

# **Purpose and Contribution in Editing Naval Documents: A General Appreciation**

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There is no question that the standards and reputation of naval history, as a field of academic enquiry, need improvement. One important way to do this is to improve the available source material and to point the way toward critical appreciation of naval documents. Well-edited volumes of naval papers can do this. They can smooth the way for general readers and for beginning students; they can improve the available source materials for popular writers; and they can provide a selection of key source materials which constitute the basis of new interpretations. Documentary publications are particularly important for naval history, a field which depends equally upon personal insights from private papers as well as on the release and interpretative analysis of official, government documents.

The editing and publication of historical documents has been a widespread feature in many countries and in many languages, but the publication of naval documents has become largely an Anglo-American tradition. Historians working in French, Dutch, and Spanish language materials have made important contributions, but their effort has not been sustained over so long a period or so large a body of published documents. Despite the common interest among English-speaking historians, however, the attitude, approach, and history of naval documents publications in Britain and the United States differ considerably.

In the United States, government archives have traditionally been open to scholars and to the public, although problems in the release of classified documents have created difficulties in the 1980s and 1990s. In the early nineteenth century, both the state and federal governments placed greater emphasis on the publication of documents as the principal means of their preservation than on the care



and arrangement of the original papers. As early as 1823, John Brannan published the *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States during the War with great Britain in the Years 1812, 1813, 1814, and 1815*. His claim that they were copied from or compared with the originals in the War and Navy Departments reflected an open-door policy at the archives, even if his work lacked more modern editorial standards.

His work was followed by the government sponsored collection of *American State Papers* published during the period 1834–1861 by Seaton and Gale which included three large volumes on naval affairs covering the first forty years of the republic's history.<sup>1</sup>

In 1884 Congress appropriated funds to begin work on the publication of *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, following the path already established by an Army series. The first of the thirty-one naval volumes appeared in 1894, beginning a continuing process of government publication that has included documents on American naval operations in the Spanish-American War, the Quasi-War with France, the Barbary War, the War of 1812, and the American Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

This emphasis on publishing these older documents received great emphasis with the personal interest of President Franklin Roosevelt. In 1913, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he had "discovered" the Navy's oldest records under the eaves of the old State-War-Navy building and personally supported the proper housing of the office of Naval Records. In 1934, he even requested Congress to establish a special fund to print naval documents.<sup>3</sup> Through its documentary publishing programs, the U.S. Navy's Naval Historical Center and its predecessor offices have made their most substantial and enduring contribution.

Despite this large-scale program by the U.S. Navy, the publication of documents by scholarly societies, university, and other presses has been intermittent at best. The Naval History Society, which was formed for the purpose of publishing documents relating to American naval history, published only eleven volumes in its twenty-year life span. The U.S. Naval Institute published only four titles in the "Naval Letters Series" it began in 1964, before that idea withered away. Other presses have published the occasional volume of naval documents, but more often than not they are items from associated libraries and archives and not a sustained effort toward the study of naval history.

In England, the situation has been quite different. The Admiralty archives were completely closed until 1879 when John Knox Laug-



hton was given personal permission to consult naval records up to 1815. In 1885, the records up to 1805 were opened to the public for the first time, and two years later, the documents up to 1815 were added.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the documents presented to Parliament and published over the years in its journals and in Command Papers, the Admiralty has never undertaken a sustained effort to edit or publish historical documents relating to the Royal Navy. Faced with this situation, Rear Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge and Sir John Knox Laughton formed the idea in 1892 to publish naval manuscripts through a private society.<sup>5</sup> On 13 June 1893, the Navy Records Society was formed to publish material for subscribing members. Interestingly enough, the only American founder-member was Captain Caspar Goodrich, USN,<sup>6</sup> who in 1911 founded the Naval History Society in New York for a similar purpose.

The British government began to publish some fundamental historical manuscripts as early as 1767 with the *Rotuli Parliamentorum* and the *Domesday Book* in 1783. In 1800, the Record Commission was established, followed by the Senate Paper Commission in 1825. The publication of *The Rolls* series began in 1858. In Britain, as in America, official publication of historical documents predated private initiative. In Britain, however, there was an additional development.

Since the 1830s and 40s, scholars and antiquarians had established a number of societies to print "historical books which no publisher would risk."<sup>7</sup> Among them were the Surtees Society, The Camden Society, The Percy Society, The Hakluyt Society, and later the English History Text Society and the Roxburgh Club. The Navy Records Society took as its models the Camden Society and the Hakluyt Society,<sup>8</sup> both of which had already published items of interest to potential members of the Navy Records Society.

