Open Source Debating: The Justifications and Responses to Deacon Source Version 1.0

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In this essay, we chart the history of the adoption of Deacon Source, the first squad-wide adoption of open source debating, by Wake Forest University in the fall of 2010. After explicating the decision to adopt open source, we examine the results of a survey on Deacon Source conducted at the 2011 Franklin R. Shirley Classic.

The 2012 National Debate Tournament (NDT) represented a significant milestone for the college debate community. Georgetown University's win against Northwestern University on a 3-2 decision was significant for several reasons, not the least of which was that it represented Georgetown's first NDT victory since 1992 and included a team of two college sophomores. Two elite academic institutions battling it out for a national championship is hardly a new event in the pantheon of college debating. What was new, however, was that Georgetown University won the NDT debating open source. Open source debating is the practice of making the full text of a team's evidence available to the public rather than simply sharing the citation.

Georgetown's win was important because, for the vast majority of the NDT debate community's existence, a "great debater" was the student willing to spend hours, if not days, in the library researching the debate topic in order to create an asymmetrical advantage over his/her opponent. By contrast, Georgetown won the 2012 NDT *sharing* their evidence—the resource that was once fiercely guarded. In the old model of evidence production, debaters sought to restrict access

to the evidence on a topic that his/her opponent did not have in order to create an important advantage in an activity that increasingly prioritized research and evidence over presentation style. As anyone who has observed an intercollegiate debate at the NDT since the age of Lawrence Tribe knows, the stereotype of smooth speaking debaters waxing poetically over which quote from our nation's founders was more apt for the topic is long gone. Today, many debaters, judges, and coaches, have elected to prioritize the depth and complexity of argumentation that comes with speaking at breakneck speeds over the traditional presentation skills. Although the virtues and drawbacks of this change are not the subject of this article, the methods used to produce and distribute the research for these conversations are.

In order to sustain the depth of debates over the complex topics used in policy debate today, students, judges, and coaches have developed research skills that make academic policy debate one of the most rigorous intellectual activities available for college students. According to O'Donnell, "One of the obvious benefits of policy debate is that it teaches research skills in a manner 'unparalleled in the world of academics' (Fritch 1993/1994, 7). No undergraduate college class assignment requires as much research as debate does" (2010, p. 37). O'Donnell continues:

> Robert Rowland argues that 'debate, more than perhaps any other educational activity at the university level, teaches students about both the importance of research and the wealth of material that is available' (1995, 101). The research effort undertaken by debaters over the course of a single year's topic is often greater than the work to obtain a law degree or dissertation (Parcher 1998). Many debaters spend as many as 20 to 30 hours per week doing research (ibid.). A typical debate team gathers

enough evidence to write thousands of pages of argument briefs. (2010, p. 37)

These research skills not only prepare debaters for a lifetime of success in every field imaginable, they are also crucial to competitive success. Once upon a time, a debate team's evidence was considered as sacred as the playbook of a National Football League team. Young debaters were scolded for losing research files and veteran debaters had complex organizational schemes that were impenetrable to the casual observer. Debaters were willing to share their evidence, temporarily, with the judge and the opponent in any given debate, but the only information that was considered "fair game" to take away from your opponent at the conclusion of the debate was the citation. This norm was so strong that, in 2003, a coach was actually removed from participating at the NDT after it was discovered that he/she was scanning evidence rather than recording the citation. Less than 10 years later, the NDT champions were freely sharing the full text of their evidence with the entire debate community for all to see and utilize as they saw fit.

Although there were many milestones in the transition to open source debating, this article focuses on the internal deliberation that led to its adoption and the community response to Wake Forest University's "Deacon Source" open source project. We hope that this essay continues the long tradition of recording significant moments in the practice of intercollegiate debate like the essays and books by Cowperthwaite and Baird (1954), Emerson (1931), Keith (2007), Nichols (1936), Ringwalt (1897), and others. This essay, then, is less focused on defending the benefits of open source debating. We recognize and acknowledge that there are many arguments for and against open source debating that are not reviewed here.[1] Instead, we hope to help record the history of the early steps towards open source debating

and the initial reaction of the broader debate community in an effort to provide some background on the starting point for a broader conversation over the advantages and benefits of the practice. In order to chart the initial adoption by Wake Forest University, we will outline the internal deliberation of the Wake Forest debate program. To examine the community response, we review the results of an IRB-approved survey on Deacon Source that was distributed at the Franklin R. Shirley Classic Tournament hosted at Wake Forest University in the fall of 2011. We hope that the combination of oral history and qualitative measures will help future scholars of debate to get a broader sense of this important moment of change in the intercollegiate debate community (Harrigan, 2012).

