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## National Debate Tournament Records

1949-1994  
44 boxes (23.25 linear feet)  
Call no.: MS 017



- [About SCUA](#)
  - [SCUA home](#)
  - [Credo digital](#)
- [Scope](#)
- [Inventory](#)
  - [Series 1. Audiovisual](#)
  - [Series 2. Ballots and records](#)
- [Admin info](#)
- [Download](#)
  - [xml version](#)
  - [print version \(pdf\)](#)

[Read collection overview](#)

The National Debate Tournament is one of the national championships for collegiate debating in the United States, seeking to exemplify excellence in scholarship, research, and argument. Originating at West Point in 1947 with twenty-nine teams, the Tournament now includes over eighty teams, with the site of the finals rotating annually among member schools.

The collections consists mostly of tournament booklets, ballots, correspondence, committee minutes, and tapes of the debates with accompanying transcripts.

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### Background on National Debate Tournament



Debaters, 1970

The National Debate Tournament is one of the national championships for collegiate debating in the United States, seeking to exemplify excellence in scholarship, research, and argument. The Tournament originated at the United States Military Academy (West Point) in 1947, where it grew out of a dual desire among the Academy's leadership for extra-curricular activities for the cadets and for expanding offerings in the liberal arts. The concept of a national tournament was greeted avidly outside the Academy, so that when the first tournament was held, it included twenty-nine teams distributed in five seeding rounds and four elimination rounds over a three-day period.

During the early years, debate rules were set largely by West Point administrators -- particularly Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor and Col. G. A. Lincoln -- with input from well-known collegiate coaches such as A. Craig Baird (University of Iowa), G. M. Musgrave (Des Moines), Alan Nichols (Southern California), E. R. Nichols (Redlands), and Joseph O'Brien (Penn State). Since the American Forensic Association took over responsibility for the tournament in 1967, however, a committee elected by member schools has been charged with overseeing development, rules, and procedures. The tournament has grown steadily, reaching nearly eighty teams in 2015, and the debate venue has rotated to a different school each year, with a few sites hosted more than once. The member schools work closely with the national committee to select a single national question or resolution on a matter of current public concern that will be debated for the entire academic year.

Both eligibility to participate and the form of the debate have evolved over the years as the Tournament has grown in size. While teams could originally be admitted either by invitation or by winning a district tournament, qualifying tournaments have been added in most districts, along with both post-district and pre-district at-large bids.

## Scope of collection

The collections consists mostly of tournament booklets, ballots, correspondence, committee minutes, and audio or videotapes of the debates with accompanying transcripts.

## Inventory

### Series 1. Audiovisual

1949-1994

National Debate Tournament final rounds: Audiovisual

Box 1

Audio cassettes

1957-1988

Box 1

Available are tapes of the debate finals for 1957-1984 and 1987-1988, and of several types of speech finals ("After Dinner Speaker," "Informative," "Impromptu" and others) from 1986.

Videotapes

1986, 1996

Box 1

Transcripts (lacking 1951, 1953, 1954, 1961-1963)

