

**Faith in Books:
The U.S. Navy's Chaplains & Assistants Serving as Librarians at Sea.**

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Introduction

When one thinks of military libraries, the first thing that probably comes to mind is that of a civilian, one with a master's degree in library science working at a base, post, or station library. Let's not forget the five military service academies providing undergraduate studies for midshipmen and cadets, and the professional graduate and post-graduate military colleges for those holding officer's commissions. Yet one may never consider the military has libraries at sea. While Navy ships provide many forms of recreation to sailors and marines at sea, one of the morale items often overlooked and not really considered outside the military establishment is the shipboard library. Depending on the type of ship, libraries range from small bookshelves to fully-operational libraries in their own dedicated compartments. On large draft vessels, these libraries are run by a chaplain who is a commissioned naval officer and the chaplain's enlisted assistant.

The intent of this research is to provide a general overview and historical account of the U.S. Navy's need for a chaplain and how that purpose expanded into the role of educator, morale officer, and more importantly, that of librarian. Further interrogating is information related to procuring an assistant and managing a U.S. Navy shipboard library. The goal of this research is to define the purpose of the shipboard library and the roles of the chaplain and assistant providing these library services. Research was conducted through reviews of military and naval correspondence, training manuals, guides, regulations, handbooks, instructions, orders, and literature dating from 1909 to the present.

The Navy Gains Shipboard Libraries

Interestingly, the concept of libraries aboard U.S. Navy ships is not a new idea. As a matter of fact, the very "first ship's library was placed aboard the warship USS *Franklin* in 1821. This venture was initiated by Mr. William Wood, a New York philanthropist."¹ Of interest is the fact that "shipboard libraries of that era were among the first projects sponsored by Navy chaplains to improve the social and moral condition of naval personnel. Similarly, the promotion

¹ Rick Dyksterhouse, et. al., *Religious Program Specialist (RP)*. (Columbia, South Carolina: Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, 2013), 8-1 – 8-2 (335-336).

of learning was among one of the chaplain's earliest collateral duties."² And while the idea, concept, and placement of libraries aboard Navy ships started relatively small, their momentum spread and the crews fell into favor with them because of the morale they provided. But the establishment of each library was a private affair, with the full success determined by the ship's commanding officer. If the commanding officer did not want one, they just did not have one. But in the span of a few short years, things changed.

Prior to the establishment of the shipboard library during the early days of the U.S. Navy, personal time was an extremely precious commodity. While some sailors and marines had hobbies such as scrimshawing or woodcarving, many others did not, and so passing the time away was an arduous affair. There was not much to do other than sit down, take a nap, or talk with one another. "The initial thrill of sailing the seas and seeing the world from a gleaming ship was chilled by the isolation of days and weeks spent outside the sight of land. 'Loneliness' and 'boredom' took on new meanings."³ Libraries aboard ships changed everything by promoting morale, education, and productivity, and ever since have "been an essential element in meeting the educational, information, communication, professional, and recreational needs of commands and of individual personnel."⁴ These boosters of morale provided a place of respite and comfort, and the chaplain was "instrumental in the establishment"⁵ and successful operation of them. While libraries aboard modern steel-hulled destroyers, cruisers, transports, and aircraft carriers differ tremendously in the physical and technological sense compared to their earlier wood-planked counterparts during the age of sail, their purpose is no different than one might imagine.

The Navy chaplain became a librarian while serving in his primary role of faith giver because of low morale among the enlisted class assigned to their ship. A requirement was one must be a commissioned officer, but neither of the line or staff corps officers wanted the duty,

² Ibid., 8-1 – 8-2 (335-336).

³ Molly Guptill Manning, *When Books Went to War: The Stories That Helped Us Win World War II*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2014), xiii.

⁴ Rick Dyksterhouse, et. al., *Religious Program Specialist (RP)*. (Columbia, South Carolina: Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, 2013), 8-2 – 8-3 (336-337).

⁵ Ibid., 8-2 – 8-3 (336-337).

and since the chaplain had previously served as the ship's schoolmaster and teacher, it seemed like a good idea to blend the two as one in order to serve one unified purpose. Chaplains literally served "as agents for change. From the earliest days of the Navy, chaplains have sought to improve conditions aboard ship. During the nineteenth century they championed good morals, established libraries, opposed flogging as a means of punishment, and urged the elimination of the serving of grog aboard ship."⁶ They were even a force in the establishment of "shore schools such as the U.S. Naval Academy"⁷ Due to these factors, the chaplain generally had a greater rapport with the enlisted men because they were someone with whom they could go to without fear or worry of retribution from other men, particularly regular officers within their command's elevated hierarchy and class system.

Although the chaplain was a commissioned officer in this system of class, he was considered "neutral" in the sense of good order and discipline. The chaplain was an officer to whom any person from any rank could go to for good advice. Founding father General George Washington had even perceived "chaplains were important not only because of their religious role, but because they contributed positively to the military efficiency of the unit."⁸ Generally speaking, good advice from the chaplain came with a sense of direction to make oneself a better person that usually took to a form of education and learning. With this good sense of direction, the chaplain might refer personnel to books in the ship's library the chaplain literally ran for the promotion of learning. Whether classic fiction works were read, naval history, modern warfare, science, or mathematics, one's positive learning could turn around a well-educated and overall better sailor to the well-oiled machine the Navy wanted.

The Navy's Need for Chaplains

Early in the Navy, there was a need for chaplains to promote religious and moral faith in addition to education in order to curb criminal activity within the enlisted ranks. Yet recruiting

⁶ H. Martin Lawrence, *United States Navy Chaplains, 1972 - 1981*, NAVPERS 15507. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1985), 196.

