



FAITH IN BOOKS: U.S. NAVY CHAPLAINS & ASSISTANTS SERVING AS LIBRARIANS AT SEA.

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Introduction

Since the inception of the first shipboard library, chaplains have greatly benefited the Navy as library officers due to their important contributions of morale and promotion of learning through education.

Role of Chaplain

Role evolved from combination of spiritual leader, educator, morale officer, and ships librarian.

Commissioned officer.

Bridges gap between officer and enlisted class structure.

Provides faith and comfort to all naval personnel.

Serve as agents for change.

Provides functional, gainful, moral, and educational support.

Provides an extension of trust not available elsewhere at sea.

Designated library officer by the commanding officer, current naval directives, and their history in the promotion of learning.

Responsible for the administration of a general library at sea.

Role of the Chaplain's Assistant

Assigned to duty from the enlisted class.

Serves, supports, and assists chaplains of all faiths assigned to ships.

Assists the chaplain in their library duties by running and maintaining the library in accordance with the standards set by the Navy General Library Program (NGLP).



Purpose of the Shipboard Library

Cited as a major contributor of morale.

Operated by the ship's chaplain and assistant.

Provides information and support to all classes of military personnel.

Promotes leisure and education.

Provides a wide range of materials in a highly-concentrated environment.

History of the Shipboard Library

1778 – First chaplain serves at sea in Continental Navy.

1799 – Navy commissions first chaplain.

1802 – Navy regulations dictate chaplain's duties, which include schoolmaster duties to midshipmen.

1814 – Chaplains authorized aboard 74 gunships-of-the-line.

1821 – First shipboard library aboard USS *Franklin*. Chaplain serves as librarian.

1828 – Navy General Library Program (NGLP) assumes responsibility of shipboard libraries.

1916 – Chaplain's rank and pay on par with other officers.

1942 – WWII creates need for temporary enlisted chaplain assistant specialists serving in the Navy.

1948 – U.S. Navy creates enlisted Personnelman rating for personnel administration in offices, including the chaplain and ship's library.

1978 – Navy establishes permanent enlisted chaplain assistant to serve chaplains at sea, ashore, and Fleet Marine Force (FMF) units, as well as libraries on ships and shore.



Conclusion

Chaplains greatly benefit the Navy as library officers due to their important contributions of morale and promotion of learning through education. Without chaplains in charge of libraries, their importance would be undervalued and the shipboard library that provides so much to so many might have never existed.