

2015

21st Century Sims: Innovation, Education, and Leadership for the Modern Era

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Recommended Citation

Masakowski, Yvonne R. and Armstrong, Benjamin F. (2015) "21st Century Sims: Innovation, Education, and Leadership for the Modern Era," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 68 : No. 4 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol68/iss4/15>

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Armstrong, Benjamin F., ed. *21st Century Sims: Innovation, Education, and Leadership for the Modern Era*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2015. 176pp. \$21.95

Over a century after first being composed, the writings of Admiral William S. Sims continue to have relevance to all Navy leaders. Benjamin Armstrong has compiled a selection of *Proceedings* articles (originally published between 1905 and 1940) and provides an informative perspective of the character and career of Admiral Sims and the impact of his initiatives on innovation and commitment to leader development. Armstrong introduces us to the young Lieutenant Sims as he begins his journey of revolution in Navy strategy, education, and ship design. From the deck plate to the President of the Naval War College, we gain an appreciation for Admiral Sims's career and his achievements from this compelling collection of his writings that resonate with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Armstrong's commentary provides us with insights into each topic's relevance. From the "Gun Doctor" and "The Battleships of High Speed" to the chapter on military character, we view the development of Admiral Sims as a military leader as someone who challenges the bureaucracy of the military institution. In his lecture on military character, Sims reflects on the qualifications of a military leader and emphasizes a strong moral character as essential for the development of a military leader. While this was written in 1916, this topic remains critical for the development of twenty-first-century military leaders. Sims's perspective provides a lens for the reader to evaluate breaches in ethics,

morality, and decision making in the twenty-first century. Sims challenges each person to view character as an element of leadership and effective decision making. He commands officers that "it is the duty of every officer to study his own character that he may improve it." Upon reflection, this is perhaps the most important message taken from this volume of articles, as moral character underlies and reinforces decision making. Today, in an era during which our nation's military leaders have committed numerous ethical violations, there is a moral imperative to develop military character as part of the education process of every military officer. For it is from the foundation of their moral character that leadership matures and enables our nation's military leaders to build a bridge of trust between the military and our nation.

This collection of Sims's writings and Armstrong's analysis provides a lens for us to view and share Sims's perspectives as he moves through the pre- and post-World War I period. Although Sims's career was nearly a century ago, the issues he addressed remain current, including acquisition reform, technological deficiencies, and the need to educate Navy leaders. Armstrong invites us to accompany Sims on his journey as he moves across Europe, inspecting and reporting on the deficiencies of gunnery and battleship designs. Imagine, if you will, meeting the young Lieutenant Sims as he moves around Europe checking on the newest advances in ship design. A young Lieutenant Commander Sims boldly sparks criticism with his critique of gunnery techniques, technologies, and platforms, as he sets the course for a career of innovation. Impervious to criticism, Sims challenges bureaucracy and is the first to push for a change in

gunnery and the development of continuous-aim fire. He begins to innovate!

Sims forged the Navy in preparation for World War I with his focus on naval gunnery, battleship design, and destroyer operations. Always the rebel and revolutionary, his insights were grounded on firsthand knowledge and experience. Sims was a critical thinker whose ability to evaluate technologies and platform designs was matched by his determination to fight for those changes required for military readiness. He abhorred risk-averse behavior and what he termed “military conservatism,” referring to the “dangerous reluctance to accept new ideas.”

From Sims’s perspective, the opportunity for officers to conduct war games served to enhance the development of critical thinking skills and innovative operational solutions. He would enjoy exploring advanced technologies, such as drones, networks of autonomous, unmanned systems, and artificial intelligence, and would integrate these technologies into military war-fighting capabilities. Sims would be the first to accept and adopt these technologies to gain a military advantage.

As President of the Naval War College, Sims exemplified a career dedicated to the education and development of Navy leaders. Throughout his career, Sims emphasized the need for the development of leaders with strong moral character, who were capable of strategic thinking and effective decision making.

Sims continues to inspire and challenge a new generation of Navy leaders. Sims would remind us that the main objective of the Navy is to prepare for war! He cautions us to be aware of our own fleet’s vulnerabilities and tasks us to remain

vigilant with regard to maintaining military readiness. While I would not presume to know how he would handle each of the military crises in today’s military operational environment, I would offer that Sims would applaud the Naval War College’s commitment to excellence in education and its commitment to developing revolutionary innovative naval warfare concepts through war gaming.

In conclusion, Sims serves as a model for all leaders and challenges us to examine our personal and professional development. How do we compare in our dedication to duty, our commitment to discipline and moral courage, our ability to innovate, and our ability to challenge ourselves continuously by learning? One could argue that we need a young Lieutenant Sims today if we are to remain a world power. The question is, Would we recognize a Lieutenant Sims in the twenty-first-century Navy?

This is a welcome addition to the 21st Century Foundations series from the Naval Institute Press, informative, inspiring, and a must-read for those interested in leader development. The bibliography provides further reading recommendations to enhance the reader’s interest in this topic.

YVONNE R. MASAKOWSKI



Kaiser, David. *No End Save Victory: How FDR Led the Nation into War*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. 408pp. \$28

David Kaiser’s *No End Save Victory* stands out as the best of several books published in 2014 that examine FDR’s leadership during the interlude between the fall of France and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December