

Some Philosophical Underpinnings for Communication: Western and Eastern Foundations as seen in Commonplace Principles

Herbert Hildebrandt, Yunxia Zhu

**Ross School of Business, University of Michigan/
UQ Business School, University of Queensland**

Consistently over time social communication, i.e., communication at the informal person-to-person level was the main means of orally conveying information, primarily so in the Western ancient world. Plato (1968, 1994) abhorred writing—even rhetoric which he maintained moved on appearances rather than truth—and thus he philosophically focuses on theories, via his mouthpiece Socrates, on searching out sources of information and then orally transmitting those identified ideas. So did Aristotle (1932). Conversely, when communicating in or to the courts of law or within or to the church, and later in the Medieval and Renaissance world of commerce, there was need to leave social casualness for more specificity and societal hierarchical communication patterns specific to the person(s) being addressed. Social conventions, or class distinctions, and language appropriate for that social level, became associated with certain professions or offices. But there were few models to which commoners, even educated leaders and their scribes could turn. Thus the birth of collections to which individuals and groups could use as touchstones for searching out ideas, patterns, directions, forms of address—even truth.

Analogously in the Eastern world, specifically China through the writings of Confucian (Xiao, 1995) philosophies, his and other writings were passed on as anecdotal incidents for early communication examples. People tended to remember stories, narratives, and phrases, and snippets of information. China has a strong tradition in using a collection of works—as do Western communicators—from Ancient scholars, which is also seen as part of a good education.

Additionally in the East, specifically China, written classical Chinese is a totally different language style from the vernacular or spoken or informal social forms of communication in Ancient China (Xiao, 1995). However, what was recorded was only written Chinese. Vernaculars were passed on to today in the form of stories, proverbs, again similar to some early Western pedagogical examples. As the majority of Chinese people in early days were uneducated, and they could not read or write any classical Chinese, they, as did Western writers, occasionally had to communicate with imperial officials or other upper classes. A major means of education for improving communication was through the use of Commonplaces and citations, many of which were taken from Confucius.

Thus this paper focuses on only one area of Western and Eastern philosophical underpinnings for communication, namely, the use of Commonplaces. However, it needs to be pointed out that we mainly focus on the Western tradition, while making some preliminary references to the Chinese rhetorical tradition since Chinese culture has very rich sources of foundation of rhetoric and communication (Ji & Yang, 2004; Lu, 1998). However, to our knowledge, ‘Commonplaces’ is a research topic that has been embarked on because of its rich traditions. In particular, we visit this singular concept of Commonplaces in two cultures: First, a brief view of the Western rhetorical tradition relating to definition/theory behind the use of Commonplaces as used in the Classical, Medieval, and the Renaissance world as the basis for communicating either orally or in written form. Second, we will briefly trace some Chinese rhetorical underpinnings of using Commonplaces, philosophies, points of view that mankind could use to communicate better, get along with people in order to achieve both informative and persuasive ends.

Definition of the Commonplaces

Mutations in the meaning of the term Commonplaces occurred over time. We begin with our definition of this genre: “a collection—more often in written form—of examples, phrases, sources, stories, narratives, arguments to which the communicator could turn in formulating a transmission to others in either an oral or written construction.”

In addition to our initial definition of Commonplace noted above, the Oxford English Dictionary is also micro, in two instances:

‘common’ place-book. Formerly *Book of common places...orig.* A book in which ‘commonplaces’ or passages important for reference were collected, usually under general heads; hence, a book in which one records passages or matters to be especially remembered or referred to, with or without arrangement. (OED, 2nd Ed., 1972-1986).

‘commonplace’...[A rendering of L. *locus communis* = Gr. *Koino* ‘j to’ *poj*, in Aristotle simply *to’ poj*, explained by Cicero (Inv. ii. xiv. § 47 et. seq) as a general theme or argument applicable to many particular cases.] In later times, collections of such general topics were called *loci communes*.... (OED, 2nd Ed., 1972-1986).

Classical Foundations of the Commonplace in Communication

Initially, we argue, that in the ancient world the stress was on locating arguments or ideas for the tripartite forms of communication, namely the forensic (legal); deliberative (government, others); and epideictic (ceremonial). There is no doubt that when the common man, familiar with social communication customary in the streets or in the *Agora*, had to present either informative or persuasive communication in a more formal environment, he needed help: to frame arguments, to use appropriate language, to search out sources for developing his thoughts, or hire the services of a logographer, often to locate the truth.

