

Finding Books and Materials of Interest

A few words about finding books and materials of interest

- I have quite a bit of experience finding books I want
- I use local libraries frequently (about twice a week). I often borrow a book from a library to see if I really want to buy it.
- Although I do a lot of computer work and find hyper linked materials on the Web very useful, at the end of the day I tend toward books that I can hold in my hands. I like the experience of holding and reading real books. Only when the real thing is prohibitively expensive or just not available in its original form do I relent and use electronic copy (pdf or html or similar).
- **Libraries**
 - If you desire to read some/all of the book before you make a purchase decision, try the local libraries. The best local library (local to The Villages) I have found is the library in Leesburg (Lake County Library System). If you live in Lake County, you can join the Lake County Library for free. If not, it costs \$40/year for full privileges. You can go to the library and do stuff there for free; but if you want to take materials out, you have to “belong”. I pay the \$40 because I want full access to the Lake County system. As of this writing, the new Sumter County library on 466A is not yet open. Nor is the new Lady Lake library
 - All library systems have an on-line search and library account management capability. Searching library systems is generally the first thing I do when I want a specific book and am not sure if I want to buy it or not. Virtually all on-line systems have a HOLD feature where you can place an item on HOLD to be delivered to your local library (within the larger system) for you to pick up in a few days. Most systems will contact you when the book is awaiting pickup. Some library systems charge a modest fee (typically 50 cents) for this service. The Lake County system does this for free. I use this feature a lot and have books delivered to the Fruitland Park branch (which is closer to my house)
 - Some library systems have relationships with other systems such that they can search other systems and find books for you. This is generally not well advertised because it means additional work for the librarian.
 - My experience with these systems (about a dozen different library systems) over the past 15+ years is that they are very accurate and searches generate correct results virtually 100% of the time
 - FYI: I searched the [Sumter County](#) and [Lake County](#) systems for the two books recommended for general reading several times over the last 6 months. In the Sumter County system there were no copies of Keegan’s book and no copies of

Spector's book. In the Lake County system there were several copies of each book.

▪ **BookStores**

- In the days before wide-spread availability of on-line bookstores, there were generally 2 types of bookstores:
 - Physical bookstores where you physically went into the store, browsed the shelves, etc.
 - Mail order bookstores where you browsed a catalog
- Today such bookstores still exist, but they have expanded their storefront to include on-line selling. Plus, of course, there are bookstores that are exclusively on-line, e.g., Amazon
- Where you shop often depends on what you want and how important the “experience” is. No on-line seller can duplicate the experience of browsing in a real bookstore and settling into a comfortable chair to preview your selection(s) 😊
 - Relatively new books that are still in print can be obtained from local bookstores (either off the shelf or special order). This is fairly simple, but you will likely pay full price or close to it. Local stores have a limited selection of used books. They often will do searches and find books for you; but you will pay for that service and the wait may be lengthy. If you are a collector and want only first editions, you must make that very clear when the store searches for you.
 - Older, out-of-print books will likely require a visit to used book stores. I am fairly new to The Villages and have not found a really good used bookstore in the local area yet; but two stores show promise: [All Booked Up](#) and [Grace's Books & Records](#). Of the two, Grace's has the better selection of WW2 books. A listing of bookstores in a 20 mile radius can be found [here](#). A listing of used/antiquarian bookstores in FL can be found [here](#). I have no real experience with any of them except All Booked Up and Grace's. Bookselling networks like Abebooks.com have some method by which you can search for booksellers by name or location. The search methods are not very good and finding a bookstore within 50 miles is a tedious task. That is probably to be expected because if you visit the bookstore, the bookselling network loses its commission 😊
 - Book sales run by libraries, churches and other civic groups can be a good source for military history. Virtually all public libraries have either an on-going sale of x-library and donated books or a periodic (typically annual) sale of such items. Some of these sales are pretty big with tens of thousands of books. Most public libraries advertise these sales. [Craig's List](#) and

- newspaper classified sections are another source for book sale events. [BookSaleFinder.Com](#) is one on-line source for finding such sales. Click [here](#) for a list of library sales in Florida arranged by town name. The Leesburg public library has a “Friends of the Library” store attached to the library that has a mixed selection of books. Their selection of WW2 is very limited (perhaps a dozen books at any time), but books are inexpensive (most of the books are x-library items) and the store is well run.
- There are two bookstores and a bookstore town that are nothing short of amazing and make sure you visit them if you are ever within 100 miles.
 - [Powells](#) in Portland, Oregon (the main, downtown store) is the best bookstore in North America.
 - [Foyles](#) in London, England is probably the best bookstore in the world. I have been to both Powells and Foyles and admit that the decision would be tough
 - [Hay-on-Wye](#) is a small town in Wales (UK) where most of the stores have been converted to bookstores. I have been there several times and have not seen it all yet.
 - **On Line Booksellers:** There are hundreds of on-line book sellers. The larger ones like Amazon, B&N, Borders, Powells, etc., discount virtually all of their books and most offer a search capability to find books they do not stock and/or are out-of-print. General on-Line bookstores that I have used include:
 - <http://www.amazon.com>
 - <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/>
 - <http://www.borders.com/>
 - <http://www.foyles.co.uk/>
 - <http://www.powells.com/>
- On-Line discounters (everything is heavily discounted) had a large advantage a few years ago, but the Internet has a way of leveling the playing field, so their advantage is not always significant. But it is always useful to check. Two that I have used include:
- <http://www.halfpricebooks.com/>
 - <http://www.hamiltonbook.com/hamiltonbook.storefront/> I have been buying books from Hamilton Books for 20+ years. Hamilton’s stock does not appear to be available to BookFinder.Com (discussed below)

