

Report

“Reports are power tests;  
Exams are speed tests.”  
Mauffette-Leenders, L. A., Erskine, J. A., &  
Leenders, M. R. (2007)

# The Case-based Report Genre

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February 8, 2010

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As Director of Writing Across the Curriculum, I'll be working with faculty and students across the university to improve student writing. I consult with instructors and departments, and I teach writing in a wide variety of courses when students in those courses are starting a writing assignment. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies, my home department.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of six books and 29 articles, including *Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities*. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW), the

**Recent presentations to classes**  
This page contains links to slides displayed at presentations I've given to classes.

**Research and faculty presentations**

**Digital rhetoric**

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html>

# The plan

- **Today:** Lecture/discussion
- Theory about how to write a case report
- **Next week:** application of theory to a case
- You/your group writes part of a case report; we share these and “workshop” them to understand what makes a strong report

# Discourse->Rhetoric->Genre

- Features shared among **text types**
- Analysis at the level of **groups of texts**
- Much attention in genre studies to the social functions of texts—the work they do to maintain relationships socially, the ways they function to regulate social systems (narratives that accompany graduate school applications)

# Genre in Writing Studies

- “Every text is organized within a specific genre according to its **communicative purposes**, as part of the conditions of discourse production, which generate social uses that determine any and every text.” (Brasil quoted in Bazerman x).  
Bazerman, C., A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo. *Genre in a Changing World* (2009). Fort Collins and West Lafayette, WAC Clearinghouse and Parlour Press.
- “**Case reports are** organized within a specific genre according to its communicative purposes, as part of the conditions of discourse production, which generate social uses that determine any and every text.”
- **What is the communicative purpose of a case report in the ICBC competition?**

# Genre as social action

- S. Miller (1984) described genre as a rhetorical action that recurs within a social setting
- The sharing of meaning is intersubjective and negotiated through discourse (spoken and written language acts) among the group—again, perhaps thesis proposals might be a useful example; journal article reviewers perform a similar function through their reviews of manuscripts
- These shared discourses form into typical types of documents (genres); **today we focus on case reports**

# Genre as social action

- Genres shape the entire social interaction, not just the documents themselves
- **Research application:** Writing a research grant, for example, doesn't just mean filling in a form; what is written will come to structure my daily life, cause other documents (articles) to be written, cause students to be accepted into a program because a supervisor has money to pay them, and so on
- **Teaching example:** In classrooms, when an instructor selects a genre that then structures and limits the acceptable written responses to that assignment; it structures what is talked about in class; it causes other texts (textbooks, readings) to be read and discussed
- **How do case reports shape the ICBC experience?**

# Genre sets

- Genres typically do not occur alone but instead as part of a set of social actions within a group
- What other genres are part of the ICBC competition?



# Genres and change

- Genres proliferate and change leading some researchers to call them “stable for now” (Schryer) or describe them as phenomenological: they exist if you see them
- Take-away: the case report genre is slippery and requires you to use judgment

# Discourse communities

- Swales (1991) developed the concept of discourse communities to explain the purposes within documents
- His concept of rhetorical “moves” within documents—such as “establish a research territory”—leads to one method for establishing the typical purposes for a document
- What “moves” do you have to make in a case report?

# Texts and Identity

- Kenneth Burke: rhetoric/persuasion depends upon **identification** between rhetor and audience
- Texts written by ICBC students build their **identity** as a member of the business community
- You as a professional are **your textual self**—or rather, selves: the stories you tell about yourself and your work



# What, why, how

- **What** = the position statement (thesis statement) is a conclusion/claim

“The Project C management team should persuade senior management and the board of directors to increase the budget by 15% . . . And extend the time for completion by four months.”

because

“failure to do so would put at risk the initial investment and overall competitiveness in the dishwasher industry.” Ellet, W. (2007), p. 107-8

# Why

- The argument answers why
- This is where you give evidence to support your conclusions
- You must tell readers explicitly what you think the numbers/evidence mean; implicit reasoning is weak

# How

- How should the recommendations be implemented?
  - How do you solve the problem?
  - How do you implement the solution?
  - How do you evaluate the solution?