Enter three classical rhetoricians: Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Their concepts, overly simplified here, moved on the wheels of dialectic, i.e. discovering arguments (Topics) in support of the theme of a communication. For Aristotle (1932, 1997) one had to search out arguments

through his convoluted discussion of *topoi* or *topos*, today translated as Topics. Today we would view such an analysis as a forerunner of the later enlarging term Commonplace, an initial repository for modes of argument to which one could turn in preparing a disputation.

Cicero (1942, *De orator; De partitione; Cicero?* 1954, *Rhetorica ad herennium*) obviously moved in Latin rather than the Greek of Aristotle. There *communes loci* replaced the Greek *Topoi*. His varied approach, as was that of Quintilian (1921, 1922) searched out those “places” in the mind from which one could take arguments in support of or contrarily find arguments opposing a thesis.

So the metaphor “places” or *communes loci* in the ancient world was simply a term for finding cognitive topics, ideas, data, information, and so on, that speakers, primarily, could use in the three recognized ancient modes of communication noted above. Our discussion is elementary, for in a short paper we simply wish to suggest that even in the Classical world there were attempts at providing both cognitive and physical sources for enlarging, supporting, embellishing ideas in communication, giving an initial momentum that reached a crescendo in the years that followed. Fuller discussions occur in (Lu, 1998; Kennedy, 1963; Lausberg, 1960; Xiao, 1995) and many others.

Chinese Foundations of the Commonplace in Communication

Different from the English sources about Commonplaces, Chinese rhetoric seems to have used a less explicit approach and used no similar terminology as did the ancients, to our knowledge. However, a preliminary review of practices suggests that Chinese rhetoric is also built and developed upon Commonplaces. This practice coincides with the foundations of Chinese rhetoric and philosophies which seem to pay more attention to the rhetorical practices than the terminologies (Lu, 1998).

For example, one of the earliest works on commonplaces can be found in Liu Xie’s work in the Fifth Century (Xie, 1959), in which he points out the importance of Sages’ thoughts and collections of ideas. According to Liu Xie, ‘sages’ are those who have mastered the pattern of the writing (Xie, 1959, p. 258) such as Confucius. This kind of understanding is further elaborated as Liu Xie explains that the reason for the production of good writing is that ‘sages’ explore and understand the principles of the universe and society, and their writings reflect these principles. They can ‘use simple language to express their purposes, or use detailed descriptions to explain their meanings’ (Xie, 1959, p.27). For example, Confucius wrote historical records and narratives which also contribute to the foundation of commonplaces.

Comparative Statement of Western/Eastern Concepts of the Commonplaces

A formal transition is in order. Genres over time undergo mutations. So it was with the concept of the Commonplace. What began as a respected philosophical format for discovering arguments in the Classical World, slowly morphed into a quite different concept, so different that the evolution of even the term, by today, has a connotation of negativism: a banal or hackneyed statement in place of something more semantically original and interesting. Surely one could argue that the seeds of this transformation began in the Classical period—we don’t know because

many original texts were lost to the ravages of time—but can suppose that the seats of argument infiltrated other avenues of social life rather than the traditional rhetorical triad of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic.

Armstrong (1998), Moss (1996), Havens (2001), and Lechner (1962) would support the above assertion going so far as to suggest a veritable crescendo of Common Place books inundated the world during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Indeed, at the macro level Common Place books, self-printed books, manuscripts, diaries, hand-written personal collections began to appear, among others, for the fields of law, medicine, theology, pedagogy, science, literature, and a host of other genres. Their purpose was simple: to collect sayings, maxims, apothegms, protocols, examples, quotations, procedures, grammatical intricacies, complete sermons, definitions, and endless other categories. Strangely, minimal—at least at this point—attention was given to the category of commerce, or business communication. That said after the authors contacted the above seminal researchers, and others, plus reviewing significant compilers of manuscripts, notably Griffiths and Pearsall (1989), and a German compiler Peter John (c.1972), there appears to be a diminution on business subjects, or lack of business Commonplace books in Western publications. That last assertion must be investigated further.

As noted earlier, Chinese rhetoric and philosophies tend to have a range of genres in place which address both the educated and less educated. The permeation can be related to the shared tradition of commonplaces in both the literary and vernacular traditions. A typical example of the vernacular traditions can be found in ‘*San zi Jing*’ [three character rhymes] collected and edited by an unknown author of the 13th Century. It was written for children to memorize in their earliest education.

Many of the anecdotes and historical events were in fact serious topics dealing with a range of themes such as familial and social relations – even literature – and math. Some of these rhymes derive from other genres such as anecdotes of the ‘Sages’. Take ‘*xi meng mu, ze lin chu*’ [Mencius’ mother moves house three times] as an example. Mencius’ mother was a widow who was said to be very concerned about her son’s studies. She observed that surroundings influenced her son’s behavior and goals, thus she moved their house three times in order to find the best location for his studies. Eventually she succeeded in finding a house near an academy of scholars.