Deacon Source Version 1.0

In the fall of 2010, the Wake Forest debate program announced that it would make the full text of all of the evidence used in competition debates available for public use. The first version of this open source project was very simple: at the conclusion of each tournament, the Wake Forest coaching staff would accumulate all of the speech documents from the Wake Forest debaters and post them to a public wiki labeled "Deacon Source."[2] The files were categorized by team, side, opponent, and tournament. In order to review the evidence, a competitor or coach downloaded each individual speech document. During the 2010-2011 season, 11 teams from Wake Forest representing hundreds of individual speech documents were hosted at Deacon Source.

Although Deacon Source was the first official open source policy, the concept of open source debating has been a part of a broader community conversation for some time. Michael Antonucci was one of the first proponents of open source debating, and he should

be credited with any subsequent adoption of open source given his early efforts to explain the theoretical underpinnings and potential benefits at a time when the concept was deemed as heretical by the vast majority of the debate community. According to Antonucci, the earliest intersections of open source and competitive debate took place in high school debate as an argument advanced by Lexington High School debaters Leo Zimmerman, Alex Jenson, William Sears and Daniel del Nido, who were coached by Leslie Phillips and Antonucci (2010). Those arguments triggered a discussion in the high school debate community, which spilled over into the college debate community (Antonucci, 2010). As early as 2005, Antonucci had proposed a "strong version" of open source debating wherein, "evidence enters the collective pool *before* you read it. In fact, entry in the collective pool is a *precondition* for the reading of any specific piece of evidence" (2010, para. 14). Later, in conversation with Dr. Eric Morris, Antonucci would help direct the conversation towards a "weak version" of open source wherein teams only made previously read evidence available. It is no coincidence that Antonucci was an assistant coach at Georgetown University when they won the 2011 NDT debating open source.

Despite the early conversations across high school and college debate, major technological hurdles had to be overcome before open source debating could be adopted without significant cost. The primary problem was that evidence production and recitation took place through the medium of paper. Although it would have been possible to scan the thousands of pages of evidence and upload them to a central database, the labor involved made it cost prohibitive. The first technological hurdle that had to be overcome was transitioning away from paper to electronic forms of evidence production and presentation.

In many ways, the spirit of open source programming was a part of the debate community long before open source debating was adopted by any debate program. Aaron Hardy, Alex Gulakov, and Naveen Ramachandrappa played pivotal roles in the development of paperless debate. Hardy and Gulakov gave freely of their time and resources to produce Microsoft Word templates along with detailed instruction manuals that enabled debaters to transition from paper to paperless debating. Ramachandrappa developed a pivotal manual in the production of electronic evidence. All three released their templates and manuals for free and dedicated countless hours to improving their products for the debate community's benefit. As is the case with any technological innovation (including the eventual transition to open source debating), there are advantages and disadvantages to paperless debate. Although space limitations prevent an in-depth discussion of the practice of paperless debating here, it is important to recognize that it is unlikely that the transition to open source debating would have been possible without the ability to quickly and efficiently distribute evidence. By 2010, Wake Forest University was one of a dozen or so debate programs that had adopted debating paperless. Paperless debating allowed Wake Forest debaters to construct individual speech documents by copying and pasting evidence from electronic files. These individual speech documents could be saved so that debaters could produce an accurate record of exactly what evidence was presented in any given debate. These advances in paperless debating made open source debating possible.

Although advances in paperless debating made it possible to adopt an open source debating platform as early as 2008, the decision to post the full text of an entire squad's evidence had not been adopted by any program as of the fall of 2010. There were, however,

instances where individual teams in high school and college debate were posting the full text of their evidence to public caselists.[3] One of the most significant moves towards open source started with the high school National Debate Coaches Association's (NDCA) open evidence project, which gained permission to post evidence produced at summer debate workshops online for public use.[4] Until the NDCA's open evidence project, large high school debate squads would gain an additional advantage by sending debaters to a wide variety of summer workshops to accrue a bigger set of evidence.

