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Battleships and Battlecruisers: 1884-1984: A Bibliography and Chronology

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they consciously avoided committing them to any serious engagement.

There is a short, speculative section on Spain's plans for battleships based on the Italian *Vittorio Veneto* design. The ships never were built, the authors say, primarily because Italy became involved in World War II. But looking at Spanish naval history over the past fifty years, it is difficult to believe that Spain had the resources to expend at that time and in this direction. Only France (the *Jean Bart*) and England (the *Vanguard*) completed battleships after the war, more for purposes of national pride than naval necessity.

The authors, after ten years of work, speculate on who built the best battleship, but since each design met differing requirements, there is no definitive answer. Of those tested, however, the leading contenders have to be, firstly, the *Bismarck* and secondarily, the *Yamato*. Both used treaty-violating size to provide superior individual offensive and defensive characteristics, and both demonstrated impressive resistance to their eventual destruction. The French *Richelieu* class may have been superior as well, and of course we should consider the untested U.S. *Iowa* class. The *Iowas* were built, as the authors point out, by the one nation who had the resources to come up with the very best.

Anyone who is interested in a definitive description of the physical characteristics of the last battleships built on earth should have all three volumes.

RICHARD F. CROSS III
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Smith, Myron J. *Battleships and Battlecruisers: 1884-1984: A Bibliography and Chronology*. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986. 691pp. \$150

Above all, this book provides us with evidence of our continuing fascination with the battleship and its hybrid sister, the battle cruiser. It is, as the title indicates, a bibliography which lists most of the important books, articles, and academic theses that have been published on these ships in ten languages during the last century. The chronology provides an almost day-by-day coverage of events in the service careers of particular ships, as well as significant dates for the classification overall.

The bibliographical section of this book is by far its largest and most important part. It is well-subdivided into almost every conceivable category, allowing its user ample opportunity to find entries on the ship or ships he is researching. In addition to listing general accounts and reference works, Smith also provides a listing of ships in alphabetical order by nation. The exception to this rule is the U.S. Navy, and here Smith has wisely chosen to follow its sequential hull number system. Appropriately, the only two exceptions to this policy, the early predreadnoughts the U.S.S. *Maine* and the U.S.S. *Texas*, are listed first in alphabetical order and then followed by the U.S.S. *Indiana*, also known as BB 1.

Before listing the works published on individual battleships in the national section, Smith provides us with a brief description of the ship

and its construction history. This description does not always include the complete light antiaircraft armament for many ships, no doubt because the information is still very much open to dispute. For the most part, his bibliographical listings are accurate and properly cited. The reader should note that Smith has a marked preference for works published in English or subsequently translated into English. If a work has not been translated into English, he cites it in the original language and provides an English translation of the title. While most of his translations from German to English are adequate, some appear to be unpolished or even erroneous, e.g., entry numbers 1491 and 4598. Readers familiar with other languages may be able to discern a similar trend. In addition to occasional translation lapses, there are typographical errors which were overlooked by his proofreaders, e.g., entries no. 1496 and 4596. Fortunately, such errors are few and far between, and do not detract greatly from the utility of this book.

One interesting feature of this book is the biographical section which includes leading naval commanders, theorists, and battleship captains. As this section lists only fifty-one individuals, it is easy to argue that some prominent captain or admiral has been overlooked. For this reason, Smith has stated that many of those who should have been listed have been ignored by historians and biographers. Unfortunately, this statement does not justify the omission of individuals like Grand-Admiral Karl

Dönitz who had overall command of several German capital ships during 1943-1945. In addition, this section reveals the incomplete nature of Smith's research because he has not listed all the works published on the individuals he has included. Two examples are Grand-Admiral Erich Raeder and Admiral Reinhard Scheer.

The final section of this book is devoted to a chronological history of the battleship from 1882 to 1984, which includes the key construction dates, design information, battle history, reconstructions and conversions, and even occasional accidents and incidents. It is, in every sense, a veritable treasure chest for the military trivia buff and the naval historian. Major points of interest for the general reader would probably be: the race between the British, American, and Japanese navies to build the first "all big gun battleship" and the events of the two World Wars. This section is also nonconclusive, and many military historians will be pleased to add details, dates, and events that Smith has overlooked.

Overall, the research that went into this book is quite impressive and it is more than obvious that it was a labor of love. That there is only one photograph of a battleship is its one major shortcoming. Additional photos would have enhanced the volume considerably. Given its high price, this book will probably not find its way onto the bookshelves of the average reader of naval armaments and history. Despite its few

minor flaws, however, it is an exceptional research tool for students of naval history and ship modelers, and it should be considered the first reference tool to be consulted for any aspect of the history of battleships and battle cruisers.

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Ropp, Theodore. *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy 1871-1904*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 439pp. \$28.95

With this book the Naval Institute continues its practice of publishing outstanding work in the field of maritime history for the benefit of scholars and warriors alike. Both will find ample reward here. Professor Ropp completed this work as his dissertation in 1937 and it became a standard reference in unpublished form at the Harvard library; so thorough is this study that none other has been attempted, and no published work on this period has followed. To fill this publication gap, Stephen S. Roberts has transformed the dissertation into a book for general readers, with outstanding clarity and utility, enhanced by remarkable photographs.

This is a fascinating story of bewildering rates of change in technology, and the awkward efforts of proud institutions to master the new weapons and platforms provided. Parallels with modern periods abound, and veterans of E-ring battles will smile in rueful empathy

with their French counterparts who fought conventional wisdom with new approaches.

The panoply of weaponry is fascinating in itself, as steam supplanted sail, steel supplanted iron and wood, and rifled quick-firing breechloaders took the place of gigantic muzzle-loading smoothbores (one class of which required 90 men to serve and fired only 3-5 rounds per hour). Simultaneously, mines and torpedoes progressed from the crude barrels of the American Civil War to the first modern weapons of this type.

All this took place on a tactical seascape in which Horatio Nelson would have been comfortable in 1870, when the melee and individual action were deemed to be the most desirable doctrine, and the ram was preferred by many tacticians over naval artillery. In the span of one generation, the conceptual basis of the large Jutland fleet engagement was in place, with scouting by cruisers, screening by destroyers, ranging ladders and torpedo attacks. All this required extraordinary intellectual effort, and modern maritime strategists will find the story of the *Jeune Ecole* of particular interest. This was an intellectual movement within the French officer corps which literally changed the basic maritime strategy of their nation by advocating commerce warfare (against their primary perceived antagonist, Britain). In response, Britain established the "two for one" rule of naval construction, which was the genesis of the naval arms race of the 1890s and 1900s.