The Navy Records Society's first volume appeared in 1894. Edited by Laughton, it documented the defeat of the Spanish Armada. After making these documents available in print for the first time, Laughton declared "it will henceforth be impossible for anyone wishing to pose as an historical writer, to repeat the transparent fictions which had grown up round the memory of our victory."<sup>9</sup>

For more than a century, the Navy Records Society has been the most important organization in the scholarly study of British naval history. In the more than 140 volumes the Society has published in that span of time, include documents from the thirteenth century through World War II, including official reports and personal papers that provide information on a wide range of topics. As a body of ma-



terial, it is interesting to compare and contrast the Navy Records Society volumes with the material produced by the U.S. Navy's historical office in exactly the same period. The means of publication and the method of finance have had an obvious effect on the emphasis and approach to the topic. The U.S. Navy's focus has been largely on the record of naval operations and battle. Through sustained work over many years, a full record of documents has been produced by government-paid historians. The Secretary of the Navy declared, as early as 1885, that "the ultimate object of publication was to place the navy's Civil War record in a permanent and accessible form where it can be referred to by the naval service, by the executive and legislative departments of the government in their efforts to insure the highest efficiency in the Navy. . . ." <sup>10</sup> Over the years, the Navy has continued to note the professional and current relevance of its historical work for those in active service. <sup>11</sup> That very same purpose for naval history was always at the center in Laughton's mind: "To know what the men of old did, and why and how they did it, to know that they failed in doing, and why and how they failed, is the best of all guides for achieving success or avoiding failure." <sup>12</sup>

Laughton's younger disciples, Julian Corbett and Herbert Richmond, echoed these thoughts in the volumes which they edited for the Navy Records Society. In contrast to work in America, however, the Navy Records Society volumes came to be edited increasingly by academics and scholars whose primary interests lay beyond the practical needs of the naval service. This difference in editorial aim combined with the fact that the scholarly work was given to the society without remuneration produced pressure for an increasing selectivity in approach. Throughout its history, the Navy Records Society has been a group with varied interests within the field of naval history. In order to meet the demands of its members, the Society faces great pressure to issue volumes on varying topics, from varying eras. Instead of long sustained series on naval operations, based on official dispatches, the Navy Records Society has produced volumes on selected topics, particular operations, papers relating to a single individual, and themes such as administration, law, social history and health as well as memoirs, journals, pamphlets and treatises and other documents that fit conveniently into single volumes. In one respect, it has had no clear policy, beyond taking the best of what is offered. By contrast, official publications are free to serve scholarly and professional interests in historical research untroubled by the sales market. The Navy Records Society, however, is far more able to meet the demands of changing academic interests and editorial practices



while the long-term projects supported by the government find themselves perpetuating methods and subjects chosen long ago.

The general differences in approach between naval documents published in America and those published in Britain are fundamentally created by the circumstances of publication. The student of American naval history has been better served than his British counterpart with information on general naval operations, but more poorly supplied with insights from private papers, and documents on administration, social history and other themes. Elting Morison's "Naval Administration: Selected Documents on Navy Department Organization, 1915-1940" remains unpublished in the Navy Department Library.

Some of these topics are included in various series of documents which have been published for students in other areas, for example, the Naval War College's International Law "Blue Books" include volumes of documents as well as legal studies and law situations.<sup>13</sup> Naval documents touching diplomatic affairs may be found in series such as *The Foreign Relations of the United States, British and Foreign State Papers*, and *Documents on British Foreign Policy*. Similarly, there is important naval material to be found in the published diplomatic papers of allied powers. By the nature of the subject, the naval historian can find much valuable material within the boundaries of other historical specialties. "If national history may be compared to a cake, the different layers which are different aspects of national life, then," as one overly quoted statement has it, "naval history is not a layer, but a slice of that cake."<sup>14</sup> The scope ranges from industrial history to the history of science. Indeed some of the most valuable material has been published in the papers of leaders who at one time or another held a political appointment as a naval secretary. On the American side, the presidential papers of Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as well as the papers of Secretaries of the Navy John D. Long, Josephus Daniels and James Forrestal<sup>15</sup> offer some sidelights into naval administration while their main thrust illuminates the broader political process. For British history, the companion volumes to Martin Gilbert's biography of Winston Churchill add a similar perspective,<sup>16</sup> although the administrative insight is more common in British naval history.

