

Chief Priority!

Ignite a Renaissance in Military Scholarship and Writing

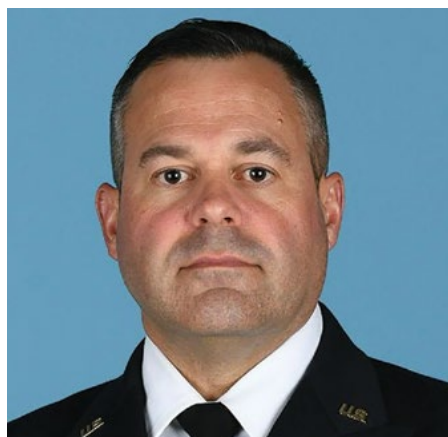
Col. Todd Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army

The chief of staff of the Army (CSA) is making professional writing a top priority. To prove it, he is incentivizing professional writing through personal recognition, and Army University Press is playing a major role in achieving this important objective.

Over the past year, the team at Army University Press has been calling for a renaissance, revival, and reawakening of thought, scholarship, and writing within the community of military professionals. Contributing to the professional body of knowledge is a fundamental part of being a “professional.” Our pleas for making scholarship, writing, and intellectual engagement an Army priority have been echoed on the pages of other complementary outlets such as the Modern War Institute.¹ Our call was heard, and action is now in progress.

A select group of leaders from around the Army are now preparing to meet at the U.S. Military Academy to plan a campaign that, if it meets its objectives, will have a profound impact on our Army. The chief priority of these attendees is to understand how to renew, reinvigorate, and improve professional writing and discourse across the Army enterprise.

To punctuate this priority, on Patriot’s Day, 11 September 2023, Gen. Randy George, Gen. Gary Brito, and Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Weimer published an article calling for military professionals to make vital investments to improve our expertise through scholarship and writing. Plainly stating, “We can assure you: we do not have all the answers,” these senior leaders are calling on soldiers of all ranks to sharpen their minds, sharpen their arguments, sharpen their pencils, and engage in professional writing. They understand that this dialogue strengthens the profession.²



Col. Todd Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army
Director, Army University Press

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, charged with the mission of developing future leaders, will guide this effort on behalf of the Army, ensuring the allocation of resources required to meet the goals and objectives of the CSA. Requirements will include updating twentieth-century policy, providing modern capabilities, and extinguishing archaic thinking about how the Army engages the profession in the twenty-first century.

In recent articles calling for renewal of professional writing, elementary analysis utilizing descriptive statistics demonstrates a decline in professional journals across the Army. Journals and authors are publishing fewer articles less often.³ Our publishing platforms have not evolved and have been allowed to wither away. As the cost of maintaining professional editorial staffs and publishing hard-copy publications skyrockets, the transition of products from print to online products has increased exponentially. Limited resources are, or have

been, redirected to other priorities, particularly over the course of the past two decades of conflict and war.

In tandem, military readers have migrated to non-military sources of information. More popular, current blogs and websites offer the ability for contributors and consumers to express more opinionated writing, offer and gain near real-time feedback and commentary, and share interesting opinion pieces on other social media outlets. There is more personal gratification and less professional editorial process that can slow the exchange of ideas.

If the Army is to truly engage with twenty-first-century audiences and capabilities, we must remove antiquated, if well-meaning, barriers to utilizing safe, modern, mobile-friendly, online website platforms and social media. We must ensure the body of knowledge related to military affairs is easily accessible and optimized for internet search engines. Likewise, the Army must improve its understanding of how current and, most importantly, future military students learn; how they research, read, and write; and how to incentivize quality scholarship and professional contribution.⁴

In the near-term, the CSA is selecting well-written articles each month by a diverse community of authors for recognition and amplification of their scholarly work. These articles will be highlighted and promoted on the Army University Press homepage, and authors will be receiving a congratulatory note and gift from the CSA. In 2024, other major, prestigious initiatives will be unveiled (look for an announcement in the January-February 2024 issue of *Military Review*).

Lt. Gen. Milford Beagle, commanding general of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, recently encouraged leaders to read the book *The Disruptive Mindset* by Charlene Li.⁵ A prominent message for leaders in the book is that if an organization such as the Army is to remain relevant, it must possess certain qualities. It must be adaptive. It must be willing to transform. It must have a healthy command climate. It must have a viable, future-focused strategy. It must focus less on

where it is and more on where it needs to be in relationship to itself, its adversaries, and the Nation.