The decision by the Wake Forest debate program to move towards open source debating happened as a result of tragedy. The sudden and unexpected passing of Ross Smith, the director of debate at Wake Forest, in the summer of 2009, resulted in a moment of self-reflection for one of the oldest and most successful debate programs in the country. The list of accolades that Smith accomplished in his time at Wake Forest includes two NDT championships and two more NDT final round appearances. Beyond the competitive success, however, Smith was dedicated to the notion that privileged programs like Wake Forest had an obligation for community service that extended beyond winning the NDT. Towards that end, Smith and Tim O'Donnell, Wake Forest alumnus and the Director of Debate at Mary Washington, founded the Open Source Debate Foundation which had as its mission, "the connection of the research and analytic capacities of the academic debate community and its graduates to the wider political and policy communities" (Stables, 2009, para. 14). Smith was also a proponent of open source debating and, despite the technological barriers, had proposed it to the Wake Forest debate program as early as the 2006-2007 season. According to Antonucci, Smith had watched future Wake Forest debater Will Sears arguing in favor of open source

while recruiting him to Wake Forest. Despite Smith's passion for open source, the debate team voted against adopting open source and unfortunately, he did not live to see his vision for Wake Forest debate become a reality.

In the fall of 2010, Jarrod Atchison took over as the new Director of Debate, and the program returned to the question of open source debating at the annual pre-season retreat in Fancy Gap, VA. Aside from the competitive risks associated with open source debating, the squad discussed two major objections to open source: (1) the potential for freeloading, and (2) the potential reduction in the community emphasis on research skills. Fortunately, intercollegiate debate was not the first community to consider the implication of open source platforms. Although the stakes for the intercollegiate debate community were high, the monetary stakes associated with companies and programmers adopting open source programming and software development made the decision to post speech documents online seem painless by comparison. With millions, if not billions, of dollars at stake, the earliest proponents of open source software confronted similar objections. Their experiences supported the idea that the decision on adopting open source debating should not be made based on the practices of the least committed members of the debate community.

There were three arguments against the risk of freeloading that the Wake Forest debaters found persuasive. First, the norm of disclosing full citations including full URLs and key phrases meant that freeloading was already possible within the debate community. Albeit easier under an open source system, it was conceivable that a freeloader debater could invest all of his/her time into simply tracking down citations to existing pieces of evidence using the publically accessible caselist information. In this way, the gains associated

with trying to keep the information private were not that meaningful. A supplement to that argument was that any gains a freeloader could gain from using existing evidence were offset by the resulting drive towards innovation that would result from the Wake Forest debaters disclosing more of their arguments. In other words, because freeloaders may use the full text of a Wake Forest debater's evidence, the Wake Forest debaters now had an extra incentive to research the next evolution in an argument to ensure a competitive advantage.

The combination of minimal gain and increased innovation is documented within the open source software community. Von Hippel and von Krogh note:

> Eliminating the assumption in collective action models that a free rider will be able to obtain benefits from the completed public good that are equal to those a contributor can obtain. Instead, it proposes that contributors to a public good can inherently obtain private benefits that are tied to the development of that good. These benefits are available only to project contributors and not to free riders and represent a form of 'selective incentives' for project participation that need not be managed by collective action project personnel. To explore these ideas, consider first that contributors to an open source software project must engage in problem solving to create novel code. When they freely reveal this code to the project, it becomes a public good. However, the problem-solving process and effort used to produce the code have other important outputs as well, such as learning and enjoyment, and a sense of 'ownership' and control over their work product. (2003, p. 216)

People familiar with intercollegiate debate will immediately see the analogy between the problem-

solving creativity in software design and the focus on the process of generating arguments for competitive debate. The willingness of open source programmers to share the endpoint of their process is instructive because it reveals the role of selective incentives in any open source system. For the Wake Forest debaters, the focus on the process over the product was an easy translation since the squad definition of success is setting a high goal and, in the process of trying to achieve it, seeing what you can become. The free riders may have the evidence, but for the participants in an open source evidence platform, the real benefit is the process of constructing the argument in the first place.