Despite its necessary connection to other areas, naval history remains a recognizable special subject dealing with the use of armed force at sea. The published historical documents which can be identified as primarily of interest to naval historians fall into six main categories: (1) documents on general naval history; (2) documents on



a specified theme; (3) documents relating to a single individual; (4) manuscripts of book length such as journals, diaries, letter books, treatises; (5) multivolume series of operational dispatches; and (6) calendars of manuscripts. There are additional categories, such as microfilm publication, but they are largely differences of form rather than content. They are important, and deserve separate consideration. On the surface, however, the approach among all these categories ranges from the greatest care in selection and interpretation to "print everything."

## GENERAL NAVAL HISTORY

There have been only two volumes of *Select Naval Documents* which were designed to illuminate a long span of history, the 1922 volume by Hodges and Hughes and the 1993 volume issued to commemorate the centenary of the Navy Records Society.<sup>17</sup> Both are source books for the history of the Royal Navy and designed to supplement interpretive readings for students. Hodges and Hughes saw their purpose as "the provision of colour and the heightening of the personal aspect" as well as the more serious issues involved in "smoothing the approach to a highly technical subject" and giving "concrete illustrations of the limiting condition of sea warfare."<sup>18</sup> Seventy years later, the Navy Records Society editors saw their role in a more sophisticated light, seeing their work as providing key documents that illustrated the best current interpretations of naval history as well as a stimulus to further archival research.

Students must have a sound basis of history before they can use and appreciate the reading of historical documents. Certainly, advanced students at schools and universities should have an appreciation of documents, although this approach to teaching has been much more common in England than in America. Students without a proper foundation, however, can find themselves with too much, too soon, bewildered by the mass of details that they fail to correlate. However, the use of documents in teaching history is important, particularly in training future professionals. As one historian explained, "Reading history ready-made is to making out oneself from documents what looking on at a football match is to playing the game oneself, or what reading a detective story is to tracking out a criminal."<sup>19</sup> Documents are the foundation and the evidence upon which broader historical interpretations are made. Published, critical editions of them are an essential means by which they may be more widely used, be more accessible, and be more thoroughly examined and un-



derstood. Teachers must consider and plan carefully how far they can go in using documents with their students. Yet one can never forget that documents are the basis of the historical discipline. They are the elements, and as Daniel Boorstin said of his collection of documents for *An American Primer*, they are "elementary in the most sophisticated sense of the word."<sup>20</sup>

The most ambitious and most successful series of selected for use in teaching is *English Historical Documents*, under the general editorship of David C. Douglas. Begun just after World War II, the series was abruptly cancelled by the publisher in 1981 and the contracts for remaining volumes withdrawn. Sadly, a projected volume for naval history was among those lost.<sup>21</sup> The basic value of the series remains, even in its unfinished form, and a few naval items can be found within its pages. This type of document publication is one that requires the greatest amount of interpretation and editorial appreciation. Each chosen document must somehow reflect an interpretive point. Chosen from the immense accumulation of historical material, they are useful in illustrating the elements and serve as a foundation relating to the analytical interpretations built on them. Historical studies build interpretations on documents which are often not available to the readers of analytical works. Without an accessible and representative collection of sources, historical "opinion proceeds without that direct study of evidence which alone can give validity to historical judgment."<sup>22</sup>

## THEMATIC SELECTION

A second type of publication is that which selects documents to illustrate a theme or subject. The Navy Records Society has issued a variety of volumes in this category, ranging from R. G. Marsden's *Law and Custom of the Sea*, and *The Old Scots Navy* to Daniel Baugh's *Naval Administration*, Stephen Roskill's *The Naval Air Service* and Michael Simpson's *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1919*.<sup>23</sup> Other than the Navy Records Society, few publishers have undertaken the thematic approach, although Edouard Desbriere's two volumes on *Trafalgar: The Naval Campaign of 1805* and the Hakluyt Society's volumes on English colonization in Newfoundland and on the early English New England Voyages come to mind. Douglas Stein's volume on *American Maritime Documents, 1776-1860: Illustrated and Described* presents a different, but equally valuable, type of thematic selection, in which the focus is on representative types of documents that a maritime and naval histo-



rian encounters rather than on specific historical events. Another variant on the thematic approach is the publication of related charts, paintings, and drawings, treating them as historical documents as well as works of art. One of the most successful examples of this is the related work of Andrew David and Rüdiger Joppien in a variety of publications, from various presses, relating to Captain James Cook's three Pacific voyages.<sup>24</sup>

