buying and selling activities had to be thoughtfully orchestrated to ensure profitability. Schedules for the shipment of live animals had to be coordinated. Shipments of meat products had to be planned with great accuracy to avoid costly errors. The genres that developed around these marketing activities had material consequences for the company—Rath's success or failure depended on the communicative practices that company agents used to interact between their varied locations. In the late 1930s, for example, the company paid for a private telephone service between its office switchboard and Chicago to handle increased communication with salesmen and others in Rath's Chicago office. This service cost Rath $1,056 per month, but allowed the company to increase the number of telephone contacts between Waterloo and the Chicago office by nearly 600 percent.[19]

Wired communication offered Rath employees ways of corresponding more rapidly than was possible with traditional forms of written communication. At the same time, the communicative practices associated with these wired technologies were often less formal than traditional written correspondence. Communicators using these wired technologies were seldom concerned about the physical form of their messages, focusing more on the transaction than the material texts exchanged. Most of the company's telegraphic messages, for example, are notable for their brevity and informality, reflecting the costs associated with

---

[18] Yeager, p. 1.
[19] October 24, 1940, internal report prepared by John G. Cook, C001/012.

this method of communication, which was billed according to the number of characters in each message. The brevity of these announcements contrasts dramatically with internal memos addressing similar topics. Wired technologies were used extensively to communicate mundane transactional information on a daily basis—and the records of most of these transactions were never saved. After the offices at Rath plants were connected with telephones, additional ad hoc communicative practices emerged. Informal oral communication obviated the need for some written communication practices, even as it made possible immediate connections in the administration of company activities.

The temporality and informality of communicative practices associated with wired technologies make it difficult to assess how these technologies affected written communication. Written communication, however, offered the most formal means of communicating and a more permanent form when communicators desired a documentary record.[20] Management decisions, for example, were typically recorded in written form to make them more formal and permanent—two markers of authority in Rath's network of communicative practices. Procedures and policies that had been communicated orally in the company's early days came to be documented in more elaborate, formal, and systematic ways in the twentieth century. These formal communicative practices, however, often overlapped with the ad hoc communicative practices associated with wired technologies—particularly when policies had to be communicated rapidly. The quickness of wired communication helped administrators in Waterloo communicate immediate changes in company policy to sales managers across the country. Such was the case, for example, when

[20] Assessing the effects of telephone technology, Yates argues that the telephone had "utility in informal exchanges. Yet it could not and did not displace the written communication that was growing up" (*Control*, p. 22).

an administrator in Waterloo needed to make an immediate revision of the policies in the company's formal sales manuals, which were held by sales agents dispersed around the country. Because the formal system of communicating company policy was slow (i.e., sending text revisions to all manual holders through the mail), he arranged to have the revisions communicated through a written transcript that was transmitted through teletype and telephone messages. Recognizing the permanency of formal paper-based communication in such matters, however, this administrator concluded his message with a note that "revised pages covering the revisions in policy will be mailed out."[21] Despite the obvious benefits of wired communication, greater authority was invested in formal written communicative practices throughout Rath's history. While the speed and informality of wired communication dramatically affected communicative practices at the company, they never replaced the more permanent written practices that had such a long history in the transaction of company business.

The Expansion of Communication Technologies: 1941-1985

When Rath celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1941, the company rivaled any comparable organization in its use of state-of-the-art technologies. Participants in the weeklong festivities were taken on plant tours and shown office equipment that testified to the company's commitment to modernization—pools of typewriters, banks of tabulating machines, a public announcement system wired throughout the plant, document reproduction machines, filing systems, teletype machines, and the more mysterious measurement and recording devices in the plant laboratories. As company administrators were apt to tell plant

[21] November 21, 1969, H. O. Bidne to all sales managers, R007/013.

visitors and newspaper reporters, "the plant is ideally modern."[22] The company's commitment to modernization continued through the 1970s, as administrators made annual investments in updating office equipment, purchasing new communication systems, and developing computer-based tools for processing company information. The resources the company devoted to its communication technologies seem all the more remarkable in retrospect, given the severe economic conditions that threatened the company from the 1950s until it ended operations in 1985.

During these troubled years, the company's employees developed communicative practices for using a large collection of electronic technologies—ranging from automated dictation systems to mainframe computers. In conjunction with these high tech devices, however, employees continued to use many of the technologies that supported genre-production habits that had been practiced for years. Computers did not immediately replace tabulating machines; photostatic copiers did not end the use of carbon paper; punch card records did not completely replace financial ledgers and inventory books. As employees began using new technologies in their day-to-day routines, Rath's genre habits changed slowly. Once again, however, proliferation rather than revolution is the best way to understand these changes. Genres mediated through multiple technologies were concurrently at play during any given era at Rath. The annual sales meetings illustrate this point well. These meetings, which played an important role in the company's fiscal success, were carefully orchestrated by the sales managers in Waterloo. During a few hours, the salesmen were exposed to a parade of information communicated through a diverse collection of technologies. The multiple media used in 1967, for example, included brochures, posters,

[22] No date, text for 50th anniversary publications, R001/001.

display charts, film, skits, manuals, and chalk talks.[23] Five years later, in 1972, slides, audio recordings, and promotional products were added.[24] Traditional written technologies were thus mixed with more sophisticated electronic technologies to meet the sales department's goals of educating salespeople about Rath's products and policies. Such varied combinations were typical of the communicative practices at play in the organization during this era.

The proliferation of communication technologies and the genre habits that surrounded them form the backdrop for my discussion below of key technological developments at Rath. After 1940, electronic office equipment, the expansion of machine accounting technologies, scientific communication tools, the integration of communicative practices via complex technological systems, and the emergence of digital computing all played important roles in Rath's genre history.

Electronic Office Equipment

After World War II, office equipment changed rapidly, with a host of new manufacturers competing for sales in the country's expanding economy. Committed to maintaining a modern facility, Rath's administrators stayed informed about what technologies were available (clippings from office equipment catalogs are scattered throughout the company's correspondence files) and regularly allocated company capital toward modernizing their communication tools. Employees constantly modified their communicative habits as they found ways to use a shifting set of text production tools in their daily transactions. Often these revisions were subtle, though occasionally the introduction of

[23] 1967, list of materials for August 19 sales meeting, R006/004.
[24] March 30, 1972, Charles Berner to Bill Jenner, R010/007.

a new technology called for dramatic change, as in 1958 when company administrators made a major investment to modernize dictation practices at Rath.

For decades, administrators at Rath had relied on company secretaries to take dictation and produce their correspondence. Such arrangements were common in companies at this time, though they did pose certain material constraints on the creation of memos and letters. Administrators who did not type their own documents had to schedule their correspondence during business hours when secretaries were available. Further, they had to arrange a meeting time when a secretary could be present to take dictation. (The highest level executives were assigned a personal secretary to ease this limitation, while all other managers shared secretarial services.) This method of creating correspondence—a daily routine at Rath—produced thousands of documents every year and thus became part of the company's workplace culture. However, when company administrators discovered a technology for altering this document production routine, making it more productive and convenient, they quickly moved to acquire the new dictation tools. Their discovery began when George Hawk, a Rath manager, toured Armour's new offices in the *Chicago Sun Times* Building during a 1958 business trip. On returning to Waterloo, Hawk submitted a travel report to all Rath officers that included a section about the communication technologies employed by their competitor. He was particularly impressed by "the dictation, secretarial and communication centers" at the Armour offices:

> "With the exception of the officers of the company, there are no individual secretaries; all letters are done by dictation using an instrument similar in appearance to a telephone but with several push buttons on it instead of a dial. Using one button connects the dictator with the secretarial section, another

> with the communication section, and a third with the filing section. Apparently one of the biggest drawbacks is in their communications center where they have no way of assigning any priorities on telegrams, and quite frequently important wires are sidetracked behind routine business with the end result [being that] they are not getting some of their messages out as fast as they would like."[25]

Such cutting-edge technology captured the imagination of Rath's administrators. Within a few years, they had created a comparable system for producing and processing their written correspondence. By the mid 1960s, most of the correspondence at Rath was being handled by the company's administrative center, which had recently acquired a partially automated dictation system. With the new system, administrators could dictate their correspondence over their telephone to a recording device that the secretarial pool could later access to prepare the desired document. Although the system still depended on the labor of a large secretarial staff, the mediating technology made the text production seem less cumbersome: administrators and secretaries could accomplish their tasks with less interaction, procedures governing the systems led to the creation of more unified memo and letter formats, and administrators were no longer limited by time and space constraints when they wanted to compose correspondence—a policy memo could be dictated at midnight from a hotel room in southern California.

This new technology for producing some of the most common documents in the company was certainly a source of pride for Rath administrators. During official plant tours, visitors were taken to the large room were the electronic equipment and secretaries worked

---

[25] October 31, 1958, George Hawk to all officers of Rath, C003/015.

side by side. The tour guide would pause at the door, explaining that "the girls in our Administrative Center transcribe and type most of the memos, letters, and reports that are used to communicate within our office and with customers, suppliers, and the general public. They do a great variety of other secretarial work too, and are highly valuable members of our office staff."[26] Electronic text production tools were thus valued at Rath, though the operation of those tools was distinctly separated from administrative tasks. Administrators focused on the content of the company's official communication, while specific groups of employees were trained to operate the technologies for producing professional textual forms.

The Expansion of Machine Accounting and Internal Reporting

In the 1930s, Rath's professional accounting firm had influenced the ways that the company used its accounting machines and the genre habits they developed as a consequence. The mandated yearly audits conducted by external accountants, as well as the auditor's comments submitted at the end of every fiscal year, ensured that these accountants would continue to influence company practices. After World War II, Rath's accountants started pressuring the company to develop even stronger internal controls through more extensive use of their accounting technologies.

When compliance with auditor's comments would incur additional costs, the company was likely to challenge the suggestions. Such was the case in 1946 when the auditors recommended that Rath institute a new system of external audits to oversee its growing business at company branch houses. The auditors recommended that their firm

[26] 1969, plant tour script, R007/020. The diminutive, gender-specific label "girls" suggests the relatively low position these secretaries had in the company's hierarchy. Administrators at Rath, like those at many other companies during this era, frequently used this label to describe its exclusively female clerical staff.

conduct "tests" of the financial accounts kept at branch houses. Testing these accounts would involve a new genre, the "request for confirmation," a document sent to customers to confirm branch house records of shipments.[27] Company accounting machines would thus be able to flag discrepancies between branch house records and shipping practices when a clerk would run the numbers for management. Administrators at Rath rejected this use of analytical controls for policing branch house operations, citing the adequacy of their existing monitoring system and the practices of other meatpacking companies.[28] In most cases, however, Rath was inclined to adopt the practices recommended by their accounting firm.