# Action plans

- Chronological organization

1. Set goals based on the argument.

“Transfer production to an appropriate vendor as soon as possible, with a target of one year to begin transfers and two years to complete them.” Ellet, W. (2007), p. 114

# Steps

- Identify, in order, the steps in the action plan.
- Use transition words to build reader comprehension: “Next, ...”; “Finally, he should . . .”
- Consider grouping into short-term and long-term actions
- Include an analysis of risk: what is the worst thing that could go wrong? Can you contain or eliminate that risk? (Ellet, W. (2007) p. 116.)



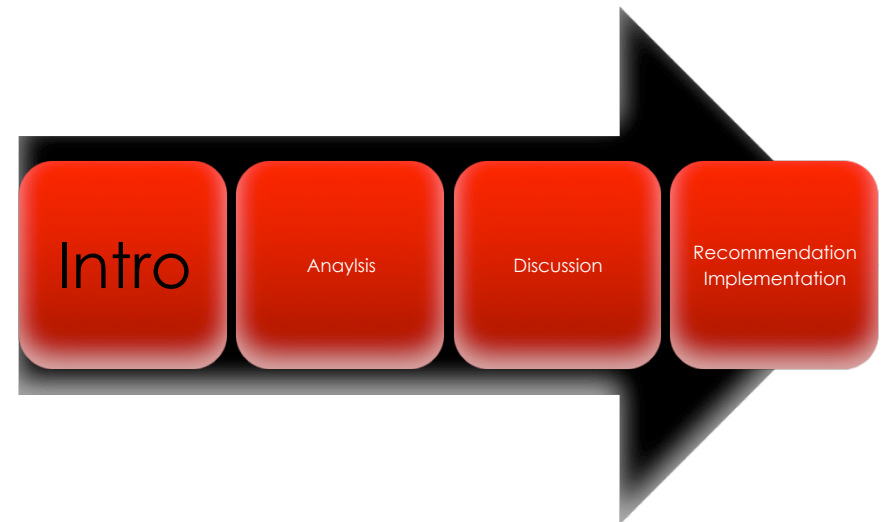
# ICBC case report format

- Introduction
- Analysis
- Discussion
- Recommendation and Implementation
- Exhibits
- Citations and Endnotes

Use headings; these are generic, but yours don't have to be.

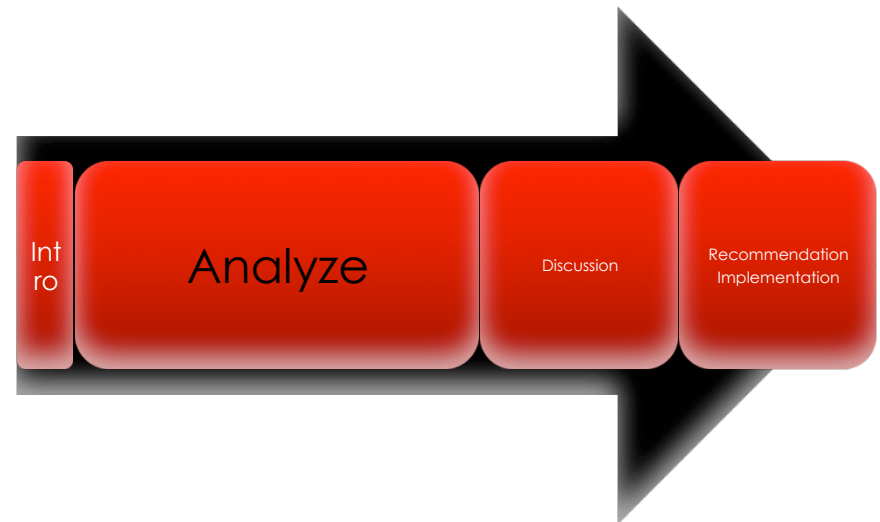
# Introduction

- **Identify** the problem
- **Establish** scope of the report
- Don't summarize the case facts  
—assume readers know them
- Don't add excess background--  
judgment