## PAPERS OF AN INDIVIDUAL

The third category of published naval documents are those culled from the papers of a single individual. One or two deal with a single theme, such as Pitcairn Jones's volume of the Edward Codrington papers, *Piracy in the Levant 1827-28*.<sup>25</sup> More commonly, however, such volumes take a more biographical approach and are devoted to the major period of a subject's career or representative of his entire life. Usually these volumes are devoted to great men or at least those who have held high office at interesting times. In this category, we encounter most of the great names of British naval history: Hawke, Vernon, Nelson, Warren, Collingwood, Sandwich, Spencer, Jellicoe, Fisher, Beatty, Keyes, Somerville, Cunningham, and many others. For the American Navy, there are far fewer, with substantial selections from only the Samuel F. DuPont, Mahan, John Paul Jones, and Gustavus Fox papers. The editors who undertake such projects have taken differing views. Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas devoted seven volumes to Nelson and tried to publish everything he could find. "Where genius exists, and where no great and absorbing feeling occupies the mind," Nicolas wrote, "the most insignificant, as well as the most studies and important letter, bears more or less of its impress: thus, there is scarcely a note of Nelson's that does not contain some word or line, or sentence, indicative" of his genius.<sup>26</sup> In his volumes of Fisher letters, Arthur Marder took the opposite view: "Completeness for the sake of completeness is a pedantic ideal that I reject. I have been 'ruthless, and remorseless' (in the best Fisher tradition) in pruning passages and eliminating hundreds of letters of little or no interest or importance."<sup>27</sup>

Both editors have had their work supplemented by the publication of additional volumes on both Nelson and Fisher, but looking at their work, one can readily see the difference. Nicolas has tried to let the documents speak for themselves while Marder asks his reader to accept his own judgment and criteria; Nicolas wanted the reader to form his own judgment, but Marder gives us only his own estimate.



I doubt that there will ever be a happy meeting ground between those two points of view. Marder can easily be convicted of over-severity in editing, while the value of Nicolas's work is lessened, in one respect, by its very completeness. Few professional naval men have taken the time to study its bulk, leaving it to the professional historian. As John Knox Laughton implied in publishing a one-volume selection from Nicolas, both approaches may be needed.

Among the editions published in Britain, the volumes of letters of a single individual, tend to be a selection of incoming and outgoing letters in an exchange of correspondence, but typically the very few editions published in America, such as the *Mahan* and the *S. F. DuPont* letters have emphasized the outgoing letters from the pen of the individual concerned.<sup>28</sup>

## BOOK-LENGTH MANUSCRIPTS

The fourth category of documents includes manuscript books, more modern versions of what scholars of ancient and medieval history might call a codex. For our purposes in naval history, they range from journals, such as Barlow's seventeenth-century volumes which paint so vivid a picture of sea life, to treatises such as *Boteler's Dialogues* on maritime affairs, Monson's *Naval Tracts*. For the eighteenth century, such works include the *History of the Russian Fleet during the Reign of Peter The Great*, and Penrose's memoir of James Trevenen's active career in both American and Russian waters.<sup>29</sup> This is the most common form of published naval document and it contains among it one of the great pieces of English literature, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. The new eleven-volume edition of this extremely difficult manuscript is a model of scholarship that must serve as an inspiration to all document editors.<sup>30</sup> Pepys's diary opens a marvelous perspective into the administrative life of the navy in seventeenth-century London. For the pathos and humor of a sailor's life in the same period, one should not overlook *The Diary of Henry Teonge*, "one of the most human and entertaining in that golden age of diarists."<sup>31</sup>

One may also find letter books, sketch books, journals, autobiographies, memoirs and logbooks in this the largest category of published naval documents. In general they are the easiest of all types of documents to edit since their form and shape are already determined, yet they need transcription, elucidation, indexing and, just as important, a scholarly introduction which gives the volume its place in the literature, explaining its importance and contribution.



Procedures and the technical aspects of the craft of editing are extremely important and must be considered in evaluating published documents. These procedures are well known and must be adhered to, for they are the elements that bring quality to craftsmanship.<sup>32</sup> We have examples of bad craftsmanship among historical documents which discredit the use of the published documents. Among the atrocities in English naval history is Oscar Browning's faulty transcription of the *Journal of Sir George Rooke*.<sup>33</sup> American naval historians have had to contend with the far murkier history of *The Diary of Gideon Welles*, Secretary of the Navy under Abraham Lincoln. Fortunately, the *Diary* has been reedited and the fabrications, additions and omissions of the 1911 edition corrected by Howard K. Beale.<sup>34</sup> Others have suffered from such overzealous elucidation that the manuscript is lost in the annotation.<sup>35</sup>