A year after Rath rejected branch house audits, the company's auditors filed their year-end comments with a recommendation that Rath revise its accounting systems to improve internal controls. The auditors argued "that both your reporting and procedures have not been expanded and revised sufficiently to meet the needs of your expanded operations."[29] The auditors recommended more extensive use of accounting, statistical, and budgetary reports, as well as more rigorous reporting schedules and record keeping practices. These changes were all presented in terms of giving management a greater degree of control over company operations. A primary advantage of adopting these accounting procedures, according to the auditors, would be that the "transactions and records [of] various functions will be continuously segregated,"[30] thereby ensuring that management would be able to analyze operations by a system of numerical checks and balances. Although some of the genre practices necessary for such an internal control system were already in place at the

---

[27] November 2, 1946, auditor's comments from Frazer and Torbet to Rath Packing Company, F087/001.
[28] January 6, 1947, Joe Gibson to J. W. Rath et al., F087/001.
[29] January 8, 1948, auditor's comments from Frazer and Torbet to Rath Packing Company, F084/017.
[30] Ibid.

company (e.g., accounting instruction bulletins, operating instructions, checklists), the auditors argued that

> for maximum effectiveness, they [the genres] should be coordinated and set forth in writing so that each individual concerned will know what his responsibilities and duties are, and will know how the performance of such duties affects other individuals and departments. The inauguration and development of a complete manual of procedures for all accounting functions will be included.[31]

H. H. Rath, the company's treasurer and a vice president began working in 1948 with the auditing firm on developing such a system in conjunction with a reconfiguration of organizational management. By August of that year, the accounting firm reported that they were ready "to try out some of these ideas."[32] The new systems, which would involve several new and managed genre practices, marked a significant departure from the way business had been done at Rath since J. W. Rath had founded the company. The accounting firm and H. H. Rath approached this change with caution, even "testing the ideas" as the auditing firm recommended by experimenting with the new forms that would be used for communicating. Their concerns about change in the company's management responsibilities were thus integrally linked with change in the company's accounting-based genre practices. As the plan developed, the auditor's reports reflect the extent to which organizational structures were becoming linked to accounting technologies.

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] August 13, 1948, G. E. Frazer to H. H. Rath, F084/028.

In the emerging organizational system, lines of authority were defined in terms of the access a manager was given to the company's accounting and statistical reports. As part of the change, the auditing firm advocated defining managerial positions in terms of the "data required" by the job.[33] The number and detail of internal reports, in turn, increased significantly with the change, as managerial responsibilities came to be reflected in the company's documents. After a new configuration of company officers was announced at the end of 1948, for example, the company began developing monthly reports that summarized data for managers in the different functional areas of the company (e.g., buying, processing, sales, and administration). Accounting machines thus emerged as significant tools for preparing genres tied to administrative tasks such as overseeing company operations and coordinating work activities between dispersed organizational facilities.

Technologies for Scientific Communication

While accounting technologies and their associated practices became an integral part of several genre habits at Rath during the twentieth century, yet another collection of numerical-analysis technologies and practices was developing concurrently. Technologies and methods associated with scientific analysis profoundly affected the company's communicative practices. Borrowing tools and methods from disciplines such as chemistry and sociology, Rath employees were engaged in an ongoing effort to connect company activities to the rational certainty that many people associated with scientific practices. These scientific practices had been present in the company from its beginning in the 1890s, as Rath's technical experts in meat production participated in scientific approaches to

[33] August 12, 1948, report from Frazer and Torbet to H. H. Rath, F084/028.

producing information.[34] When national enthusiasm for scientific approaches to business management swelled in the 1910s, employees at Rath discovered many new ways to integrate scientific tools with company practices.

Like other major meatpacking companies, Rath was an active participant in introducing scientific tools to meatpacking processes. When the processes of meat production came under closer public and governmental scrutiny during the early 1900s, major producers like Rath looked for ideas to help control variables in their meat-production activities. Disassembling animals on a mass scale to produce more-or-less uniform cuts of edible meat was a problem that required expertise in both engineering and science. To meet growing consumer demands for edible meat products—but also to do so in a financially sound manner—the industry looked to technology and science for help. The need to develop regular production yields of sanitary meats at stable prices led to the development of meat science during this time.[35]

Scientific principles had been introduced into Rath's operating procedures long before the company began using scientific management principles to measure employee

---

[34] For example, see the recipe test reports generated during the 1890s and collected in the company's "Technical Journal" (F083).

[35] The Institute of American Meat Packers was organized in 1919, for example, bringing together scientists (e.g., chemists and biologists) with industry representatives. This institute of scientific and business professionals was created to increase cooperation between packers and government, to promote meat's "economic worth" to the public, and to encourage "the study of the arts and sciences connected with the meat-packing industry" (p. 4). See Institute of American Meat Packers, *The Packing Industry*. Throughout the century, industry experts connected meat packing to research in chemistry. At the 1919 Institute meeting, for example, William D. Richardson argued that in the meat-packing industry, "the chemist holds the center of the stage, which, you may imagine, is set with retorts, test tubes, stills, pipettes, burettes, and other paraphernalia of the chemist's workshop. Science in the packing-house has become synonymous with the science of chemistry" (*Packing Industry*, p. 256). The widespread interest in a scientific approach to meat production led to partnerships between packers and academic institutions. Rath, for example, employed researchers and academics at Iowa State University to gather information about animal production as well as to conduct testing. Widespread interest in science also led to the development of scientific management programs like the one implemented at Rath in 1948, which introduced a performance-based wage system into company practices.

performance in 1948. From the beginning of this century, employees made use of new measurement technologies to establish analytical controls over routine operations. Production activities, for example, were quantified and statistically analyzed before wage-rate systems were implemented. In the late 1920s, Rath employed chemists to collect chemical control data to create a historical record of product quality. Using new technologies such as optical color comparators, these chemists adapted laboratory practices to company operations, creating hybrid genres, such as lab reports that were modified to serve as business records.

Throughout the twentieth century, the company's communicative practices became increasingly intertwined with technologies and practices associated with science. As these new communicative practices emerged and were modified, the vitality of scientific methods became evident in several company genres. Along with the use of scientific tools in day-to-day operations, employees at Rath developed new genre habits. The company's thermocouple potentiometers, pH and pyshrometers, infrared spectrophotometers, gas chromatographs, and nuclear magnetic resonance sensors were used in conjunction with technical memos, lab test reports, equipment specifications and tolerances, formula books, and modeling projections. The new types of information that scientific technologies and methods made possible—often far-removed from conventional paper-based texts—clearly influenced the development of genre habits at Rath before administrators adopted a formal scientific management program. When they decided to formally align work activities with the scientific method via a system of measurements and analytical controls, company administrators almost certainly had in mind the rational precision evident in the technical genres that company employees had been producing during recent years.

Measurement and analysis, key activities in the scientific management of work, were thus a part of the plant's communicative practices before 1948. However, with the advent of a performance-based wage system that year, new types of data and organizational genres began to be generated at Rath. The data-intensive genres that emerged at this time depended on the expanded use of precision instruments in the administration of workplace activities. The instruments of scientific management[36]—stopwatches, time study clipboards, event recorders, cycle timers, interval timers, elapsed time digital computers, camera drive control timers, 16mm cameras, etc.—yielded information that altered existing genres (e.g., department production reports and employee performance reviews) and introduced new genre practices such as the time-motion study. As tools-in-use, these technologies were inseparable from a constellation of genres that grew steadily from the 1950s until the late 1970s. There were, for example, standards bulletins (see Figure 6.5) in which work activities were broken down into discrete elements and levels of work performance were measured in increments. There were labor analysis sheets (see Figure 6.6) in which actual work performance was measured against established company standards to determine employee wages. There were cost and variance statements (see Figure 6.7) for measuring the actual costs of a work center against planned costs. These and multiple other genres supported the data-intensive administrative activities that developed around the scientific management of work at Rath.

[36] The company's industrial engineers—the primary users of these instruments—maintained a library that included professional articles about workplace applications (See TM003 for examples.) The library also contained Rath's procedures for using several of these technologies and for communicating the information they yielded.

F-4949

THE RATH PACKING CO.
Standards Bulletin
PO-4

Dept. Name Grease Dept. No. 106 Page 1 - 1

Operation Slice & Score Inedible Pork Livers for Fish Food Date Issued

JOB DESCRIPTION	STD. MIN. PER Liver
1. Push tub truck containing inedible livers to drain table, approximately 15 feet.	.0006
2. Walk as necessary to find fork, walk back. Using short handled five tined fork, fork up livers to drain table. Set aside fork.	.0268
3. Walk to locker for knife, walk back to drain table.	.0009
4. Set up and position washer to receive sliced livers. (Close escape valve and place tray across lips of washer shell and tumbler opening.) Walk as necessary. Position by hand as necessary.	.0042
5. Reach to liver, position on slicing board. Examine as necessary for gall bladder. Slice approximately 12 TIMES AND Throw aside into tumbler.	.2020
6. Lay aside knife, wash mesh glove and hands.	.0021
7. Steel knife.	.0040
Note: Weight Average 3.25#/Liver	
Approved: 2/14/53 K. H. Collins	
TOTAL STANDARD MINUTES PER Liver	.2406
_____ PER EMPLOYEE HOUR 807 Lbs. STANDARD HRS. PER 100 Lbs.	.124

Figure 6.5. A Standards Bulletin (TM016)

7/1/69

LABOR ANALYSIS

THE RATH PACKING COMPANY
DIRECT LABOR ANALYSIS

DEPARTMENT Sausage Pack NO. ______ Month ______ Year ______

DATE	Total Hours Worked	Day Work Hours	Delay Hours	Hours On Std.	Earned Hours	% of Dept. Perf.	Prem Hours	% of Prem Hours	Below Std. Hours	Paid V.A. Hours
2-10-6	22.4	1.4	—	21.0	25.20		5.26		—	1.06
2-11	24.0	1.2	—	22.8	27.36		5.70		—	1.14
2-12	24.0	1.8	—	22.2	26.64		5.55		—	1.11
2-13	24.0	.6	—	23.4	29.25		6.45		—	.60
2-14	24.0	.6	—	23.4	28.53		6.07		—	.94
Total	118.4	5.6		112.8	136.98	121	29.03	25.7		4.85
Total										
Total										
Total										
Total										

Figure 6.6. A Labor Analysis Sheet (TM003)

COST AND VARIANCE STATEMENT

PLANT OPERATIONS 21
WATERLOO PLANT 101
INDUSTRIAL ENG 807

JUN 05-30-89 (21)

ACCOUNT	PERIOD 4 WKS ACTUAL	VAR PLAN	LAST YR VAR	YEAR TO DATE 39 WKS ACTUAL	VAR PLAN	LAST YR VAR
81 MFG PERIOD COST			LAST YR ACT			
183 WAGES-WH PLANT	2715	54-	2527	25029	916	32551
192 SALARY-EXEMPT	3152	160	3312	31246	1043	33985
193 SALARY-WH NFC NONUNIT	1153	232	1393	12261	1245	14645
202 1982 SUSPENDED COLA						94
203 1982 SUSPENDED COLA						123
205 82 C DED W C H NON UNIT		237-	240+	730+	1580-	2280+
206 82 C DED W C H UNIT		123-	96+	808+	792-	1128+
230 SALARY & PAYROLL COST IRF		800	660	1778	3422	6190
352 APC171-175/192-195/198/21	461	121	1250	8780	793	10645
355 APC183-187/196/197	787	102-	928	6894	216-	9285
481 TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT				89	89-	192
482 TELEPHONE TOLLS & MSG UNI	2	3		9	36	8
752 ACTUAL CC MAINT CHARGE		67	53	487	210	796
891 TRAVEL - GENERAL		31			298	96
TOTAL COST CENTER	8670	898		85394	5326	

Figure 6.7. A Cost and Variance Statement (TM023)