‘*Rong si sui, neng rang li*’ [Rong, aged four, is capable of giving best pears to other family members] is another frequently cited example within a family education, which depicts how Kong Rong, Confucius’ great, great grandson gave the best pears to his family members who were all his seniors. Respecting the old and senior was thus seen as a virtue and merit and Kong Rong hence became a role model for the younger generation.

The influence of ‘*San zi Jing*’ [three-character rhymes] was far and wide and had been used for children’s education until after the Second World War. However, the influence still continues even up to today because of its strong foundation on Commonplaces and in its simplest genre of children’s rhymes, which also help to promote the Confucian values relating to family relations and social rituals.

Additional examples of genre permeation can be found in the collection or encyclopedia of Chinese proverbs (e.g. Gansu, 1978), which is based on the collections of anecdotes from the Sages', works and anecdotes, or simple common sayings. These proverbs tend to be composed of four characters, which resemble the styles of Chinese classical verses or poems. It would be interesting to view parallels between these proverbs with the Christian Bible. Therefore, educated Chinese tended to use the four character proverbs, perhaps analogous to Medieval and Renaissance theological scholars. In a similar way, many of the Chinese proverbs derive from a similar source with '*San zi Jing*'.

The above two anecdotal examples from the Sages are also common proverbs but in a four-character form this time:

'meng mu san qian' (Mencius' mother moves house three times)
'kong rong rang li' (Kong Rong gives best pears to other family members)

Many other proverbs are based on more literary forms such as poems and Sages' writings. This particular genre reflects a combined source of Chinese wisdom and culture and a significant proportion is based on Commonplaces. The four or multiple character proverbs are still an important part of the Chinese rhetoric and communication and they also serve as an indication of one's knowledge and education.

Thus how to get a methodological handle on the thousands of Western Commonplaces is difficult as they indiscriminately arranged their collections. More research is needed if the same is true for Chinese collections. Locke (1706) understood the semantic morass and attempted to salvage some conformity, but his method too aroused little enthusiasm. Our approach now is to focus on Self-generated Western Common Place publications, view selected Specific Professional Commonplace Areas, and conclude with observations pertaining to business communication. Then we shall simply nod at our concepts of Commonplaces in modern communication texts, the internet, and conclude with a general discussion.

Self generated Commonplaces

What was one of the major influences that made personal and pragmatic Commonplace collections available to the world? Before we answer that question, it is necessary to define the concept of self-generated Commonplace books. Briefly, we suggest that individuals for either their personal use—even ego advancement—or for use in the classroom began to collect a wide variety of items to use in either their written or oral communication. In fact, says Armstrong (1998), "Scholars encouraged students to probe, store, and retrieve information and required them to collect excerpts from their reading under appropriate headings. When the students produced works of their own, they were encouraged to use their commonplace books as a resource, culling from them a wide range of quotations, idioms, and other passages thought instrumental in the composition of an original work."

Thus pedagogy was an influence on individuals to collect statements that could be used in the present or the future in varied communication genre. A classic source that supports the above statement is found in Clark's *John Milton at St. Paul's School* (1948). In other words, classroom

exercises, or Exercises for Praxis, had many formats in the Medieval and Renaissance period. We shall note only two of the most popular, many dependent on illustrative items collected in individual Commonplace books.

Epistle. William Fulwood (1568) captured the intent of letter writing exercises perfectly: “And to describe the true definition of an Epistle or letter, it is nothing else but an Oration written.” That is, the tools of classical rhetoric were applied to a school exercise years after they had been discussed in early rhetorical writings. It is easy to infer that students who became scribes, letter writers for the world of commerce and others, learned the rudiments of communication in those early classrooms.

Themes or *Progymnasmata*. Simply defined as exercises that developed a theme, primarily through the stylistic device of amplification; an idea was enlarged through numbing stylistic devices. Copiousness of thought added both figures of speech for adornment along with furthering the substance of an argument. Among the many writers on style and content one Renaissance scholar stands out: Erasmus (1569); His *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum* [On copiousness of words and ideas] was popular, went through several editions, and was imitated and plagiarized in following years.

Beyond these two often-used exercises were many others: all taught the student to more effectively communicate on a social and professional level. A good source, only as examples of class exercises is taken from Clark (1948, pp. 233-249): fable; narrative; chreia (amplification); proverb; refutation; confirmation; common place; encomium (praise/dispraise); vituperation; comparison; impersonation; description; thesis; and legislation.