The second argument against the free rider concern was a definitional challenge to the term. One of the primary arguments in favor of adopting an open source evidence platform was that it was necessary to help reduce resource disparities between debate programs. Simply put, the Wake Forest debaters agreed that one person's free rider is another person's less privileged debater, trying his/her hardest to participate in intercollegiate debate at a less resourced program. There are certainly bigger resource disparities between debate programs than evidence production, including but not limited to, availability of scholarships, assistant coaches, travel budgets, and a variety of other resources. In the context of freeloading, however, the Wake Forest debaters were persuaded that one entry barrier to participating in traditional policy debate is the amount of evidence required to be competitively successful.[5] Many of the community's most privileged programs include coaching staffs with no obligations for teaching, academic research, and/or university service (Hingstman & Hahn, 2010). These programs have specialization within their coaching ranks designed to research specific genres of arguments or specific opponents to improve

the chances of their debaters to win the NDT. Many of the community's least privileged programs, on the other hand, include directors of debate with full teaching loads, traditional academic research expectations, and/or service to their universities (Hingstman & Hahn, 2010). These programs do not have the luxury of assistant coaches, much less former NDT champions that are only expected to contribute evidence towards their program's competitive success.

Given that many underprivileged programs often start with debaters with little to no high school experience in policy debate, it is simply not realistic to assume that their debaters can reasonably compete with the assistant coaches that have no academic obligations, much less their peers that come into intercollegiate debate with a tremendous amount of research experience from high school debate. Indeed, many of the most privileged programs have the human resources to assign people the sole responsibility of researching the evidence that is publically available through the caselist. Investing human resources into researching the citations allows privileged programs to invest the rest of their human resources in new argument innovation while ensuring they have their "bases covered" with the existing arguments. The people tasked with researching existing citations are not deemed freeloaders by the privileged programs, nor are they excluded from the benefits of the argument innovations done by other people on their own teams. Any strong advocate of the free rider argument would have to agree that squads that share evidence among themselves are also susceptible to free rider debaters using their own squad's evidence for a competitive edge over harder working debaters from lesser privileged institutions. In the end, it was decided that sustaining a diverse set of programs and helping to increase the overall participation in debate was worth

the risk that a free rider might use open source to attain competitive success that he/she did not "deserve."

The last response to the freeloader objection that the Wake Forest debaters found persuasive was that most, if not all, debate programs already use the community constructed knowledge to research and innovate arguments. The underlying assumption of the free rider argument is that it is unfair that the free rider is gaining a benefit from the intellectual property of another person's efforts. The Wake Forest debaters agreed that, unlike the software/programming world, the vast majority of all evidence read in a debate comes from someone else's intellectual work in the first place. The notion that any debater and/or debate team could lay claim to the intellectual property of evidence that is parsed from someone else's intellectual efforts was not persuasive. The combination of arguments and the specific deployment of evidence obviously represent an act of creativity that is unique to intercollegiate debate. That creativity, however, is not preserved by hiding the full text of the evidence and, in fact, may be hindered since access to the hidden text may spark new areas for argument innovation. The disclosure of the taglines, organization, and key phrases through the publically accessible caselists means that, even if a person believed preserving intellectual property at all costs, there was little intellectual effort to be lost by disclosing the full text of the evidence. What is gained is the possibility for younger debaters to focus their efforts on learning how arguments are constructed. The Wake Forest debate team decided that open source debating was a middle ground between "teaching someone how to fish and letting them starve in the process." The speech documents would provide a model for less experienced debaters in how to construct arguments while providing coaches from less resourced programs a set of resources

that could serve as a basic evidence packet on the topic.

The other major objection to open source was a concern that community wide adoption would diminish the emphasis on research skills. The importance of research skills should not be underestimated. For many directors, coaches, and administrators, the most important defining feature of policy debate is its emphasis on teaching research skills. The Wake Forest debaters were persuaded that an open source platform may actually increase the emphasis on research skills in three ways. First, for the participants in an open source system, there is a greater need to research to maintain a competitive advantage. The relationship between a debater's research and his/her competitive advantage stems from two variables—surprise and delay. One of the primary reasons that the Wake Forest debaters supported a "weak" version of open source rather than the "strong" version outlined by Antonucci (2005) was precisely because they wanted to maintain the competitive drive to innovate. In the strong version of open source, a participant would have to upload an argument before it could be deployed in a debate, which the debaters felt would dis-incentivize argument innovation if the argument had to be made public in advance. The weak version would continue to incentivize debaters to innovate arguments, but the speed of community wide adoption, scouting, and review is much faster in an open source system.

