

SUMMARY

Writing handbooks have long been a much favoured outlet of prescriptive injunctions about grammar and style (Allen 1935, 1953, Christensen 1954, Mackiewicz 1999, Myers 1995). The first decades of last century saw the development in the North American higher education context of a new genre of university-oriented writing textbooks – business communication handbooks. In addition to grammatical and stylistic norms of usage, these textbooks featured business communication norms that, as the genre developed in the 20th century, turned into a new prescriptive canon. This paper analyses a corpus of university business communication textbooks published in the USA over the last 100 years in order to investigate how prescriptive norms have been represented and have developed in the past century.