1949-1966

Box 41

Bibliography of published transcripts

1967-1983

Box 1

National Debate Tournament, other rounds: tapes

1986-

Box 1

Series 2. Ballots and records

1950-1994

Debates for 1950-1966

1950-1966

Post-tournament booklet

1950

Box 2  
Pre-tournament booklets  
1951-1959  
Box 2  
Photos  
1959  
Box 2  
Pre-tournament booklets  
1960-1966  
Box 2  
Post-tournament booklets  
1964-1966  
Box 2  
American Forensic Association: 20th anniversary luncheon  
undated  
Box 2  
Debate for 1967  
1967  
Awards, cards, and certificates of participation  
1967  
Box 3  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1967  
Box 3  
Booklet with records  
1967  
Box 3  
Correspondence: awards  
1967  
Box 3  
Photos (with negatives)  
1967  
Box 3  
Procedures proposals, memoranda on rules  
1967  
Box 3  
Debate for 1968  
1968  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1968  
Box 3  
Booklet with preliminary round summary sheets  
1968  
Box 3  
Correspondence: general  
1968  
Box 3  
Form letters to participating teams  
1968  
Box 3  
Judges lists  
1968  
Box 3  
National Debate Tournament charter and letters on Washington and Lee  
1968  
Box 3  
Certificate of participation  
1968  
Box 3  
Debate for 1969  
1969  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1969  
Box 3  
Booklet with preliminary round summary sheets  
1969  
Box 3  
Correspondence: districts 1, 3-6, 8  
1969  
Box 3  
Correspondence: general  
1969  
Box 3  
Form letters to participating teams and judges  
1969  
Box 3  
Mailing lists of schools interested in National Debate Tournament  
1969  
Box 3  
National Debate Tournament minutes  
1969  
Box 3  
Debate for 1970  
1970  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1970  
Box 4  
Booklet  
1970  
Box 4  
Budget estimates and final budget  
1970  
Box 4  
Correspondence: districts 2, 7, 8  
1970  
Box 4  
Correspondence: other (letters from Matheny)  
1970  
Box 4  
Form letters and information about Tournament  
1970  
Box 4  
National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1970  
Box 4  
Photos: Tournament activities  
1970  
Box 4  
Certificate of participation  
1970  
Box 4  
Debate for 1971  
1971  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1971  
Box 5  
Booklet  
1971  
Box 5  
Budget estimates and final budget  
1971  
Box 5  
Correspondence: Budget  
1971  
Box 5  
Correspondence: to Edward Brown regarding Tournament ethics  
1971  
Box 5  
Correspondence: trophies  
1971  
Box 5  
Correspondence: National Debate Tournament trustees  
1971  
Box 5  
National Debate Tournament Committee minutes  
1971  
Box 5  
Certificate of participation  
1971  
Box 5  
Photographs  
1971  
Box 5  
Debate for 1972  
1972  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1972  
Box 6  
Bid allocations: committee report  
1972  
Box 6  
Booklet  
1972  
Box 6  
Budget estimates and final budget  
1972  
Box 6  
Correspondence: American Forensic Association grant of \$1,500  
1972  
Box 6  
Correspondence: Districts 1-4 and lists of qualifying teams and tournaments  
1972  
Box 6  
Correspondence: general (includes Lehman's letter of resignation as National Debate Tournament director)  
1972  
Box 6  
Correspondence: Post-tournament  
1972  
Box 6  
Correspondence: National Debate Tournament trustees  
1972  
Box 6  
Form letters to teams and judges  
1972  
Box 6  
Photograph of hotel  
1972  
Box 6  
National Debate Tournament Committee minutes  
1972  
Box 6  
National Debate Tournament Newsletter  
1972  
Box 6  
Certificate of participation  
1972  
Box 6  
Power-matching suggestions  
1972  
Box 6  
Correspondence: trophies  
1972  
Box 6  
Debate for 1973  
1973  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1973  
Box 7  
Booklet  
1973  
Box 8  
Budget estimates and final budget  
1973  
Box 8  
Results from Districts 2-6, 9  
1973

Box 8  
Form letters for teams and judges

1973  
Box 8

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1973  
Box 8

National Debate Tournament judges data sheets

1973  
Box 8

National Debate Tournament qualifiers: list of teams and coaches

1973  
Box 8

National Debate Tournament subscribers

1973  
Box 8

National Debate Tournament judges (candidates)

1973  
Box 8

Debate for 1974

1974  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1974  
Box 9

Booklet

1974  
Box 9

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1974  
Box 9

Debate for 1975

1975  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1975  
Box 10

Booklet

1975  
Box 10

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1975  
Box 10

Debate for 1976

1976  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1976  
Box 11

Booklet

1976  
Box 11

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1976  
Box 11

Debate for 1977

1977  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1977  
Box 12

Booklet

1977  
Box 12

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1977  
Box 12

Debate for 1978

1978  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1978  
Box 12

Booklet

1978  
Box 12

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1978  
Box 12

Debate for 1979

1979  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1979  
Box 12

Booklet

1979  
Box 12

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1979  
Box 12

Debate for 1980

1980  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1980  
Box 13

Booklet

1980  
Box 13

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1980  
Box 13

Debate for 1981

1981  
Ballots: elimination rounds

1981  
Box 13

Booklet

1981  
Box 13

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

1981  
Box 13

Box 13  
Debate for 1982  
1982  
Advance information to qualifying teams  
1982  
Box 14  
At-large results: lists first and second round teams  
1982  
Box 14  
Correspondence: awards  
1982  
Box 14  
Booklet revisions and information on elimination  
1982  
Box 14  
Conflict of interest forms for judges  
1982  
Box 14  
Correspondence: Ford Foundation regarding National Debate Tournament alumni  
1982  
Box 14  
District tournament results  
1982  
Box 14  
Elimination round strike sheets  
1982  
Box 14  
First round applications  
1982  
Box 14  
Fund-raising booklet, with memos and letters  
1982  
Box 14  
Guest judge forms and information sheet  
1982  
Box 14  
Host booklet  
1982  
Box 14  
Judge forms  
1982  
Box 14  
National Debate Tournament Committee minutes  
1982  
Box 14  
Newsletter  
1982  
Box 14  
Correspondence: Ownership of final round  
1982  
Box 14  
Schedule drafts  
1982  
Box 15  
Second round bid applications  
1982  
Box 15  
Site information  
1982  
Box 15  
Speaker cards  
1982  
Box 15  
Team and coach information for booklet  
1982  
Box 15  
Tournament evaluation report  
1982  
Box 15  
Team and judge cards  
1982  
Box 15  
Tournament procedures  
1982  
Box 15  
Schedule drafts  
1982  
Box 15  
Second round bid applications  
1982  
Box 15  
Site information  
1982  
Box 15  
Speaker cards  
1982  
Box 15  
Team and coach information for booklet  
1982  
Box 15  
Tournament evaluation report  
1982  
Box 15  
Team and judge cards  
1982  
Box 15  
Tournament procedures  
1982  
Box 15  
Elimination round judge preference sheets  
1982  
Box 16  
Elimination round judge preference sheets