Our senior leaders today are tested warfighters who now find themselves in corporate positions, leading the Army institution in an “interwar period” characterized by great power competition. Although our Army is not directly engaged in high-intensity conflict, we are not able to lower our guard or “take a knee.” To borrow from the Navy, we still require “all hands on deck” to ensure our intellectual and human capital is invested in maintaining our relative cognitive advantage over future adversaries. Technological advancements and advantages, cornerstone capabilities of the U.S. military, are not enough. We require soldiers and leaders who can outthink the enemy at every level. This necessitates continued education, training development, and repetition, particularly as it relates to professional reading, critical thinking, and writing.

The real work will be done at the lowest levels, as soldiers engage in forums that inform the force, connecting with peers across the institution to share lessons learned, write, engage in scholarly discourse, improve military doctrine, optimize training, and achieve these objectives on platforms, outlets, and mediums that require enabling, twenty-first-century policies. At the beginning of 2023, Army University Press laid out a challenge to military professionals. That challenge is now supported by our CSA. I will end my letter for the last 2023 issue of *Military Review* the same way I ended the first:

I challenge those who subscribe to the moniker of military professional to write, to share, to engage, to think. Help the profession improve. Cast off and banish any hint of anti-intellectual cynicism or undertone that shames those that seek education and professional development. You can start ... by working with Army University Press, submitting articles or book reviews for publication. Contact us and let us help you reach the full calling and requirement of a true military professional. Write!⁶ ■

Notes

1. For example, see Matt Cavanaugh, “Follow the Yellow Brick Wall: The Reasons Why Military Officers Do Not Write,” Modern War Institute, 23 February 2016, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/follow-the-yellow-brick-wall-the-reasons-why-military-officers-do-not-write/>.

2. Randy George, Gary Brito, and Michael Weimer, “Strengthening the Profession: A Call to All Army Leaders to Revitalize Our Professional Discourse,” Modern War Institute, 11 September 2023, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/>

[strengthening-the-profession-a-call-to-all-army-leaders-to-revitalize-our-professional-discourse/](#).

3. Zachary Griffiths, "Bring Back Branch Magazines," Modern War Institute, 27 April 2023, <https://mwi.usma.edu/bring-back-branch-magazines/>; Zachary Griffiths, "Low Crawling toward Obscurity: The Army's Professional Journals," *Military Review* 103, no. 5 (September-October 2023): 17–28, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/September-October-2023/Obscurity/>.

4. Ibid.

5. Charlene Li, *The Disruptive Mindset: Why Some Organizations Transform While Others Fail* (Oakton, VA: IdeaPress Publishing, 2019).

6. Todd Schmidt, "Where Have All the Warrior-Scholars Gone? A Challenge to All Military Professionals," *Military Review* 103, no. 1 (January-February 2023): 1–2, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/January-February-2023/Letter-from-the-Editor/>.

2023 General William E. DePuy Special Topics Writing Competition Winners

"Implementing FM 3-0, Operations"

1st Place

"Convergence and Emission Control: Tension and Reconciliation"

Maj. Matthew Tetreau, U.S. Army

2nd Place

"FM 3-0: A Step Forward in Approaching Operational Art"

Maj. Christopher Salerno, U.S. Army

3rd Place

"Obstacles to Implementation: A Dialectic between Old and New"

Maj. McLeod Wood, Australian Army

Honorable Mentions

"The Convergence Algorithm: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Enable Multidomain Operations"

Lt. Col. Michael B. Kim, U.S. Army

"Deep Six Chapter Seven: Qualitative and Practical Analytical Arguments for Removing Chapter 7 from FM 3-0"

Lt. Col. Mohamed. B. Massaquoi, U.S. Army

"Returning Context to Our Doctrine"

Maj. Robert G. Rose, U.S. Army

"Through a Glass Clearly: An Improved Definition of LSCO"

Maj. John Dzwonczyk, U.S. Army

Maj. Clayton C. Merkley, U.S. Army

For information on the General William E. DePuy Special Topics Writing Competition, including the 2024 topic and how to submit an entry, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/DePuy-Writing-Competition/>.