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National Debate Tournament Records

1949-1994

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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

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

Audiocassettes

1957-1985

Box 1

Videotapes

1986-1988

Box 1

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

1949-1966

Box 1

Bibliography of published transcripts

1967-1983

Box 1

National Debate Tournament, other rounds: tapes

1986-

Box 1

Series 2. Ballots and records



Debaters, 1970

1950-1994
Debates for 1950-1966
1950-1966
Post-tournament booklet
1950
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Pre-tournament booklets
1951-1959
Box 2
Photos
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Pre-tournament booklets
1960-1966
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Post-tournament booklets
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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
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Box 3
Booklet with records
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Box 3
Correspondence: awards
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Box 3
Photos (with negatives)
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Box 3
Procedures proposals, memoranda on rules
1967
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Debate for 1968
1968
Ballots: elimination rounds
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Box 3
Booklet with preliminary round summary sheets
1968
Box 3
Correspondence: general
1968
Box 3
Form letters to participating teams
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Box 3
Judges lists
1968
Box 3
National Debate Tournament charter and letters on Washington and Lee

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Box 3
Certificate of participation
1968
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Debate for 1969
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Ballots: elimination rounds
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Booklet with preliminary round summary sheets
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Correspondence: districts 1, 3-6, 8
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Mailing lists of schools interested in National Debate Tournament
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Box 4
Booklet
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Budget estimates and final budget
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National Debate Tournament Committee minutes
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Photos: Tournament activities
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Ballots: elimination rounds

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Budget estimates and final budget

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Box 5

Correspondence: Budget

1971

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Correspondence: to Edward Brown regarding Tournament ethics

1971

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Correspondence: trophies

1971

Box 5

Correspondence: National Debate Tournament trustees

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Box 5

National Debate Tournament Committee minutes

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Box 5

Certificate of participation

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Box 5

Photographs

1971

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Debate for 1972

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Ballots: elimination rounds

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Box 6

Bid allocations: committee report

1972

Box 6

Booklet

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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

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Box 6

National Debate Tournament Newsletter

1972

Box 6

Certificate of participation

1972

Box 6

Power-matching suggestions

1972

Box 6

Correspondence: trophies

1972

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Debate for 1973

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Ballots: elimination rounds

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National Debate Tournament judges data sheets

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National Debate Tournament qualifiers: list of teams and coaches

1973

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Correspondence: Ford Foundation regarding National Debate Tournament alumni
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Host booklet
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Correspondence: Ownership of final round
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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

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