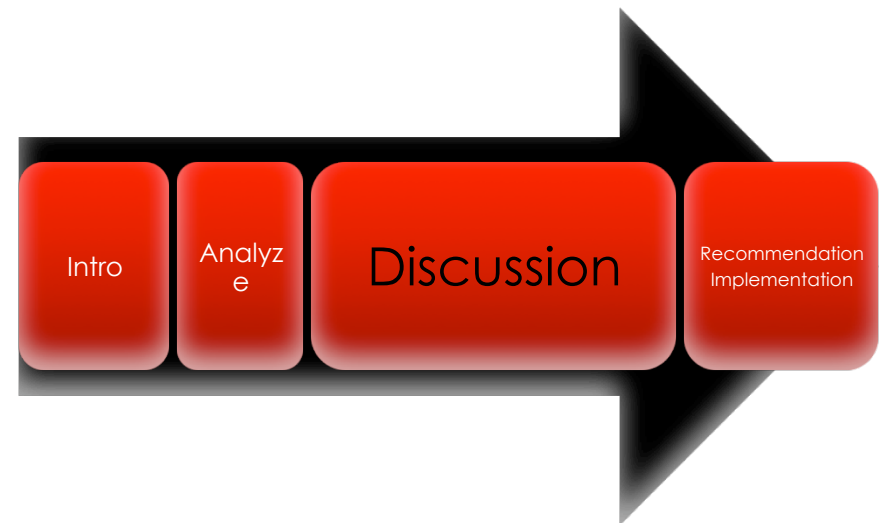
# Analysis

- Identify the problem
- Examine the factors contributing to the problem
- Use financial data
- Stipulate the requirements a solution must meet



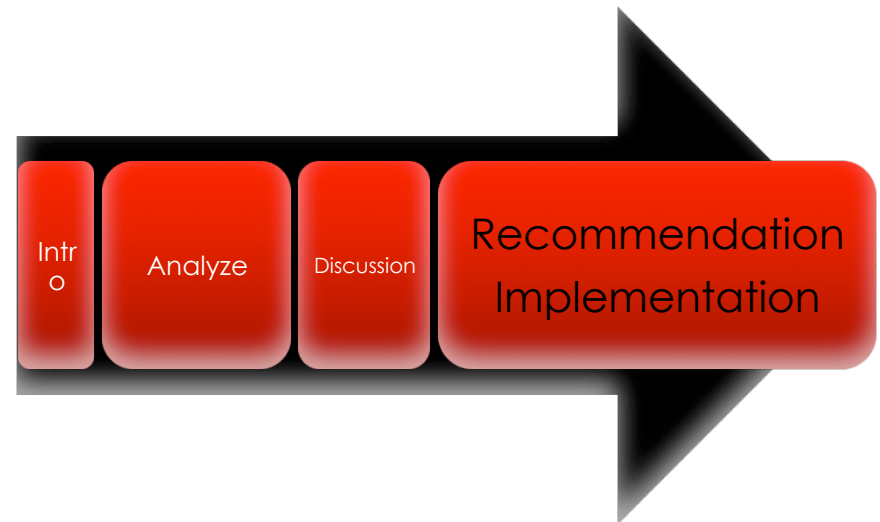
# Discussion

- **Discuss** major alternative solutions concisely
- **Refer** to details from the case
  - Use the case as evidence; focus your paragraphs on the solutions (topic sentences)

