

To the RSVP Board Members and the Curran Fellowship committee,

I write to report my progress on *Official Navalism, Popular Navalism, and the Journalist as Middleman, 1885-1914*, the ongoing dissertation project for which I was awarded the 2014 Curran Fellowship. Generous funding from the RSVP as well as from other sources allowed me to complete the vast majority of the archival research for this project during the summer of 2014; this report will detail the archival research directly funded by the Curran Fellowship and most germane to the RSVP.

My dissertation examines the ‘navalist era’ in Britain, generally defined as the period between 1885 and 1914. British navalism has become something of a hot topic recently, but contemporary scholarly works on the period tend to focus on political developments, case studies of specific personages, or the economic aspects of naval warfare. My project focuses on the military-cultural aspect of navalism, specifically the links of communication between professional naval officers, pro-naval journalists, and navalist authors during the period in question. There was a great deal of overlap between these groups; officers fed information to naval journalists, who then acted as semi-official mouthpieces for naval personnel who did not have the authority to discuss naval matters in the public press. My dissertation also argues that while this relationship was initially mutually beneficial, as the Edwardian period progressed many professional-journalistic relationships became strained or fractured entirely, as popular navalism overtook the more technical professional concerns – and by the eve of the First World War, navalist journalists were often openly antagonistic towards their previous benefactors at the Admiralty. One of my goals in my archival research was to identify both indirect cooperation between professional and journalistic sources – such as a congratulatory memorandum on an incisive article, or a naval officer suggesting that a journalist speak with a certain public official – and direct cooperation, which began with journalists being slipped confidential files and extended as far as naval officials writing articles or portions of articles to be published under journalists’ names.

The first major archival collections the Curran Fellowship allowed me to visit were those held by the Churchill Archives Centre, part of Churchill College, Cambridge. The largest relevant collection held by the Churchill Archives is the Fisher correspondence. Admiral Sir John Arbuthnot ‘Jacky’ Fisher held a variety of high-ranking Admiralty posts from the mid-1880s onward, including – most importantly – the highest professional post in the Royal Navy, First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, from 1904 – 1910. The Fisher papers have been heavily examined by historians, and selections from the papers were edited and printed by Arthur Marder as early as the 1950s; Fisher and his ‘Fishpond’ are often held up as the exemplar of press relations during the period. Yet despite being somewhat well-trod ground Fisher remains an essential linchpin to any study of the relationship between the Royal Navy and journalism, and although Fisher’s letters to and from contemporary journalists have often been cited, they have not yet been effectively contextualized as part of the broader professional-journalistic relationship.

Fisher’s voluminous list of correspondents included W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 1883 – 1889 and the *Review of Reviews* from 1890 until his death in 1912; Archibald Hurd, naval correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* from 1899; James Thursfield, naval correspondent of *The Times* from 1887; J.L. Garvin, editor of the *Observer* from 1908; J.A. Spender, editor of the

*Westminster Gazette* from 1896; H.A. Gwynne, editor of the *Standard* from 1904 – 1911 and of the *Morning Post* from 1911; and Arnold White, who wrote for the *Referee* from 1907 but had worked as a naval correspondent for a variety of papers beginning in the 1890s. It can also be seen from this brief sample that Fisher's press contacts were not limited to any specific end of the political spectrum; this was another aspect of the professional-journalistic relationship that would change over time. As far as the Fisher papers are concerned, the Arnold White and James Thursfield letters are the most significant. White was one of Fisher's first journalistic allies, and although the working relationship continued throughout the latter's professional career the White correspondence provides an important glimpse into an early working relationship. Thursfield was another journalist whose correspondent with Fisher covers the majority of the project's chronological scope, and his status with *The Times* indicates that the Admiralty had channels in the most powerful of British press institutions. In addition, new boxes of material were added to both the Fisher-White and Fisher-Thursfield correspondence files in 2001, too recently to be included in Marder's standard edited collection of the period and many subsequent studies of the navalist era.

I also examined other collections at the Churchill Archives Centre; the Centre holds the papers and letters of a variety of journalists, including the previously-mentioned W.T. Stead and Archibald Hurd. Unfortunately, the Stead collection proved to be lacking a hoped-for smoking gun. The navalist movement in Britain is considered – at least by historians focusing on the cultural aspects of navalism – to have begun with an 1884 series of articles in Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette* entitled 'The Truth About the Navy;' it is also generally accepted that the confidential naval documents Stead obtained to write his articles were provided by Jacky Fisher. Yet there is no surviving correspondence between the two earlier than the 1890s in either the Stead or the Fisher papers; evidence in the collections indicates that whatever material may have existed had gone missing as early as the 1920s. Even so, the Stead papers contain a wealth of early Stead-Fisher correspondence. The Archibald Hurd collection also proved to be useful; despite the prevalence of journalists connected with Jacky Fisher, one of my research goals was to specifically seek out navalist editors and authors who maintained a broader naval circle. Although Archibald Hurd did communicate with Fisher, he also maintained a correspondence with other well-known naval personages, including Admiral Sir Edmund Fremantle and Admiral Lord Charles Beresford. Hurd's letters provide an important counterweight to the sheer volume of the Fisher collection, demonstrating that Fisher – although eminently quotable – was certainly not the only naval figure to be in close contact with the British press.

Funding from the Curran Fellowship was also used to examine a collection of Imperial Maritime League pamphlets and journals at the British Library in London. The IML, founded in 1908, was a navalist pressure group that was demonstrably partisan, taking a strongly Conservative and anti-Fisher position while calling for greatly increased naval spending. I aim to demonstrate that this radicalization had much to do with the IML's lack of official communication with British naval officials and pro-naval journalists, both of whom found a ready home in earlier avowedly non-partisan groups such as the Navy League.

I was also able to utilize the Curran Fellowship to travel to the West Sussex Records Office in Chichester, where I examined the Leopold Maxse papers. This visit to Chichester was funded entirely through the Curran Fellowship, and could not have been considered without the support of the RSVP. As noted above, one of my research goals was to make as much use as possible of navalist sources unrelated to Jacky Fisher, so as to provide as broad a source base for the project as possible, and the papers of Maxse – editor of the *National Review* from 1893 – certainly fit the bill. His correspondence covers the entire 1880-1914 period in question and includes a great deal of

communication with the naval journalists James Thursfield, Arnold White, and, most valuably, H.W. Wilson. Wilson, the associate editor of the *Daily Mail* from 1898, was a major figure in Edwardian naval journalism – but he never corresponded with Fisher, disagreeing with the admiral’s naval reforms, and left no collections of his own papers, making his letters in the Maxse collection especially useful for the project. Maxse also kept in regular contact with prominent naval officers such as Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, the important early navalist Vice Admiral C.C. Penrose Fitzgerald, and Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge.

The archival visits enabled by the Curran Fellowship allowed me to complete nearly all of the primary research necessary for my dissertation. Being able to demonstrate that I had successfully completed my summer archival trip and was proceeding apace led to my being awarded two additional grants from my university: a Graduate Research Fellowship from the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research, which allowed me to recently examine the J.L. Garvin papers at the University of Texas at Austin, and a 2015 Dissertation Fellowship from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at Texas A&M University. This fellowship will enable me to spend the entirety of 2015 working on the dissertation project, with the optimistic side goal of submitting an article for publication based on my research. The Curran Fellowship and the confidence of the RSVP have made the timely completion of my dissertation research and the forthcoming dissertation possible; it remains an honor and a privilege to have been selected for the award.

Sincerely,

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