

CASE STUDY: ONE EVENT, TWO GENRES

Arch Collapse at a National Park

In this case study, two writers report on a single event. One writes a press release, the other a blog post.

The event: In August 2008, a rock formation in Utah's famous Arches National Park collapses.

The writers:

- » **Paul Henderson**, a ranger at the park who also wrote press releases
- » **Shaan Hurley**, a blogger and fan of the park who had hiked and photographed it

The compositions:

- » "Wall Arch Collapses," a press release by Paul Henderson
- » "The Wall Arch Collapses in Arches National Park," a blog post by Shaan Hurley

As you'll see, Henderson and Hurley provide much of the same information about the arch collapse, but they write in different genres, and with different purposes and audiences in mind. The notes in the margins of each piece explain their rhetorical situations and how they work within the conventions of the press release and the blog post.

Think of a current issue. How is the issue covered in different genres—for example, in a news report, an editorial, documentary footage, and a comic strip?

Guided Reading: Press Release

Paul Henderson

Wall Arch Collapses

At the time of the collapse, Paul Henderson was chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services for Arches National Park, which is managed by the National Park Service, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. When the arch collapsed, Henderson was interviewed by news outlets, including MSNBC, which also quoted from the press release on page 18.

(Image on page 18 courtesy of National Park Service.)

What is the
composer, **Paul
Henderson**,
doing?

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Purpose
Audience
Rhetorical appeals
Modes & media

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How do I
know this is a
press release?

THE GENRE'S CONVENTIONS

Elements of the genre
Style
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Arches
National Park
Utah

Wall Arch Collapses



Date: August 8, 2008 [Subscribe](#)  [What is RSS](#)

Contact: Paul Henderson, 435-719-2140

Wall Arch, located along the popular Devils Garden Trail at Arches National Park collapsed sometime during the night of August 4, 2008. Rock has continued to fall from the arms of the remaining portion of the arch necessitating the closure of the Devils Garden Trail just beyond Landscape Arch.

On August 7, 2008, representatives from both the National Park Service Geologic Resources Division and the Utah Geological Survey visited the site and noted obvious stress fractures in the remaining formation. Rock debris has completely blocked this section of the trail. The closure will remain in effect until visitor safety issues can be resolved.

First reported and named by Lewis T. McKinney in 1948, Wall Arch was a free standing arch in the Slickrock member of the Entrada sandstone. The opening beneath the span was 71-feet wide and 33-1/2 feet high. It ranked 12th in size among the over 2,000 known arches in the park.

All arches are but temporary features and all will eventually succumb to the forces of gravity and erosion. While the geologic forces that created the arches are still very much underway, in human terms it's rare to observe such dramatic changes.

No one has reported observing the arch collapse and there were no visitor injuries.

Guided Reading: Blog Post

Shaan Hurley

The Wall Arch Collapses in Arches National Park

Blogger Shaan Hurley has a background in mechanical design and works in the field of technology. *All Things Autodesk & Technology* is Hurley's personal blog; he also posts on Twitter. He posted the following entry in August 2008. (Image courtesy of Shaan Hurley at Autodesk.)

What is the
composer,
Shaan Hurley,
doing?

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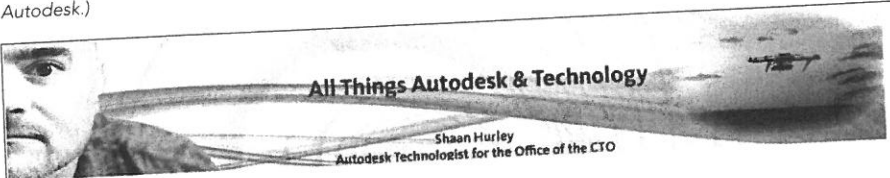
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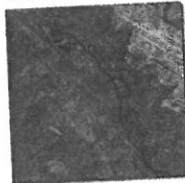


The Wall Arch Collapses in Arches National Park

Almost one year ago to the week I was in the beautiful and world famous Arches National Park which is little more than 4 hours drive from my home in Utah. Just this week perhaps Tuesday one of the famous sandstone arches fell. Wall Arch is now Wall Pile. While Wall Arch was not the most spectacular or stunning, it was a beautiful arch.



Arches are formed by an ever changing nature and erosion and leave us with only a small window of geological time in which to marvel at the arches before they succumb to gravity. Who knows, perhaps another arch was born that we have not seen in the past year as well. Last year while I was photographing many of the arches and absolutely enjoying the natural beauty and silence in between the tourist buses,



I hiked back to Landscape arch which itself had suffered a partial collapse in 1991. Since it was so hot that day and I figured I would get back there again soon I did not hike the remaining quarter mile to photograph Wall Arch by the Devils Garden. Now I will not have the opportunity to photograph Wall Arch except the remnants on the ground. It is another example of how things you take for granted may disappear.

If you ever have the chance to Visit the Moab, Utah region or Southern Utah you should do so as it is beyond words and one of the reasons I know call this state home. This is photography heaven for color and so many varied landscape and rare geography. One of the other things I love about the area is the history of the Fremont people from thousands of years ago leaving their art on the rock walls and then last but not least Green River Utah having the world's best watermelon when hiking in 100+ deg F. weather. If you are ever in Utah let me know as I am always happy to get an excuse to head to Moab and love showing the hidden gems beyond the tourist trails.

Here are a couple of my photos from the hike back on August 4th 2007 in Arches National Park. I still have hundreds of photos yet to publish. It may sound odd for someone to see some sense of loss in what to some may just be a sandstone structure born of erosion but if you have ever been there in the silence and the vibrant glow of red at twilight you would understand the magic of the area. This is nature's art and landscape at it's finest.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bt1/>

Never take for granted who or what you can see today, you may not have the opportunity tomorrow.

Have a great weekend,

Shaan

Questions: Analyzing Paul Henderson's press release and
Shaan Hurley's blog post

Compare the rhetorical situations on Henderson and Hurley by addressing the following constituents for each:

- exigence
 - What is the discourse about? (who, what, where when, why)
 - Why is it needed?
 - What should it accomplish?
- audience
 - who are they? what do you know about them? what do they know about you?
 - what do they know/not know about your topic?
 - can be known, multiple, or unknown
 - what biases, values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, etc. do they hold?
- rhetors
 - who is the writer? what do we know about them?
 - who is the typical rhetor (author) of this genre?
- constraints
 - work either for or against the rhetor's objectives
 - Grant-Davie defines constraints as "all factors in the situation, aside from the rhetor and the audience, that may lead the audience to be either more or less sympathetic to the discourse, and that may therefore influence the rhetor's response to the situation"