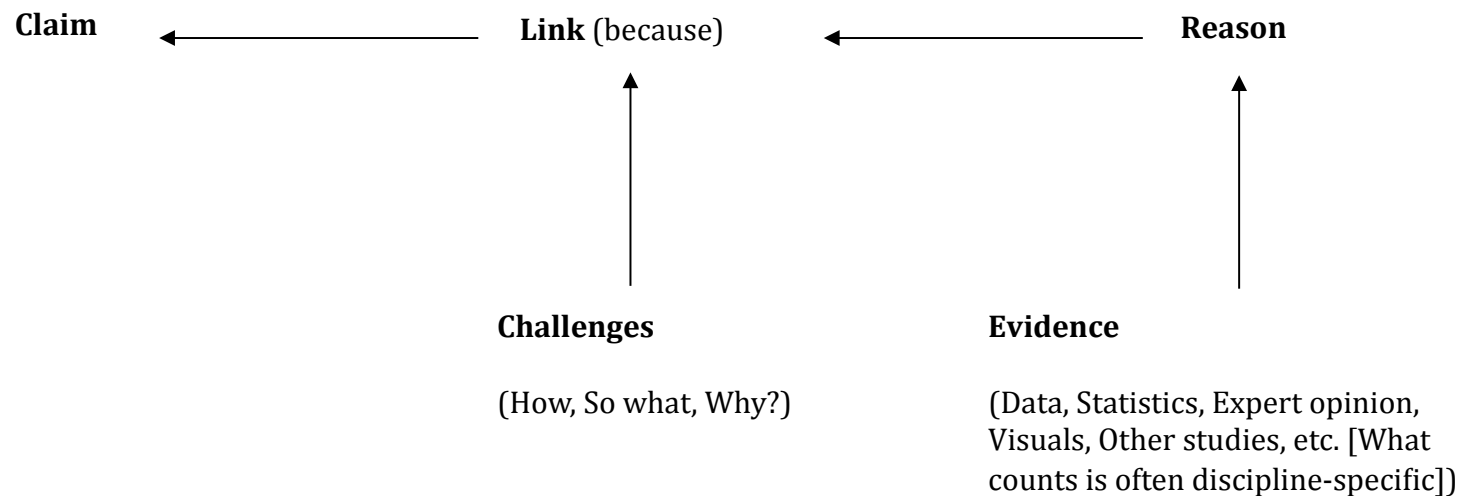


# Recommendation & Implementation

- **Summarize** the arguments for **your** recommendation
- **Describe** your plan for implementing your recommendation
  - Who will do it?
  - When will it be done?
  - Where will it be done?
  - How will it be done?



# Informal Argument and Academic Writing



Ex. [this study] will be a unique scholarly contribution as very few studies genuinely combine oral history and the documentary record.

# Exhibits

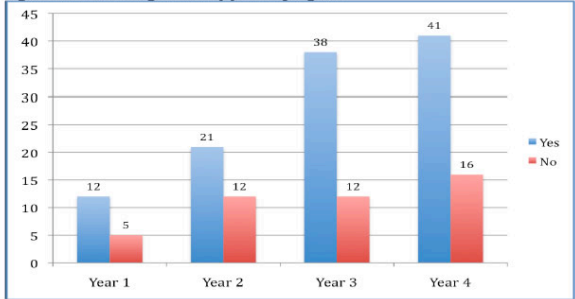
What kinds of things could you put here?

- Mention them in the body of the report
- Limit yourself to 5 pages of exhibits

Table 1: Number of writing assignments by year level

Year	Number of Assignments	Number of Courses	Assignments/course
1	42	4	10
2	12	3	4
3	35	6	6
4	74	11	6.7
Total	163	24	6.7

Figure 5: Nested assignments by year in program



# Citations, endnotes

- Academic integrity guidelines from both schools apply
- Pick a citation system and be consistent
- No page limit



# Sources

- Ellet, W. (2007). *The Case Study Handbook: How to Read, Discuss, and Write Persuasively About Cases*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Mauffette-Leenders, L. A., Erskine, J. A., & Leenders, M. R. (2007). *Learning with Cases*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London, ON: Richard Ivey School of Business.