In most cases naval documents have been published in strictly chronological order, but in editing the *Spencer Papers* for the Navy Records Society, Julian Corbett suggested that a thematic approach would be much more useful. "A simple chronological presentation would have been easy enough," he wrote, "but would have scarcely served the purpose for which the Society exists. If such papers are to be of real and general service in illustrating the principles of naval and maritime warfare an arrangement by subject is imperative."<sup>36</sup>

With the same purpose in mind, John D. Hayes presented his selection from the letters of Samuel Francis DuPont in chronological order, but hoped that their publication would draw attention to neglected naval subjects, "such as logistics, prize captures and the blockade, or to general problems suggested by career-versus-civilian contention for control of naval operations, by political influences upon the conduct of the naval war, and by early efforts at interservice cooperation."<sup>37</sup>

## MULTIVOLUME SERIES OF OPERATIONAL DISPATCHES

In the fifth category of publications, the U.S. Navy's series on *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, *The Barbary Wars*, and *The Quasi War with France* have dominated. The two most recent series, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* and *The Naval War of 1812*, have widened the focus slightly and considered some aspects beyond the operational records of battles and engagements. *The Naval War of 1812* volumes, in particular, are much more selective in their approach as well as more thematic.<sup>38</sup>



There are no multivolume series of twentieth century operational documents. The vast range and quantity of such documents present a difficult problem of selection, but the fact that many of these documents were produced on a typewriter presents an opportunity. In their sixty-eight-volume series, the editors of the "War Diary of the German Naval Staff, 1939-45" have employed an innovative approach. In this case, the editors reproduced the document as a photographic facsimile, adding notes at the end of each volume.<sup>39</sup> Their approach could be a model for others who deal with similar types of documents that are typewritten and uniform in their layout.

## THE CALENDAR

The final category is the calendar form of editing. In this form, documents are not quoted verbatim, but are abstracts with occasional extracts from individual documents. The editors of the *British Calendar of State Papers* developed a form which provided so much data that they came to be regarded as substitutes for the documents themselves. British practices in calendaring documents were adopted widely in the United States, but in recent years, they have fallen out of favor. In America, they have not been used for naval documents, although in England the London Record Society published in 1983 a calendar of *Trinity House Transactions*, some of which have great naval interest.<sup>40</sup>

In search for form and unity, other editors have attempted to intersperse descriptive passages and explanatory text between selected document entries. Louis Jennings employed this method in the *Crocker Papers*<sup>41</sup> and following Martin Blumenson's successful approach to the papers of General George S. Patton, Craig Symonds used the same idea in his *Charleston Blockade*.<sup>42</sup> Others have taken greater liberties with documents, bringing varying types together, piecing together extracts from letters, dairies and reports, into an arrangement that attempts to make a unified and more readable narrative than if the documents were published separately and in full.<sup>43</sup>

## TRANSCRIPTS, PHOTOCOPIES, AND MICROFILM

The issue of spelling and form of transcription is a matter which raises the strongest passion among document editors. We only need to remember the "Great Spelling Controversy of 1867" which nearly



destroyed the Camden Society to realize the depth of such passions.<sup>44</sup> Here too lies an issue upon which no compromise will be found among the contenders. With acid in his pen, Michael Oppenheim wrote in 1896: "A Fifteenth Century manuscript dressed up in modern English has a painfully artificial appearance, and, when thus masquerading, bears much the same resemblance to its source as does a translation to its original."<sup>45</sup>

In her recent edition of the fifteenth-century account books of William Soper, Susan Rose took the opposite view, and in a single sentence embraced all the sins that Oppenheim had fulminated against. "In this translation," she wrote, "the aim has been to provide a text which is clearly understandable and is as close to the original as is consistent with that aim."<sup>46</sup> One must add, however, that the Navy Records Society has generally published its works using the form of transcription which modernizes spelling and expands abbreviations. On the other hand, the U.S. Navy and the Hakluyt Society have used a form of transcription that attempts to reproduce more exactly the look of the manuscript. In the case of Norman Thrower's Hakluyt Society edition of Captain Edmond Halley's Journals,<sup>47</sup> this has meant the use of a variety of symbols and unusual characters. The purpose of this approach is undoubtedly "to preserve as fully as possible the flavor and character of . . . [a] manuscript by retaining . . . peculiarities of spelling and punctuation."<sup>48</sup>

The publication of documents through microfilm, microfiche and other inexpensive, miniaturizing procedures has revolutionized modern research methods. Documents and collections have been made available, which would otherwise have remained closed to everyone except researchers able to travel the world seeking their quarry. The cost to the researcher has been drastically reduced, while at the same time wear and tear on fragile original documents has been reduced by preserving or replacing them with microfilm publications. Yet microfilm remains difficult and unpleasant to use.<sup>49</sup> It still requires a specialist to interpret handwriting and abbreviations, identify and clarify references. Although immeasurably valuable to the researcher, microfilm publication must have the same scholarly assistance as that already described for selecting and editing letterpress editions. Simple reproduction of documents is not the purpose of historical editing, but thoughtful selection, interpretation, and clarification are the important matters.

