

# Digital Rhetoric



## Definition

The term *rhetoric* often refers to a set of practices and a theory helping us to make, represent, and share knowledge, and often we think of rhetoric, more specifically, as the art of persuasion. Thus, in writing in both in school and out, we attempt to persuade others by use of logos, pathos, and ethos. Likewise, we often compose by using the rhetorical canons—*invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery*—as a heuristic for composing. But in a digitally mediated environment, composing may need to employ a different rhetoric, a *digital rhetoric*. For example, in traditional rhetoric, we think of the rhetor/composer and the audience as being separate, but as James Zappen observes, digital rhetoric seems less interested in persuasion and more interested in how we can support “self-expression” and “creative collaboration for the purpose of building communities of shared interest” (321). Likewise, the rhetorical canon of delivery seems to be taking on new mean-

ings in a digital environment. Thus, delivery can refer to traditional ways of sharing a text—in speech and on paper—but it can also refer to other forms of sharing through media that often interact with each other. The central question is how this new digital and networked environment is changing rhetoric.

## Significance

Digital rhetoric is a new field of study and practice adapting the principles of rhetoric for a world where we write to the screen as much as to the page, where we write to readers we have never met halfway around the globe—who may well write back to and with us.

## Resources

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