

Information Hunters: When Librarians, Soldiers, and Spies Banded Together in World War II Europe

Edward Salo

Kathy Peiss

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military tradition—continued. Even as the West's global political and economic hegemony erodes, the Western way of war will continue to inform the military organization, strategy, and tactics of any would-be hegemon.

Ultimately, *The Cambridge History of Warfare* is the most comprehensive textbook treatment of Western military history extant, and it serves as the quintessential companion to the Cambridge History of War series. While it may be “open to the charge of Eurocentrism,” there is no doubt that the “Western way of war has become dominant all over the world” (p. vii). The volume includes twenty maps, a helpful glossary, a detailed chronology, and an extensive bibliography. No work on this subject can be truly comprehensive, but readers will find this edition to be a good resource providing an overview of the Western way of war.

VIKTOR M. STOLL



Information Hunters: When Librarians, Soldiers, and Spies Banded Together in World War II Europe, by Kathy Peiss. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020. 296 pages. \$36.95.

The ultrasuccessful businessman Mark Cuban stated in an interview that “[i]nformation is power. Particularly when the competition ignores the opportunity to do the same” (“Interview with Scott McKenzie,” *slushpile.net*, 9 March 2006). This axiom is especially true during times of war, when information—no matter the subject matter or level of importance—can be made part of the intelligence-gathering process. On today's battlefield, information warfare is one of the many domains in which our military

prepares to fight, and intelligence agencies use much open-source intelligence.

Kathy Peiss, in her book *Information Hunters: When Librarians, Soldiers, and Spies Banded Together in World War II Europe*, examines the efforts of U.S. librarians and archivists during World War II. First they gathered open-source intelligence, then gathered and preserved books, manuscripts, and other sources during the war and postwar periods to enhance the holdings of the Library of Congress and other research collections across the nation.

This is not the typical subject matter for Peiss, who usually studies the history of gender and sexuality. The book started when she began exploring the life of her uncle Reuben Peiss, who was part of the Library of Congress European Mission (LCM), which started with the mission of acquiring books and periodicals for the library but shifted to one of intelligence gathering. Peiss's curiosity regarding her family has resulted in an exciting exploration of a mission that was important during World War II but still holds meaning today.

Peiss divides the book chronologically, with chapters that correspond to different periods and relate the missions of the various units and their masters who collected the information. Peiss illustrates that, unlike the “Monuments Men” who worked within the U.S. Army to protect art and historic buildings, many groups contributed to the protection and gathering of books and other materials. These ranged from the Library of Congress, the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications within the Office of Strategic Services (the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency), and military units such as T-forces, to the Monuments Men

themselves. While the number and variety of the groups can be confusing, Peiss focuses on the individuals—scholars and librarians, male and female—who had to make critical decisions about books and collections out in the field.

Just as warfare sometimes is the catalyst for great leaps in technology and science, such as the development of the rocket and jet engines during World War II, Peiss contends that, in addition to preserving physical books, the LCM and other groups brought about innovations in library science. The sections on the use of microfilm and the development of organizations that would develop into ProQuest and OLIC also were interesting to this scholar, who uses those services on a daily basis.

Peiss also delves into parts of the mission that were less than ethical. She shows the shadowy actions of some black-market dealers, as well as bringing up the ethical dilemma of obtaining a portion of a nation's intellectual heritage during a time of war. Finally, I was taken by the discussion of saving Nazi records and propaganda, first for the war trials, then to preserve them for future historical studies.

Peiss's book is a joy to read; her recounting of this aspect of World War II is interesting in itself. It also provides the perfect companion piece to Robert Edsel's *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (2009) or Joshua Hammer's *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: And Their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts* (2016); the latter deals with efforts to save important manuscripts during a more recent war. Peiss's book deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in intelligence gathering, library science, the protection

of cultural artifacts, or the power of information warfare. I also would advocate that it be included in the training of civil-affairs personnel in the military. Peiss provides the history of efforts to gather and preserve books, manuscripts, and other sources, but she also provides lessons on how to conduct similar operations during future military operations.

EDWARD SALO



Strategy Shelved: The Collapse of Cold War Naval Strategic Planning, by Steven T. Wills. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021. 292 pages. \$44.95.

In *Strategy Shelved*, Center for Naval Analyses analyst and retired surface warfare officer Steve Wills examines the U.S. Navy's struggle to reestablish its purpose and recapture its identity following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The "strategy shelved" motif refers to both the late-1980s *Maritime Strategy*—perhaps the most successful employment and force-structure plan in the Navy's history—and the apparent disinterest of the Navy's leadership in drafting a unifying strategic vision of its future during the later 1990s and the early part of the following decade.

In Wills's depiction, the cadre of uniformed naval strategists that the naval services carefully developed during the Cold War was shelved. Instead, the Navy's full attention turned toward preserving its force structure and its share of the dramatically shrinking defense budget by grasping at stray concepts and shoehorning itself into land-centric joint plans. Under the latter conditions, having creative strategic experts did not seem particularly