Without open source, debaters can rely on a lag time between when an argument is deployed and when it can be re-deployed by the competition. As noted above, for privileged squads, there is less lag time between a citation being posted on the caselist and a squad having the argument before the next tournament, which is a result of the human resources available to the more privileged institutions. The rest of the debate community

is forced to make choices about what portions of the caselist they have time to research, meaning that most non-open source debate teams have a competitive advantage over the less privileged institutions simply by virtue of the time it takes for the less privileged institutions to "catch up" to the arguments they have already deployed. When the Wake Forest debaters realized that the lag time is greatly reduced in an open source system, they understood that they would have to work harder to ensure that their argument innovations create a competitive advantage. Simply put, allowing the entire debate community access to your arguments in the immediate aftermath of the competition would mean that the Wake Forest debaters would have to work *harder* to maintain a competitive advantage over the competition. This sentiment was echoed by Jonathan Paul, Georgetown's Director of Debate, immediately after winning the National Debate Tournament when he noted, "Open source definitely encouraged our students to work harder. We collectively felt it was vital to significantly innovate our arguments after each tournament." (Paul, 2012, p. 1).

The second argument in favor of increased emphasis on research skills was that the *more* squads that participated in open source, the *more* emphasis there would be on research skills. The fear that open source would dis-incentivize research is akin to the free rider argument previously discussed. The people that would be dis-incentivized to do research would be the squads that choose not to participate in open source and, instead, choose to use the community evidence pool without additional research. Although it is certainly possible for a squad to simply use open source rather than doing any form of research whatsoever, the Wake Forest debaters were persuaded that the benefits of the increased research emphasis for them and for any other

participating institution outweighed the potential that others would give up the competitive benefits that stem from individual squad research. Simply put, the debaters were not convinced that the Wake Forest squad decision should rely on whether or not open source would discourage research among the people who already have little motivation to do research. Instead, the debaters believed that the more institutions that opt-in to an open source model, the more research the community would produce as a whole.

The last argument that persuaded the Wake Forest debaters was that in the new era of digital literacy, open source debating would emphasize new conceptions of debate research that better account for the information environment we find ourselves in on a daily basis. Stables argues, "Today's literacy challenge is not just about locating information, but increasingly how to curate this volume of information" (2011, p. 249). As noted in the introduction, the old model of debate research relied on finding the arguments that no one else had found up until that point. Although much of the formula for argument innovation still depends on researching the next level of an argument that has not been deployed yet, open source encourages a new set of research wherein debaters and coaches *use* the existing community set of evidence in new ways. Within an open source evidence platform, participants are incentivized to consider unique combinations of arguments that the traditional model of research does not incentivize because of the "catch up" effect mentioned previously. Open source creates the intellectual space necessary to re-arrange the evidence pool in new ways, encouraging the re-deployment of arguments to account for both the existing set of responses, and, ideally, catapulting debaters into new sets of literature. As Stables summarizes, "When reviewing the essential

literacy skills in a digital society it is difficult to ignore the powerful ways in which debate could blossom as a central educational practice, especially when considering the importance of idea of play" (2011, p. 251). This phenomena is supported by the broader open source literature which suggests that innovation across platforms takes place more efficiently when programmers can reuse existing code, "Returns on investment in the creation of new knowledge hinges on the extent to which this knowledge can be applied across the development of new processes and products" (Haefliger, von Krogh, & Spaeth, 2008, p. 181).

At the conclusion of the discussion, there was consensus that Wake Forest debate should adopt an open source model of evidence production for the 2010-2011 season. On September 14, 2010, Wake Forest announced the creation of "Wake Forest Open Source Initiative Version 1" by stating, "Wake Forest Debate is pleased to announce version one of our Open Source Debate Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to try to determine if the benefits of greater argument transparency in collegiate debate outweigh the potential disadvantages associated with reducing the amount of research debaters currently engage in when tracking down evidence from citations alone" (Atchison, 2010, p.1). On September 23, 2010, the first set of evidence was uploaded to the Deacon Source wiki. From the first tournament of the year to the 2011 NDT, every piece of evidence read in a speech delivered by a Wake Forest debater was uploaded for community use, representing hundreds of speeches.

Although there was little public discussion of Wake Forest's announcement, during the 2010-2011 season, the University of Pittsburgh William Pitt Debating Union also adopted an open source evidence model (Kurr, 2010) and the University of Georgia debate program adopted

an open source backfile project designed to help new programs have access to essential evidence (Harrigan, 2010). The conclusion of Wake Forest's September announcement stated, "We are looking forward to assessing this initiative throughout the year. Towards that end, we hope to work with communication scholars in our department to develop a survey in order to gather the debate community's input after everyone has had an opportunity to see the initiative in action" (Atchison, 2010, p. 1). The next section of this essay summarizes the results of that survey.

