

1992

Guide to Naval Writing

William F. Hickman

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as elsewhere, politics, economics, military science, and human nature produce an exquisitely braided rope of complexity. The Asian and European variants are quite different and arise from geography, population densities, distances, and culture.

In the final chapter the author offers his conclusions and prognoses. They are simple and insightful.

This reviewer has no hesitation in recommending this book to any serious student of military affairs.

JAMES O'BRASKY
Naval Surface Warfare Center
Dahlgren, Virginia

Shenk, Robert. *Guide to Naval Writing: A Practical Handbook for the Naval Professional*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1990. 349pp. \$22.95

"What are you trying to say? Rewrite this!" Every officer who has ever stood in front of an executive officer has heard those fateful words. Many sea-service professionals would rather stand consecutive midwatches or take "zero-zero traps" than take pen in hand or sit at a keyboard. Although driving the ship, flying the plane, or diving the boat require carefully developed skill, expressing oneself clearly in writing is perhaps the most difficult task faced regularly by officers and senior enlisted people.

Over the years the art of writing in the navy has been akin to a secret handshake. Those who have never been able to crack the code should take heart, for help is finally at hand.

Robert Shenk, a naval officer and professor of English at two service academies, has written a book that bridges the gap between fitness report word-lists and professional style manuals.

This handbook is specifically aimed at the unique requirements of the sea-going officer. Based on interviews with hundreds of naval professionals, it is a jewel. It is filled with common sense and practical advice, and covers all aspects of every writing assignment regularly required of navy and marine corps personnel. Although for decades guides for writing fitness reports have been passed around the fleet, common documents such as naval letters and messages have been given short shrift. Not so in this work. Each of these, along with other reports and forms, is carefully and thoroughly analyzed in separate chapters. In addition to format guides and completed examples (both good and bad) that tell how a phrase should be constructed, the *Guide* explains why it should be written that way.

This is a reference book that not only shows how to draft an effective press release but also how to eliminate emotion in writing and how to use sex-neutral language. It includes a very useful ready reference on the mechanics of writing (capitalization and punctuation), and contains an extensive list of abbreviations and acronyms used in naval messages.

From this description, one could reasonably surmise that this handbook is the usual dry, boring reading normally associated with textbooks. On

the contrary, it has the immediacy of a bull session with a good friend in the wardroom. Sidebars and anecdotes interspersed throughout the book give a unique flavor to this comprehensive, highly readable guide to one of the most important aspects of the naval profession. This book should be in every wardroom and ready room in the fleet. Every reporting officer should receive a copy. It is indispensable.

WILLIAM F. HICKMAN
Captain, U.S. Navy

Peters, Hubert J.M.W., comp. *The Crone Library: Books on the Art of Navigation*. Nieuwkoop, Netherlands: De Graaf Publishers BV, 1989. 805pp. \$96

This descriptive bibliography was published for the Netherlands Scheepvaart Museum in Amsterdam and is a major contribution to maritime scholarship. It is not merely a listing of the museum's collections of navigation books but a collection of scholarly treatises, and is a tool of remarkable scholarly value.

There are five parts to the book. The first pays homage to the collector, Dr. Ernest Crone (1891-1975), the former chairman of the board of the Sheepvaart Museum, in a biographical sketch explaining his interest and experience in navigation and listing the 109 items that he published. This is followed by a "Survey of the History of the Art of Navigation in the Netherlands," by Professor C. Koeman. It is a useful sixteen-page

overview of the subject, which places Dutch contributions to navigation within the context of broader elements.

Koeman's essay is followed by W.F.J. Morzer Bruyns's descriptive list of the "Crone Collection of Nautical Instruments." These instruments were a direct complement to the books which Crone acquired, linking the bibliographic aspects of the study with the real practice of navigation in history. This description is divided into several categories: instruments for measuring the altitude of a celestial body above the horizon; time measurement; compasses; instruments for measuring the speed of a ship through the water; telescopes; and drawing and computing instruments.

These introductory parts lead to the main catalogue, which is a chronological listing of 1,223 items published between 1483 and 1971. The whole takes up 565 pages, with a complete technical description of each work. There is a thirty-one page explanation of the principles, and also instructions for using the list explaining the various entries, references, and abbreviations.

The main list is followed by seven indices, including one each for authors, printers, and book sellers, and place names and their imprint variants, with reference maps by period showing the place of publication with numbers of editions. The final fifty-pages cap the volume with a selection of illustrations, mainly title pages but also bindings and maps and illustrations within a book.