⁷ Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations since Cromwell*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

ministers and priests into the military seemed contradictory at the time as one promoted death while the other did not. And, in addition to this, recruiting a chaplain was quite difficult compared to the standards in place today. In general terms, “it was up to the ship’s captain to find a chaplain. There was no regular procedure for recruiting or hiring them. In some instances, captains hired un-ordained men who also worked as surgeons or clerks – in addition to conducting divine services. Their status was similar to their role in the army, in that they were considered junior officers and were given an appropriate amount of any prize money their ship received. Smaller vessels often only rated a schoolmaster.”⁹ And so, in addition to their regular duties as faith giver, the chaplain was charged in teaching sailors and midshipmen how to read, write, and to do mathematical problems. There were at times, instances where chaplains were charged with educating children at the local base where they were assigned.¹⁰

By the early 1800’s, changes were necessary as chaplains were the target of unnecessary depositing of duties no other officer wanted or desired. Although Congress had in 1814 “authorized both a chaplain and a schoolmaster for the seventy-four new gun-ships of the line”¹¹ in order to relieve the chaplain of extra unforeseen burdens, the Navy’s regulations issued “four years later made it clear that in addition to his religious duties, the chaplain was to serve as the commodore’s secretary when called upon.”¹² This reflected the Navy’s need for a separate chaplain and teacher. Besides, a chaplain’s hands were still tied and were basically holding a position that was at the mercy of their commanding officer. In some cases, commanding officers felt “the chaplain’s religious duties took second place to his other, more important jobs – except when it came to baptizing babies – a situation brought about by the presence of wives aboard ships. In some instances, ship’s captains appointed a member of the crew as chaplain, thereby making it clear that specialized religious training and organization were not prime prerequisites for the job.”¹³

⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹¹ Ibid., 22 - 23.

¹² Ibid., 22 - 23.

¹³ Ibid., 22 - 23.

If determining the chaplain's duties were difficult enough, determining their relationship to a comparable military rank and how much pay they should receive was an even greater problem in a system of class that has prevailed for centuries. This system, while seemingly antiquated, serves a greater purpose in the military establishment because the military has a defined leadership and rank structure based on: commissioned officers, warrant officers, and enlisted personnel. These make up the military establishment, but also define certain aspects and characteristics of the military that otherwise could not be accomplished.

Commissioned officers make up the leadership corps of the military while warrant officers are the technical experts behind systems and groups where the enlisted force is the pure backbone of the military class system. Without enlisted personnel, battles would not and could not be fought in the purest sense of wins and losses. But in the context of the chaplain, there was a dilemma as to their exact placement within the military structure. Questions had risen to the inherent need of a chaplain, their placement in the structure, and what class and rank they should be afforded. Some may perhaps argue that the chaplain should remain a civilian attached with military units keeping a neutral stance in the pure scope of all things militarily speaking. This was the dilemma the military faced then, and in some respects the same argument remains to this day.

Rank and class in the military may seem trivial to those outside the establishment, and although the process seems antiquated, the end result has endured the test of time through countless wars, conflicts, and skirmishes. In all respect, rank in the military is about leadership and followership, and by adding the two, they are equally important to maintaining good order and discipline. With regards to the chaplains who have a faith-based mission, researcher Dale Herspring stated "there were those who believed that chaplains should be set apart from others in the military – both officers and men. They should be treated with respect, but since they were mostly noncombatants, they should not be commissioned officers. Another concern – which continues to be argued today – was that if chaplains became full-fledged officers, their task of relating to the troops would be more difficult."¹⁴ Those not familiar with this system should

¹⁴ Ibid., 24 - 25.

understand the Navy is a hierarchical organization. The officer corps provides leadership, warrant officers serve as technical experts, and the noncommissioned officers and enlisted personnel literally run the show while each of these classes has a purpose of and within itself. Without it, the system would be doomed for failure. So, how do we “circle the square? How to make chaplains both accessible to the troops and yet ensure that they had the authority they needed to carry out their tasks? A variety of approaches were tried – all of which led to changes and modifications in uniforms and insignia over the years.”¹⁵

But many chaplains still felt the need to serve a purpose to those and desperately wanted to bridge the gap in the fullest sense between officers and enlisted personnel, but needed the rank to have control of their formal religious functions. For example, “Without an officer’s rank, the chaplain was at the mercy of any commanding officer who might be antireligious or anticlerical. The commanding officer controlled everything on post – from the schedules for the troops to whatever kinds of resources might be available. He could even control the chaplain’s life and time by assigning him unpleasant tasks – or jobs that took away from his primary duty of dealing with and helping soldiers. Obviously, if the chaplain carried an officer’s commission, he would have a commensurate amount of authority and be able to deal with officers on a more even playing field. The issue of whether a chaplain was or wasn’t an officer remained unresolved as the Civil War approached.”¹⁶ In the end, the chaplain was essentially “the only member of the military who served two gods – the army and his religious denomination”¹⁷ Additional “concern[s] on the part of many denominations was that if the chaplain became a full-fledged officer, they would lose control over him. He was treated as if he was an officer – wasn’t that enough? The denominations did not want the military brass getting between them and their clergymen.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 24 - 25.

¹⁶ Ibid., 25 - 26.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

Comparing other military services, the United States Army's chaplains acquired problems similar in nature to those of the Navy. In fact, the base or post chaplain was literally known as a "handyman," due in part to the fact that the commanding officer could and would assign him a variety of collateral duties no other officer wanted, such as "schoolmaster, librarian, post gardener, post treasurer, and manager of the post bakery."¹⁹ Even though the chaplains were responsible for their weekly devotional duties, they "continued to have the responsibility for morale, motivation, and political socialization. The problem, however, was that he was being asked to do so many things that his ability to carry out these tasks was threatened. Sometimes chaplains had an enlisted man assigned to them and that helped. However, it did not solve the problem."²⁰

In addition to performing divine services at sea, Navy chaplains were required to teach and assist those who fell ill. As time progressed, regulations began to detail the duties of the chaplain, but in some ways remained vague. For example, Naval regulations from 1893 dictated "during combat [the chaplain] was to 'aid the wounded.' Finally, he was to prepare a quarterly report, as well as one for each cruise, on how he had carried out his duties. Based on what we know of the activities of Navy chaplains, it appears that a chaplain was assigned to each squadron and the commander had no say in the matter. Many did not want chaplains, fearing that they would undermine the squadron's rigid concept of discipline, but from this point onward, commanders would have to live with them."²¹

In some instances, situations arose when "chaplains were under constant pressure from their colleagues and commanders to consider themselves officers first and members of the clergy second. This often put them in a quandary – they were there to provide both spiritual and moral leadership for the troops, but other officers seemed to believe that their primary job was to uphold 'good order and discipline.' It was as if the chaplain was being asked, 'Whose side are you on?' In reality, he was on both sides – he was expected to work to maintain good order and

¹⁹ Ibid., 30 - 31.