Community Response

One hundred and twenty six teams representing 68 debate programs gathered in Winston-Salem, NC for the Franklin R. Shirley Classic Tournament on the weekend of November 11-14, 2011. Voted the tournament of the decade for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the Franklin R. Shirley Classic is considered the NDT of the first semester.[6] At the tournament registration, the Wake Forest staff distributed a 12-item survey inviting tournament participants to provide input on Wake Forest's open source platform (Appendix A). Surveys were distributed to each participant, and were available to all those participating at the tournament. The registration staff received 49 responses representing current debaters, assistant coaches, head coaches, and directors. Of the 49 respondents, 35 were debaters, five were assistant coaches, two were coaches, two were directors, two identified as "other," and three did not identify.

Although we will outline themes below, the results suggest that the respondents found open source net beneficial. The two broadest questions asked on the issue of whether open source was net beneficial were whether or not the respondents found the speech

documents helpful and whether or not the respondents had ever utilized the information for assisting in a debate competition. All 30 respondents to the question regarding helpfulness agreed that the information was helpful and only three of 33 respondents had not utilized the information for a debate competition. The open-ended answers provide a better context for which parts of the open source model the respondents found beneficial. We identified three themes within the open ended answers: (1) respondents that found open source helpful for reducing resource disparities; (2) respondents that found open source helpful for improving the quality of arguments; and (3) respondents that found open source helpful for teaching research and argumentation skills.

Respondents consistently articulated that the primary benefit of open source is to help reduce resource disparities. There are plenty of disparities that cannot be remedied through any model of evidence production, including differences in travel budgets, coaching resources, and scholarships, to name a few. However, though the survey did not identify respondents by school size, around 10% self-identified themselves as members of "small schools" and went on to note the ways in which open source has helped their participation in intercollegiate debate. One respondent wrote that "Small squads with limited resources find this invaluable; it is inspiring to our novices and motivation for us to update our own evidence." Another respondent echoed a similar sentiment, "We have two researchers on the team and having this example of research and organization is <u>invaluable</u> to a recovering squad like ours" (original emphasis). Several respondents also wrote that the speech documents were helpful examples for more inexperienced debaters. For example, one respondent noted, "it is extremely helpful in demonstrating argument

diversity to novices while debating for a small school." Commenting specifically on research, one respondent declared, "It allows for easier research for small teams, better strategic knowledge of block responses, and ensures that everything is open rather than restricted." Another respondent added that open source "can guide research efforts and help small schools keep up with research demands." One respondent spoke directly to the question of competitive equity by stating that the primary benefit of open source is, "Leveling the playing field, [by] helping squads with limited coaching generate ideas." As to the prevalence of small schools utilizing open source, one respondent noted, "We debate small schools who utilize Wake's ev[idence] all of the time." Of all of the open-ended answers, the discussion of small schools was the most consistent benefit of open source identified by the respondents.

The second theme is that open source is helpful for improving the quality of arguments. According to the responses, this improvement occurs in two ways. First, open source encourages specificity and deeper knowledge of the topic. One respondent noted, "[open source] allowed us to write specific answers to evidence more quickly than would usually be the case." The respondent went on to write, "It fosters very simple and effective intel sharing, and encourages more specific research and debating." Another respondent wrote that "context for debates is awesome and intel[ligence] sharing makes everyone's args [sic] more specific and better." Along with increased specificity, respondents consistently noted an overall improvement in the quality of the evidence, open source encourages "more access to arguments, [which] allows for better arguments," and that open source "generally raise[s] quality of evidence overall." One of the ways that open source encourages specificity and argument quality is by helping direct

research efforts, as noted by one respondent that wrote that open source, "makes decisions about which cites to cut easier." These responses support a basic claim echoed by another respondent that open source encourages "more depth into the topic."