Many of the scientific management practices at Rath involved time measurement. By the 1970s, for example, employee performance evaluations were being conducted with an elaborate network of documents constructed from time measurements. Technologies for gauging and comparing time increments were essential for establishing the standards on which the company based its production wage system. They also came to be important tools for measuring and evaluating individual employees' contributions to production activities. Time Study Observation Sheets were used to compile data about the average times that different elements of a work operation required (e.g., cutting the intestines away from a carcass, loading frankfurter casings into a machine, stacking boxes of canned hams in the

loading dock). Standard Data Sheets were collected in manuals to be referenced by managers and supervisors throughout the organization. Standards Bulletins, mentioned above, provided sequenced operation instructions with the standard minutes required for completing each element. (Many elements required only fractions of a minute.) Reports of Product Labor Costs were generated by the company's accounting department from consolidated employee performance records. Variance in Labor Cost Reports for administrative planning were produced by comparing actual performance data against standard data. Sales and Production Schedule Sheets were computed based on the standard data reported in production studies. "Manning Schedules" for oversight of labor payroll costs were based on performance standards. Cost Estimate Reports incorporated data from performance standards in their formula-based calculations. Procedures and Methods Analysis Studies for management decisions used work standards as part of their embedded comparative costs estimates. Check Sheets for calculating wage incentives were pre-printed with standard data on them. Request for Timestudy forms were issued by foremen to initiate the revisions of existing standard data. Notices of Standards Changes were sent to union representatives to announce new performance standards. Stopwatch technology operationalized for time measurement thus generated a diverse collection of genre practices at Rath. Each genre, in turn, was articulated to its own network of sociopolitical practices that were manifest in still more organizational genres—from department and work gang efficiency reports compiled for management to labor conflict records that were used during contract negotiations between union and company representatives. Timekeeping thus became an entrenched part of day-to-day operations at the company; it was a fundamental part of company culture. As a company organizational manual explains, Rath's timekeeping

department was just "one of several departments whose functions are the recording, checking, [and] computing of time records."[37]

The genres supported by the stopwatch technologies that Rath employed from the 1950s until the late 1970s were far removed from the lines where animal intestines were removed and where blended meat products were injected into casings. New technologies often had unanticipated consequences, such as the exponential growth of written communication that would accompany the company's increasing reliance on scientific tools and practices.

The Integration of Communicative Practices via Complex Technological Systems

It is difficult to account for the inter-workings of genres that developed after World War II as new technologies were introduced because so many practices and technologies were concurrently at play at any given moment. Unwieldy networks of routine documents and patchwork configurations of technology emerged as the company expanded after the war. Most often, these networks were so expansive, spilling over departmental lines and sometimes extending beyond the company, that it took a great effort for managers isolated in discrete areas of the company's bureaucracy to understand the inner- and inter-workings of a single company process. Below, I briefly describe the technologies and genres connected to one such process, hog purchasing evaluation,[38] to illustrate how collections of work activities as diverse as bookkeeping and weighing diseased pig carcasses became integrated through communication technologies and the habits developed by the people using them. Hog purchasing in the early 1960s tied together several interrelated technologies and genres—

[37] No date, *Industrial Engineering Procedures*, TM003.
[38] 1964, Hog Purchasing Evaluation report, C006/004.

illustrating how extensive the network of communicative practices associated with a fundamental company activity could become.

Buying pigs for Rath in 1964 involved a range of technologies for producing information (e.g., scales, tattoo kits, computers, typewriters, calculators, punch card machines, and timekeeping devices) and well over a dozen routine forms of communication. Invoice and scale data were fed into Rath's electronic data processing equipment on an hourly basis while company agents were procuring hogs. Every day during buying season, employees counted hog inventories, condemned animals, and data about slaughtered carcasses. Still other employees collected data during the buying process to produce accounting department reports, invoice and ticket proof lists, reports of checks written to producers, and written verifications of invoice and scale tickets. Much of the information collected during these activities was systematically read into company computers to produce additional genre types. Hog buying evaluation reports with multiple variables such as carcass weights, live weights, carcass grades, and yields were printed on predesigned forms. Hog grade and yield vouchers and bank checks for animal producers were generated from the same database. Morning reports detailing the previous day's purchases were generated for production managers. Hog inventories with numbers about the types of pigs (e.g., boars, stags, cripples, roughs, and heavy sows) in process at the company were printed from the computer on a daily basis. Likewise, information about government-condemned carcasses was kept by the electronic data processing department to produce a computer-generated report that detailed the name of the animal's producer, the location at which the hog had been purchased, the carcass' tattoo identifier, the animal's disease, and its carcass weight. Slaughter reports, generated on a weekly basis, provided administrators with yet another

categorical list of numbers based on counts taken during the production process and calculations made afterwards. Accounting department controls, a computer report generated weekly, offered an extensive numerical record "to provide accounting and financial control" of the process. Mistakes in processing documents would cause the computer to generate an invoice and scale ticket proof list, identifying the document on which the error had occurred as well as other information for correcting problems this mistake had created in the computing system. Finally, a report of checks written was generated on a daily basis to provide a permanent record of money advanced or paid to producers for animals sold to the company.

As this example suggests, communicative practices at Rath after World War II were organized into complex networks that were mediated by electronic technologies. Computing technologies, in particular, had introduced changes to the ways in which employees exchanged information. How did this situation develop? How would it change over time as employees gained experience with computer technologies? To begin answering these questions, I turn to the late 1950s, when the company was posed to make its first mainframe computer acquisition and then trace the developments after that point.

The Turn Toward Mainframe Computing and Its Consequences

By the time mainframe computing technologies became available on the business market in the 1950s, Rath was primed to use these new machines. Having integrated accounting machines into multiple communicative practices and relying on scientific methodologies to improve day-to-day routines, company administrators were overwhelmed with information. After World War II, the amount of data generated at Rath grew

exponentially, and by the 1950s, clerical staff were recording and processing large amounts of information to conduct business activities. The increasing volume of written communication was due, in part, to the expansion of company operations to fill the demands of a growing consumer market. It was also due to the information-intensive management practices instituted after the war. Scientific management had planning, recording, and analyzing routines that were supported by an extensive network of genres. Structural analysis, with its objective statements, information campaigns, analytical reviews, and strategy statements added its own set of communicative habits. In combination with the systematic management practices that had existed at Rath since its earliest days (e.g., inventory systems, production records, and expense accounts), the new management practices elevated the importance of written communication for the coordination and control of company activities. In addition, new regulatory standards required the company to keep more extensive records of its operations, creating yet another collection of genres for employees to manage.

In the emerging business climate, quantitative information became even more prevalent in internal reporting than in previous decades. Company decisions makers increasingly relied on numerical reports to summarize organizational activities and used them to transact their daily business. Continuing the trend that had started three decades earlier, administrators revered their tabulating machines and accounting methodologies as essential tools for generating reliable information. These machines and methodologies became so much a part of Rath's culture, in fact, that operating the business without them was unthinkable.

Technology Manufacturers. The administration's decision to invest in digital computer technology to process company information was almost inevitable, given the business practices that had evolved since the machine accounting department was created in 1923 and the relationships Rath had developed with manufacturers of office technologies. For decades, Rath regularly purchased office equipment from manufacturers such as the Burrough's Adding Machine Company to support the production of numerical analysis genres. During Rath's 50th anniversary year in 1941, for example, the company began its relationship with the International Business Machines Corporation, whose punch-card machines had already altered statistics and accounting procedures in several business fields and were being discussed in popular books for business managers.[39] Rath administrators arranged for IBM's "Electronic Accounting Machine Division" to install new accounts receivable and tabulating machines at the Waterloo plant. Later that year, IBM featured Rath's 50th anniversary as the lead article in its *Business Machines* publication.[40]

Companies like Burrough's and IBM were offering tools that Rath's administrative employees needed to handle the influx of information they were expected to process into various organizational genres. And Rath administrators were particularly inclined to procure new office technologies so that the new types of management information they had come to rely on could be processed more quickly and efficiently. In 1951, for example, the company's administrators decided to purchase a Summary Punch and Multiplier from IBM to manage its annual Easter Ham Campaign data. For years, administrators had relied on handwritten quota and sales reports to record information about the company's single most

---

[39] Harry Pelle Hartkemeier, *Principles of Punch-Card Machine Operation* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1942), p. v.
[40] August 19, 1941, F. A. Deck to R. Brecunier, C002/016.

profitable sales program. The reports were a primary indicator of how much revenue the company would likely generate in a given year and were a tool for managers in making decisions about animal purchases and production volumes for the following year. According to an internal study, in 1950 it took approximately 1,886 hours to produce these written reports in the spring.[41] The new IBM machine, however, allowed employees to record the same data on punch cards, thereby eliminating the need to produce the quota and sales reports as a written genre. Compiling data with the IBM machine on punch cards in 1951 took only 814 hours. Such time reductions were attractive to company administrators, who were finding it difficult to sustain the levels of profit the company had experienced in previous years. The improved efficiency such machines made possible ensured administrative enthusiasm for information technologies that would support organizational communication.

The information technologies that Rath administrators brought into the company during the 1950s were increasingly sophisticated. Before the end of the decade, Rath's employees had begun using new machines throughout the plant. These new technologies partially automated and accelerated the production of many texts, and, in some cases, created new types of information. Company employees, for example, were using Card-O-Matic machines to prepare 5,000 shipping cards per hour. Prior to purchasing these machines, the typists had produced only 75 cards per hour. A new Interpreting Machine used data to print more than 250,000 labels per week. A UNIVAC 60 machine calculated customer costs from shipping cards at a rate of 150 cards per minute. New tabulating machines were being used to "verify all human and machine computations in accounting and billing procedures" on

[41] April 4, 1951, Harold H. Lenius to W. W. Jennings, C003/002.

customer invoices. Whenever possible, the new technologies were linked together to create information systems that required little human mediation. In the animal purchasing area, for example, a method was devised for transferring information about an animal's seller and grade to a tabulating machine in the office. The state-of-the-art tabulating machines were then able to calculate statistics automatically and transcribe the data onto punch cards. These cards, in turn, were processed on UNIVAC machines to produce a printout on a voucher with the seller's name. Most of the information systems introduced at Rath during the 1950s were designed by consultants who worked for the technology manufacturer. Rath employees, however, developed additional ways to use the new information technologies to meet their own needs. As part of Operation R in 1959, for example, employees in the Plant Personnel office created a new system for identifying job titles according to department numbers and bracket rates. Their system involved punching new IBM cards, allowing for news ways to manipulate their data and improve cost control.[42]

Mainframe Computing. Enthusiastic about introducing the latest office machines to the organization, Rath administrators were ready to take advantage of the digital computing technologies being discussed in professional and popular literature during the 1950s. In 1959, before many large companies had even seriously considered using digital computers, Rath procured its first mainframe computer from UNIVAC. The company's earlier favorable experiences with electronic tabulating machines and punch card systems eased the transition, helping explain why Rath administrators were willing to be the first

[42] February 17, 1959, Harlan Heise, C004/006.

company in Iowa and the fourth in the United States to purchase a UNIVAC 90 mainframe computer.[43]

With the advent of digital computing at Rath in 1959, computers became the most revered communication tool in the company, and employees sought ways to transform company information into digital forms. Although traditional genres were still regularly used throughout the organization to get things done, administrators increasingly turned to computer-based genres with their data-based information to make important decisions.