1982  
Box 16  
Preliminary round judge sheets  
1982  
Box 16  
Debate for 1983  
1983  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1983  
Box 16  
Advance information  
1983  
Box 17  
Awards  
1983  
Box 17  
At-large ranking for preliminary rounds  
1983  
Box 17  
Booklet  
1983  
Box 17  
National Debate Tournament charter and by-laws  
1983  
Box 17  
Conflict of interest forms  
1983  
Box 17  
Correspondence: general  
1983  
Box 17  
Development fund brochure  
1983  
Box 17  
Director: search correspondence  
1983  
Box 17  
Elimination round seedings  
1983  
Box 17  
First round applications  
1983  
Box 17  
Guest judge forms  
1983  
Box 17  
Correspondence: IRS and tax status  
1983  
Box 17  
Judging philosophy booklet  
1983  
Box 17  
Legal status  
1983  
Box 17  
National Debate Tournament minutes  
1983  
Box 17  
Newsletters  
1982-1983  
Box 17  
Round-by-round pairings  
1983  
Box 17  
Tournament rules  
1983  
Box 18  
Second round bid applications  
1983  
Box 18  
Speaker cards  
1983  
Box 18  
National Debate Tournament subscribers  
1983  
Box 18  
Tab room forms  
1983  
Box 18  
Tournament evaluation surveys  
1983  
Box 18  
At-large committee rankings  
1983  
Box 18  
Elimination round panels  
1983  
Box 18  
Elimination round preference forms  
1983  
Box 18  
Preliminary round results  
1983  
Box 18  
Debate for 1984  
1984  
Ballots: elimination rounds  
1984  
Box 19  
Booklet  
1984  
Box 19  
Ballots: elimination rounds (pink ballots)

1984  
Box 20  
Preliminary round results  
1984  
Box 20  
Advance information packet  
1984  
Box 21: 1  
Assembly announcements  
1984  
Box 21: 2  
At-large composite rankings  
1984  
Box 21: 3  
Awards  
1984  
Box 21: 4  
Booklet insert sheet  
1984  
Box 21: 5  
National Debate Tournament budget  
1984  
Box 21: 6  
National Debate Tournament charter and rules master  
1984  
Box 21: 7  
Correspondence: Church (100 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 21: 8  
Correspondence: Hazen (130 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 21: 9  
Correspondence: Johnson  
1984  
Box 21: 10  
Correspondence: McGuire  
1984  
Box 21: 11  
Correspondence: Southworth (110 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 21: 12  
Correspondence: Other (140 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 21: 13  
District tournament results  
1984  
Box 21: 14  
Elimination round striking cards  
1984  
Box 21: 15  
Elimination round strike sheets  
1984  
Box 21: 16  
First round at-large bids  
1984  
Box 21: 17  
Guest judge forms  
1984  
Box 21: 18  
Guest judge information packet  
1984  
Box 21: 19  
Hotel facilities for Tournament events  
1984  
Box 21: 20  
Judge cards and speaker cards  
1984  
Box 21: 21  
Judging obligations  
1984  
Box 22: 22  
Master copies of forms  
1984  
Box 22: 23  
Master transparencies for judge assignments  
1984  
Box 22: 24  
Newsletters  
1983-1984  
Box 22: 25  
Newsletter 2  
1984  
Box 22: 26  
Newsletter 3  
1983-1984  
Box 22: 27  
Participant roster  
1984  
Box 22: 28  
Preliminary results sheet  
1984  
Box 22: 29  
Preliminary round pairing copies  
1984  
Box 22: 30  
Preliminary strike sheets  
1984  
Box 22: 31  
Preliminary subscription notice (201 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 22: 32  
Room assignment data  
1984