While the above discussion focused on students maintaining their own Commonplace books for classroom exercises, the fourth cannon from classical rhetoric also played a part: memory. That is, Commonplace books aided one to remember set phrases, set ideas, set procedures to follow in communicating, which is also the case with Chinese rhymes as noted earlier. Students and others could turn to their own receptacles, selecting at the moment from his or her memory, appropriate phrases or ideas as the situation demanded. Whether memory is either a cause or an effect in enhancing the reputation of the Commonplace book is debatable. Regardless, Dacome (2004) argues that even Erasmus (1518, 1522) suggested that students could turn to their collections and “When a topic had to be extended in the course of a speech, the speaker could collect materials from the various places stored in the memory or in the notebook and then skillfully integrate them together into a coherent whole.”

In a similar way, self-generated commonplaces to be used in communication genre of all kinds are not less common in the Chinese tradition. A good example can be found in the genre of ‘*xie hou yu*’ [common sayings], also worth a further note. ‘*Xie hou yu*’ is a type of vernacular and is only found in oral communication in informal contexts. With this genre, people often used metaphors to communicate meanings, with wit. For example, ‘*zhi ma kai hua jie jie gao*’ [sesame opening flowers with one being higher than the other]. This expression often refers to an increasingly promising or successful situation such as accumulating more and more wealth. One of the authors had the experience of working on a Chinese farm for nearly three years and found that the less educated peasants used a lot more of these ‘*xie hou yu*’ deriving from

everyday life such as plants, weather, insects than the educated people in the city. The reason can be that they have more opportunities of developing these expressions since they have direct tangible experience of growing plants and witnessing insects—a remarkable source of developing metaphors and enriching their communication.

It is not the purpose of this paper to rehearse the hundreds, thousands? of personally collected words and ideas of others. A quick scan of Commonplace titles, and our above discussion, suggest these conclusions: (1) Some individuals collected ideas simply as a pastime; (2) Persons engaged with other persons vicariously simply through reading their words; (3) Collections ranged from simple one-two word extracts to complete statements; (4) Individuals wished to read, reread both philosophical and pragmatic thoughts not once, but several times; (5) Collectors desired to use the words and ideas of others to incorporate in their own communication or search out ideas that would support/diminish the propositions of others'; (6) Prescriptions, models, paradigms, allowed rephrasing of ideas and the adding one one's own. (7) and others.

Now to answer the opening question: what allowed self-generated Commonplaces to proliferate? There is little doubt that the invention of printing, of producing books in the West via Gutenberg's invention allowed anyone, especially those of wealth, to make public their inner selves. Whether others read these self-written and then printed collections were voraciously read by others is difficult to determine. But the fact that Commonplace books and manuscripts—and increasing research under the influence of Humanism, suggests a desire to emulate and capture the elegance and thought and rhetorical flowers of the ancient world and then apply them in the Medieval and Renaissance world, added to the importance of the humanistic individual. A final statement: our focus has been upon the English language. Commonplace works also appeared in Latin, Italian, German, and French. Mutations of the Commonplace book, or notes, or summaries were also present in Eastern countries. Those cultural homes also need more intensive investigation.

Specific Professional Commonplace Areas

As civilization became more complex, as different disciplines matured, as the world became more multinational, as the church became more powerful, as governments became democratic or autocratic, as hierarchical social stigmas arose in various cultures, as legal patterns developed, as medical knowledge increased, as intercourse between cultures intensified, as universities were founded, there arose the need for a heightened degree of communication competence to cross the professional lines separating the disciplines. Early schools, as we have seen, laid the macro foundation via class exercises'; these were generic rather than discipline specific. Of course one could argue that on entering a discipline one would learn on the job. But more was needed. And that need was satisfied, in part, through Commonplace books in specific discipline areas. One should not jump to the conclusion that a pristine commonality, a consistent taxonomy was followed. Such a common methodology in structure was absent, wholly absent, to which we now turn, limiting our discussion to two branches of learning: Law and theology, two of the four—literature and science the other two—categories noted by Havens, (2001). We end with a brief nod to business matters because of the paucity of Commonplace research in that area.

Law. Earlier we noted that social communication, the vernacular of the streets, was adequate for casual communication. Lawyers as professionals then, as now, used a vernacular—intentional vs. unintentional?—among themselves and slowly provided Commonplace books from which others might learn both language and legal procedures. And as society became more litigious, as regulations and procedures became more complex, within cultures and with different cultures, complete books, pamphlets, manuscripts began to appear, on a variety of legal topics. Hereafter is only one example which in its title suggests the theme; other works are similar:

--Doddridge, John. (1631). *The English lavvyer. Describing a method for the managing of the lawes of this land....* London: Miles Fiesher for I. More Esq. ...and many others....