Because numerical analysis was already the norm for making rational management decisions in the company, administrators looked to their new mainframe computer—their most powerful number-processing tool—to evaluate all types of company data. Any company information that could be represented in numerical terms was a candidate for conversion to computer processing. Inventories that had once been compiled on handwritten forms by employees working in the storerooms and then converted into typewritten reports had already been transferred to punch card data. In the 1960s, this same data was being processed on Rath's mainframe computer, and the inventory record genres were transfigured to machine printouts.

In addition to altering existing company genres, the activity of computer processing created new genres for employees engaged in their day-to-day work routines. Information that earlier would have taken hours of special effort to compile, was available in a fraction of that time, as more and more company data was converted into machine-readable forms. Whereas employees had relied on a set of more-or-less static reports and records to

---

[43] The first commercial UNIVAC computer had been sold to the U.S. Bureau of the Census just eight years earlier for approximately $1 million. See Franklin M. Fisher, James W. McKie, and Richard B. Manke, *IBM and the U.S. Data Processing Industry* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1983), p. 8.

accomplish their work in the past, the mainframe computer could be configured to calculate and report data that had not been routinely available. Often the printouts of these new data sets generated by the mainframe computer became routine tools—genres—that modified work practices. In 1961, for example, just two years after the UNIVAC 90 was installed, computer printouts were used to change communicative practices in one of Rath's oldest production areas, sausage production.

The formulation of sausage had traditionally been carried out through a combination of genres: company recipes recorded in a technical journal,[44] production work orders, and lists of available inventories. These genres, combined with the tacit knowledge of experienced production workers, had formed the textual basis for manufacturing sausages at Rath. Compiling and analyzing the information in the written genres, however, was not an efficient task and was certainly open to interpretation. Production employees had to adjust recipes based on inventories of available meats. Such variations led to production costs that could vary significantly and to sausages with distinctly different tastes. To gain some control over these variations, company administrators codified the written genres into data sets and equations that could be processed by their recently acquired mainframe computer. As a company official explained at the 1961 annual meeting of stockholders, "in modern sausage processing the sausage maker must combine age-old recipes with the availability of raw materials to produce the right product at the right price. For this reason, Rath has turned to electronic computers." The need to interpret the company's written genres was almost completely eliminated from the process. The computer had been programmed to accept the

[44] No date, F083.

raw data traditionally communicated in a set of internal genres and to yield a new document type—print-out formulas—that instructed production workers about how to produce a more consistent sausage product. As the Rath spokesman explained to company stockholders, "a UNIVAC Computer is fed the necessary data and almost instantly UNIVAC furnishes the sausage maker with formulas using the various combinations of ingredients available. The sausage maker then relies on his experience, special skills and knowledge of processing techniques to select the formula best suited to Rath's high standards."[45]

With each successful application of mainframe computing to the company's decision-making processes, additional genre habits were altered. As they had been since early in the century, Rath's accountants were actively involved in these shifts. Eager to gain some control over the unpredictable fluctuations in the company's financial transactions, the accountants encouraged company administrators to use computer technology more extensively. In a 1964 correspondence with an executive at Rath, for example, one of the company's professional accountants sent a copy of a different packinghouse's annual report, with a letter stating, "They are doing with computers what I think your Company will be doing with computers; in other words, determining what and when to buy and other management decisions on an absolutely daily basis."[46] The revolution this accountant was calling for at Rath would mean a complete reconfiguration of the company's administrative genres. Over the next decade, company administrators came close to realizing this goal.

In 1966, two years after the accountant had sent his letter, Cameron, the first Rath president who was hired from outside the company, initiated a program to move all the

[45] December 13, 1961, script for slide presentation at annual stockholder's meeting, C004/046.
[46] March 31, 1964, Russell V. Puzey to Harry G. Slife, C006/001.

communication involved in the company's distribution activities to the computer system. As he reported to stockholders, the goal was to "take full advantage of the most advanced systems in electronic data processing."[47] Traditional hand- and typewritten genres were replaced with programmable report structures that could be generated from computer databases. Large sets of information were processed rapidly as the company's computing machines performed numerical tasks, eliminating the need for paper-based genres such as the calculation sheets that employees had traditionally labored with. Whole genre sets used for the distribution of company products disappeared as distribution activities were oriented toward the new reports and records being generated by the computer. Although handwritten genres were not completely displaced (e.g., raw data still had to be collected on forms) and new genres developed (shipping orders were routinely annotated and initialed), the bulk of the distribution activities was now focused on what Cameron called "computer problem-solving." The new mode of company activities is aptly summarized in an annotated image that appears in the company's 1966 annual report at the end of the year (see Figure 6.8). The caption above a picture of three men with their papers spread out on one of several large computing devices reads, "Three of Rath's electronic data processing specialists huddle in the UNIVAC computer room to solve some of the management problems involved in applying sophisticated business machine techniques to the company's marketing, accounting, and inventory control needs."

Changes to the company's communicative practices were not always so dramatic. Subtle alterations were sporadically introduced, signaling the influence that computer technology exerted in the company. For example, as part of their effort to implement the

[47] See script in C007/022.

Rath's 1966 operations

MODERN MARKETING

Consumer products. It is the job of Rath's Marketing Division to keep constantly in tune with the consumer's changing preferences in food products so that the company's product research and production resources can be geared to developing and producing those kinds of products that the American housewife says she wants.

The company uses as one of its marketing research tools a sizable consumer panel in certain major cities of the United States. From these attitude and customer preferences research studies, the Marketing Division is aided in developing its final determination on the specifications for the finished products that it is creatively conceiving to attract the attention of discriminating shoppers all over the nation. During 1966 important strides were made in updating Rath's major consumer products lines, and the groundwork was set for a significant expansion of this effort in 1967.

Field staff members of the Marketing Division also keep in close touch with the food trade at the retail level to insure that our dealers' products are up-dated and fit the needs of today's supermarkets. Keeping on top of the fast changing merchandising methods of the retail stores requires a constantly diligent effort. To aid in this program an important study is now being undertaken, with the assistance of a group of marketing consultants, to improve Rath's service to retailers in our most important markets. The company's line sales personnel are aggressively building better distribution with those retailers who can expose the Rath product lines to the maximum number of consumers.

During the year certain select test markets were researched to determine the effectiveness of a new way for us to use television advertising. These tests showed substantial sales increases could be achieved for Black Hawk wieners and Black Hawk sliced bacon. As a result of these research findings, Rath is expanding its use of television as a primary means of communicating with the American consumer market. To achieve a high degree of brand identification memorability for Rath television advertising, in competition with television commercials of numerous other sponsoring companies, a decision was made to build 1967's sales program around an entirely new network spot TV campaign featuring motion picture actor Louie Nye.

Nye will be seen by millions of American families on all three national networks throughout 1967 demonstrating and selling the outstanding flavor of Rath's Black Hawk canned ham and bacon. He will use good natured humor as still another effective marketing device to help achieve the high degree of memorability we desire for these sales messages.

Other accomplishments in marketing and sales which were achieved during the year included establishment of definite profit center responsibility on the part of the sales managers and the plant managers. A 10 per cent reduction in field management was achieved as well as effecting a shift which moved the Regional Sales Management from the headquarters office in Waterloo and placed them in the field close to the markets for which they are responsible. This change completed the establishment of one single, unified selling force for the company as contrasted with the previous sales system which relied on car route selling and branch house sales forces.

These moves now enable our sales force to devote their full time and concentration on the vital task of selling without having to be concerned about product or distribution problems. Another advantage is that we now are better able

Computer problem-solving. Three of Rath's electronic data processing specialists huddle in the UNIVAC computer room to solve some of the management problems involved in applying sophisticated business machine techniques to the company's marketing, accounting and inventory control needs.

Figure 6.8. 1966 Annual Report to Stockholders, p 3.

tools of structural analysis management in 1966, administrators in the controller's department created new cost accounting procedures that involved computer processing. To make computer-processing possible, the department set up a numerical charging system and required employees who wanted advance funds for travelling to fill out a revised version of the traditional request form with new digital codes. They explained the "change in procedure . . . [as] principally for accounting purposes only,"[48] though the ultimate root of the change was based in a shift to tracking and processing the forms on the company's computer equipment. Whether the changes were revolutionary or subtle, by the mid 1960s, the company's use of computer technologies had yielded significant changes in the communicative practices of employees.

The company's rapid integration of computer-based technology into its day-to-day operations made computer data an indispensable tool for conducting business. As employees developed new ways to use computers, the company had to perpetually update its equipment with new computing machines. The need for this equipment grew so rapidly and took on such immediacy, in fact, that when IBM was late delivering Rath's new, upgraded computing systems in 1967, company administrators signed a contract with another Waterloo manufacturer, the John Deere Waterloo Tractor Works, to use their equipment.[49] Such an arrangement—renting another manufacturer's equipment to ensure continuity in Rath's genre practices—was novel for company administrators. It was also a costly proposition for Rath's

[48] January 12, 1966, Controller's Department to all Departments, C004/036.
[49] November 1, 1967, John Deere and Rath Agreement, C006/034.

administrators.[50] That Rath administrators felt compelled to go to such lengths to avoid a potential disruption of their information-processing abilities indicates how fundamental computer technology had become for the company's production of hams, bacon, and lunchmeats.

Every year after acquiring their first mainframe computer, the company upgraded and expanded its computing abilities. By the end of the 1960s, Rath was spending approximately $14,000 per month in rent for two UNIVAC 1050 computer systems. To do anything but devote company resources to perfecting computer-based information processing seemed unwise because the equipment had proved itself so valuable. The company's computers had become the single most reliable source of information for management—and management was devouring whatever information it could acquire in its efforts to steer the company to profitability during a difficult economic period for meatpackers. In 1968, for example, when claims for reimbursement by salesmen complaining about defective packaging escalated, administrators turned to their computer programmers to find a solution. The increasing frequency of these claims as the consumerist movement gained momentum in the early 1970s was diminishing the company's profits significantly, creating a crisis for the administration. Near the end of that fiscal year, the head of marketing in Waterloo called for a more sophisticated technological approach to solving the problem. He speculated that the source of the problem might be a breakdown in communication: his department head had stopped sending data about excessive claims to the branch offices during the previous year and the

[50] In addition to paying rental fees for using the equipment, Rath also had to create new operating procedures because the contract stipulated that "all documentation and procedures relative to the operations of these programs will be provided by the Rath Packing Company in the standard format for standard procedures used by the John Deere Waterloo Tractor Works." Ibid.

number of claims had increased dramatically. This computer-data void, the department head surmised, probably explains the current crisis: "We have no facts on which to do anything. . . . [U]ntil we can get some facts coming off our computer which indicate the real cause for these increasing claims, it seems to me that we must place more attention at the sales level to keep them going down."[51] The company's computers had thus become the source of factual information on which administrators could make decisions. As this episode suggests, in less than a decade, information produced with computer technology had become synonymous with fact and was more valued than the types of information employees exchanged in more traditional genres.

