

ORAL TRADITION AND THE A.F.S.

Ever since William Wells Newell discarded his concept of folklore as survival in favor of folklore as oral tradition, oral tradition seems to have served as the prime medium for the dissemination of information in the A.F.S. No doubt oral means of communication, in a society devoted to the investigation of oral processes, had a certain quaintness-value and even exhibited a measure of usefulness back in those days when the devotees of the discipline constituted a Gemeinschaft society. However, the 1970 meetings in Los Angeles have more than adequately demonstrated that our transition from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft is virtually complete. Concerned members of the A.F.S. no longer enjoy those kinds of relationships that allow for the oral dissemination of information with any degree of efficiency. Not only does the proverbial right hand not know what the left is doing; its state is such that it is no longer certain that it is the right hand. Consequently, our annual business meeting increasingly resembles a group therapy session for manic-depressives.

The Society has grown too large and informal means of communication are no longer adequate. Communication in the A.F.S. must be formalized (not to be confused with formularized). As folklorists concerned with the activities of the Society, we require the regular dissemination of information, preferably in newsletter form. (Besides, newsletters will provide excellent source material for future generations of intellectual historians). At business meetings we should no longer be suprised by motions made from the floor, Executive commitments, fiscal prognoses and Shanghai gestures. No longer should we have to formulate opinions or support, oppose or propose motions on the basis of no-information. Furthurmore, knowledge of the activities of the Executive throughout the year should not be the sole property of those who received their Ph.D.'s between 1962 and 1966.

The FORUM would be delighted to serve as the organ for regular reports and retorts concerning A.F.S. matters, but unfortunately our circulation is not quite congruent with A.F.S. membership. The A.F.S. must establish a newsletter which is regularly dispatched to all its membership. This should help eradicate the information differential in the Society by informing everyone what is being planned, what is being done, and who is being done in.