²⁰ Ibid., 30 - 31.

²¹ Ibid., 29 - 30.

discipline, while at the same time have a close and private relationship with enlisted personnel.”²² What could a chaplain do? They held an officer’s commission that elevated their status. But in an environment requiring good order and discipline and no fraternization with enlisted personnel, a good part of their job required maintaining a good rapport with the enlisted men in order to understand and address their concerns through the proper channels.

The quandary of where to place the chaplain had endured in the military for so long, but the military has, in the keener sense, resolved the situation since World War I. Interestingly, debates still exist outside the military establishment as to why chaplains serve as military officers in the armed forces. Over time, the consensus dictated chaplains were to serve in their primary religious denomination while tending to, in a limited form, education, morale, and most importantly, comforting the sick and dying. Although in the Navy, their position was greatly enhanced by their service as library officers, providing resources to those who otherwise might be missed entirely.

Lessons were taught and learned on both sides of the spectrum regarding military order and religious faith. In the end, it was the United States Civil War that “taught chaplains (and the military) two things: the need for religious tolerance and flexibility and that chaplains were indispensable.”²³ Chaplains brought comfort to the sick and dying who served their country, but also provided a greater sense of good to those who needed it such as teaching an illiterate sailor how to read or a marine in understanding their purpose in life through their Christian faith. The chaplain would always be there for them. But for the most part, an “improvement was made in the status of Navy chaplains in 1906 when Congress changed the pay system. They were now commissioned officers with the rank and remuneration of a lieutenant (junior grade). By 1916 the pay that chaplains received was on par with that received by other naval officers. Indeed, for the first time in the Navy, chaplains had achieved full equality with other officers.”²⁴ The chaplain finally had a place and purpose on and off the battlefield; helping those who needed

²² Ibid., 35.

²³ Ibid., 29.

²⁴ Ibid., 30.

help. From that point, it became unnecessary to fight the establishment in regards to rank, order, and equality.

The Chaplain's Emerging Role as a Librarian

The U.S. Armed Forces provides offensive and defensive strategies to their citizens for protection. While individuals decide to serve, the greater purpose is the individual serving as a team for the success of the country. While individuals serve in their primary jobs as a team member, each individual is also responsible for collateral duties such as preventative maintenance, painting, maintaining supplies, or cleaning. Even the faithful Navy chaplain bears the weight of collateral duty assignments that benefits sailors and marines at sea, ashore, and in the field. Of special interest is the chaplain's charge of the shipboard library. A bigger question is how and why chaplains evolved as the Navy's librarians aboard ships? While it has been briefly discussed how the chaplain came into military service and their early duties, as time progressed, their duties were much more defined, including that of the collateral duty assignment of ship's librarian.

According to *The Chaplain's Manual*, Article 1201 states "Under the commanding officer the chaplain conducts, or arranges for others to conduct, such services as will permit personnel to fulfill their religious obligations."²⁵ But the chaplain primarily serves in the role "As an advisor to the commanding officer on moral and religious matters, the chaplain is one of the key officers in promoting the moral, spiritual and religious welfare of personnel."²⁶ If we contrast this last statement to *The Bluejacket's Manual*, the Navy's reference handbook for all enlisted personnel, it states "The chaplain has religious duties primarily, although the chaplain is involved in all matters pertaining to the mental, moral, and physical welfare of the ship's company."²⁷ The Navy has provided a chaplain for all military personnel assigned to them because the chaplain provides a level of support that no other person can provide in the realm of faith and moral support.

²⁵ *Chaplains' Manual*. NAVPERS 15664-B. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1959), 2.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

²⁷ *The Bluejacket's Manual*. (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1990), 40.

While Article 1201 of the *Chaplain's Manual* speaks of a chaplain's religious obligations, one duty not empirically stated but mentioned further in Chapter 11 and defined in current naval directives is that of the shipboard and small shore station librarian performed by the chaplain and assistant. These libraries are a major contributor of morale, and without them, a considerable lack of benefits and opportunities would be available to personnel on a regular basis. Whether one is studying for advancement, leadership opportunities, off-duty college courses, on-the-job training, or for recreation, the shipboard library serves in providing a tremendous effort to the morale of the crew whether they are in-port for a few days or deployed for an unspecified number of months in defense of their country or assistance to others.

Idleness and boredom at sea necessitated a need for boosting morale. Over time, the chaplain, and later on their assistant, became somewhat of a de facto librarian for the sole purpose of increasing the ship's morale on long voyages by providing a plentiful supply of books to educate sailors. While neither holds a degree in library or information sciences, they receive invaluable training and experience from civilian librarians of the Navy General Library Program (NGLP) who hold degrees from accredited institutions. The chaplain and assistant run the library as a collateral duty while providing religious guidance and assistance to personnel assigned to their command. But why did the chaplain become a librarian? The Navy's most logical answer was because the chaplain is considered to be an officer, and although they served in a system of class along enlisted personnel, they provided ministry, comfort, and morale to all personnel regardless of rank.

Because of the chaplain's proactive support, it should not be a surprise that "One of the oldest collateral duties of the Navy chaplain was the promotion of learning. Chaplains were among the very first to introduce libraries on naval vessels and throughout the years the chaplain has been in charge of them. The Government, recognizing the need for good reading as an important factor in maintaining high morale, appropriated hundreds of thousands of dollars for books during the recent war. It was comparatively easy for chaplains to secure the necessary

number of books for their ship or station.”²⁸ Nevertheless, a number of examples show in detail how successful these chaplains were in the cause for shipboard libraries, especially regarding their views of comfort and morale.