According to the respondents, the second way that open source helps improve argument quality is by providing more information to help opponents better understand arguments. Several respondents articulated that open source "improves the quality of scouting info." For instance, one respondent wrote, "being able to see highlighting of cards to contextualize arguments is useful. Especially incredibly long cards/args which I have a limited knowledge of." Another respondent wrote that open source was, "beneficial to see the way a particular team highlights evidence for knowledge of how to debate them." According to the respondents, the increased information sharing did not just improve argument comprehension before debates, open source, "allows for better assessments of ev[idence] quality." Other respondents echoed a similar response when noting that open source, "gives insight into card quality." Respondents noted that the culmination of better scouting information and better evidence assessment leads to better argument innovation by providing, "direction for some new research opportunities" while preventing "bad backfile check debates." Writing optimistically about the future of open source, one respondent summarized, "It could force teams to do better research and also allows strategy to take a greater importance."

The last theme is that open source is helpful for improving research and argumentation skills. According to one respondent, open source is "incredibly useful for reconstructing debates for redos and personal speech development." Another respondent noted that open

source "helps make my speeches better through strategic research and by examining these arguments for learning about argument construction." Another respondent wrote that open source, "Help[s] to show how a block can be set up and a round may progress." Finally, a respondent indicated that open source was helpful for teaching debate beyond the confines of intercollegiate policy debate. According to this respondent, open source has been utilized by the instructors at the Detroit Urban Debate League, "for evidence examples" and "research tutorial."

As the above quotations and data demonstrate, many of the responses to the first version of Deacon Source were positive. There were, however, some respondents that expressed concerns with open source. The primary concerns were the same objections raised during the fall 2010 discussion with the Wake Forest debaters—the potential for free riders and the potential for decreased emphasis on research skills. One respondent noted, "It may lead to teams not cutting their own cards…," while another respondent feared that open source, "could lead to no one cutting their own ev[idence] and arguments become [sic] repetitive." Three respondents simply wrote, "freeriders" while another respondent connected both objections by writing, "freeriding reducing [sic] undergrad[uate] research." Although these objections were predictable based on the fall 2010 Wake Forest discussion, they demonstrate that the debate community is very concerned about the relationship between open source and both competitive success and research skills. Interestingly, when asked whether or not the respondent would be interested in participating in open source, 31 of 38 respondents indicated that they were interested, but some feared the competitive risks associated with it. This fear is best summarized by a respondent that wrote, "I think that it is good for debate if the whole community

does [it]. I just don't want the strategic disadvantage of going first."

Although we believe that the data is important for charting the initial response to open source, we believe there are several limitations to the survey data. First, the surveys were distributed by pen and paper at the tournament in order to ensure that the respondents were current participants in intercollegiate debate rather than an online survey which would have included the potential for a broader audience. This introduces the risk of biasing the respondent rate towards those who had more down-time during a tournament to fill out a pen and paper survey, though given the high number of debaters who were respondents; it seems that many time-pressed individuals were able to complete the survey. Second, we recognize that the sample size is a limitation of the study and hope to replicate the study in the future using alternative survey methods to increase the response rate. Finally, this survey was distributed at a time when there was very few institutions participating in open source debating. Now that there are many more institutions involved in open source, participants across the debate community may have formed stronger opinions about the practice.

Conclusion: From Deacon Source to Open Caselist and Beyond

The community response, although limited in scope and size, was on balance positive and supported the idea that open source may be instrumental in helping reduce resource disparities between programs while encouraging argument innovation. The survey results also demonstrated, however, that version 1.0 of Deacon Source was not an ideal platform for organizing and distributing the evidence. There was one suggestion that stood out to the Wake Forest coaching staff: "find a way

to integrate it with the wiki for consolidation purposes." The wiki refers to the online caselist where teams disclose the outlines of their arguments along with their citations. Although the first caselist wiki was started by J.P. Lacy when he was an assistant coach at Wake Forest University in the fall of 2011, the caselist was moved to a new site hosted by Aaron Hardy.[7] The change would be significant since it would remove the need for anyone to go to a separate website to find open source evidence for each squad. In order to integrate Deacon Source into the caselist, Version 2.0 of open source was introduced. The changes included: (1) integrating an entire tournament's worth of speech documents into a .zip file to make for an easier download; (2) separating the .zip files by affirmative and negative along with separations by team for clearer organization; and, finally, (3) uploading the .zip files as attachment to a team entry into the caselist.[8] Version 2.0 enabled consumers to go to one central location to find both citations for non-open source squads and open source evidence in a more organized system.

