

Warrant Officers and the Harding Project

By Dr. Leonard S. Momeny, Ed.D., CW5 (ret), and Jim Steddum, CW5 (ret)

There is a movement occurring across the entire United States Army, the Harding Project. The Harding Project is an effort originating from the office of the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA). The overall effort of the project is to reenergize professional conversations in every formation by revitalizing the Army's vast collection of journals. The project has included two conferences, one at West Point and the other at Army University, countless working groups, web-based Substacks, podcasts, and multiple in-person information briefs from members of the CSA's office. While it does not necessarily seem the natural area of the Army Warrant Officer, the Cohort has been present every step of the way. The following article provides background information on the project, identifies key members, shares tools, and hopefully spurs the Army's technical experts into involvement with an Army-wide effort.

Harding Project Origin, Inspiration, and Workshops

During the fall of 2023, the Commandant of USAWOCC selected CW5 Leonard Momeny and CW3 Suzie Albert to attend the inaugural workshop for the Harding Project. The Modern War Institute hosted the event at the US Military Academy at West Point. This invitation nearly sounded too good to be true, especially since *Strength in Knowledge: The Warrant Officer Journal* had only recently been published by Army University Press. However, representatives were requested from all areas of Army publication, and the topic was the revitalization of Army professional writing. As the sole Warrant Officer-centric publication in the Army and the "new kid on the block," it was an honor for the *Strength in Knowledge* team to participate. Upon arrival, all workshop members would learn the purpose and intent of the project directly from LTC Griffiths and SFC Summerlin, the Harding Project team. Additionally, Lieutenant General Beagle, General Brito, and General George (CSA), emphasized their full support for promoting professional discourse in writing across the Army. The interest was high, and the potential outcomes to benefit the entire Army were enormous.

Origin

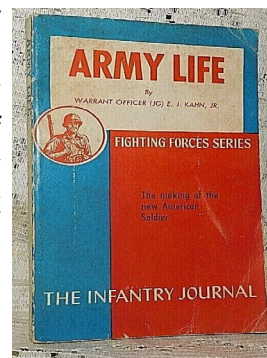
The problem statement guiding the project was simple enough: interest in Army publications was down, and the absence of quality professional conversations became more evident daily. To stimulate renewed professional discourse across the formation, the office of the CSA was looking to link Army leaders with journals once again to spur innovation and discussion to maintain an edge in future combat. After all, "[e]ffective military writing provides a way for leaders to inform the force, connects units and individuals laterally so they can share lessons and best practices, allows the field an outlet to pass information up, connects soldiers today with inspiration from our past, and develops better communicators" (Griffiths, 2023, p. 1).

Inspiration

The inspiration to address the problem originated in 1934 with Major Edwin "Forrest" Harding. In 1934, the Army, though not engaged in massive conflict at the time, was looking toward preparedness and force modernization. Just as today, modernization requires ingenuity and thoughtfulness. An emphasis on movement and maneuver marked this moment, and the Army was only beginning to see technology integration into its greater formations and their guiding doctrines. Major Harding was thrust into the

moment of need by his assignment to the Infantry Journal, with the goal of increasing the dissemination of information and reenergizing professional communication. “In just four years, Harding doubled circulation and fostered critical debates over the rapidly maturing tank and combined arms. Today, the Army again finds itself in an interwar period, seeking to transform before the next war” (Griffiths, 2023, p. 1). Interwar period organizational revitalization seemed to work in this historical instance and is the inspiration for much-needed current efforts in revitalizing Army publications. And so, in the spirit of MAJ Harding, the first workshop was convened with about “50 experts in military journals, accessible archives, and professional military education...[to] chart the way forward for the Army’s journals” (Griffiths, 2023, p. 1).

Perhaps the first Warrant Officer to publish in Infantry Journal was Warrant Officer Ely Jacques Kahn, a prolific writer drafted during World War II in 1941. While serving, he wrote for several sources, including Yank, the Army Weekly, and the Infantry Journal. In 1942, Kahn wrote *Life at Camp* (Kahn, 1942). By the fall of 1943, Chief Warrant Officer E.J. Kahn wrote scores of articles for the Infantry Journal, Army newspapers, and even *New Yorker* magazine. But, probably none more relevant than the first that later turned into a book with a forward from Major General Edwin Harding himself. Interestingly, Kahn wrote about the battles in New Guinea during World War II, where he served under Major General Harding’s command in the 32d Infantry Division until Harding was relieved by McCarthur in December of 1942 (Huber, n.d.).



Workshops

Representatives from across the Army and beyond participated in the conference, including Warrant Officers, and all exchanged ideas openly. Senior leaders expressed intent and interest, and to paraphrase one of them, “[w]hatever my boss finds important, I find completely consuming.” The CSA found this important, and the call to arms was essentially given, and all found it consuming. The members were broken into four working groups: Policy and modernization, Archives, Staffing, and Education. Each working group was tasked with knocking over bureaucratic walls, finding commonality in capability, and looking for efficiency and innovation in publication. Each working group was to collect their data and provide the CSA with their findings, hopefully crafting a way forward.

Some of the items brought out of the initial working group were recommendations toward mobile-friendly platforms, web-first publications, increased attention on archiving to determine accessibility and other usage statistics and adopting changes in professional military education to “improve familiarity with professional journals” (Griffiths, 2023, p. 1). The improvement areas were immediately reintroduced at a subsequent Fort Leavenworth, Kansas workshop. Jim Steddum and CW3 Albert attended these sessions for Strength in Knowledge. Army University Press hosted the effort, even spearheading a massive effort to reorganize the location and accessibility of all Army journals under the banner Line of Departure. Other outcomes from the second workshop included a tremendous, and still ongoing, campaign in which LTC Griffiths, SFC Summerlin, and so many others discuss the intent to revitalize Army publications. *War on the Rocks*, *The Green Notebook*, and multiple podcasts, including *COHORT W*, started hosting guests to discuss the efforts of the Harding Project.