The battleship USS *New Mexico*'s library officer Chaplain Riddle wrote in 1918 that “a library was furnished, for the most part, by the contributions of civilians. Every effort has been made to make it homelike and cheerful. . . . Through the gifts of the Bureau of Navigation, there is a splendid library of history, travels, and biography; a small collection of educational and school books, and a large assortment of popular, modern fiction.”²⁹ Around the same time on the USS *Frederick*, Chaplain D. S. Robinson noted his securing of purchases in the amount of “\$1,200 worth of new books for his ship from funds provided by the Government.”³⁰ In addition, “He also reported the organization of classes in mathematics, history, and English to help prepare men for the examinations for Annapolis.”³¹ At the time, “Many soldiers were not only illiterate, but a large number of them spoke only rudimentary English. Chaplains organized courses in what we would today call ‘English as a foreign language,’ while others set up classes in debating, Latin, German, mathematics – whatever resources on hand and the needs of the soldiers dictated.”³² This point is very crucial as it illustrates how chaplains took part, historically, in the foundational education needs of our military personnel.

During 1943, World War II was raging across Europe and the Pacific. Chaplain A. R. Chatten penned a letter to the Chaplains Division detailing the value of the shipboard library, and noted “During a 72-day period from 11 January to 24 March, the men of his unit made 7,000

²⁸ Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume Two, 1939-1949*, NAVPERS 15808. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 249 - 250.

²⁹ Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume One, 1778 - 1939*, NAVPERS 15807. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 180-181.

³⁰ Ibid, 180-181.

³¹ Ibid, 180-181.

³² Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations since Cromwell*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 28.

withdrawals from a library of only 1,600 volumes”³³ and further stated “My library was a big success. The skipper said that it was one of the biggest morale factors in the unit. One could not conduct athletic contests because of the intense heat. . . . Reading was their favorite relaxation.”³⁴ Contrast this statement to Chaplain Howard M. Day during the Korean War aboard the USS *Bon Homme Richard*. "At sea, reading was perhaps the major form of recreation."³⁵ The importance behind this is evident in Chaplain Clifford Drury’s statement from 1949. “Chaplains have always been sensitive to the relation between idleness and wickedness. Keep a sailor busy and happy at worthwhile activities during his leisure hours and you choke off at the source all kinds of moral irregularities. This is the justification that Navy chaplains give for engaging in collateral duties. Directly and indirectly by so doing they are helping to build upright character.”³⁶ Once a week on Sunday's, as a prescriber of heavenly faith, the chaplain's job was to save one's soul upon their death. During the week however, the chaplain was by trade an educator in moral standards and practices that was trying to build upon a sailor's character. Through this, the chaplain was able to keep sailors busy through positive and enlightening reading materials from the library.

By similar comparison, U.S. Army chaplains performed library duties at posts across the country. In fact, the Army’s U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas published regulations in 1909 dictating the chaplain’s duties, in that “The chaplain will, under the direction of the commandant, have charge of the prison chapel, prison library and school for the instruction of convicts, and will perform such other duties as the commandant may direct.”³⁷ This requirement necessitated the need to establish “a school for the instruction of convicts, the

³³ Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume Two, 1939-1949*, NAVPERS 15808. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 249 - 250.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 249 - 250.

³⁵ Paul S. Sanders and Ivan Hoy, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume Six, During the Korean War, 27 June 1950 - 27 June 1954*, NAVPERS 15936. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 103.

³⁶ Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume One, 1778 - 1939*, NAVPERS 15807. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 180-181.

³⁷ *Regulations for the Government of the United States Military Prison and any Branch Thereof*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909): 5.

different classes to be organized under the direction of the commandant.”³⁸ In addition, “The prison library will contain such books, newspapers and periodicals as may be approved by the commandant, and all convicts except those undergoing punishment for violation of the prison rules and regulations, will be permitted to read in their cells or rooms books and papers belonging to the library and to select from the library catalogue those they desire.”³⁹ And so, the purpose of the prison library is met equally in the same manner as the shipboard library; to give some sort of respite and relaxation from the hard day, to prevent idleness, and promote education through learning.

Historically speaking, boosting morale at sea has always and forever will be a difficult chore to master. Commanders have struggled with this dilemma for years experimenting with various outlets to curb boredom into something efficient and productive, some working great, others not so well. On the other hand, appearing seemingly out of nowhere and serving within the steel skin of countless Navy ships is the venerable chaplain who understood this problem almost as well anyone. While the library is considered to be the general mainstay of the ship’s company, some chaplains took it upon themselves to further boost morale under various programs. A number of chaplains “issued daily mimeographed bulletins”⁴⁰ while others “edited the ship or station paper.”⁴¹ Some chaplains were even placed in charge of ship’s “entertainment programs, including movies and assisting the special services program.”⁴²

While boosting morale is part of the chaplain’s duty, some of the duties have more recently been assigned to officers in order for the chaplain to firmly focus on their library. Per current regulations, they are designated the library officer, and *The Chaplain’s Manual* dictates

³⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

³⁹ Ibid., 6-7.

⁴⁰ Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume One, 1778 - 1939*, NAVPERS 15807. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 180-181.

⁴¹ Ibid., 180-181.

⁴² Paul S. Sanders and Ivan Hoy, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, Volume Six, During the Korean War, 27 June 1950 - 27 June 1954*, NAVPERS 15936. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 71.

that while “On board ships to which chaplains are assigned and at small shore stations, when so designated by the commanding officer, the chaplain is the officer in charge of the library. He shall supervise the work of personnel assigned to operate the library. He shall encourage and stimulate reading and library use. Assistance concerning library operations and administration may be obtained from the Bureau of Naval Personnel (Library Services Branch) and from district librarians on the staff of most district commandants.”⁴³

While the Navy chaplain’s primary duties are that of their religious faith, the change in their library officer duties are clearly evident since the inception of the USS *Franklin*’s library in 1821. Technological change is clearly apparent with the advent of electricity, musical recordings, radio, television, and computers. While books and magazines continue to make up a fair majority of the shipboard library’s inventory, computers and study areas are consequently taking up an equal amount of space. Essentially, the library services the chaplain provides are ever-changing and evolving like a modern-day library that provide free and open access to all.

