

LIBRARY AFLOAT: EDUCATING MARITIME STUDENTS AT SEA THROUGH LIBRARY SERVICES

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Abstract. As a part of the SUNY Maritime College training and education the SUNY Maritime College cadets are required to participate on three summer sea terms aboard the Training Ship Empire State VI. Each summer, the cadets travel across the world, learning about the maritime industry, attend classes and courses as well learning the operations of the ship. The Stephen B. Luce Library shares the educational mission of the college by supporting the *Training Ship Empire State VI* with a library of collections, services and personnel. During the 9-weeks' long semester at sea the librarian onboard the Ship's Library is actively involved in planning and conducting the research needs of the cadets, faculty and crew. Staying on course with the college's strategic directions, the Ship's Library provides the focused collections and resources such as books, magazines and journals, research pamphlets, electronic resource and audio visual material needed for courses and training at sea. "Library Afloat: Educating Maritime Students at Sea through Library Services" describes the ship's library operations and collections in support of the courses taught at sea. In addition, the paper demonstrates how a successful library support enhances the maritime student education at sea.

INTRODUCTION: SUNY MARITIME COLLEGE AND THE LUCE LIBRARY

SUNY Maritime College is one of the 64 colleges and universities of the State University of New York system. A four-year college located at historic Fort Schuyler in Throggs Neck, New York offers a solid academic program coupled with a structured cadet life in the regiment for both men and women. Maritime College prepares students for careers through a content-centered curriculum and a hands-on, team building approach to learning. Maritime offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, 23 varsity athletic teams, summer training cruises to Europe, United States Coast Guard license and intern programs, SUNY Maritime College web portal [1].

The Stephen B. Luce Library of SUNY Maritime College is accredited by professional organizations such as the Middle State Commission on Higher Education and it adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Association of the College and Research Libraries of the American Library Association, American Library Association [2]. The Luce Library is the oldest academic maritime library serving the community of the oldest maritime academy in the United States, SUNY Maritime College, founded in 1874. The Library's collections and resources support the research requirements of the maritime disciplines in engineering, science and the humanities.

In the United States, the maritime curriculum is taught with academic content and rigor that serve specific sectors of the maritime industry and further the professional opportunities of graduate students. With an unusually large number of credits and undergraduate requirements, in addition to semesters at sea and merchant marine license exams, the maritime curriculum prepares and positions its students for high-level professional opportunities. Due to the rigorous academic demands of the maritime core curriculum, the Stephen B. Luce Library of SUNY Maritime College has developed instructional program for research information services and information literacy which is both equally rigorous and complementary to the

maritime core curriculum. The Library's instructional program serves the teaching and learning needs of the SUNY Maritime College through instruction, assessment, and evaluation of scholarly material (print and electronic) ashore and afloat.

The study "Library Afloat: Educating Maritime Students at Sea through Library Services" demonstrates the Stephen B. Luce Library's instructional program for research, information services and information literacy in educating cadets on board on *Training Ship Empire State VI*. The cadets of SUNY Maritime College sail for nine weeks aboard the *Training Ship Empire State VI* attending courses while practicing seamanship. The Ship's Library is equipped with print and electronic collections with a professional librarian onboard to instruct the cadets on the use of library resources for their research. In addition, the Ship's Librarian conducts research sessions on the information needs of all crew members as visitors to international ports and a port facts sheet supplements these sessions.

SHIPS' LIBRARIES: READING AT SEA

The mariner has always been subject to loneliness at sea. Loneliness at sea is a condition which has been described in the medical science as "nostalgia," in poetry and literary works as well as in paintings and art, Simpson & Weiner [3]. In eighteen and nineteenth-century iconography sailors were shown with a book in their hand. The book played an important part in the recreation and pastime of a sailor at sea. Reading helped dispel the loneliness and boredom of hard times at sea and provided of the few intellectual pastimes available on shipboard, Skallerup [4]. The desire to read and especially to learn at sea is evident in various accounts. Ships carried books for beginners such as books learning to spell, grammar and arithmetic books, Dana [5]. The bible and other religious texts were among the most frequent reading materials. Frequently sailors read aloud to their shipmates so that others may learn to read. Historical accounts describe the living conditions aboard ship were both conducive and prohibitive to reading. At times there were many opportunities for seamen to read but other times due to the bad weather conditions, darkness and fatigue prevented the sailors from reading.

The quantity of books and type of books accessible to seamen at sea varied from ship to ship. Popular literature of the day found its way aboard ships in the sea chests of sailors. In addition to religious books there were ephemeral literature of the street which consisted of lurid and sensational stories, political pamphlets and books of amusement, Skallerup [6]. Medical books were written for masters of merchant vessels who needed information and advice on how to treat sickness and injury among their men. *The Sailor's Physician* by Dr. Usher Parson was an early American work that was found on ships between 1824 and 1867, Skallerup [7]. The first evident of a librarian onboard a ship is mentioned in the preface of *The Cabin Boy's Locker* (1853), a collection of stories featured in the *Sailor's Magazine*. The Cabin boy was usually aboard the passenger ships; instead of serving wine, ale and hard liquors, he would hand out books to passengers for leisure reading and maintain a chest of books.