Professional genres can also be traced back in history. Zhu (2000) offers a detailed discussion of the historical development of professional genres which include both more formal types of ‘*ling*’ or emperors’ orders and ‘*shu*’ which can be translated simply as letters written by common people. Liu Xie’s (1959) works can be of relevance again for the discussion of ‘*shu*’ because he was the first researcher in the study of Chinese written communication to treat professional genres as proper genres. Before his time, only literary genres including poems and prose were seen as formal genres which were worth any research. Liu Xie (1959) appropriately divides genre study into the study of ‘*wen*’ [literary genres] and ‘*bi*’ [non-literary such as letters and anecdotes]. It is the latter type of genres, such as ‘*shu*’ [letters] that are related to Commonplaces.

Liu Xie has not only promoted the importance of the non-literary genres, more importantly, he has also promoted the collections of the common people who were not Sages. Note that Liu Xie provides a dynamic view of the creators of wisdom which also include everyday people like you or me. Some of the writers of ‘*shu*’ became well known and so were their ‘*shu*’. ‘*Shu*’ derived from persuasive arguments advisers presented for the warriors, many of whom, during the warlord era (200-280 CE), were involved in war. Since everyone wanted to enlarge his lands, large numbers of advisers appeared and used their power of persuasion in the running of warfare for the warriors. Subordinates used ‘*shu*’ in the written form, keeping its persuasive nature to express their opinions to their superiors, usually from warriors of inferior positions to the emperor. Equal works on forms of address were also present in Medieval and Renaissance books printed on how to address persons of a higher rank. This kind of ‘*shu*’ is relatively formal in style since it was used to address the emperor and others of a higher cultural rank. There are also less formal uses of ‘*shu*’ [letters] that become an integral part of Chinese collected writings written in the genre of Commonplaces. Their writings became best-case examples and have been collected and cited by common people ever since.

Were legal Commonplace books useful in the West? One British author, Brewster, (1680); see also Havens (2001), was unequivocal in his support: “How absolutely necessary, and of what great use and benefit a common-place is in all sciences whatsoever, there is none that does not pretend to any study on letters, but sufficiently knows.”

Theology. Unhesitatingly one can infer that as other disciplines began to codify and make use of others’ writing and teachings, those in the service of religion would do no less. But those

theological scholars based their collections—in their eyes—on their indisputable conclusion, ably summarized by Moss: “Quotations from Scripture is a valid and efficacious mode of theological argument, because Scripture is the record of divine revelation. The (pagan) ‘philosophers’ may also have knowledge of truth, but by natural reason, not by divine revelation.” (Moss, 1996, p. 21). In other words, truth was automatic when choosing between the dichotomy of humanistic truth vs. biblical truth. Quoting or using the words of other theologians or pastors or the Bible guaranteed a divine dialectic in argument, firmly contrasting with employing the ancient and humanistic tools of searching for reason that only produced probabilities. An absolute scriptural status had no competitors, or so though respected theologians. The Classical concepts of *Inventio*, *Topoi*, *communes loci*, and scholar’s complex internequine philosophical disagreements in a search for truth were overridden, were simplified if one accepted the ultimate, religious, infallible truth.

How was this done? We turn again to our overused word “mutation.” Tripartite canons dominated in the Classical world. That triad slowly vanished as canonical concepts enlarged to include almost any conceivable topic.

Religious Commonplace books was such a variation. Under the influence of the Humanistic influence, notable Erasmus (1518; 1522) both collections, e.g., of proverbs and analyses of scripture were made available to theology and its students. Sermons, quotations, analyses were both for seasoned preachers and students learning theological precepts. Simply as two examples, out of hundreds, are Strong’s (1886) and Foxe’s (1572) works illustrative of ideas usable for the theological world.

The World of Commerce. Conceivably business persons and the scribes hired to communicate with and oversee transactions of business matters also made use of the hundreds of Commonplace books during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Scribes would have been introduced to these works in school, emulated and borrowed and rewrote the illustrations for class, and applied those generic concepts to business communication. Unfortunately, we find little research on how business scribes of the day learned both the linguistic and procedural protocols needed in their duties.

Certainly grammar, arrangement of ideas, vocabulary improvement, and orthography were part of the grammar school, but one work assumes preeminence for assembling a potpourri of themes potentially useful to the businessperson: Richard Arnold’s The customs of London, otherwise called Arnold’s chronicle...(1811)—[the first edition was seemingly published in Antwerp in the 16th century (Arnold, 1521?)]. Of course he veered from his major business theme into other minutia of the day also found in other collections. The arte of gardening...and the phisicke helps belonging to each herb, ...ye names of the baylys, custose, mayers, and shefrefs of ye cyte of Londong... Mappe mundi, otherwise called the compasse, and cyucuet of the worlde: and also the compasse of euery llande... illustrate his wide-ranging interests in informing readers.