The Chaplain Procures an Assistant

All military personnel have a title based upon the rank they hold. Of the seven uniformed services in the United States, the Navy and Coast Guard are the only ones with a unique standard for enlisted personnel in that they combine the enlisted person’s job title with their rank. They call their enlisted job specialties ratings, "a duty calling for certain skills and aptitudes."⁴⁴ This sea-based tradition of job titles has stood the test of time since the early colonial days, but the tradition harkens back to the early days of sail from the British system when enlisted personnel were referred to as ratings. This is the system the U.S. Navy adopted, and since then, the system of naval ratings has grown, downsized, expanded, and merged, mostly to keep pace with technological change. A number of original ratings still exist because of the nature of the Navy’s operational structure requirements.

⁴³ *Chaplains’ Manual*, NAVPERS 15664-B. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1959), 44.

⁴⁴ *The Bluejacket's Manual*. (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1990), 19.

One rating unique to the Navy's enlisted structure is appropriately titled Religious Program Specialist (RP). Personnel holding this rating are assigned to a chaplain in order to assist them "with administrative and budgetary tasks. They serve as custodians of chapel funds, keep religious documents, and maintain contact with religious and community agencies. They also prepare devotional and religious educational materials, set up volunteer programs, operate shipboard libraries, supervise chaplains' offices, and secretarial duties. They train personnel in religious programs and publicize religious activities."⁴⁵ Historically, these personnel were not readily available to the chaplain when one was needed. As a matter of fact, they are only a recent addition to the Navy's enlisted structure, created nearly forty years ago under Secretary of the Navy William Graham Claytor.

Until World War II, Navy chaplains did a majority of the work themselves. Occasionally one of the enlisted men from the ship's office, usually a rated Yeoman, would assist the chaplain in their administrative duties, Sunday's divine services, and help maintaining the library. While this did alleviate the situation somewhat, "it did not [however] solve the problem"⁴⁶ of the chaplain rating their own permanent assistant. But as early as 1942, "the Navy Department took the first steps which led to the establishment of the Specialist (W) rating to assist Navy chaplains. The '(W)' referred to welfare and it was decided that this rate would be established only for the duration of World War II"⁴⁷ in order to relieve the chaplain of some of their administrative duties.

With the end of World War II in 1945, the Navy had decided to consolidate their expansive enlisted rating structure through a series of ratings mergers, disestablishing some, and placing others in a reserve or emergency status. And so, "The Navy Department inaugurated a new rating structure on 1 April 1948. Among the new general service ratings that were established was the rating of 'Personnelman,' for personnel administration duties in various

⁴⁵ Ibid, 40.

⁴⁶ Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations since Cromwell*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 30 - 31.

⁴⁷ Joseph C. Preston, Jr., *Religious Program Specialist 3 & 2 Module I - Personnel Support*. (Pensacola, Florida: U.S. Naval Education and Training Command, 1984): 1-5 (17).

offices, including the chaplains."⁴⁸ The abbreviated title was PN, and if assigned to work with a chaplain the abbreviation was PN(W) for Personnelman (Welfare). While not considered to be a permanent assignment to a chaplain, it was definitely a stepping stone forward in the right direction. Three decades later however marked the turning point for a permanent chaplain's assistant. In "February 1978, the SECNAV (Secretary of the Navy) approved the establishment of the RP (Religious Program Specialist) rating. Stringent selection requirements were set. In November 1978, the Selection Board selected the first 160 RP's."⁴⁹ Since then, RP's have proudly served the Navy chaplain at sea, ashore, overseas, and with Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Units worldwide.

Ranking from the first grade of Seaman Recruit to the ninth and final grade of Master Chief Petty Officer, Religious Program Specialists work as a Religious Ministry Team (RMT) "in direct support of DON (Department of the Navy) chaplains. RMTs support, manage, and execute the Command Religious Program (CRP). RP functional areas include ministry support and accommodation, pastoral care support, command advisement, expeditionary ministry support, finance and accounting, and shipboard library administration."⁵⁰ While duties and responsibilities vary based on rank and assigned location, there is always room to advance in order to earn more roles and responsibilities. Of major importance is the religious support RP's provide to chaplains and the support of morale and welfare programs to the entire ship's company.

According to the Navy, their policy concerning RP's states that their responsibility is to "advise chaplains and command enlisted leadership on matters pertaining to the CRP and the morale and well-being of the command's personnel and families."⁵¹ But they are also responsible for "providing library multi-media resource center services onboard ships."⁵² And

⁴⁸ Rick Dyksterhouse, et. al., *Religious Program Specialist (RP)*. (Columbia, South Carolina: Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, 2013), 1-9 (14).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1-13 (18).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1-3 (8).

⁵¹ J. M. Bird, *Religious Ministry in the Navy*, OPNAV Instruction 1730.1E. Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 2012), 7.

thus due to their unique role in the Navy's enlisted structure and the duties they are required to exercise on a daily basis, they "are placed under the chaplain in the command's organizational structure."⁵³ Further, "In circumstances potentially warranting RP placement elsewhere in the organization, commanders should consult with the senior supervisory chaplain and senior RP."⁵⁴ This is because of the unique, significant, and inherent relationship the chaplain and assistant perform as a team.

The Religious Program Specialist's duties take up large quantities of time from preparing divine worship and administrative functions to the library. Even though the chaplain is the designated library officer and at times runs the library, the RP's maintain the library, keep it running and in working order for all personnel during the specified hours of operation. Without the RP's assistance to the chaplain, the management of the library would be difficult. The RP is a source of relief and an invaluable aid to the chaplain who recognizes their skills and ability as managers in order to make their work much smoother.