STEPHEN B. LUCE LIBRARY AFLOAT

It has been a long tradition for the SUNY Maritime College to sail with its library during the summer sea term for two months aboard the Training Ship *Empire State VI*. Library records show that the Stephen B. Luce Library afloat has been in support of the education of the cadets at sea since at least since 1961. The Library aboard the school's training ship *T.S. Empire State* is staff with a professional librarian who is a member of the library faculty, furnished with collections, services, and the professional knowledge and expertise to carry out the education mission of SUNY Maritime College.

In 1962, the Library Director, Dr. Joseph Whitten, joined the crew of the *T. S. Empire State IV* as the first Ship's Librarian. In his Librarian's Log he wrote: "It seems important that the Ship's personnel recognize the importance of reference, academic and advisory services. This end should be achieved, in part, through the presence of a professional librarian. It certainly shows the interest of the Library in the total

college program and should give all personnel that the Library participates in all aspect of the program,” Whitten [8].

EDUCATION AT SEA

SUNY Maritime education and training continues at sea onboard the 565-foot training ship *Empire State VI*, one of the largest and best-equipped training ship in the United States and also the only training ship with a full service library. During the annual Summer Sea Term, which is a mandatory part of the curricula, the *Empire State VI* sails more than 8,000 nautical miles and visits a minimum of four international ports over the course of nine weeks. The rigorous and demanding sea term provides cadets with the opportunity to experience hands on training in leadership and responsibilities of all aspect of ship operation under the supervision of licensed officers and staff. As outlined in the college catalog, the main goals of the Summer Sea Term are, SUNY Maritime College [9]:

1. To provide an understanding of shipboard organization, administration, facilities and functions of the various departments of a merchant vessel.
2. To develop a full appreciation of the principles of command, to train Cadets in the duties and responsibilities of watch officers and other supervisory personnel, and to promote a complete understanding of the duties and responsibilities of personnel in general.
3. To supplement ashore classroom instruction in professional subjects through practical application aboard the training ship at sea.
4. To promote an understanding, through practical experience, of the leadership, teamwork, techniques, and technical skills required to manage and operate a vessel efficiently, safely and economically.
5. To enhance cultural and professional backgrounds through as many contacts with the geography, history, and national distinctions of other countries and peoples, as the limited time allows.

Cadets pursuing a professional license as a United States Merchant Marine Officer are required to take a minimum of three Summer Sea Terms. Cadets aiming to qualify as a mate undergo extensive (basic, intermediate, and advanced) training in ship operation and management. While onboard the “deckies” are exposed to rigorous training in the areas of communications, navigation, ship handling, ship operations, safety, and meteorology. Under the supervision of the Chief Engineer and the Senior Engineering Training Officer, Cadets qualifying as assistant engineers receive in-depth training in the ship’s organization, interrelationship of the components of an operating engine room, and safety of person and ship. Each cadet must take and pass intensive oral and written examinations, SUNY Maritime College [10].

The Ship’s Library functions as an educational and reading center and serves to fulfill the educational and training objectives of the cadets during the Summer Sea Term. The main function of the Ship’s Library is to support the curricula of Summer Sea Term. However, with the array of resources and services provided, the Ship’s Library fulfills other goals and objectives. First, recreational reading is a major function and users have access to an extensive paperback bestseller collection and a maritime-based leisure reading collection called the GOVE collection. Second, in support of Summer Sea Term goal #5, the Ship’s Library assumes responsibility to provide port information, including information on countries, their cultures, their food, and other pertinent information for visitors. The librarian prepares and conducts lectures and creates handouts on port information prior to arriving in each port. Third, the Ship’s Library serves as the base for media entertainment, especially in providing access to DVD movies entertainment. Finally, being such a unique and comfortable space, the Ship’s Library is often the retreat for cadets to meet socially and have intellectual discussions.

In 1962, then Library Director Dr. Whitten set the standard of having a librarian sail aboard the Training Ship during Summer Sea Term. Dr. Whitten stressed the importance of having a professional to provide reference and other library services. As Librarian Ray Cotter stated in the 1970 Librarian’s Report,

without the services of a librarian the Ship's Library is just a room full of bookshelves, Cotter [11]. At present, the Ship's Librarian plays a major role in supporting the cadets' education at sea. As a senior officer of the crew the Librarian participates in the cadets' training process by being a teacher, a mentor, an advisor, and a shipmate. The Librarian teaches information literacy classes, conducts port information lectures and creates handouts, leads group discussion sessions, conducts reference service, and generally supports the information needs of the officers and cadets. The Librarian also writes a log of the highlights of the day's activities which is communicated back ashore for posting on a web blog.

Library space

The Ship's Library occupies 2400 square feet on deck four of the Training Ship *Empire State VI*. With a seating capacity for 50 people, the reading room area consists of group study tables, charts & maps tables and lounge chairs. The shelving holds approximately 7,000 books and magazines, and has some shelves specially designed to prevent books from falling during ship roll. The computer area has several networked workstations for student use. The Librarian's station includes a desk with a computer workstation and the network server, audio/visual equipment wired throughout the ship to deliver training and entertainment videos, and a ready reference area with over 200 reference books.