But Arnold’s seminal work, as a work relating to commerce, regardless of its imperfections, is the Chronicle. (1811). Through 351 tedious pages he cites micro examples of issues tangentially relating to business.

Certainly his work is not original as was the case of hundreds of other general Commonplace collections. Borrowing without attribution was rampant, overt plagiarism from individuals and works, now lost to time, was common. In the “Advertisement” for Arnold’s book, that writer suggests Arnold’s dependence on a work found in the library of a B.I. Julius and overt dependence on a man called Robert Bale, a recorder of London in the reign of Edward IV (See Arnold, 1811, p. vii).

Several observations are in order after viewing the three above Commonplace genre: (1) Orthography has little consistency from paragraph to paragraph, chapter to chapter, book to book. English form and substance was still finding its way; (2) the prolixity of rhetorical flowers, today called ornateness and purple prose still held sway as collected and influenced by the numerous and popular *floriga* books (e.g. Mosellanus, (1526); Sherry, (1550); Peacham, (1577); Day, (1595); Erasmus, (1569); Susenbrotus, (1570); Puttenham, (1589); Crane (1954); and many others: (3) style, the third part of the ancient rhetorical triad reached its apogee during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. (4) Arnold’s work is a crude vernacular textbook made accessible to the average scribe or business persons who could turn to the included exemplars for dealing with business communication; (5) the influence, though chronologically distant during this time of humanistic education suggests that the revival of neo-classical thought was still evident; (6) there is evidence that rank, or caste, demanded a level of language beyond the vernacular or social communication; (7) Plagiarism, without attribution, due to the proliferation of printing presses, and one’s own egotism to have his works published made borrowing and assembling and making public one’s thoughts much easier; and (8) So rampant was the borrowing that it is difficult, in many instances, to determine who was the original author of a phrase or example.

In short. The evolutionary nature of Western communication demanded movement from the social vernacular to the linguistic sophistication of professional groups, business or commerce included. That assertion holds true for today, as we turn to a discussion of the preceding brief review of Western and Eastern philosophical underpinnings of communication.

Discussion and Implications

Capturing the thin gossamer, philosophical threads on communication history, spun together over two thousand years, is difficult, especially in disparate cultures: multicultural; multinational; neo-classical rhetorical theories; vernacular linguistic shifts; accessibility to ancient texts, often in Italian, German, Latin, Greek, or Chinese; wholesale unclear derivatives and gestation into new formats; and cognitive impairment as a result of the above mutations, allow but tentative conclusions. Extensive research needs to be done to fully analyze years of underpinnings that have influenced the communication media concepts of today. Thus we have limited our discussion to the varying but enlarging genre concepts and uses of Commonplaces in hand written, oral or printed form to which persons from all walks of life could turn to improve their communication with the world about them. We offer several conclusions and implications:

- (1) What began in the Classical world as searching for truth, for underlying concepts of virtue, for valid arguments, for ideas located in metaphorical “places” of the mind, these purposes over time mutated into vast collections on almost every conceivable topic, from

micro to macro topics. Throughout this mutation a core principle remained: writers assembled textual and oral fragments that they themselves or others could rely on, insert, remember, rehearse, borrow, steal, and use as one's own in either written or oral communication.

(2) Originality of one's own thoughts may minimally have been included in the multivariate books. But most collections were recycled material. Only rarely did the collectors mention the sources for their endeavors, suggesting outright plagiarism. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to determine who was the original author as repetitions of the same example(s) appeared and reappeared over the years. We cannot help but insert a comic's comment: if you "borrow" from one person it's plagiarism; if you depend on two persons it's research."

(3) Some of the above findings also apply to the Chinese sources for Commonplaces. Chinese Commonplaces, just like the Western tradition, are dynamic and diverse in genre and forms. However, different from the Western tradition, Chinese sources have indicated stronger reliance on Sage's works and anecdotes. Other sources such as the collection of 'shu' [letters] and 'xie hou yu' [common sayings] are also revealing in their contribution to form part of Chinese persuasion concepts applicable to communication.

(4) From the time of the ancients through today, classrooms depend on examples. In business classes "Cases", really, a modern variation of a Commonplace book, are vehicles of instruction, with an entire industry and a reputable university behind such endeavors. We can also seriously ask, are textbook authors—your two current authors included—that much different in intent from those pedagogues of year's ago? Add to that affirmation that the requirements/assignments we give our students today are not too dissimilar from pedagogical requirements in earlier classrooms: theme writing, business letters, beginnings and endings of letters, good-news and neutral and bad-news communication, and you know the rest (Murphy, Hildebrandt, H. & Thomas J. (1997). Today we go one step further: we add the visual element of TV as supplements to the illustration in cases and texts. In brief, the semantic topography and architecture of the collections may have changed, but the central purpose remains the same: teach readers how to apply either oral or written communication to various human situations. Today textbooks by the hundreds parallel the endeavors begun, philosophically in the Classical world, for then and now determining the linguistic appropriateness for almost any genre.