Organizing and Managing the Shipboard Library

Shipboard life in the Navy is rarely considered fun or pleasurable. Work is tedious, arduous, monotonous, occasionally boring, and very much a dangerous business on a recurring basis. The Navy on the other hand understands a happy sailor is a productive sailor. With that said, boosting morale goes a long way with the rough, rigorous, and harsh duty at sea. This is one reason the shipboard library has stood the test of time.

When it comes down to the operation of a ship, one person is in charge and accountable for every action and every person; the commanding officer. The commanding officer's job can be extremely tough and stressful. Within their designated line of responsibility, commanding officer's are authorized to appoint and/or designate personnel to certain positions per current

⁵² V. E. Clark, *Religious Ministry in the Navy*, OPNAV Instruction 1730.1D. Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 2003), 4.

⁵³ J. M. Bird, *Religious Ministry in the Navy*, OPNAV Instruction 1730.1E. Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 2012), 3 - 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 - 4.

naval instructions. One of those positions are the ship's librarian. The *Naval General Library Manual* states "Commanding officers of ships are responsible for the maintenance and operation of a general library program serving all ship's and embarked personnel. Authority to act as a Library Officer is normally assigned as a collateral duty. The basic function, duties, responsibilities, authority, and organizational relationships of the Library Officer are specified in OPNAVINST 3120.32."⁵⁵ An instructional order, OPNAVINST 3120.32 is relayed through the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and over time has been subsequently amended to reflect the current needs of the Navy and their personnel. In the case of the ship's library, while the commanding officer may appoint any person they deem qualified as a library officer, this appointment has generally been delegated to the chaplain and assistant, guided by those instructions previously mentioned.

Section 3.4.8 of this instruction spells out the requirements of the library officer's basic functions, duties, responsibilities, authority, organizational relationships, and points to the *Naval General Library Manual* as a primary reference, which formally governs and "is the authority for the administration and operation of the General Library Program aboard each ship and station in the Navy."⁵⁶ Functions of the library officer are defined in that library officers are to "organize, plan, and administer a library service for unit personnel."⁵⁷ Further, library officers are "responsible for administration of a general library and management of funds approved by the recreation council and the executive officer for use in the library. The library officer shall account for library materials and initiate requisitions for desired books and periodicals not available through BUPERS (Bureau of Naval Personnel) to the recreation council."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ P. R. Hawkins, *Naval General Library Manual*, NAVEDTRA 38021, Department of the Navy, Chief of Naval Education and Training. (Pensacola, Florida: Naval Education and Training, 1979), 48.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Preface.

⁵⁷ J. M. Bird, *Standard Organization and Regulations of the U.S. Navy*, OPNAV Instruction 3120.32D. Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 2012), 3-45 (82).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-45 (82).

Administratively, the ship's executive officer oversees the library's functions, and the library officer is equally responsible in reporting "to the executive officer for matters pertaining to the administration of the library."⁵⁹ The executive officer reports directly to the commanding officer on these matters. Library staffing is generally performed by the chaplain and assistant, but there are times when schedules may prevent the regular observance of library hours. In that case, some libraries may have different staffing models "such as assigned duty station, assigned watches, paid liberty attendants when the appropriate Fleet Commander in Chief has granted a waiver to the ship, and volunteers. Library attendants perform library duties and carry out library procedures under the supervision of the Library Officer who provides, or arranges with a Regional Librarian for, the necessary indoctrination and training."⁶⁰

While the operation of the ship's library falls under the Command Religious Program (CRP), it "can be a major contributing factor to the morale of personnel who are at sea for extended periods of time"⁶¹ While a working knowledge of library sciences is not a requirement in holding the position of library officer, assistant, or attendant, certain duties are required for the library's overall operation as dictated from *The Naval General Library Manual*. Responsibilities may vary from ship to ship, but overall the chaplain and assistant are required to:

1. Assign and train personnel to function as librarians.
2. Receive, inventory, record, catalog, and shelve new books.
3. Update the library collection on a continuing basis.
4. Maintain library spaces.
5. Encourage the use of the library by publicizing hours of operation and new books received."⁶²

When a ship is designed, the Navy sees fit to include some form of library access based on the ship's designated crew complement. *Figure 1* specifies the relation of crew complement to square footage, required number of seats, and linear feet of vertically adjustable shelving for a

⁵⁹ Ibid., 3-45 (82).

⁶⁰ P. R. Hawkins, *Naval General Library Manual*, NAVEDTRA 38021, Department of the Navy, Chief of Naval Education and Training. (Pensacola, Florida: Naval Education and Training, 1979), 48.

⁶¹ Ralph R. Byrd, *Religious Program Specialist 1 & C*. (Pensacola, Florida: U.S. Naval Education and Training Command, 1984): 3-10 (46).

⁶² Ibid., 3-10 (46).

library. With increased crew levels, square footage, seats, and shelving also increase. This ultimately leads to, at certain levels, a greater variety of materials available at any given time ranging from periodicals, training manuals, non-fiction, fiction, biography, newspapers, journals, music, film, and computer terminals with internet access.

*Figure 1*⁶³

Shipboard library minimum criteria for area, seating, and shelving

Ship's Complement*	Area (Square footage)	Number of Seats	Linear feet of vertically adjustable Shelving** (books and periodicals)
Under 150	As available	As available	50 to 60
151 - 299	100	5	60 to 80
300 – 450	145	6 -10	80 - 110
451 – 1,000	260	10	115 – 225
1,001 – 1,350	300	12	230 – 300
1,351 – 1,750	350	15	305 – 400
1,751 – 2,000	500	18 – 30	405 – 450
Over 2,000	1,200	35 – 50	Up to 2,000

*In determining library area, seating, and shelving requirements, include all crew members attached to the command in which the LMRC belongs to and all other personnel attached to other commands that routinely visit or embark on deployments and may frequent the LMRC (i.e., Flag staff, air squadrons, etc.).

**Based on minimum initial collections of 1.5 hardbound books per uniformed billet, shelving standards for hardbound collections allow seven books per running foot of shelving for clothbound books. Periodical shelving, paperback display, and storage for audiovisual materials are additional.