Electronic media present another new approach for publishing documents and we are just beginning to make some use of them. As government offices and international organizations come increas-



ingly to use Internet Web sites and to post current documents, one can envisage placement of these materials in some type of electronic archive that grows over time, allowing available electronic search and retrieval of documents.

In choosing among methods as in developing an approach, form and character of a volume, a good editor must carefully weigh the nature of the material in the light of the range of people who should use it and how it can best be presented for the most appropriate audience. In this day that means also an eye toward production costs. Peculiarities of spelling and punctuation are important to philologists, a joy to antiquarians, routine to the average historian and repulsive to both typesetters and ordinary readers. Whatever the choice, someone will be displeased; it is a matter of choosing friends and conserving enemies.

To look at published naval documents from another angle, let us take a general look at the overall body of material that has appeared. The bulk of it is found in the over 140 Navy Records Society volumes and the fifty-eight volumes published by the U.S. Navy. Beyond that, the material is scattered. At the present time, none of the naval bibliographies provides an accurate means to identify the full range of documentary sources in print. The most difficult of all to find are the stray items published in journals, tagged on as appendices to other works, included in document collections relating to different specialties or lost in the morass of government publications. A perceptive naval bibliographer could do a great service by compiling a thoroughly researched and carefully organized list of published documents. So much bad naval history has been written that we would all be well served if we could quickly and easily find references to the accessible foundation stones that are already in print. Reference to good sources is the best means in improving the standards of naval history and in raising naval history to an academically respectable level. A greater body of published naval documents is necessary to do it; documents are the essential foundation of historical scholarship.

In an overall view of published naval documents in America and in England, the five categories I have talked about and the long series of operational dispatches published by the U.S. Navy show the same general patterns. First, we can see that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries up to 1815 dominate the scene. Much less has been done for the earlier period, and work on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is spotty. We have no volume of select documents in either British or American naval history, which effectively gives an accessible and representative collection of sources for the general



student to use. The disparate and varied sources which have been published have clear cut and valuable purposes behind them. One can point to a variety of volumes that contain insights into the naval profession which have deep significance and enduring value in understanding the formulation of naval strategy and tactics. We have at our fingertips the basis for understanding the function, purpose, limitations and contribution of navies; yet the synthesis remains to be done.

All of us who put our hand to editing documents have a deep responsibility to observe the highest scholarly standards making them as useful as possible to those who read and study naval history. We must show clearly that our choice of documents for publication is not merely serendipitous or random, but the product of careful thought and deep understanding in relation to the contribution which the material makes to our general field of study. Too often, editors of naval documents have produced a volume which stands authoritatively on the shelf but is never read or understood. Our purpose is clear, but the contribution intended has not yet been achieved. There is much to be done if the insights and interpretations offered by carefully edited volumes are to be fully accepted as part of the historical literature, not merely sources for experts. The fault lies with document editors who fail to explain their purpose and the meaning of their contribution as well as with those readers who limit their understanding by assuming too quickly that an analytical or narrative work is the only means by which the development of historical opinion can proceed. Perhaps we would be wise to remember Samuel Pepys's reflection on the issue as he contemplated his own projected history of the Royal Navy. Documents and memoirs, he wrote,

are true and useful stars, whilst studied histories are those stars joined in constellations, according to the fancy of the poet.<sup>50</sup>

Editors of historical documents cannot look successfully at these stars without understanding the nature of the galaxy in which they lie. They must rationally explain to readers their order of magnitude and judge their place in the heavens beyond.

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## NOTES

This is a revised and up-dated version of an essay that originally appeared in *Editing Naval Documents: Selected Papers from the Sixth*



*Naval History Symposium, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 29 September 1983.* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1984).

