

U.S. Army Military History Institute
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Jan 2002

Army War College

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CURRICULAR ARCHIVES

An Explanatory Statement

by

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Technically this collection is the property of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) as part of Record Group 165.7 (War Department General Staff/Special Staffs/Army War College), and to a lesser extent, Record Group 319.24.2 (Records of the Army Staff/Records of Schools/Records of the U.S. Army War College) but NARA allows the collection to be held at the Military History Institute, primarily for the benefit of the present-day US Army War College.

The AWC Curricular Archives can be roughly divided into three chronological sections, with varying degrees of depth and comprehensiveness of the collection materials themselves and varying coverage by finding aids. These are: 1) the pre-WWI Army War College, more or less since its founding in 1903 to its inactivation during the American participation in World War I; 2) The interwar Army War College, 1919-1940, with limited coverage of World War II after its inactivation in 1940 for the mobilization; and 3) the Post World War II Army War College, primarily referring to its refounding in 1950 and covering to a great extent up to the present day.

The pre-WWI AWC material is relatively limited and consists primarily of three sets of material: 1) a set of bound volumes of lectures, exercises, and student reports for the period 1906 (when actual instruction at the school began) to 1917, when the school was closed for the wartime mobilization; 2) a series of bound student monographs analyzing military battles and campaigns, almost exclusively of the American Civil War; and 3) a very limited number of files relating to the earliest years of the Army War College as an institution, including information on the building and equipment of the school when it was located at Washington, DC. These files are generally found at the very beginning and very end of the Records Section of the AWC Archives. The latter set of records can most readily be identified by a prefix of "WCD" or four-digit file numbers.

The primary finding aid available at MHI for the pre WWI Army War College consists of a microfilm copy of a set of hard-copy index cards maintained at the National Archives, which also has a better selection of these pre-war items.

The interwar curricular archives consist primarily of lectures, student committee reports, individual student papers (termed General Staff Memoranda or Individual Staff Memoranda), and a run of documents known as the Records Section. The Records Section was basically an information storehouse for the benefit of the War Department General Staff of the time. The curricular files, narrowly defined, are arranged primarily by academic year, then by course, and then student committee reports followed by lectures for that course. Individual student papers are in a separate filing run, arranged by academic year and then file number.

The courses in this period generally were structured by numbers or parallel titles, more or less conforming to the prevailing staff sections of the Army, so the "1" course would deal with personnel and administration issues, the "2" course would be concerned with intelligence and strategic appraisals, and the "4" course with supply and logistics. The "3" course would, more often than not deal with the policies, events, and programs current in the component portions of the Army of that year, with a senior or responsible officer of a branch or program frequently being the primary lecturer on that branch. The "5" or War Plans Course would center on the creation of academic version of war plans whether in a hypothetical or real world setting and would often build on strategic appraisals done in the "2" course. The "6" or Conduct of War course focused on operational issues and often included an Analytical Course as a sub course. The Analytical Course had students compare and contrast similar campaigns from two different conflicts, frequently one from the American Civil War and one from World War I. In any given year, other courses, Training, Mobilization, etc., might form part of the curriculum.

Individual student papers most often were done on topics which were expressed interests of the General Staff that year. The topics could be broad or narrow in nature. Generally speaking, students were required to do such a project, but this was not an absolute requirement.

The Records Section files include materials primarily concerned with the administration of the Army War College, on activities of the Army itself, or on aspects of foreign military establishments. Notable features of the Records Section files include a voluminous series of reports on Army and Corps level maneuvers, field training exercises, and command post exercises in the late 1930s involving members of the Reserves and National Guard as well as the Regular Army. A limited number of files include those from the Army Ground Forces Headquarters, which occupied the grounds of the Army War College for the duration of WWII, although most of those files were removed for inclusion in the Record Group devoted to the AGF. One additional adjunct to the WWII coverage of the Records Section are some monographs prepared by the Historical Section of the Army War College, which in the period 1942-1943, prepared studies based largely on our experiences in WWI, particularly of an administration and logistical nature, to inform the administrators of the war effort of WWII.

The primary finding aid for the interwar Army War College Archives is a hard copy card index, currently housed in the main reading room of MHI. The card index includes subject indices, name indices (primarily of students, faculty, and lecturers), course indexes, and a set of locator cards. The Historical Section monograph series has an inventory list of the studies filed in the first box of these studies.

The interwar AWC Curricular Archives is a very rich resource for insights into the education of career Army officers of that era as well as into military affairs in general and the concerns and activities of the U.S. Army in particular. Students of military doctrine in the early to mid twentieth century have found this collection to be very helpful.

There was no Army War College during the period 1941-1949. There are a few documents dating from about 1945 which anticipated the refounding of the school at the end of hostilities, but this measure was put off in favor of the new National War College, which took over the physical plant of the old Army War College in 1945.

The post World War II Army War College was established in 1950, initially for a year at Fort Leavenworth and then moved to Carlisle Barracks in 1951. At that point, the Army War College reclaimed most of its curricular Archives and Library resources from the National War College.

The curricular archives from the period after 1950 consist primarily of three parts: student papers, course materials, and administrative files.

The post 1950 student papers are primarily individual student papers, generally done as the primary research project for the year. These are often referred to as Military Study Projects (MSPs) or Strategic Research Projects (SRPs). In some years, students may have done more than one such paper. Similarly, in more recent years, groups of students have participated in joint projects. Since 1970, non-

resident courses have been offered, and these student papers are also retained. In some periods, particularly the early 1950s and late 1960s, there have also been special papers done by students or student committees as part of sub course work. In more recent years, students have the opportunity to undertake alternative projects in lieu of a research paper, so it cannot be assumed that all Army War College students will have a research paper on file. The general arrangement of these papers is by academic year of graduation and then alphabetically by the name of the student. To retrieve the paper, MHI staff will need the year, author name, and title. There are finding aids available for most of the student papers. Student papers for this period can be loaned to researchers via Inter Library Loan.

Course materials for the post 1950 period consist primarily of a curriculum pamphlet which outlines the general structure of the year's studies, course directives, which provides a syllabus for a specific course, and booklets of selected readings, which provided excerpt level readings for specific lessons in that course (but did not necessarily constitute all the readings for that lesson). Parallel sets of materials are also held for the non-resident courses. Transcripts of many of the lectures up to 1970 are available for study. Outside researchers can also study the curriculum pamphlets for given years. Course directives and selected readings can be subject to caveats and other restrictions. The curriculum pamphlets serve as the primary de facto finding aids to this material.

Administrative files of the post-1950 Army War College consist of internal administrative records, self-study reports, etc. They are subject to considerations such as the Privacy Act and similar restraints. These records are intended primarily for the use of Army War College itself and are accessible chiefly on a For Official Use Only basis. There is at this time no comprehensive finding aid for this material.

There are a limited number of special analytical studies which were done by predecessor agencies of the present day Strategic Studies Institute of the Army War College and some ad hoc efforts by one or more AWC faculty members. Many of these were done under the auspices of the Army Study Group. Some, though not all, of these studies may appear in the CATS electronic card catalog or be cited individually in MHI Reference Bibliographies. There is at present no collective inventory of these studies.

There is an introductory finding aid to the AWC Curricular Archives, Special Bibliography No. 8 in the MHI (previously listed as US Army Military History Research Collection) bibliographic series, A Suggested Guide to the Curricular Archives of the U.S. Army War College, 1907-1940, by Benjamin Franklin Cooling, ca. 1973. Researchers are also encouraged to consult Harry Ball's curricular history of AWC, Of Responsible Command, for an explanation of the structure of the courses for the period being studied.