Once computers had been programmed to process a majority of the company's administrative genres, management and data processing came to be nearly synonymous in the organization's language. When visitors to the facility in 1969 went to the room housing the company's computers, for example, their guide announced that they were entering the "management information center."[52] A handout these visitors received explained the purpose of the center: "a computerized management information system provides daily print-out of inventory, accounts receivable, orders, and shipping schedules." The handout also offered an explanation of what the imposing pieces of electronic equipment did: "serving needs such as writing customer orders and payrolls, evaluating purchase of hogs, analyzing sales results and accounting data, and doing statistical analysis and inventory control."[53] Although there was a degree of hyperbole in this claim, it is noteworthy that Rath administrators wanted to attribute to their computers tasks such as writing, evaluating, analyzing, and controlling—all

[51] October 21, 1968, H. E. Williams to B. G. Adkins, R007/019.
[52] 1969, plant tour script, R007/020.
[53] 1969, plant tour handout, R007/020.

of which were activities that managers and employees had traditionally negotiated with written genres. Because the company administrators viewed their computers as their source of facts, any administrative action that could be mediated through a computer-generated genre (i.e., printouts and screen displays) was afforded a degree of authority. Organizational structures for supporting these new genres emerged and were made official as the company created new departments: electronic data processing administration, systems design and programming, computer and tabulation, and data prep and distribution. With the ascendancy of these departments, management of the company's older departments was often subordinated.[54] With the rise of the new administrative genres, whole management structures found themselves realigned around computer technologies at Rath.

The organizational changes brought about by computer technologies during the 1960s and 1970s signaled an important shift in the company's communicative practices. Whereas genres had emerged throughout the company's history to address specific needs (e.g., to generate information for a new management program or to meet a regulatory requirement), computer databases offered even more powerful tools for consolidating the information contained in dispersed genres and to structure new genre types. Systems, rather than individual document types, became more prominent in Rath's communication practices.[55] With the introduction of machine-readable data, employees recognized the potential for sharing common pieces of information among genres and began developing systems for

[54] In 1968, for example, the head of Waterloo plant accounting as well as the shipping stock controller were placed under the manager of electronic data processing, who was made "responsible for the total data flow from the plants" (March 11, 1968, Rath news bulletin, R006/022).

[55] As I illustrated earlier, organizational genres had always been structured in complex relationships—with one type of document providing information for another or provoking the production of other genres. These genre connections, however, were significantly redefined once administrative data could be digitally manipulated.

doing so. The "Pyramids System" created in 1968, for example, provided for data collection at multiple points in company production processes so that administrators could analyze work flows and pinpoint the source of production problems. Integrated computer database systems like this offered employees the ability to generate complex reports in a fraction of the time it would have taken to compile a similar document using traditional methods. In addition, the structures of these reports could be easily modified with programming changes, and the reports could easily be updated because they were compiled from routinely updated databases. The Pyramids System thus made administrative report genres more dynamic than they had been in the past and encouraged administrators to create even more extensive and powerful systems.

The "Midas System" created for marketing and sales employees in 1972 was a robust random access database that allowed users to request multiple kinds of reports—based on time, geography, volume, product categories, etc. These customizable reports for decision-makers eliminated the need for traditional genres such as the hand-compiled and typewritten sales reports that had been used for years. The speed with which these computer-generated reports could be compiled was particularly important to administrators who were compelled to adjust company practices to market conditions in an effort to maintain profit margins. This sense of urgency about internal reporting is evident, for example, in comments prepared by Rath's marketing research department when changes to the computing system had been proposed: "As competition becomes tougher and margins for error tighten, it becomes increasingly imperative to have reliable data on which to base decisions."[56] The use and

[56] March 28, 1972. Rath marketing research department report entitled "Proposed Revision of the Midas System," R010/007.

demand of computer systems like Midas was so great at Rath, in fact, that the company generated more data than the technology would allow. The constraints of the technology directly affected the genre habits that evolved, as administrators were forced to decide whether to collect data weekly or monthly, how many of their accounts to track, and which types of data to track so that they would not surpass the limitations of their computer technologies.[57] Such limitations, however, were temporal as the company continued upgrading its computer technologies and as new systems were developed for integrating data into administrative reports.[58] In 1978, four years after use of the Midas System had pushed the company's existing computers to their limits, administrators had new computer equipment in place; they introduced "a complete integrated management reporting system on a direct standard cost accounting basis"[59]—once again affirming the connections between the company's administrative genres and principles of accounting.

The integration of advanced technologies with communicative practices was not without its problems. While data processing systems gave employees access to information in new printout and online genres, they also placed constraints on communication. As was the case with designed forms, the company's computer systems were created to accept only predefined types of information. The texts in traditional genres were routinely varied to fit the circumstances—memos could be one sentence or 100 pages long, photographs could be attached to technical instructions, customer complaint letters could be affixed to bulletin board postings. Computer databases, in contrast, were strictly regimented. Number and text

---

[57] Ibid.
[58] For an examination of the shift toward database-mediated communication in the workplace, see Barbara Mirel, "Writing and Database Technology: Extending the Definition of Writing in the Workplace," in Sullivan & Dautermann, eds., pgs. 91-114.
[59] C012/012.

strings had to fit defined parameters, and the reports generated by the computer were relatively stark in comparison with the hand and typewritten genres they replaced. Whenever interpretation of the reports was necessary, printouts had to be annotated or the data had to be transferred to a more malleable form, such as a typewritten document.

Integrated, data-based communication created still other problems for the company as mistakes were reproduced through the system. Data entry errors were difficult and tedious to discover, though their consequences could be dramatic. Entering the wrong number into the company's ordering system, for example, might result in the printing of inadequate purchase orders being sent to livestock buyers. It might also lead to the generation of kill sheets with inflated numbers, producing more perishable carcasses than the company could process. Problems like these became more and more common as computer technology systems came to dominate varied and far-flung activities in the company. By the early 1980s, when dire financial problems were already threatening the company, such systematic problems were an endemic part of their culture, as an editorial in the company's management newsletter, *Smoke Signals*, suggests:

> We need good communication because as a company we can't afford any losses. As an example, one mistake in coding an item number in error causes a domino effect in paperwork. First, you have the wrong product in town which you must resell, usually at a loss. Now the paperwork is just beginning—you have to write the resale or the claim, it has to be approved by immediate management, claims department, and the credit department

resulting in a loss of valuable employee time You create an obvious problem and similar loss for the account you were attempting to sell in the first place.[60]

Conclusion

Throughout Rath's history, communicative practices emerged and developed around the many technologies people used to get their work done. New technologies expanded the number of potential practices communicators could employ, though they never absolutely determined the ways things would be communicated. Employees made decisions about whether or not to integrate technologies like photographs into their routine exchanges. They also made decisions about how technologies should be integrated into work activities, as in the 1960s and 1970s when new computers were introduced to the company. Within the company, there was a general enthusiasm for experimenting with new technologies, ranging from scientific instruments to digital computers. Thus, while the repetitious use of many of these technologies tended to stabilize communicative practices, constant experimentation led to significant variations in practices at Rath. Focused research into any one of these technologies would undoubtedly reveal additional insights into the complex interplay between technology and communicative practices—though such an investigation falls beyond the scope of this study. In the final chapter, I return to the broader questions guiding this study and discuss their implications for expanding knowledge in professional communication studies.

---

[60] Ed Kaminiski, "Off Our Mind, Off Our Chest—Communication," *Smoke Signals*, 1.2 (July 1984), R011/043.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

Having surveyed current trends in rhetorical genre theory, proposed a way of adopting that theory to the study of workplace communication, and constructed a genre history of Rath that examines the company's communicative habits as they developed in three broad frames of organizational activity, I will now discuss the implications of my study. To begin, I return to key issues identified at the beginning of the dissertation to discuss this study's historical perspective on genre practices in the workplace. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss additional questions that researchers using this approach to studying professional communication might address in future studies.

A Historical Perspective on Genre Practices in the Workplace

My approach in this study has been to identify communicative practices in a company and to call attention to the interplay between those practices and other organizational activities. These communicative practices, which I examine as genres, were in constant flux as the networks of organizational activities which they helped constitute changed over time. In my analysis, I chose to focus on managerial, regulatory, and technological activities, pointing to ways in which these activities—present in all contemporary business enterprises—affect and were affected by communicative practices at Rath. Although important, these three activities are somewhat arbitrary, as I discussed in Chapter 2. I could have, for example, selected economics and examined Rath's communicative practices in terms of financial trends during this century. Or, I could have selected livestock production and focused my analysis on meat supplies and consumer demands during the same period. However, the three activities I did select seemed particularly appropriate because they are not

unique to Rath and are thus accessible to subsequent scholars who might use this approach to examine genre habits in other companies. Regardless of the specific year in my study, I found ample evidence in the archival record of an ongoing interplay between these three activities and communicative practices at Rath. As the company depended on routine forms of communication to get things done, managerial, regulatory, and technological activities kept their genre repertoire under constant revision.

My intention in this study has been to contribute a historical perspective to our understanding of rhetorical practices in the workplace. To a large extent, the history of professional communication as practiced in the workplace during this century[1] has been neglected in our field's research. Scholars seeking historical information must turn to business histories and other sources to find the little information that is available. A historical study of Rath is valuable because, during different eras, the company was both a small, regional enterprise and a large, interstate company with offices across the country. While the company was in many ways unique, its history parallels that of other growing, national businesses during an era when commercial enterprise in the US expanded rapidly. This history thus makes Rath an interesting case for historical research, though I do not mean to suggest that it is representative of all types of production companies, much less the many other types of organizations in which professionals communicate. The liability of studying a single company is that it is impossible to generalize to the entire history of professional

---

[1] In contrast, several valuable studies of the rise of professional communication instruction during this century have been written. See Teresa C. Kynell, *Writing in the Milieu of Utility: The Move to Technical Communication in American Engineering Programs, 1850-1950* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1996); Katherine Adams, *A History of Professional Writing Instruction in American Colleges: Years of Acceptance, Growth, and Doubt* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993); David R. Russell, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines 1870-1990: A Curricular History* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); and Robert J. Connors, "The Rise of Technical Writing Instruction in America," *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 12 (1982): 329-352.

communication. My findings in this study will thus become more meaningful when brought into contrast with similar studies of different organizations. Until we have several similar studies and connections can be drawn between them, our disciplinary understanding of how professional communication practices developed in this century will remain hazy. The patterns of communicative practices that I have observed at Rath, however, can serve as a starting point for scholars who wish to understand how workplace genres developed during recent decades.

Rath's operations grew during a time when paperwork in its many forms was becoming a norm in business transactions, and professionals in businesses throughout the US were experimenting with ways to make work more systematic through written forms of communication. As Rath expanded rapidly in the first decades of the century, so did its reliance on communicative routines. Professional communication in all its forms developed rapidly with the rise of big businesses like Rath during this century, and in that sense my study offers a valuable case for scholars in our field to consider.

My specific contribution to this story—the pattern on which I have focused—calls attention to repetition and variation in workplace genre habits. Throughout this century, management techniques, regulatory controls, and the uses of technology at Rath played significant roles in how communicative practices came to be repeated and varied. As I demonstrated in earlier chapters, organizational routines associated with management, regulation, and technology all led to the repetition of certain communicative habits over long periods of time during Rath's history. While engaged in these types of organizational activities, people at Rath reproduced communicative practices they had used before, providing a kind of coherence between their day-to-day activities. The effect was much like

that which John Law observed in his ethnographic study of workplace sociology, where he notes that texts potentially "have ordering effects that spread across time and space."[2] On the other hand, dynamic social exigencies related to constant changes in Rath's activities (managerial, regulatory, technological, and otherwise) gave rise to variation in those same communicative practices. When the temporarily ordered stabilities of organizational activities at Rath were disrupted—and such disruptions were continuous, as I have demonstrated in this study—variations emerged in the company's genres. Such patterns of repetition and variation are evident only in a historical study such as this one that examines communicative habits as practices that are contingent upon time and space.