1. G. Philip Bauer, "Public Archives in the United States," *In Support of Clio: Essays in Memory of Herbert A. Keelar*, ed. William B. Hesseltine and Donald R. McNeil (Madison, 1958), pp. 57, 62.
2. An outline history of the office responsible for most of these publications appears in William James Morgan and Joye L. Leonhart, *A History of the Dudley Knox Center for Naval History* (Washington, 1981). See also the unpublished study by John McElroy, "Office of Naval Records and Library, 1882–1946," in the Navy Department Library, Washington, D.C.
- The Naval Historical Center and its predecessors published all the volumes, except the volume on the Spanish-American War: Bureau of Navigation, U.S. Navy Department, *Naval Operations of the War with Spain: Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation* (Washington, 1898); *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of Rebellion* (Washington, 1894–1927); *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, 1935–38); *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, 7 vols. (Washington, 1939–44); *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, 9 vols. to date (Washington, 1964–); *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History* 2 volumes to date. (Washington, DC, 1985–).
3. *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi War . . .*, I: iii, The foreword was signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt.
4. John Knox Laughton, "The Study of Naval History," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, XL, pt. II (1896): 801.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 808.
6. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich: MSS, NRS/I: Minutes of Council, List of Members, p. 2.
7. Charles Johnson, "The Camden Society," Appendix I in R. A. Humphreys, *The Royal Historical Society 1868–1968*. (London, 1969), p. 53.
8. Laughton, "The Study of Naval History," p. 808. See also, A. N. Sainsbury, *History of the Navy Records Society* (London, 1993) and R. C. Bridges and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth: Studies in the History of the Hakluyt Society, 1846–1996*. Publications of the Hakluyt Society, series II, volume 183. (London, 1996), p. 15, fn.3, 45 fn.2.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 809.
10. "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1888," in *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, I: viii.
11. See for example Franklin D. Roosevelt's forewords to the *Quasi-War* and *Barbary War* series and the various forewords and the introductions to *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* volumes.
12. Laughton, "The Study of Naval History," p. 795.
13. The series, begun in 1901, published documents for the years 1914–25, 1940–54 and 1979.
14. One excellent example of British naval information in Dutch diplomatic papers for the period of the War of the Spanish Succession 1702–14 is



A. J. Veenendaal, ed., *De Briefwisseling van Antonie Heinsius, 1702-1720*. (The Hague, 1976-). For a detailed description of the edition, see Hattendorf, "A Dutch Door to Europe, 1702-1720" *Documentary Editing*, 19 (September 1997), pp. 57-61.

The quotation is from John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William II, 1689-1697* (Cambridge, 1953), p. xxii.

15. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morison, John M. Blum and John J. Buckley, 8 vols. (Cambridge MA, 1951-54). Vols. 1-2 contain naval material; Franklin D. Roosevelt, *FDR: His Personal Letters*, ed. Elliott Roosevelt, 4 vols. (New York, 1947-50), vol. 2; John D. Long, *America of Yesterday as reflected in the Journal of John D. Long*, ed. Gardiner Allen (Boston, 1939); Josephus Daniels, *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels 1913-1921*, ed. E. David Cronan (Lincoln, NE, 1963); James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis (New York, 1951).
16. See in particular the years as First Sea Lord in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume III*, 2 parts (London, 1973), part 1 (July 1914-April 1915).
17. H. W. Hodges and E. A. Hughes, eds., *Select Naval Documents* (Cambridge, 1922). Compare with later editions for changing emphasis in teaching British naval history.
18. *Ibid.*, p. v.
19. Quoted in T. C. Mendenhall, B. D. Henning, A. S. Foord, eds., *Ideas and Institutions in European History, 800-1715: Select Problems in Historical Interpretation*. (New York, 1948), p. iv.
20. Daniel J. Boorstin, ed., *An American Primer*. (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1966), p. xiii.
21. The naval volume was to have been edited by John B. Hattendorf and R. J. B. Knight. More than decade later, the concept for it, with the editorial advice and assistance of a wide variety of other scholars, became the basis for the Navy Records Society centenary volume of documents, *British Naval Documents, 1203-1960*.
22. David C. Douglas, ed., *English Historical Documents*. (London, 1953-81), I:iii.
23. R. G. Marsden, ed., *Documents Relating to the Law and Custom of the Sea*, Navy Records Society, vols. 49-50 (London, 1915-16); James Grant, ed., *The Old Scots Navy from 1689 to 1710*, Navy Records Society, vol. 44 (London, 1914); D. A. Baugh, *Naval Administration, 1715-1750*, Navy Records Society, vol. 120 (London, 1977); S. W. Roskill *Documents Relating to the Naval Air Service*, Navy Records Society, vol. 113 (London, 1969); Michael Simpson, ed. *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1919*. Navy Records Society, vol. 130. (London, 1991).
24. Edouard Desbriere, ed., *Trafalgar: The Naval Campaign of 1805*. (Oxford, 1933). Gillian T. Cell, *Newfoundland Discovered: English Attempts at Colonization, 1610-1630*. Publications of the Hakluyt Society, Series II, volume 160. (London, 1982) and David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, *The English New England Voyages, 1602-1608*. Publications of the Hakluyt Society, series II, volume 161. (London, 1983). Douglas L. Stein, compiler. *American Maritime Documents, 1776-1860: Illustrated and Described*. (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1992); Andrew