Again, this article means not only sharing a working group’s activities. It is so much more important. Through this working group, the CSA is trying to maximize problem-solving among leaders throughout the Army by increasing communication and professional discussion, but it intends to create vehicles that augment doctrine. There is no better vehicle for the coming talks than Army journals and their

associated supporting mediums. Do not take my word; simply listen to General George, General Brito, and Sergeant Major of the Army Weimer (2023):

As you contribute to our revitalized professional journals, you will be solving problems and you will also be strengthening the profession. For individuals, writing a well-argued article with supporting evidence hones the ability to think critically and communicate. These are essential leader traits. It also requires some courage to put your ideas out there, and both individuals and the institution will take some licks in the process. But this is exactly the type of courage we need right now. It is no different than any other form of training. Well-meaning leaders may be wary of “rocking the boat,” but the Army needs the absolute best ideas at echelon. You have our commitment that we will be open to the best ideas, even if they challenge the sacred cows of the Army’s conventional wisdom. Encourage writing in your formations so that our Army remains the greatest ground force in the world—strong, professional, and ready to defend its fellow citizens.

Tools and Resources

If you have stayed with this article to this point, chances are you are interested in joining the effort to revitalize professional discourse within the ranks of the Warrant Officer and the Army writ large. Perhaps you feel motivated to contribute to the discussion and are unsure where to start. Or maybe you know where to start but do not consider yourself much of a writer. Well then, welcome to the starting line reader, and worry not; tools abound to assist you in learning, writing, and communicating your ideas to a greater force.

The best starting point for anyone looking to join in revitalizing Army journals is to visit Army University Press or AUP. The AUP website hosts tons of information and publications, including *Strength in Knowledge: The Warrant Officer Journal*. On the flagship page, you will also find a tab to select the Chief of Staff of the Army Recommended Articles. If you are going to read one thing every month, then let it be the CSA’s recommended articles, as this will likely give you an understanding of preferred topics of discussion. Additionally, this site will soon host *Line of Departure*, a one-stop shop for all journals within the US Army that will be mobile-friendly. There have even been discussions that the selected software will allow an audio function for future articles. AUP is the best place to visit if you seek inspiration, knowledge, or the current pace of professional discourse within the Army.

Perhaps you feel interested in the current discussion and are well-read, but writing is not your strong suit, or you simply need assistance. One option is attending professional military education (PME) courses, e.g., WOILE, as faculty will coach students through writing via Writing Improvement Classes. Additionally, in WOSSE, students can present articles for consideration and peer review on critical topics from their field. They can even sit with instructors for coaching to bring their papers to a publishable level. It is hard to find time to write, and PME is intended to be a moment of professional solace and growth where students can focus on improving skills and knowledge.

If PME attendance is not available in the near future, perhaps you simply need other assistance. Free resources are available online, such as *Professional Writing: The Command and General Staff College Writing Guide (2024)*, which emphasizes the writing process and all associated pitfalls and tricks for writers. There are also writing communities and discussions occurring consistently online. One CGSC faculty member, Dr. Trent Lythgoe, author of *Professional Writing*, always discusses elements of the writer’s craft on his LinkedIn account. Additionally, editors across the various publication vehicles in and around the Army are always willing to help a new or first-time writer. The point is that tools exist,

and writing for publication is accessible to all willing to put in the effort. The Army's Flagship journal, *Military Review* published a special edition on Professional Writing. This issue has become the standard reference for Warrant Officer PME at the Warrant Officer Career College. Writing to publish is the standard we ask all students to tackle, including researching other journals.

Finally, it is notable that the Library of Congress has issued an International Standard Serial Number to our young journal. The Army also recognizes the Journal as Professional Bulletin 1918—a fitting number representing the year of official recognition as an Army cohort. We will publish more on the Line of Departure in individual articles. Once published, the article will be archived at the Defense Technical Information Center and receive Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to increase searchability across the research sphere.

Closing Thoughts

Writing for publication in an Army journal allows for a professional conversation to occur beyond the walls of an office or organization. I remain incredibly grateful that the CSA office included Warrant Officers in the greater Harding Project endeavor. The voice of the technical expert is critical and not always heard outside of an aircraft, legal office, or motor pool. Writing or sharing professional thoughts in a greater context is challenging, as it usually brings scrutiny and potentially welcomes disapproval and argument. Who cares! A little conflict is good in an organizational setting as it gives way to discussion and possible innovation. Warrant Officers must be a part of the discussion, and so the cohort must write. It is all too appropriate to close with the following from LTG Beagle (2023):

Now, here are my three easy ways to drive this change:

Our force must learn how to write (again). I recall days of staff duty where the assignment to the commander in the morning was a paper. I remember doing the same as a battalion and brigade commander. Writing takes practice.

Help Soldiers and leaders overcome a fear of writing and the feedback. To write is to think, but it is also to be vulnerable and who wants to be vulnerable?

Encourage, endorse, and create environments where our teammates will be willing to give of their time to write.

Line of Departure

Line of Departure debuted October 11, 2024, at the Association of the United States Army Exposition in Washington, D.C. You will be able to search for all journals and articles, including those featured by the Chief of Staff of the Army's reading list at <https://www.lineofdeparture.army.mil>. You will also find journals and publications hosted by Army University Press at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil>.

About the Authors

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