My articulation of these repetition and variation patterns in the genres at Rath to the company's organizational activities illustrates the significance of managerial, regulatory, and technological activities in the history of professional communication. As I explain below, each of these connections merits further scholarly examination.

Management

In my discussion of management practices at Rath, I demonstrated that the ways in which a company chooses to order its activities are manifest in the practices its participants use to communicate. Systematic management, that is, the impulse to make organizational activities predictable and controllable, was present at the company throughout its history. In their ongoing efforts to make organizational activities more methodical, employees across the company depended on written forms of communication (documentation, agendas, performance records, etc.) to order their interactions with one another. Genre routines—

[2] Law, p. 102.

which encompassed organizational habits of both textual production and reception—were an integral part of how employees at Rath managed to impose the rule of system on their activities.[3]

The ordering of organizational activities through genre routines is evident throughout the company's archival record. The fundamental actions associated with management, however, were refashioned at pivotal junctures in the company's history as administrators used their institutional authority to organize company activities around different management approaches. Paternalistic management, with its heavy-handed emphasis on defining roles for company participants, dominated the company's early history, as family members and a small group of associates occupied key positions of authority for several decades after the company was founded. They closely managed key aspects of the business and controlled most of the text production in the company during this time. Paternalistic controls slowly eroded as the company expanded to a national business and as employees took on more sophisticated, communication-intensive tasks such as coordinating interstate shipments. A thread of paternalistic control, however, continued even to the last decade of the company, as management always had the final word and controlled the only real mechanisms for talking to the entire family of employees.

When the company formally instituted scientific management practices in the late 1940s, there was a notable shift to documentary practices based on the sciences (e.g., numerical studies, formula-based management analysis reports, and data collection sheets for testing activities). Throughout the company during this era, administrators pushed to find the

---

[3] As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, however, system always proved an illusory goal. Or, as Law observed, "Perhaps there is order*ing*, but there is certainly no order. . . . orders are never complete." Ibid., p. 1.

single best way to accomplish a given task, and their drive to organizational efficiency was largely mediated through textual forms that emphasized analysis. Genres injected with numerical tables and charts, itemized lists and other forms of discrete textual units, flow diagrams, and graphic representations proliferated—literal inscriptions of the rationale that underpinned the ordering of organizational activities during this era.

When professionally trained managers became more prominent in the administration of company activities during the late 1950s, yet another set of communicative tools was added to those already existing in the company. Such shifts were inevitable as structural analysis initiatives re-ordered organizational activities around long-range plans, participatory programs, and strategic objectives. Participatory management initiatives, for example, were mediated through genres that made it possible for employees to formally correspond with managers who were hierarchically and spatially separated from them in the company's bureaucracy. Additional genres emerged to facilitate (and shape) the cost-benefit analysis, internal audit, strategic planning, and exploratory study activities that ordered organizational routines at this time.

Changes in management activities and their manifestation in communicative practices is a phenomenon that has scarcely been examined in our field's scholarship. As I have illustrated in my examination of the three epochs in the history of management at Rath, an organization's genre routines are integrally linked to the ways in which that organization orders its activities. To the extent that my argument has been successful, I have demonstrated the limits of studying professional communication without acknowledging the time during which and under what circumstances communication is occurring. To move beyond this severe limitation, to open new questions about rhetorical practices in the

workplace, I suggest that additional researchers begin theorizing and offering tentative accounts of the social ordering processes that make professional texts meaningful. By looking at the practices through which an organization manages to order its activities, we will gain insight into the habits of communication that professionals use to transact their day-to-day business.

Regulation

Not all of the factors that affect an organization's communicative practices are defined by the organization itself. In my discussion of regulation and genre routines at Rath, I illustrated an inherent problem with defining workplaces as discrete communities that provide contextual frameworks sufficient for understanding their communicative practices. At Rath—as at other organizations—regulatory controls that circulated in much larger social networks had consequences for the textual habits of company employees. Regulatory controls rearticulated the purposes of many company genre routines that had emerged earlier in the company's history to perform some mundane transaction; these transactional genres became objects of scrutiny for auditors ensuring Rath's compliance with regulations. Consequently, many of the company's genre routines came to serve two purposes; they had a transactional purpose—to get some type of work done—but they were also records that demonstrated compliance with governmental requirements.

Because Rath was so closely regulated from the beginning of this century, it is often difficult to distinguish between these two purposes in even the most basic company documents (production records, inventory reports, and purchase orders). When regulatory controls expanded during the century—affecting such diverse activities as accounting,

advertising, and employee training—company employees became particularly adept at finding ways to adopt their existing genre routines to satisfy regulatory requirements and, when such changes were not possible, of making newly mandated genres do double work for the company's administrative purposes. They discovered that mandatory governmental forms, for example, could sometimes also serve as data collection tools for making administrative decisions.

Although few similar studies have been conducted in our field, I believe that recognizing the interplay between regulation and the textual habits of professionals could give scholars greater insight into why certain forms of communication emerge in the professional world and the complex functions that they serve. To expand our knowledge of the constraints that affect rhetorical practices in the workplace and the genre habits of professionals, researchers will have to move beyond studies that treat organizations as self-contained discourse communities that define their own norms and language rules. My examination of the play of regulatory controls in Rath's genre routines reinforces Bernadette Longo's observation that research in professional communication should move beyond the "limited and conservative view of culture" that is evident in much of our recent scholarship.[4] As my study illustrates, culture extends beyond institutional walls. Our theories about professional communication should offer ways to begin accounting for this expanded understanding of culture—as partial and as provisional as those accounts will certainly be. My examination of Rath's genre routines in terms of regulatory controls suggests one approach to this accounting.

---

[4] Bernadette Longo, "An Approach for Applying Cultural Study Theory to Technical Writing Research," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 7.1 (Winter 1998): 53-73.

Technology

It is negligent to divorce a historical study of workplace communication from the technologies that made that communication possible. As I illustrate in my examination of the technological tools that were available for communicating at several intervals in Rath's history, genre routines develop around the materials available for producing texts. The introduction of machine accounting equipment, for example, gave employees a powerful means for conducting numerical analyses, and these analyses quickly became more prominent in the communicative exchanges of the organization. Technologies, however, do not determine how things will be communicated or in what form. For example, a primitive technology—the ubiquitous business form—was ostensibly designed to order communication in highly repetitious patterns. Rath's archival record, however, is full of examples of people literally communicating outside the box—communicating more and alternative types of information than the technology was designed to gather. Consequently, as I illustrated in Chapter 5, while specific technologies suggest certain types of genre routines, to accurately account for the actual communicative practices that emerged around those technologies it is necessary to examine how people put those technologies to use. When the company introduced mainframe computers, employees and administrators had to make decisions about what type of information they would put on the machine and in what forms they wanted it reported. And furthermore, they revised their decisions periodically as technological enhancements or new ideas about how to use the existing tools emerged.

By paying attention to the technologies that professionals use to communicate, scholars can begin to understand why some genre routines come to be so common and why alternative routines are not selected. Without examining the technological tools that

professionals use to produce texts—both in terms of what those tools make possible and what they prohibit—our studies of the textual practices in the workplace are limited. This is particularly true when scholars are looking at nontraditional texts such as designed forms, computer printouts, numerical charts, etc. To begin to understand the scope of communicative practices in the workplace, we must begin to account for these alternative forms of communication that technology makes possible.[5]

Management, Regulation, and Technology

In my analysis, I have treated these managerial, regulatory, and technological activities in more or less discrete terms, examining each in its own chapter. This arrangement was necessary for illustrating the different activity frames within which workplace communication can be understood. These three activities, however, did not exist in isolation; throughout the company's history these activities were all at play simultaneously. Computational technologies, for example, made many of the practices of scientific management possible and at the same time aided the company in producing the accounting records required by regulators. An extended analysis of this interplay of activities in communicative practices is beyond the scope of this study, though a subsequent study of this type may prove valuable.[6] The purpose of this study was not to argue that researchers must account for everything that affects communicative practices. Rather, it was to suggest a

[5] Dorothy A. Winsor has made a similar argument based on her study of the communicative practices of engineers. She demonstrates how meaning is constructed through nontraditional forms of writing that are seldom recognized by writing researchers. See Winsor, "What Counts as Writing? An Argument from Engineers' Practice," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 12.2 (1992): 337-347. See also Mirel.

[6] Subsequent professional communication scholars might, however, also be inclined to limit the scope of their analyses to examine only one type of activity in order to answer specific research questions.

way of studying communicative practices that would not artificially bracket off those practices as if they had an autonomous existence.

I have designed this study of historical events at Rath to identify patterns of workplace communication that future research into other companies' practices might confirm, deny, extend, or otherwise revise. I have not presented this study as a definitive statement on the history of workplace genres. My intention has been to establish ideas that I and others researchers might scrutinize with additional studies. Like any other historical examination of professional communication, then, this study presents only part of a story. Countless plots and subplots in this story remain to be told.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although I have attempted to account for several aspects of Rath's genre history in this study, I have not come close to exhausting the archival record. While working on this study, I became increasingly aware of questions that were simply beyond the scope of this project. For example, questions about the interplay of gender with the company's communicative practices suggested themselves at several turns. What did it mean that women never occupied significant administrative positions in the company's management hierarchy? What effect did the influx of female production workers during World War II have on the ways that communication on the line developed? Did the administration's reliance on a large pool of female secretaries and clerks alter the ways information was exchanged? And, if so, to what extent? Such questions would be appropriate for the genre history approach I have recommended in this study.

To address yet another set of questions that emerged from this study, subsequent research could be conducted into analyzing how individual genres at Rath developed as tools for accomplishing specific tasks. While my study addressed this issue broadly, subsequent studies of genres in organizations like Rath could examine how individual communicative practices such as the time-motion study changed over time in response to changing organizational exigencies. Equally valuable would be a study of the computer interfaces that developed as organizational needs changed, electronic technology became more sophisticated, and computer programming techniques matured. Also valuable would be a contrastive study of the genre practices used to facilitate activities within the company and those used to interact with the public—in this dissertation I have only begun to suggest the contradictions between these two activity networks.

Implications for Studying Professional Communication

My study has advocated an approach to studying professional communication that extends beyond my examination of communicative practices at Rath. In my introduction, I alluded to Dorothy E. Smith's theory of the textual constitution of social organizations, suggesting that to further our knowledge about professional communication, we should investigate the play of texts in the organizations where professionals do their work. With this study, I have attempted to do so by examining professional communication as sets of practices that are embedded in larger networks of workplace activity. This approach draws attention to the communicative practices of professionals as genre routines that are differentiated over time and across the spaces in which people are attempting to get things done. Furthermore, it allows researchers and scholars to begin investigating rhetorical

practices in the workplace in a way that helps explain how social organizations sustain themselves through textual routines.

