Providing Sea-Going Libraries Since 1921

Seafarer browsing for a “Good Read,” USS Bremerhaven, Germany.
The American Merchant Marine Library Association (AMMLA) is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization representing a unique and necessary service to those who spend their lives at sea. The “Public Library of The High Seas,” has sent thousands of books to American flag and allied vessels. There still is a demand for books despite the growing use of the Internet and movies on DVD for entertainment.

Just last year, AMMLA sent more than 19,000 new and used books and magazines to American Merchant Marines, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, and seafarers of allied nations; especially noteworthy were the 210 libraries mailed to U.S. merchant vessels transporting supplies to U.S. Forces. In this era of smaller crews and fewer hours in port, seafarers rely on AMMLA more than ever for their recreation, education and self-help needs.

AMMLA is the only public library chartered to provide library services on American ships. Its history goes back to a World War I book program conducted by the American Library Association to provide books for soldiers and sailors. At the war’s end, the American Library Association asked Mrs. Henry Howard, chief of the social service bureau of the United States Shipping Board, to establish an association to continue placing libraries on American merchant ships. As a result of her efforts, the New York Board of Regents gave AMMLA its library charter in 1921.
Seafarers and Books

What is a “Seagoing Library?”

The American Merchant Marine Library Association (AMMLA), as Public Library of the High Seas, provides seafarers on board ships with books, paperbacks and magazines of interest and educational significance. Each library is like a “care package” and typically includes a range of selections, from biography to science fiction, spy thrillers to westerns, and magazines from National Geographic to Popular Mechanic. As you can imagine, there are as many literary interests as there are seafarers on board each ship; and AMMLA aims to reach across this diversity to cater to the individual preferences of its entire audience.

The Importance of Libraries on Ships

Seafarers face many constraints in meeting their recreational and educational needs while at sea. During long voyages, seafarers face formidable stretches of unstructured time. When far away from home and loved ones, daily life in such a contained environment can become tedious and even grueling. Libraries on ships help seafarers combat the loneliness of the seagoing life and enjoy their time off-duty while expanding their horizons.
AMMLA has evolved to meet the changing needs of seafarers. In 1973, AMMLA became an affiliate of United Seamen’s Service (USS). Through this affiliation AMMLA is able to expand its operations by distributing seagoing libraries through the USS Centers worldwide. With the support of USS, AMMLA now provides publications for seafarers from a whole host of nationalities as well as U.S. mariners.

It’s a winning combination. During long voyages, seafarers face formidable stretches of unstructured time. When far away from home and loved ones, daily life in such a contained environment can become tedious and even grueling. Having libraries aboard ships creates the opportunity for seafarers to continue to expand their horizons.

Seagoing libraries typically include a range of selections, from biographies to science fiction, spy thrillers to westerns, and magazines from National Geographic to Time and Newsweek. As you can imagine, there are as many literary interests as there are seafarers on board each ship.

And, it’s the American Merchant Marine Library Association that is the primary source of these “seagoing libraries.” Throughout our history, we have provided diverse selections of books to seafarers, catering as much as possible to individual preferences.

Seafarers and AMMLA have the general public to thank for this service. It is people like you who help to ensure the well-being of merchant mariners through your generous support of this program. Gifts and books are always appreciated and are the cornerstone of AMMLA’s service to seafarers.
Ship Service

“Seagoing Libraries” are distributed to the ships through port branches in New York/New Jersey, Port Arthur, Texas and at United Seamen’s Service (USS) centers worldwide.

Since 1981, in addition to the services of its port branches, AMMLA has operated a direct library service. Libraries are mailed to ship management companies for distribution directly to the ships and through the fleet post office (FPO).

Collecting Books: Library and Financial Support to AMMLA

AMMLA is wholly dependent upon public and publisher contributions for its books, magazines and operating funds. Because of the invisibility of seafarers in our daily life and geographical scattering of their families through the U.S., special effort is needed to make the recreational and educational needs of our seagoing men and women known to the American public.

Mailing Rates and Tax Deductions

Books may be mailed to 104 Broadway, Jersey City, NJ 07306. The U.S. Postal Service makes it easier to donate books by allowing them to be mailed by the pound as Media Mail. The current postal rate for Media Mail is $2.75 for the first pound and 52 cents for each additional pound up to 70 pounds. All packages must be clearly labeled MEDIA MAIL to qualify.

For book donations, AMMLA will issue a receipt for the number of books received to validate the tax-deductible contribution. The donor determines the value of the gift.
A Seafarer’s Expression of a Life of Adventure

Encouraged by AMMLA programs, seafarers often take an active interest in literature, writing and developing their own literary talents. The late Captain Daniel T. Kozak had been a prolific writer of poetry, essays and articles about his seagoing life. His poem, *Homeward Bound*, captures his fond memory of the challenges of navigation during inclement and foggy conditions:

“The Captain of a ship stands on the bridge alone
As he brings his vessel and crew safely home
The Pilot or Mates plot the rocks and the reefs
Their skill aboard brings great relief
A drastic course change lends to some tension
Sharp, watchful eyes heed what needs mention
A break in the mist is a welcomed sight
Whether it occurs in daytime or during the night
The long voyage home is finally ended”
When the last mooring line to the shore has been bended.”