(5) Gutenberg may have been the catalyst to propel hand-written Commonplaces into the hands of the common man. Earlier we mentioned that for some individuals collecting sayings, ideas, concepts, was a hobby, perhaps an intentional diary that could be left to their heirs. Printing not only made these private collections available, but allowed those more pedagogically inclined to make available authoritative concepts and collections available to many. A prime example, not discussed in this paper, is the publication of the Bible into the German vernacular, allowing the person on the street access to information at one time known only to the church principals.

(6) During the internecine conflict between humanist and religious philosophers,

the themes of virtues and vices—often discussed in the Classical period—found expression on church-doors to detailed treatises, even trials, on what was written and said, taken from books that collected arguments on both sides of an issue. Bi-polar extremes, either for written or oral communication, depended on collected works to support arguments.

We began this paper with the assumption that the common man used his vernacular in social communication. That was fine for the *Agora*, the communication of the street, but as civilization advanced the semantic momentum in and by the professions, the arising social hierarchical distance, the intentional or unintentional neologisms of some professions, demanded more lexical refinement and understanding to enter the realm of the enlarging intellectual genre. Such a need was met, in part, via the Commonplace book. Many of the commonplace traditions still have significant influence on today's business world as we discussed earlier. So research in this direction should be carried out in more depth since our preliminary research has already highlighted the need for this type of investigation, which, we believe, will provide further historical underpinnings for communication and managerial behavior and practices.

Bibliography

- Aristotle. (1932). *The rhetoric of Aristotle*. (L. Cooper. Trans.). New York: Appleton-Century Crofts.
- Aristotle. (1997). *Topics*. (R. Smith. Trans.). New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Armstrong, R. (1998). The Commonplace Book, *Biblio*, 36, 1.
- Arnold, R. (1521?). *In this boke is conteyned ye names of the baylyfs, custose, mayers, and sherefs of yecyte of London from the tyme of Kynge Richard the Fyrst: & also the artycles of ye chartour & lybartyes of the same cyte, and of the chartour and lybartyes of England with other dyuers maters good and necessary for euery cytezen to vnderstond and knowe ...*London: Peter Treveris.
- Arnold, R. (1811). *The customs of London, otherwise called Arnold's chronicle...*(2nd ed.). London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington [et. al.].
- Brewster, S. (1680). A briefe method of the law: being an exact alphabetical disposition of all the heads necessary for a perfect commonplace: useful to all students and professors of the law; much wanted and earnestly desired. In E. Havens (2001). *Commonplace books. A history of manuscripts and printed books from antiquity to the twentieth century*. New Haven: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Univ.
- Cicero (1942). *De oratore*. (E.W. Sutton & H. Rackham, Trans.). London: Loeb Classical Library.
- Cicero (1942). *De partitione oratoria*. (H. Rackham. Trans.). London: Loeb Classical Library, ii.5; ii.7
- Cicero? (1954). *Rhetorica ad herennium*. (H. Caplan. Trans.). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Clark, D.L. (1948). *John Milton at St. Paul's School*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Crane W. (Ed.) (1954). *The garden of eloquence*. H. Peacham (1577). Gainsville: Scholars Facsimilies & Reprints.
- Dacome, L. (2004). Noting the Mind: Commonplacebooks and the pursuit of the self in Eighteenth-century Britain. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4, 603 ff.
- Day, A. (1595). *The English Secretorie*. London.
- Doddridge, J. (1631). *The English lavvyer. Describing a method for the managing of the lawes of this land....* London: Miles Fiesher for I. More Esq.
- Erasmus. (1569). *De duplici copia verbrum ac rerum*. [On copiousness of words and ideas] London: Lugduni Batavarum. See also (1963) *On copia of words and ideas*. (D. King & H. Rix Trans.). Milwaukee: Marquette Univ.Press.
- Erasmus. (1518, 1522). *Ratioseu methodus compemdi perveniendi ad veram theologiam*. [A guide for reaching a true theology]. Basel.