Smaller vessels such as patrol craft, submarines, minesweepers, and destroyers do not have self-contained libraries aboard nor do they assign permanent chaplains and assistants. They are however allotted a specific set of shelving units for the use of a ship's library program and have designated morale officers for the sole purpose of requesting appropriate materials. Large draft ships such as cruisers, aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, replenishment, cargo, fleet oilers, transport, and repair ships have permanent chaplains and assistants assigned to them as well as dedicated compartmental spaces aboard that are large enough to accommodate shelving, cabinets, tables, chairs, and computer terminals. Again, the set amount allotted to each ship is based on the crew complement in order to supplement a decent size library for with a chaplain and assistant in charge.

⁶³ Rick Dyksterhouse, et. al., *Religious Program Specialist (RP)*. (Columbia, South Carolina: Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, 2013), 8-24 (358).

While chaplains and assistants provide divine services to crews of Navy ships, their primary purpose and focus “is to maintain the morale of command personnel.”⁶⁴ The ship’s library is “a very important factor in this effort. Shipboard libraries may range in size from a small paperback book collection aboard a minesweeper to a 5,000-volume library collection aboard a giant nuclear powered aircraft carrier.”⁶⁵ Shipboard libraries are considerably unique to the military as they provide an intellectual means of growth through learning, communication, education, and on-the-job training to the men and women who serve aboard them. Just as unique is the fact that even though chaplains and assistants do not hold any degrees in library and information sciences, they do in fact receive training regarding a library’s operation and run these libraries with as much loyalty and dedication as your typical hometown librarian. In the end, the chaplain and assistant provide a service most people take for granted, one that generates a boost of morale to those who might otherwise not have it readily available when they need it the most.

The Navy General Library Program

While the Navy chaplain and assistant are in charge of shipboard libraries, ultimately, the responsibility lies with the Navy General Library Program (NGLP) to train and guide these personnel as good stewards of the libraries they manage, detail to proper operation, form, function, and procedures. The program falls “under the control of the Commander Naval Installations Command (CNIC) Fleet and Family Readiness Program, provides for 422 afloat and 32 ashore libraries with an inventory of more than 2½ million books”⁶⁶ to assigned military personnel. Further instruction from the *Naval General Library Manual* (NAVEDTRA 38021) aids to provide chaplains and assistants information regarding “the administration, operation, and maintenance of a coordinated Navy and Marine Corps general library system and program.” This manual is composed of “fifteen chapters and four appendixes,”⁶⁷ outlining procedures of the overall operation of a small shore station or shipboard library.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8-1 (335).

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8-1 (335).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8-1 (335).

⁶⁷ Robert W. Wilford, *Religious Program Specialist 3 & 2 Module III - Administration*. (Pensacola, Florida: U.S. Naval Education and Training Command, 1988), 4-35 (135).

When considering the overall operation of a conventional library and comparing their stated functions to one at sea with respect to the parameters of size and location, there is not much of a difference other than a chaplain and assistant physically running the day-to-day operations. With training from the Navy General Library Program and a basic understanding of library processes detailed in the *Naval General Library Manual*, chaplains and assistants are given a unique and interesting perspective of librarianship in a condensed resource not otherwise available to aid in the operation of a truly functioning library. Granted, not all shipboard libraries will or have performed all fifteen functions from this manual, but what is important is that it creates a general synopsis of the basic premise and scope of librarianship in order to operate a fully functioning library at sea.

While the purpose of the *Naval General Library Manual* is to provide chaplains and assistants a definitive resource for the operation of a fully-functioning library at sea, they are also guided and supported by the principles of the Navy General Library Program (NGLP). “The primary mission of the NGLP is to assemble, organize, preserve, and make easily available to all naval personnel afloat balanced, unbiased, and uncensored collections of library materials, print and non-print, and accompanying library services specifically adapted to the interests and requirements of naval personnel and to the missions and tasks of commands.”⁶⁸ This is important because personnel can have a wide array of information available to them that provides for their personal, professional, educational, social, or leisure needs.

In order to specifically address and “achieve these ends, a central staff office is maintained for the NGLP to guide and support naval general libraries afloat.”⁶⁹ The program also provides for the use of “facilities that offer a wide variety of books and periodicals, computer resources and programs that enhance opportunities for educational research and recreational reading. NGLP supports all general libraries in the Navy, including more than 300 afloat and 30 shore locations. NGLP also outfits new ships with libraries and provides support to military missions

⁶⁸ Rick Dyksterhouse, et. al., *Religious Program Specialist (RP)*. (Columbia, South Carolina: Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, 2013), 8-3 – 8-4 (337-338).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-3 – 8-4 (337-338).

in the Unified Pacific Command. NGLP has partnered with Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) to provide downloadable audio books, e-books, Navy Times, reference materials and practice tests at no cost to Sailors and Marines.”⁷⁰

Another factor allows for shipboard libraries in maximizing their collections. The Navy General Library Program provides for the use of Library Multimedia Resource Centers (LMRC’s) that allow libraries to “use space-saving digital technology to increase the holdings of afloat libraries by enabling the storage of reading materials on computer media and providing e-mail and Internet connectivity. The technology supports access to accredited educational programs that enable crewmembers to pursue advanced education opportunities. Sailors consistently rate the availability of computers and Internet connectivity at LMRC’s as important shipboard quality of life services.”⁷¹

A prime example of a benefit that Library Multimedia Resource Centers provide aboard ships for sailors and marines is a place for them to study for upcoming advancement examinations or off-duty educational courses for college. The *Navy News Service* published an article in July 2002 explaining that Quartermaster 3rd Class David Bateholts, who was assigned to the USS *Wasp*, was using the resource center for some time in order "to finish my requirements for a rate conversion."⁷² Corporal Jessie Harbison, a Marine assigned to the ship’s landing battalion went to the resource center because it was "the best place for me to study my math homework. My only other option is the rickety lounge in my berthing. I come here because it's quiet, well-ventilated, and well-lit."⁷³

But many others go to the resource center in the library because they provide a place for sailors and marines to check their personal e-mail, pay bills, watch movies, or play board games

⁷⁰ “Navy Libraries,” Navy General Library Program, accessed January 23, 2017. <http://www.navymwr.org/libraries/>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Derrick M. Ingle, *Wasp Library Multimedia Resource Center is Perfect Getaway*, July 10, 2002. Navy News Service. Accessed: January 30, 2017. http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=2438.