A few on-line sellers with a military focus:

- <http://usedmilitarybooks.com/>
- <http://www.historicaviation.com/index.po?product=books>
- <http://www.landmarkmilitarybooks.com/>

Many smaller bookstores sell through bookselling networks like:

- <http://www.abebooks.com/>
- <http://www.alibris.com/>

Most major on-line sellers (Amazon, B&N, etc) also provide electronic storefronts for smaller bookstores.

eBay is always worth considering. I have found some nice things on eBay

Half.Com is an eBay subsidiary that is focused on books, music, videos, etc. Always worth checking

- **BookFinder.Com:** One of the **most useful sites for books** generally is <http://www.bookfinder.com/> This site seems to have access to everyone's stock (US and foreign) and claims to have data on 150 million books at any point in time. I have used Bookfinder hundreds of times and have purchased at least 50 books through that service. The average time from order to in-my-hands is 5 days. The only downside to this approach (or the bookselling networks mentioned above) is that it takes about 24 hours for your order to be confirmed (via email) by the actual bookseller and there is some chance (less than 5%) that the relevant records were not up to date, and the item is no longer available. You are not charged and you do find out fairly quickly, but you have to start the process again ☹

▪ On-Line Electronic Media

- Some of the items sought are hard to find and, if found, are quite expensive. There is always the chance that some bookseller does not realize what they have and offers a \$50 item for \$2, but don't count on it. The three official history sets mentioned by Professor Goldstein several times are a good example:
 - Craven & Cates, 7 vol set of the USAAF Originally published by the University of Chicago Press in 1948-1958 and reprinted in 1983. You will find copies of the 1983 reprint on some bookseller sites; be prepared to pay \$30 to \$50 per volume for anything in decent condition. Alternatively, you can visit the USAF Historical site and download a pdf copy of any volume for free. The

USAF Historical site has lots of material you will not find elsewhere except the HyperWar site (see below)

- Morton's 28 vol set on the US Army is part of the larger 100+ volume set on the US Army in WW2 commonly called The Green Series). You may find some materials through on-line booksellers, but be prepared to pay dearly. Alternatively, the [US Army Center for Military History](#) has most of the set on-line. See also comments on the HyperWar site below
- Morison's 15 vol set on the US Navy is not too hard to find (Bookfinder.Com found 7 complete sets of the original Little Brown edition for sale and lots of individual volumes and reprints), but a decent set will cost \$250. It was reprinted approx 2001 by Castle and selected volumes are available for between \$3 (Hamilton book) and \$50 (Amazon) each and will be reprinted again in 2010 by Naval Institute Press in paperback (projected price is \$25/vol, expect to pay about \$16) . It is not available on-line due to copyright issues. The US Navy does have a History & Heritage site and some WW2-related materials [on-line](#) but since the Morison work is not "official", you will not find it there.
- HyperWar Site
 - The [HyperWar](#) web site is an effort to link together¹ a large fraction of the official documentation related to WW2 produced by various agencies of the United States, United Kingdom and British Commonwealth governments that does not have copyright issues (and would, thus, be inappropriate for an on-line presentation). A daunting challenge, but progress over the last 10 years has been significant.
 - USAAF Series: HyperWar has 5 of the 7 volumes [on-line](#)
 - Army Green Series: HyperWar has about 50% of the volumes [on-line](#)
 - Morison's US Navy set: this set is presently copyrighted and, thus, is not available. However, the [HyperWar site](#) has some other quite interesting materials
- Local Sources ☺
 - I have the Craven & Cates 7 volume set in pdf format. It is government issue (straight from the USAF Historical site) so I can make as many copies as I want. It is 8 files, a one page file with links to each volume and the 7 volumes, one per file. If you would like a copy, bring a USB thumb drive (aka stick drive, stick memory, etc) to the next WW2 History Club meeting. Make sure the drive is a 2GB (or larger) drive. You can buy one of these at any office supply or computer store for \$10.

¹ the original term for what we now call a "link" was "hypertext" – hence the site title

All Booked Up

The used book store in Colony Plaza is modest in size. It has a decent selection of fiction and the kinds of things most people read. Their selection of military history is limited to a few (short) shelves of WW2 and military related materials, but it is a mix of non-fiction and historical fiction. They do have a computerized inventory system and can instantly tell you what they have in stock. I have found two WW2 items on their \$2 table

Grace's Books & Records

This bookstore is located in the Main Street Antique Mall (201 West Main Street across from the Tropix Theater) in Leesburg. It is a block from the Leesburg library which is the best library in the area. They have a half dozen shelves of mostly WW2 non-fiction plus some other related books here and there. They did have copies of both Keegan's book and Spector's book (basic references for the lectures). They have the best stock of WW2 material that I have found locally. The vast majority of books are hard covers and they specialize in 1st editions, so their prices will seem high if all you want is a reading copy. Like most small used bookstores, they are not the most organized and do not have an up-to-date inventory. But I suspect that Frank Grace can point you to any book he has ☺