- Foxe (1572). *Pandectae locorum communium*. [A comprehensive collection of commonplaces]. London: John Day.
See also John Rechten, John Foxe's comprehensive collection of commonplaces: a Renaissance memory system for students and theologians. *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 9, 1, 83ff.
- Fulwood, W. (1568). *The Enemie of Idleness*. London: Robert Robinson.
- Gansu, S. (1978). *Hanyu chengyu cidian*. [A dictionary of Chinese proverbs]. Shanghai: Shanghai Educational Press.
- Griffiths, J. & Pearsall, D. (Eds.). (1989) *Book production in Britain 1375-1475*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Havens, E. (2001). Commonplace books. A history of manuscripts and printed books from antiquity to the twentieth century. New Haven: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Univ.
- Ji, Y., & Yang, J. (2004). *A brief history of Chinese culture*. Beijing: Beijing Press.
- John, P. (c.1972). *Toposforschung: eine Dokumentation*. [Research into the Topics]. Frankfurt/M: Athenäum.
- Lausberg, H. (1960). *Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetoric; ein Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. [A handbook on literary rhetoric: A basis for knowing literature]. Munich: M. Hueber.
- Locke, J. (1706). *Posthumous works of Mr. John Locke: viz. 1. Of the conduct of the understanding... To which is added. VI. His new methods of a common-place book*. London: W.B. for A. and J. Churchill.
- Kennedy, G.A. (1963). *The art of persuasion in Greece*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Kennedy, G.A. (1980). *Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition from ancient to modern times*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Lausberg, H. (1960). *Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetoric; ein Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. [A handbook on literary rhetoric: A basis for knowing literature]. Munich: M. Hueber.
- Lechner, J. (1962). *Renaissance concepts of the commonplaces*. New York: Pageant Press.
- Lewis, H. (2006, April). Review of Commonplace Books of Law: A Selection of law-related notebooks from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century. *Alabama Review*, 59, 152-153.
- Locke, J. (1706). *Posthumous works of Mr. John Locke: viz. 1. Of the conduct of the understanding ... To which is added. VI. His new methods of a common-place book*. London: W.B. for A. and J. Churchill
- Lu, Xing. (1998). *The literary mind and the carving of dragons*. (Shih and W. Yu-chung, Trans.). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press.
- Mosellanus, P. (1526). *Table de schematibus et tropis*. [A collection of schemes and tropes]. France.
- Moss, A. (1996). *Printed commonplace-books and the structuring of Renaissance thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Murphy, H., Hildebrandt, H., & Thomas, J. (1997). *Business Communications*. (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- OED. (1972-1986). *Oxford English Dictionary*. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Peacham, H. (1954). *The Garden of eloquence*. (William Crane, Ed.). Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints. (Original work published in 1577).
- Peacham, H. (1954). *The Garden of eloquence*. (William Crane, Ed.). Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints. (Original work published in 1593).
- Plato. (1968). *Phaedrus*. (Benjamin Jowett, Trans.). New York: Heritage Press.
- Plato. (1994) *Gorgias*. (R. Waterfield, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, New York.
- Puttenham, G. (1936). *The arte of English poesi*. (Gladys Willcock & Alice Walker, Eds.). Cambridge, London: The Univ. Press. (Original work published in 1589).
- Quintilian. (1921, 1922). *Institutio oratoria*. (H.E. Butler, Trans.). London: Loeb Classical Library.
- Sherry, R. (1550). *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*. London. See also H. Hildebrandt. (1961). (Ed.). *Richard Sherry's a treatise of schemes and tropes*. Scholars Facsimilies & Reprints: Gainesville, Florida.
- Strong, A. (1886). *Systematic theology; a compendium from a commonplace-book designed for the use of theological students*. Rochester: E.R. Andrews.
- Susenbrotus, J. (1570). *Epitome troporum ac schematus et grammaticoums et rhetorum*. [Synopsis of schemes and tropes for grammarians and rhetoricians]. Zurich.
- Xiao, X. (1995). China Encounters Darwinism: A Case of Intercultural Rhetoric. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 82, 38-54.
- Xie, Liu. (1995). *The literary mind and the carving of dragons*. (W. Yu-chung Shiu, Trans.). New York: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Zhu, Y. (2000). Rhetorical moves in Chinese sales genres, 1949 to the present. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 37(2), 156-172.

Biographies

HERBERT W. HILDEBRANDT

Former President of ABC and recipient of ABC's Outstanding Researcher Award, Professor Hildebrandt is the author of over 50 referred journal articles and eleven books, taught business, managerial communication at the University of Michigan for 40 years. In retirement he continues his research and writing on intercultural communication issues between Asian and Western countries and businesses.

YUNXIA ZHU

Senior Lecturer at UQ Business School, University of Queensland. Her research interests include rhetoric and persuasion, intercultural communication, cross cultural management, international HR, and business negotiations. She won the ABC Distinguished Publication Award in 2006. She has written books and book chapters and published extensively in prestigious international journals.