*Book Exchange, “Take One – Leave One,”
USS Yokohama, Japan*
Since 1921, the American Merchant Marine Library Association (AMMLA) has supplied “seagoing libraries” to American Merchant Marines, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, and to seafarers of allied nations. As a non-profit, non-sectarian library service, AMMLA’S primary objective is to meet the educational, recreational and self-help needs of seafarers by offering a library service on a wide array of subjects.

In 2018, USS/AMMLA distributed more than 19,000 books through its USS Centers, AMMLA representatives in New York/New Jersey and Port Arthur, Texas, and to US Merchant vessels transporting supplies to U.S. Forces. The following is a list of USNS, Ready Reserve Fleet, MSC time chartered vessels and U.S.-flag vessels that received AMMLA libraries in 2018:

- Cape Diamond
- Cape Douglas
- Cape Ducato
- Cape Edmont
- Cape Henry
- Cape Horn
- Cape Hudson
- Cape Inscription
- Cape Isabel
- Cape Island
- Cape Kennedy
- Cape Knox
- Cape May
- Cape Mohican
- Cape Race
- Cape Ray
- Cape Rise

USNS SHIPS
Effective
Fall River
Impeccable
Maj. Stephen W. Pless
Dewayne T. Williams
Lewis and Clark
PFC Eugene A. Obregon
Page
SGT Mate J. Kocak
SGT William R. Button
Sisler
Pomeroy
Roy W. Wheat
1st LT. Jack Lummus
1st LT. Baldomero Lopez
2nd LT. John P. Bobo
LTC John U.D. Page
Watkins
Watson
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<tr>
<th>MV Patriot</th>
<th>APL Agate</th>
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<tr>
<td>MV Edgar B. Speer</td>
<td>APL Belgium</td>
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<td>MV Edwin H. Gott</td>
<td>APL China</td>
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<td>MV Endurance</td>
<td>APL Coral</td>
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<td>MV Freedom</td>
<td>APL Cyprine</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Great Republic</td>
<td>APL Guam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Honor</td>
<td>APL Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Independence II</td>
<td>APL Korea</td>
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<td>MV Integrity</td>
<td>APL Pearl</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Liberty</td>
<td>APL Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MV Midnight Sun</td>
<td>APL President Adams</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV North Star</td>
<td>APL President Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MV Ocean Atlas</td>
<td>APL President Polk</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Ocean Titan</td>
<td>APL President Truman</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Pacific Collector</td>
<td>APL Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Pacific Tracker</td>
<td>APL Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Patriot</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV Presque Isle</td>
<td>SS Arthur M. Anderson</td>
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<td>MV Roger Blough</td>
<td>SS Carson J. Callaway</td>
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<td>MV Resolve</td>
<td>SS Cornhusker State</td>
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<td>MV Wheeler</td>
<td>SS Denebola</td>
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<td>SS Flickertail State</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SS Gem State</td>
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<td>SS Gopher State</td>
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<td>SS Grand Canyon State</td>
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<td>SS Keystone State</td>
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<td>SS John G. Munson</td>
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<td>SS Philip Clarke</td>
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<td>SS Pollux</td>
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<td>SS Regulus</td>
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<td>SS Seakay Spirit</td>
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AMMLA’S Dedicated Friends

To make libraries available, AMMLA depends upon financial contributions and donations from many dedicated friends of seafarers. Shipping companies, crews, maritime unions, publishers, the general public, and United Seamen’s Service contribute to AMMLA. In 2018 AMMLA financial and/or book contributions were received from the following:

American President Lines (APL)
American Roll-On Roll-Off Carrier
American Maritime Officers
American Merchant Marine Veterans – NJ
Richard Berger
Richard Berkowitz
Lee Danon
Phillip W.J. Fisher
Kevin Gatling
Gerald Gordon
Kathleen A. Hunt
Howard Jones
Robert Kaufman
Keystone Shipping Company
District 1 – MEBA
Enrico Esopa
International Organization Of Masters Mates, & Pilots, ILA, AFL-CIO
John Clarke Chapter of Daughters of the War of 1812
Masters, Mates & Pilots
Matson Navigation Company
M.E.B.A.
Maersk Line, Limited
National Defense Transportation Association
National Society, Daughters of the American Colonists
National Society, U.S. Daughters of 1812
Operation Pass Along
Operation Paperback
Pacific Gulf Marine
Beatrice Pratt
Harvey Rubenstein
Scarsdale Women’s Club
Seafarers International Union
The Marine Society of the City of New York
The Philip and Janet Shapiro Family Foundation
 Totem Ocean Trailer Express
USMMA Bland Memorial Library
United States Daughters of 1812
Barbara Spector Yeninas
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Operating Revenues, gains and other support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Support, Ocean and Inland Crews</td>
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<td>Contributed goods and services</td>
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<td>Interest and Dividends</td>
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<td>Program Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furnishing Literature to Vessels and Portside Libraries</td>
<td>$18,870</td>
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<td>Supporting Services</td>
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<td>Management and Fundraising</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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<td>Change in Net Assets before Other Changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets (Deficit) – End of Year</td>
<td>($66,092)</td>
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