

Here's for a Coriolis Effect in Maritime History

John B. Hattendorf

The launching of a new scholarly journal for the broad field of maritime history is an event that should be warmly welcomed and strongly encouraged by all who work in the varied disciplines of the maritime humanities. The subject of maritime history is a wide theme in global history that cuts across the standard boundaries of academic disciplines. In many respects, it is a new and developing interdisciplinary field of scholarly research and writing, although it has deep roots in much older scholarship in specific and highly focused parts of the field, such as separate national naval histories, the history of nautical science, and the history of maritime exploration. At the same time, the study of some other areas within maritime history—such as fishing history, aspects of maritime social and labor issues, art and literary history—is a relatively recent activity, and even these have tended to be separate and national in outlook.

Maritime history is the field of historical study that encompass humankind's relationships to the seas and oceans of the world. It is a multidimensional, humanistic study of human activities, experiences, interactions, and reactions to the vast water-covered regions that cover more than seventy percent of the globe. A student who pursues the maritime theme may approach it from a variety of vantage points, including science, technology, industry, economics, trade, politics, art, literature, sociology and social issues, religion, military and naval affairs, international relations, cartography, comparative studies in imperial and colonial affairs, institutional and organizational development, communications, migration, intercultural relations, natural resources and environmental issues, archaeology, sports, and recreation. Under the overarching label of maritime history, each of its sub-specialties has a tie to a specific range of academic approaches. The maritime economic historian has a fundamental tie to the academic fields of economic and business history; the naval historian has connections to the diplomatic, military, and international history fields; the historian of navigation has a fundamental tie to the history of science and technology; the student of maritime art or maritime literature each has connections to the wider fields of art history and literature, while the historian of exploration has ties to the history of imperial expansion and global cultural interaction. Each of these connections to particular academic disciplines and specialized academic fields of interest helped

to define those particular subspecialties, but they are all interconnected through having the maritime element in common. It is this common maritime element, with its cross connections and relationships across the various sub-specialties, that becomes a revealing and important extension of the broad aspects of national and international events ashore and contributes to the understanding of a shared global history.

One would hope that the explicit focus of *Coriolis: the Interdisciplinary Journal of Maritime Studies* on the historical flow of maritime affairs around the globe can create its own Coriolis Effect for future historical studies by helping to broaden the scholarly perspective on maritime affairs beyond the single nationalistic outlook that has been traditional in the past. Such an Effect can link readers to maritime histories that have not yet become well-known in the Anglo-American world, promote broader perspectives with innovative and comparative approaches, and contribute to global understanding of mankind's relationships with the seas and oceans that occupy the majority of our planet.

John B. Hattendorf has been the Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the U.S. Naval War College since 1984, editor-in-chief of the Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History (2007), and the Director of the Munson Institute of American Maritime Studies at Mystic Seaport, 1998-2003.