⁷³ Ibid.

in a much quieter and relaxing area than other places aboard the ship such as the engine room or flight deck. Lieutenant Commander William Muhm, the ship's chaplain and library officer aboard the USS *Wasp* at the time this article was published indicated that he "credits his assistants with making the area more convenient and noiseless for crew members"⁷⁴ and that his assistant, "RP2 George has done an outstanding job supplying sufficient LMRC watch standers from engineering and deck departments,"⁷⁵ further stating "The LMRC increases morale through peace and silence. It's a great place to escape to because silence is therapeutic."⁷⁶

Funding is provided by the Naval Sea Systems Command in order that "every new ship and submarine is outfitted with a library consisting of laptops, hardback books, paperbacks, magazines, Playaways, DVDs, small electronics, games and other materials as determined by ship personnel."⁷⁷ After a ship is commissioned, the Navy General Library Program provides assistance to the ship's library and also provides a substantial distribution of paperback books to all ship and shore stations. Other areas include support of Navy owned civilian merchant mariner-run "USNS class vessels manned with military personnel."⁷⁸ Additionally, "as funding allows, laptops, Jane's Reference Collections, Playaways (self-contained audio books), small electronics and games, and DVD collections for personal use also are provided"⁷⁹ for use of the crews at sea.

Not wanting to leave shore station libraries out of the conversation, the Navy General Library Program also provides for summer reading programs to dependent children living on or near the base regardless whether the sailor or marine is assigned to ship or shore duty. As a matter of fact, the Navy General Library Program "manages the DoD-wide Summer Reading

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Navy Libraries," Navy General Library Program, accessed January 23, 2017. <http://www.navy.mwr.org/libraries/>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Program for all of the services.”⁸⁰ The program also includes support for personnel incarcerated in Navy and Marine Corps briggs with “Professional library guidance [that] is provided to the Navy Corrections Program.”⁸¹

Finally, the sole responsibility of the Office of the Chief of Naval Education and Training is providing assistance “in the training of Library Officers and attendants through workshops conducted by Naval Regional Librarians, through publications, through on-board visits and consultations, and through the provision of such training aids as those described in Chapter 3.”⁸² As with any services provided in the training and education courses in librarianship, they are a “vital, but still partial, facet of Library Officer and attendant training. Considerable personal effort will be required to reach and maintain a satisfactory level of competence in library science.”⁸³ Yet, one must take an extra step in the direction of understanding these finite processes, as “efforts might include visits to Navy, and other general libraries ashore to observe facilities and operations, visits to other ship libraries, enrollment in courses in library science, particularly courses in library reference, book selection, and technical processes, and self-study through such means as reading and attendance at library meetings.”⁸⁴

Conclusion

A library without librarians is a lost cause. A library without an administrator is hopeless. The Navy utilizes and values their libraries to such an extent that through the course of their existence, they have found the chaplain to be indispensable in the operation, form, and function of shipboard libraries while wearing the three hats of chaplain, librarian, and administrator. No one approached the chaplain to become a librarian, nor did they ask; it just happened to land flat in their lap because they were natural at teaching others and were eager to

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² P. R. Hawkins, *Naval General Library Manual*, NAVEDTRA 38021, Department of the Navy, Chief of Naval Education and Training. (Pensacola, Florida: Naval Education and Training, 1979), 48 - 49.

⁸³ Ibid., 48 - 49.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 48 - 49.

promote learning through education. The ship's library was a perfect way to extend the reach of the chaplain as a tool in boosting morale to such an extent that it allowed sailors and marines to take their minds off the headaches of the day: fatigue, combat, and war. Without these chaplains and assistants taking the helm of the ship's library, sailors and marines would literally be lost at sea with little or nothing to do in their spare time.

Serving at sea for months on end can seem lonely even though many people are around you serving in the same capacity; but even they are in the same predicament. Floating around for months on end, doing a job, and looking for something to do in their spare time to pass the time away. A camaraderie and cohesiveness is built between one another at times such as these, but even then, one needs their own time to do something worthwhile. Without a place to go for solitude or relaxation such as the ship's library would garner the idea there is no continual desire to promote leisure or morale. With the absence of morale comes the monotony of boredom that inevitably leads to trouble. And so the chaplain and their assistant take their job of providing morale and moral support very seriously. Without a "happy" ship, the Navy would be doomed to failure in the missions they provide on a daily basis. While the chaplain and assistant provide this level of support to the Navy as librarians, they do it diligently and without hesitation or reservation because they know that a library provides more than just books for a good read; it provides a place to go when the going gets tough.

This research has explored and demonstrated the many facets of the U.S. Navy's shipboard library program, their importance, and relevance. Discussions have detailed the history of the shipboard library, the chaplain, their assistant, and their stated roles within the ship's library. Additionally, organization and management of the shipboard library were discussed, including that of the Navy General Library Program (NGLP) structure, including concrete examples supporting the value of shipboard libraries aboard Navy ships. While the Navy's shipboard library program has come a long way since the first one was installed aboard the USS *Franklin* in 1821, the principles and purpose of today's shipboard library remains very much the same; to provide a place for comfort, rest, and relaxation. Not for one specific group, but for all sailors and marines, commissioned officers, warrant officers, and enlisted personnel.

Since the inception of the shipboard library nearly two-hundred years ago, the chaplain and assistant have run the library. Chaplains have greatly benefited the Navy as library officers due to their important contributions of morale and promotion of learning through education. Nowhere else will you find chaplains and assistants in charge of libraries as without them, their importance would be undervalued and the shipboard library that provides so much for so many Navy and Marine Corps personnel might never have existed.

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