The move to a more centralized system that was already being used by the vast majority of the debate community came with an additional benefit—greater participation. The ease of attaching a speech document to a caselist entry rather than compiling the speech documents and creating a separate wiki for each institution meant that more debaters were able to participate. As noted in the introduction, the eventual NDT winners from Georgetown University, Andrew Markoff and Andrew Arsht, adopted a full open source platform. Other teams, like Dartmouth College's Zach Elias and Alex Resar, adopted less formal systems but did post entire speech documents from the NDT. For the 2012-2013 season, several institutions including the Baylor University, University of California at Berkeley,

Dartmouth College, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, the University of Wyoming, and several individual teams such as Northwestern's Peyton Lee and Arjun Vellayappan (runner-up for the 2013 Copeland Award and finalists at the 2013 NDT) have adopted full open source systems as well.

In our opinion, the future of open source evidence platforms will largely be determined by technology and software design. Although there does not appear to be much community discussion supporting a "strong version" of open source that would require uploading an argument in advance of deploying it, there is support for developing a database for storing open source evidence.[9] A database would allow users to search, tag, assess, and rate the quality of any particular piece of evidence. The result could be a system of peer review where, over the course of a season, debaters and judges would rate evidence producing a final database of evidence that could be sorted to produce the best evidence on a given part of the college topic. Such a database would also provide countless opportunities for academic connections for the debate community beyond the competition setting. Over the past four years alone, the college policy debate community has scoured the relevant literature and compiled innovative arguments related to the Arab Spring, immigration, nuclear weapons, and agricultural subsidies. Scholars, think tanks, and even policy makers would surely benefit from the intellectual labors of the debate community that are currently relegated to individual squad files. As the open source software community has demonstrated, the future of these innovations will depend on the willingness of programs to participate and the continued efforts of our intellectual community to improve evidence platforms.

Notes

1. This essay, for instance, does not address the important objection that open source debating will reduce the incentive for researchers to go back and re-read the original source in its entirety. We did not exclude this argument because it is not an important objection, but simply because it was not a part of the original squad deliberation. For more discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of open source debating broadly, see Casey Harrigan's essay "Open Source Debating: A Difficult Decision."

2. Although the wiki is no longer the central location for open source documents, it can still be accessed at: http://deaconsource.wikispaces.com/.

3. In high school, Bronx Science High School's Andrew Markoff and Zach Elias were one of the first teams to post the full text of their evidence online. As the introduction notes, Andrew Markoff would later become the first team to win the NDT debating open source. In college debate, Gonzaga University's Abe Corrigan and James Joseph were one of the first teams to post the full text of their first affirmative constructive online.

4. The NDCA's open evidence project can be found here: http://www.debatecoaches.org/page/open-evidence-project/.

5. It is important to note that, both before the Wake Forest decision to go open source and after, there have been highly successful debate teams that do not rely on traditional forms of evidence for competitive success.

6. The question was removed from the community survey for the 2000s.

7. The current college caselist is located at: <u>http://opencaselist.paperlessdebate.com/xwiki/wiki/opencaselist/</u>.

8. Version 2.0 for Wake Forest can be found here: http://opencaselist.paperlessdebate.com/xwiki/wiki/opencaselist/view/Wake+Forest/WebHome.

9. See the discussion here: http://www.cedadebate.org/forum/index.php?topic=3582.0;wap2.

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Appendix

You are invited to participate in a research study about the Wake Forest Open Source website and resources. Completion of this survey should take approximately 15 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question(s) you do not wish to for any reason or discontinue your participation at any time.

1. How often do you visit the Wake Forest Open Source website: http://deaconsource.wikispaces.com/?

2. Have you ever downloaded speeches from the Wake Forest Open source website?

If you answered question #2 "no" skip to question #8?

4. Did you find the information helpful? If so, why?

5. Have you used the information for any teaching activities? If so, how?

6. Have you used the information for any coaching activities? If so, how?

7. Have you used the information for intercollegiate debate competitions? If so, how?

8. What concerns, if any, do you have with the Wake Forest Open Source project?

9. In your opinion, what are the benefits, if any, with the Wake Forest Open Source project?

10. What improvements, if any, would you suggest for the Wake Forest Open Source project?

11. Would you consider participating in an Open Source project? Why or Why not?

12. Please indicate your association with the 2011 Franklin R. Shirley Classic debate tournament:

_____ Intercollegiate debater participating in tournament.

_____ Director of a debate program.

_____ Coach of a debate program.

_____ Assistant Coach of a debate program.

_____ Other: _____

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