- David, Rüdiger Joppien, and Bernard Smith, eds. *The Charts & Coastal Views of Captain Cook's Voyages*. Publications of the Hakluyt Society, Extra Series, volumes 43, 45, 46. (London, 1988–1997). Rüdiger Joppien, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages . . . with a descriptive catalogue of all known original drawings of people, places, artifacts and events and the original engravings associated*. Three volumes. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985–88).
25. Sir Edward Codrington, *Piracy in the Levant 1827–8. Selected from the papers of Admiral Sir Edward Codrington*, ed. C. G. Pitcairn Jones, Navy Records Society, vol. 72 (London, 1934).
  26. Horatio Nelson, *Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, ed. Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, 2nd ed. with add. letters, 7 vols. (London, 1845–46).
  27. John Arbuthnot Fisher, *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, ed. Arthur J. Marder, 3 vols. (London, 1953–59), I:11.
  28. Horatio Nelson, *Letters and Dispatches of Horatio, Viscount Nelson, KB*, ed. John Knox Laughton (London, 1886), p. vii.
  29. Cyprian A. G. Bridge, ed., *History of the Russian Fleet During the Reign of Peter the Great by a Contemporary Englishman*, Navy Records Society, vol. 15 (London, 1899); Edward Barlow, *Barlow's Journal of His Life At Sea in King's Ships, East and West Indiamen and Other Merchantmen from 1659 to 1703*, ed. Alfred Basil Lubbock (London, 1934); Nathaniel Butler, *Boteler's Dialogues: A Dialogical Discourse Concerning Maritime Affairs Between The High Admiral and a Captain at Sea*, ed. W. G. Perrin, Navy Records Society, vol. 65 (London, 1929); Sir William Monson, *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*, ed. M. Oppenheim, Navy Records Society, vols. 22, 23, 43, 45, 47 (London, 1902–14); James Trevenen, *A Memoir of James Trevenen*, by C. V. Penrose, ed. Christopher Lloyd and R. C. Anderson, Navy Records Society, vol. 101 (London, 1959).
  30. Samuel Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1970–1983).
  31. Henry Teonge, *The Diary of Henry Teonge, Chaplain on board His Majesty's ships Assistance, Bristol and Royal Oak, anno 1675–1679*, ed. Sir E. Denison Ross and Eileen Power (1825; reprint ed., London, 1927), p. 26.
  32. For rules and procedures, see "Report on Editing Historical Documents," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 1 (1923): 6–25 and vol. 2 (1925): 13–26, and the section entitled "Editing and Printing," in *Harvard Guide to American History*, ed. Frank Freidel, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1974), I:27–36.
  33. Sir George Rooke, *The Journal of Sir George Rooke*, ed. Oscar Browning, Navy Records Society, vol. 9 (London, 1897).
  34. Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, ed. Howard K. Beale, 3 vols. (New York, 1960). See pp. xxii–xxiv for an examination of the 1911 version.
  35. See for example, George T. Fullam, *The Journal of George Tounley Fullam: Boarding Officer of the Confederate Sea Raider Alabama*, ed. Charles G. Summersell (Mobile, AL, 1973).
  36. George John Spencer, *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer*, ed.



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38. For a detailed discussion of these volumes, see Hattendorf, "We Have Met the Enemy and They Are Ours": The Naval War of 1812," *Documentary Editing*, 15 (September 1993), pp. 57–60.
39. For a detailed description of this series, see Hattendorf, "The War Diary of the German Naval Staff, 1939–1945," *Documentary Editing*, 18 (September 1996), pp. 58–62. [A review article on Werner Rahn, et al., eds., *Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung, 1939–1945*. (Hereford: Verlag E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1988–1997)].
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49. Bernard J. S. Williams, "Microforms, pro and contra," *The Times of London Literary Supplement*, 14 October 1983, p. 1139.
50. Samuel Pepys, *Samuel Pepys' Naval Minutes*, ed. J. R. Tanner, Navy Records Society, vol. 60. (London, 1926), p. 69.