Box 22: 33  
Rosters (010 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 22: 34  
Schematic for pairing round one  
1984  
Box 22: 35  
Second round at-large bids  
1984  
Box 22: 36  
Site selection: Tennessee (301 National Debate Tournament)  
1984  
Box 22: 37  
Subscription list  
1983-1984  
Box 22: 38  
Team card transparencies  
1984  
Box 22: 39  
Team Coach data forms  
1984  
Box 22: 40  
Booklet  
1984  
Box 22: 41  
Evaluation forms  
1984  
Box 22: 42  
Rules and regulations  
1984  
Box 22: 43  
Debate for 1985  
1985  
Tournament ballots  
1985  
Box 23: 44-52  
Tournament ballots  
1985  
Box 24: 53-57  
Tournament records  
1985  
Box 25  
Tournament records  
1985  
Box 26  
Debate for 1986  
1986  
Tournament ballots  
1986  
Box 27  
Tournament records  
1986  
Box 28  
Tournament records  
1986  
Box 29  
Debate for 1987  
1987  
Tournament ballots  
1987  
Box 30  
Debate for 1988  
1988  
Tournament ballots  
1988  
Box 31  
Tournament records  
1988  
Box 32  
Tournament records  
1988  
Box 33  
Tournament records  
1988  
Box 34  
Budget statements  
1988  
Box 35  
Finances: recorded  
1988  
Box 35  
Request forms  
1988  
Box 35  
Originals  
1988  
Box 35  
Charter and standing rules  
1988  
Box 35  
Rules and regulations  
1988  
Box 35  
Correspondence: Scott  
1988  
Box 35  
Correspondence: Kauffman  
1988  
Box 35  
Correspondence: Henderson  
1988  
Box 35  
Correspondence: Rhodes

1988  
Box 35  
Correspondence: Southworth  
1988  
Box 35  
Correspondence: Other  
1988  
Box 35  
Site selection: Weber State  
1988  
Box 35  
Subscription invitation cover letter  
1988  
Box 35  
Current subscribers  
1988  
Box 35  
Master subscription list  
1988  
Box 35  
Newsletter 1  
1988  
Box 35  
Newsletter 2  
1988  
Box 35  
First round at-large bids  
1988  
Box 35  
Second round at-large bids  
1988  
Box 35  
At-large rankings  
1988  
Box 35  
Participant roster  
1988  
Box 35  
Team Coach data  
1988  
Box 35  
Tournament forms (copies)  
1988  
Box 35  
Advance information packet  
1988  
Box 35  
At-large qualification packet  
1988  
Box 35  
District tournament information  
1988  
Box 36  
Guest judges packet  
1988  
Box 36  
Tournament schedule  
1988  
Box 36  
Booklet preparation  
1988  
Box 36  
Booklet  
1988  
Box 36  
Tab room supply  
1988  
Box 36  
Tab room proceedings  
1988  
Box 36  
Hotel facilities  
1988  
Box 36  
Room assignment data  
1988  
Box 36  
Round one schematic  
1988  
Box 36  
Preliminary round strike sheets  
1988  
Box 36  
Team card transparencies  
1988  
Box 36  
Master judge assignment transparencies  
1988  
Box 36  
Preliminary pairing copies  
1988  
Box 36  
Guest judge forms  
1988  
Box 36  
Conflict of interest forms  
1988  
Box 36  
Announcement of assemblies  
1988  
Box 36  
Judge and speaker cards  
1988

Box 36  
Preliminary results sheet  
1988  
Box 37  
Elimination round strike sheets  
1988  
Box 37  
Elimination bracket  
1988  
Box 37  
Elimination strike cards  
1988  
Box 37  
Tournament evaluation forms  
1988  
Box 37  
National Debate Tournament Committee minutes  
1988  
Box 37  
National Debate Tournament Trustees  
1988  
Box 37  
Alumni newsletter  
1988  
Box 37  
Ballots  
1988  
Box 37  
Ballots  
1988  
Box 38  
Ballots  
1988  
Box 39  
Debates for 1992-1994  
1992-1994  
Booklet  
1992  
Box 40  
Booklet, results, judges' philosophy booklet  
1993  
Box 40  
Elimination round preference sheets  
1993  
Box 40  
Preliminary strike sheets  
1993  
Box 40  
Preference sheets  
1993  
Box 40  
Booklet, judges' philosophy booklet  
1994  
Box 40  
First round at-large applications  
1994  
Box 40  
Second-round at-large applications  
1994  
Box 40  
Judge preference sheets  
1994  
Box 40  
Judge conflict of interest forms  
1994  
Box 40  
Ballots  
1994  
Box 40

## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Gift of National Debate Tournament, 1984-1994.

### Processing Information

Processed by Rita Miller, 1985, and H. D. Smith, 2015.

### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use ([More information](#))

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## Search terms

### Subjects

- American Forensic Association
- Debates and debating

### Contributors

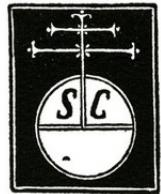
- National Debate Tournament [main entry]

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