The approach I have advocated in this study would expand the scope of professional communication research. Rather than focusing on the micro-level and macro-level issues that are investigated in so much of our current research, scholarly investigations following the approach I have advocated will uncover a new set of issues to be investigated.[7] They will focus on unraveling the processes whereby communicative practices become routine in specific workplaces; they will help us understand how these routines are both typical and novel; and, they will provide insight into development of specialized practices, as well as practices that seem almost universal. Micro- and macro-level studies will continue to be valuable for pursuing specific lines of inquiry. New types of investigations, however, will emerge as researchers begin examining connections between the textually mediated social actions through which workplace organizations come to be constituted. We will be able to more thoroughly understand the relationship between genre routines and what Anthony Paré and Graham Smart call "regularities in social roles."[8] We will better understand how

---

[7] Professional communication scholarship has benefited from both high-level social theories of communication and the study of much more narrowly focused individual texts. Studies of macro-level general writing principles such as coherence and cohesion, relevance, and arrangement play a valuable role in our pedagogical and professional literature. Research invested in developing macro-level strategies for more effective communication such as collaboration, expert systems, structured text, minimalist instruction, interactive technical communication, and audience analysis is also important. Likewise, micro-level studies of individual writers and specific texts provide detailed information about the nature of communication in local exchanges. However, while both types of studies make valuable contributions to our field, a middle-level of analysis is largely missing from our disciplinary research.

The approach to studying professional communication that I have advocated in this study is designed to provide scholars with a perspective on this middle space—on what occurs between abstract *systems* of communication and the production of *individual* texts. Through my study of communicative practices at Rath, I have illustrated connections between macro and micro levels of analysis that professional communication scholars might explore.

[8] Anthony Paré and Graham Smart, "Observing Genres in Action: Towards a Research Methodology" in Freedman & Medway, p. 149.

communicators act as agents in their highly articulated organizations by investigating how their communicative practices repeat or vary social norms.[9]

By studying workplace documents as typified communicative practices, we may also further extend the academic scope of professional communication scholarship. We will supplement the field's traditional research into processes for producing texts more effectively[10] or efficiently[11] with an expanded inquiry into how these documents order our social institutions. Such a move will connect professional communication scholarship to larger academic and social questions. Like Schryer, we may begin to interrogate how our institutional genres make possible some actions while limiting or preventing others.[12] Like Freedman & Smart, we may investigate how communicative practices enable governmental institutions to establish and monitor policies that affect our ways of living.[13] Like Janet Giltrow, we may examine how our genre habits come to mask certain types of knowledge in our efforts to create coherence across our social institutions.[14] To expand the scope of professional communication studies and begin answering questions like these, we will need to begin accounting for the interplay of multiple communicative practices in the professional

---

[9] Such investigations would complement examinations of authority in workplace communication. See, for example, Jennifer Daryl Slack, David James Miller, and Jeffrey Doak, "The Technical Communicator as Author: Meaning, Power, Authority," *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 7.1 (January 1993): 12-36. The theoretical perspective I have advocated in this study advances the idea that communicators always have a type of authority in that they must make decisions about when and how to repeat or vary genre norms in their workplace.

[10] See, for example, Bruce Thomson, "Expert Systems: A New Kind of Technical Writing," *Intercom* 44.5 (June 1997): 5-7; Scott L. Jones, "A Guide to Using Color Effectively in Business Communication," *Business Communication Quarterly* 60.2 (June 1997): 76-88; Lisa D. Mason, "Design Issues for Producing Effective Multimedia Presentations," *Technical Communication* 44.1 (February 1997): 65-71.

[11] See, for example, David Garrett, "Boosting Productivity with Templates," *Intercom* 43.10 (December 1996): 24-27; and Wenger & Payne.

[12] Schryer, pgs. 228-230.

[13] Freedman & Smart, p. 253.

[14] Janet Giltrow, "Genre and the Pragmatic Concept of Background Knowledge," in Freedman & Medway, pgs. 155-179.

settings we study. No longer should we talk about *the* annual report, *the* memo, or *the* resume as if they existed autonomously. Instead, we should focus on the prior communicative practices from which annual reports, memos, and resumes emerge; we should examine the social practices through which these forms make sense for people who are negotiating work activities.

This approach to studying professional communication offers a way of understanding the role of texts in the social ordering of communication in workplace organizations by drawing attention to patterns of repetition and variation in the habits of workplace professionals. Studies such as this one provide insight into the contingencies of rhetorical practices in the workplace, helping us understand professional communication as a differentiated set of activities in time and space. However, we need additional historical studies into the multiple organizations where professionals communicate to explore the multiple social activities that come into play in workplace communicative practices. Such studies will test the hypotheses I have advanced in this study and, more importantly, offer a better understanding of how our communicative practices arrived at the point they are today. The promise of such research is that we will gain insight into not only the texts professionals have used to negotiate their daily tasks, but also into the ways we have come to order our social institutions around the production and reception of those texts.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

All of the primary materials cited in this study are in The Rath Packing Company manuscript collection held by the Special Collections Department at Iowa State University. The collection contains approximately 300 linear feet of company material, including public relations and advertising materials, employment and labor records, correspondence, time-motion studies, photographs, films, and blueprints. Citations in this study identify the locations of material in collection by subsection, box, and folder. For example, a memo in folder 15 of box 2 in the collection's correspondence subsection would be identified as C002/015. Citations refer to the following subsections of the collection:

Correspondence (C)
Finance (F)
Public Relations (PR)
Reports (R)
Time-Motion Studies (TM)

Secondary Sources

Adams, Katherine H. *A History of Professional Writing Instruction in American Colleges: Years of Acceptance, Growth, and Doubt.* Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993.

Armstrong, John, and Stephanie Jones. *Business Documents: Their Origins, Sources, and Uses in Historical Research.* London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1987.

Banta, Martha. *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Bazerman, Charles. "Difficulties in Characterizing Social Phenomena in Writing." *Constructing Experience.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994. 123-130.

———. "Foreword." *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective.* Eds. Nancy Roundy Blyler and Charlotte Thralls. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993. vii-x.

———. *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

———. "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions." *Genre and the New Rhetoric.* Eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994. 79-101.

Bazerman, Charles and James Paradis, Eds. *Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

Beniger, James R. *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Berkenkotter, Carol, and Thomas N. Huckin. "Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective." *Written Communication* 10.4 (1993): 475-509.

Blyler, Nancy Roundy, and Charlotte Thralls, eds. *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993.

Bureau of National Affairs. *The Job Safety and Health Act of 1970: Text, Analysis, Legislative History*. Washington, DC: Bureau of National Affairs, 1971.

Burkholz, Herbert. *The FDA Follies*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Forms and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction." *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*. Eds. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Falls Church, VA: The Speech Communication Association, 1978. 9-32.

Chandler, Alfred D., Jr. *The Essential Alfred Chandler: Essays Toward a Historical Theory of Big Business*. Ed. Thomas K. McCraw. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1988.

———. *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962.

———. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977.

Chatov, Robert. *Corporate Financial Reporting: Public or Private Control?* New York: The Free Press, 1975.

Christie, Frances, and J. R. Martin, eds. *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School*. London: Cassell, 1997.

Comstock, Jamie, and Gary Higgins. "Appropriate Relational Messages in Direct Selling Interaction: Should Salespeople Adapt to Buyer's Communicator Style?" *Journal of Business Communication* 34.4 (October 1997): 401-418.

Connors, Robert J. "The Rise of Technical Writing Instruction in America." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 12 (1982): 329-352.

Cooper, Marilyn M. "The Postmodern Space of Operator's Manuals," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 5.4 (Fall 1996): 385-410.

Cortada, James W. *Before the Computer: IBM, NCR, Burroughs, and Remington Rand and the Industry they Created, 1865-1956.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

———. *Information Technology as Business History.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Couture, Barbara, and Jone Rymer. "Situational Exigence: Composing Processes on the Job by Writer's Role and Task Value." *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives.* Ed. Rachel Spilka. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993. 4-20.

Davidson, Donald. *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation.* Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1984.

Debs, Mary Beth. "Corporate Authority: Sponsoring Rhetorical Practices." *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives.* Ed. Rachel Spilka. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993. 158-170.

Devitt, Amy J. "Intertextuality in Tax Accounting." *Textual Dynamics of the Professions.* Eds. Charles Bazerman and J. Paradis. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991. 336-357.

Donnell, John D. *Why the Rath Packing Company Failed.* Waterloo, IA: Grout Museum of History and Science, 1993.

Douglas, George H., and Herbert W. Hildebrandt, eds. *Studies in the History of Business Writing.* Urbana, IL: The Association for Business Communication, 1985.

Duin, Ann Hill, and Craig J. Hansen, eds. *Nonacademic Writing: Social Theory and Technology.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996.

Eldridge, Mary Beth. *The Rath Packing Company Strike of 1948* (Waterloo, IA: Eldridge, c1990).

Emanuel, Joseph T. "The Executive Summary: A Key to Effective Communication." *Technical Communication* 43.1 (February 1996): 78-82.

Fisher, Franklin M., James W. McKie, and Richard B. Manke. *IBM and the U.S. Data Processing Industry.* New York: Praeger Publications, 1983.

Fowler, Bertram B. *Men, Meat and Miracles.* New York: Julian Messner, 1952.

Freedman, Aviva, and Graham Smart. "Navigating the Current of Economic Policy: Written Genres and the Distribution of Cognitive Work at a Financial Institution," *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 4.4 (1997): 238-255.

Freedman, Aviva, and Peter Medway. "Locating Genre Studies: Antecedents and Prospects." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994. 1-20.

Garrett, David. "Boosting Productivity with Templates." *Intercom* 43.10 (December 1996): 24-27.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984.

———. *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*. London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1982.

Giltrow, Janet. "Genre and the Pragmatic Concept of Background Knowledge." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Aviva Freedman & Peter Medway. (Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994): 155-179.

Guillén, Mauro F. *Models of Management: Work, Authority, and Organization in a Comparative Perspective*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Hagge, John. "The Spurious Paternity of Business Communication Principles." *Journal of Business Communication* 26.1 (1989): 33-55.

Halpren, Rick, and Roger Horowitz, *Meatpackers: An Oral History of Black Packinghouse Workers and their Struggle for Racial and Economic Equality*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996.

Hansen, Craig J. "Contextualizing Technology and Communication in a Corporate Setting." *Nonacademic Writing: Social Theory and Technology*. Eds. Ann Hill Duin and Craig J. Hansen. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996. 305-324.

Harrison, Teresa M. "Frameworks for the Study of Writing in Organizational Contexts." *Written Communication* 4.1 (1987): 3-23.

Hartkemeier, Harry Pelle. *Principles of Punch-Card Machine Operation*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1942.

Henderson, Powell G. "Writing Technologies at White Sands." *Electronic Literacies in the Workplace*. Eds. Patricia Sullivan and Jennie Dautermann. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996. 65-88.

Huettman, Elizabeth. "Writing for Multiple Audiences: An Examination of Audience Concerns in a Hospitality Consulting Firm," *Journal of Business Communication* 33.3 (July 1996): 257-273.

Institute of American Meat Packers. *The Packing Industry.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1924.

Ives, Russell J. *The Livestock and Meat Economy of the United States.* Chicago, IL: AMI Center for Continuing Education / American Meat Institute, c1966.

Jones, Scott L. "A Guide to Using Color Effectively in Business Communication." *Business Communication Quarterly* 60.2 (June 1997): 76-88.

Kent, Thomas. "Hermeneutics and Genre: Bakhtin and the Problem of Communicative Interaction." *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture.* Eds. David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman, and Richard Shuasterman. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991. 282-303.

Kolko, Gabriel. *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916.* Chicago, IL: Quadrangle, 1967.