Collection

The Ship's Library collection, consisting of print, media and electronic titles, is geared towards supporting classroom instruction, practical training, licensure preparation, leisure reading, and entertainment at sea. In support of academics the collection is focused on marine transportation, marine engineering, and other relevant areas to meet the needs of teaching and training. A secondary focus is on leisure reading and entertainment, including a collection of adult paperback fiction and the GOVE special collection with true to life stories that stimulate a love of the sea and foster a better understanding of the seagoing profession and life at sea. The Reference and Reserve collections consists of many handbooks, study manuals, and guidebooks in the areas of sailing directions, ports guide and entry, rules of the road, communication, knots, deck officer license study guides, marine engineer license study guides, boilers, engines, turbines, HVAC, country and culture studies and travel guides, language dictionaries, and other related subject areas. Electronic resources include the most updated edition of various official government publications on ocean conditions, navigation, and federal regulations; and official country information and ports guide. *Bowditch Practical Navigator*, *List of Lights*, *International Code of Signals*, *Code of Federal Regulations*, *Pilot Charts*, *Sailing Directions*, *Radio and Radar Navigation*, and *Sight Reduction Tables* are prominent titles available electronically. The media collection is several hundred titles of movies and training videos. The entire collection is cataloged and searchable via the Library's electronic catalog (OPAC).

Technology

The new generation of cadets is far more technology oriented and thus is far more demanding for instantaneous access to information. Similar to Maritime College Library ashore, the Ship's Library afloat is equipped with the appropriate technology to accommodate cadets' mode of learning and information researching, Constantinou & Fazal [12]. The Ship's Library has several computer workstations networked on its local area network (LAN). The Library's LAN is networked to the Ship's intranet which is connected the Ship's satellite communication system. All library computers provide access to electronic publications, information on the Library operations and staff, image and data banks, various training software, and the Library's OPAC. Effective record keeping and management of library operations is done using LibrarySoft, an integrated library management system. Cataloging of books, circulation, patron record maintenance, statistics and report generation are all managed by LibrarySoft.

Library use and operation

While at sea the Ship's Library is heavily used by cadets, officers and the general crew and in recent years usage have increased even more. A decade ago the average use was about 2150 patrons over the nine-week sea term, but in recent years usage have doubled to about 4300 patrons for the term (averaging to 110 patrons per day). The Library opens an average of 12 hours a day while at sea and much less hours while at port due to many other scheduled port activities. The Library is staffed by the Librarian in charge and a few cadet assistants who perform routine maintenance and organization duties. Circulation transactions totals to over 1100 items for the sea term of which 60 % are for items in the fiction and GOVE collection. Apart from borrowing reading materials, cadets use the library to research print and electronic sources to complete deck and engine class assignments. The Librarian answers many reference questions including technical questions on ship operations, ship structure, ship handling, types of vessels and rules and regulations for each type, engine room techniques, engine design and peripheral components. Other reference requests are generally on information on vessels, travel and port information, currency exchange, food and culture, etc.

CONCLUSION

Library Director, Dr. Joseph Whitten, the first member of the faculty to serve as the Ship's Librarian in 1962 wrote in his librarian's log that $\frac{1}{4}$ of the schools maritime education takes place at sea. Cadets and young mariners receive their most valuable element of their education at sea, aboard ships where they apply their knowledge into practice and experience. Dr. Whitten acknowledged that the library must be involved in the total college program and should demonstrate that to all personnel that the Library participates in all aspect of the students education. Dr. Joseph Whitten's premise serves as the foundation for the Luce Library of SUNY Maritime College to build collections at sea, to develop services and to educate mariners in their natural element and the natural environment of their studies.

Traditionally and throughout history young mariners learned how to read and write and received their education from book they read at sea. The ultimate purpose of educating mariners at sea is to install the ideas of life-long learning in the cadets' minds, behaviors and habits. A new generation of mariners is immersing from the Maritime Academy. These young mariners not only are able of acquiring information and knowledge from ship's library resources but they are also learning how to disseminate information quickly and efficiency. They appreciate and understand and access to information as a critical component to their decision making while they are at sea as much as at ashore.

The library's instructional mission and learning process does not pause, to the contrary, it continues at sea. The Stephen B. Luce Library has come to appreciate that library effectiveness and the education of mariners is not achieved by a way of being at the heart of the academy. The Library's objective in educating mariners at sea is achieved by a way of decentralizing the core and the essence of the library organization; it is achieved by a way for decentralizing the principals of scholarship, maritime institutional tradition, service and access to reach out to the maritime community at sea. It is proven that there is no "one best way" of achieving one's organizational and educational objectives. The maritime community is dynamic and diverse; therefore the library as an organization must be dynamic and diverse. Strengthening the maritime community requires a consistent effort of disseminating organizational access and assets to meet the needs of the floating community. The Stephen B. Luce Library of SUNY Maritime College Library continues to change; it morphs and evolves to become who the maritime community is and it travels to be where the maritime community is, ... at the *crossroads of the vast seas*, Constantinou [13].

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