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## Reflections on Reading

The U.S. Naval War College

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## REFLECTIONS ON READING

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Late in calendar year 2020, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Michael M. Gilday, USN, approved aspects of a new revision to his office's Professional Reading Program (CNO-PRP), referred to as CNO-PRP 5.0. The specific reading categories and book titles still were being finalized as this issue of the *Review* went to press, so details will be provided in a follow-on Reflections on Reading column.

In the interim, it is interesting to look at the issue of reading from a broader perspective.

- The ubiquitous Google search engine estimates that 130 million different books have been published in modern history. This certainly provides ample content from which to choose!
- According to a Pew Research survey conducted in 2019, Americans on average read twelve books per year. However, since 27 percent of the respondents reported reading *no* books during the previous year, the more voracious readers tend to skew the data.
- The Pew survey also found that printed books remain the preferred format, used by 65 percent of the respondents. In the past twelve months, only 25 percent had read an e-book and 20 percent had listened to an audiobook.

With these data nuggets in mind, how should you decide which of the 130 million books out there you should target if you set an ambitious goal of reading a dozen books a year? The answer, of course, is very personal for each individual. Many experts divide reading into two categories: reading done strictly for pleasure and reading done for enrichment or professional growth. Science fiction, westerns, historical fiction, and romance are all genres that can fill the pure-entertainment bill effectively. The CNO-PRP, however, seeks

to assist sailors in focusing their reading on books that contribute to mastering their profession and improving their abilities to serve with honor, courage, and commitment.

To arrive at the list of books recommended for inclusion in the new CNO-PRP, a Reading Program Advisory Group was established, consisting of representatives from the Naval Academy, Naval Postgraduate School, Naval War College, and 21st Century Sailor Office. Collectively, these advisers created a slate of nearly four hundred books they considered to be particularly valuable for the development of the women and men of the U.S. Navy. From there, using an iterative process of review and consultation, they reduced the slate to approximately seventy-five titles. The CNO and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy finalized the list from these recommendations. We now await official approval.

In addition to categorization by specific lines of effort that support the Navy vision for the future, the list has been divided into subcategories according to Navy professionals' level of experience. Books in the Foundational category may be most appropriate for sailors (officer and enlisted) at all grades and ranks during their first seven years of service; books identified as Advanced are suggested for midcareer sailors, in the eight-to-fifteen-year range; and the Capstone books are suggested for reading by those with sixteen or more years of service. These subcategories are advisory in nature; Navy professionals can read anything that appeals to them.

Once the final program details have been solidified, an updated CNO-PRP website will provide all the titles, as well as thumbnail sketches of each book. In most cases, a link will be provided to allow readers to access the books as digital files from the Navy MWR Digital Library at <http://navy.lib.overdrive.com>. Once you establish a Navy MWR Digital Library borrower's account, e-books, and in some cases audiobooks, can be borrowed for up to thirty days, after which the content will be deleted from your device so it can be loaned to another user.

Future Reflections on Reading columns here in the *Review* will highlight various titles from the CNO-PRP version 5.0. The CNO has stated, "Learning is the ultimate warfare enabler, and the intellectual development of our sailors provides our most critical war-fighting capabilities." His Professional Reading Program is a great way for sailors to develop their intellects on a continuing basis.

JOHN E. JACKSON