Kynell, Teresa C. *Writing in the Milieu of Utility: The Move to Technical Communication in American Engineering Programs, 1850-1950.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1996.

Law, John. *Organizing Modernity.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994.

Litterer, Joseph. *The Emergence of Systematic Management as Shown by the Literature of Management from 1870-1900.* New York: Garland Publishing, 1986.

Locker, Kitty O., Scott L. Miller, Malcolm Richardson, Elizabeth Tebeaux, and JoAnne Yates. "Studying the History of Business Communication." *Business Communication Quarterly* 59.2 (June 1996): 109-127.

Longo, Bernadette. "An Approach for Applying Cultural Study Theory to Technical Writing Research." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 7.1 (1998): 53-73.

Mabrito, Mark. "Writing on the Frontline: A Study of Workplace Writing." *Business Communication Quarterly* 60.3 (September 1997): 58-70.

Mansfield, Harvey C. *A Short History of OPA.* Washington, DC: Office of Price Administration, 1947.

Mason, Lisa D. "Design Issues for Producing Effective Multimedia Presentations." *Technical Communication* 44.1 (February 1997): 65-71.

Mayer, Robert N. *The Consumer Movement: Guardians of the Marketplace*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1989.

Merkle, Judith A. *Management and Ideology: The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980.

Miller, Carolyn R. "Genre as Social Action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 157-78.

———. "Rhetorical Community: The Cultural Basis of Genre." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994. 67-78.

Mirel, Barbara. "Writing and Database Technology: Extending the Definition of Writing in the Workplace." *Electronic Literacies in the Workplace*. Eds. Patricia Sullivan and Jennie Dautermann. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996. 91-114.

Neal, Harry Edward, *The Protectors: The Story of the Food and Drug Administration*. New York: Julian Messner, 1968.

Nelson, Daniel. *Managers and Workers: Origins of the Twentieth Century Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975.

———. *Frederick W. Taylor and the Rise of Scientific Management*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980.

Odell, Lee. "Beyond the Text: Relations between Writing and Social Context." *Writing in Nonacademic Settings*. Eds. Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami. New York: Guilford Press, 1985. 249-280.

Odell, Lee, and Dixie Goswami, eds. *Writing in Nonacademic Settings*. New York: Guilford Press, 1985.

Okun, Mitchell. *Fair Play in the Marketplace: The First Battle for Pure Food and Drugs*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986.

Olsen, Leslie A. "Research on Discourse Communities: An Overview." *Writing in the Workplace*. Ed. Rachel Spilka. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993. 181-194.

Orbell, John. *A Guide to Tracing the History of a Business*. Aldershot, UK: Gower, 1987.

Orlikowski, Wanda J., and JoAnne Yates. "Genre Repertoire: The Structuring of Communicative Practices in Organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39 (1994): 541-574.

Paré, Anthony, and Graham Smart. "Observing Genres in Action: Towards a Research Methodology." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994. 146-154.

Parker, R. H. *Management Accounting: An Historical Perspective*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969.

Perry, Charles R., and Delwyn H. Kegley. *Disintegration and Change: Labor Relations in the Meat Packing Industry*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1989

Portz, John. *The Politics of Plant Closings*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1990.

Rath Packing Company. *Waterloo Packer: The Story of the Rath Packing Company*. Waterloo, Iowa: Rath Packing Company, c1941.

Richardson, Malcolm, and Sarah Liggett. "Power Relations, Technical Writing Theory, and Workplace Writing." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 7.1 (January 1993): 112-137.

Russell, David R. "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis." *Written Communication* 14.4 (1997): 504-554.

———. "Writing and Genre in Higher Education and Workplaces: A Review of Studies that Use Cultural-Historical Activity Theory." *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 4.4 (1997): 224-237.

———. *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990: A Curricular History*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

Scholz, Jan. "Developing Technical Documentation the Smart Way." *Technical Communication* 41.1 (February 1994): 94-99.

Schryer, Catherine F. "Records as Genre." *Written Communication* 10 (1993): 200-234.

Seligman, Joel. *The Transformation of Wall Street: A History of the Securities and Exchange Commission and Modern Corporate Finance*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982.

Slack, Jennifer Daryl, David James Miller, and Jeffrey Doak. "The Technical Communicator as Author: Meaning, Power, Authority." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 7.1 (January 1993): 12-36.

Smith, Dorothy E. "Textually Mediated Social Organization." *International Social Science Journal* 36 (1984): 59-75.

Seligman, Joel. *The Transformation of Wall Street: A History of the Securities and Exchange Commission and Modern Corporate Finance*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982.

Spilka, Rachel, ed. *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993.

Strom, Sharon Hartman. *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Swales, John. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Taylor, Frederick Winslow. *Scientific Management: Comprising Shop Management, The Principles of Scientific Management, Testimony Before the Special House Committee*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947.

Tebeaux, Elizabeth, and M. Jimmie Killingsworth. "Expanding and Redirecting Historical Research in Technical Writing: In Search of Our Past." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 1.2 (1992): 5-32.

Thompson, Victor A. *The Regulatory Process in OPA Rationing*. Columbia, NY: King's Crown Press, 1950.

Thomson, Bruce. "Expert Systems: A New Kind of Technical Writing." *Intercom* 44.5 (June 1997): 5-7.

Thralls, Charlotte, and Nancy Roundy Blyler. "The Social Perspective and Professional Communication: Diversity and Directions in Research." *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective*. Eds. Nancy Roundy Blyler and Charlotte Thralls. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993. 3-34.

Tone, Andrea. *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Van Nostrand, A. D. *Fundable Knowledge: The Marketing of Defense Technology*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

———. "A Genre Map of R&D: Knowledge Production for the US Department of Defense." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. Basingstoke, UK: Burgess Science Press, 1994. 133-145.

Waring, Stephen P. "Peter Drucker, MBO, and the Corporatist Critique of Scientific Management." *A Mental Revolution: Scientific Management since Taylor*. Ed. Daniel Nelson. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1992. 205-236.

———. *Taylorism Transformed: Scientific Management Theory Since 1945*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Warne, Colston E., and Richard L. D. Morse, *The Consumer Movement*. Manhattan, KS: Family Economics Trust Press, 1993.

Watson, Tony J. *In Search of Management: Culture, Chaos and Control in Managerial Work*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Wenger, Michael J., and David G. Payne. "Effects of a Graphical Browser on Readers' Efficiency in Reading Hypertext." *Technical Communication* 41.2 (May 1994): 224-233.

Whitmore, John. *Factory Accounts*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1984.

Winsor, Dorothy A. "What Counts as Writing? An Argument from Engineers' Practice." *Journal of Advanced Composition* 12.2 (1992): 337-347.

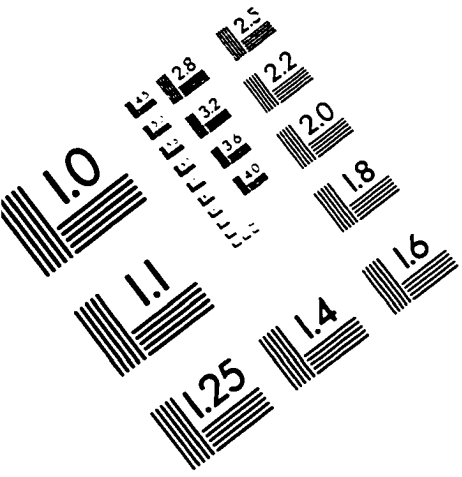
Yates, JoAnne, and Wanda J. Orlikowski. "Genres of Organizational Communication: A Structurational Approach to Studying Communication and Media." *Academy of Management Review* 17.2 (1992): 299-326.

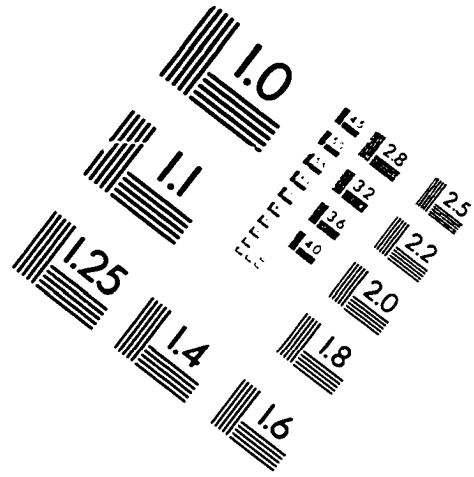
Yates, JoAnne. *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

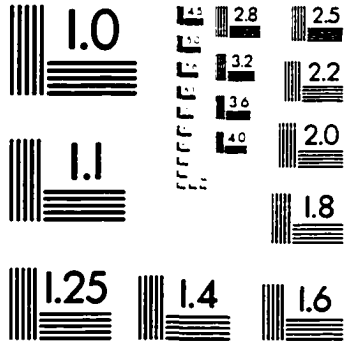
Yeager, Mary. *Competition and Regulation: The Development of Oligopoly in the Meat Packing Industry*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1981.

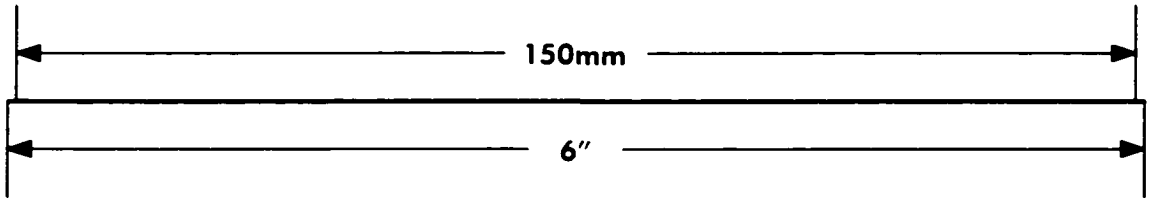
Zonderman, David. *Aspirations and Anxieties: New England Workers and the Mechanized Factory System, 1815-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

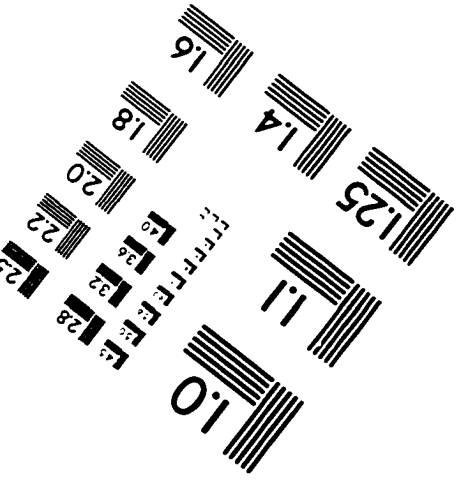
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

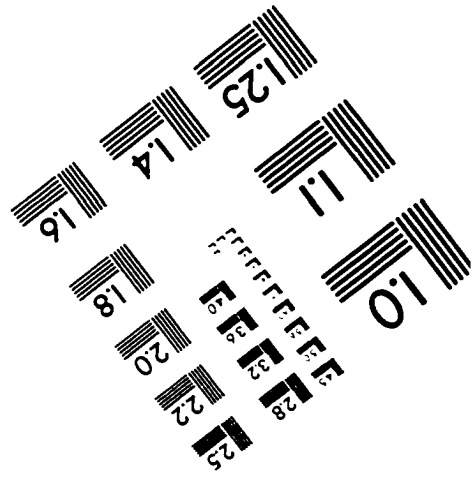












APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989