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Cadets, Critical Thinking and Lifelong Learning:

Faculty-Library Collaboration in Professional Military Education

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Abstract

Professional higher education programs increasingly emphasize the development of critical thinking, information literacy and evidence-based decisions. Using the SoTL-approach, we have explored how information literacy taught by librarians can be integrated into the military officer education to support the cadets' learning and critical interaction with information leading to better decisions. While academic libraries are increasingly recognised as educational partners in civilian higher education, their role in military academic contexts remains underexplored and often reduced to technical resource provision. Through reflexive thematic analysis of interviews with military and civilian faculty, this study investigates how library teaching can be purposefully embedded into the Norwegian Defence University College (NDUC) bachelor programmes. The analysis identifies three refined themes: Information literacy and academic development; Pedagogical collaboration through embedded librarianship; Contextual relevance for critical thinking. These findings suggest that librarians collaborating with faculty staff can contribute to support development of academic skills, information literacy, and critical inquiry. The study highlights the importance of librarians' professional adaptability and contextual

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understanding of the military professional domain, arguing that meaningful integration requires active participation in curriculum planning and pedagogical collaboration. By conceptualising the library as a pedagogical partner rather than a support service, the article contributes to ongoing debates on the academisation of officer education and the evolving professional identity of librarians in a military context. The study provides empirical insights to how embedded librarianship may be operationalised in military higher education and offers perspectives that might be of relevance also beyond a military context.

Keywords*: Critical thinking, educational collaboration, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), embedded librarianship, professional military education (PME)*

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are expected to prepare students to navigate complex information environments, critically evaluate sources and evidence, and exercise informed professional judgement. These capabilities are widely recognised as central to the students' intellectual and scholarly development and can be described as academic development, including critical thinking, and lifelong learning. The importance of critical thinking can be exemplified as by Brage & Svenssons (2010, p. 49): "About 5-10% of the students fail and the main reasons are a lack of a serious approach to the search process itself and a lack of a creative and reflective way of thinking. The student normally doesn't have any problems finding information, but the difficulties lie in finding qualitative information with scientific value." This is particularly relevant in programmes where graduates must make decisions in uncertain and information-rich contexts (King, 2019). Developing these competences requires more than simply providing access to information resources; it also depends on educational practices that support students' engagement with information, disciplinary knowledge, and professional practice. McClurg et al. (2019, p. 2) describe teaching by librarians as "to organize and make sense of the information around us." McClurg et al. (2019) further state that this teaching often goes under the broad heading information literacy, which also encompasses the very important skill of manoeuvring through the complex world of disinformation, fake news and today's global insecurity. This is extremely relevant in a professional military educational context, but also for everyone supporting students' learning and development in today's challenging information environment. Mullins & Boyd-Byrnes (2024, p. 432) found in their study of teaching librarians a mutual agreement that information literacy "is not just a library topic but manifests itself in all content disciplines and is critical to lifelong learning".

Our study was initiated as a library teaching project after mapping the current state of library teaching at the military academies at Norwegian Defence University College (NDUC). We further developed the process of integrating library teaching at the academies. A series of conferences at NDUC aimed at all teaching faculty, presented Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) as a methodical framework and approach, encouraging staff to investigate and improve their own teaching practices through evidence-informed inquiry into student learning and educational outcomes. Grounded in Boyer's (1990) expanded conception of scholarship, SoTL refers to the systematic and scholarly study of teaching and student learning. By making findings public and subject to peer review, SoTL seeks not only to improve educational practice but also to contribute to a shared body of knowledge that can inform teaching and learning beyond the local context (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). The conference series acted as a catalyst, strengthening our conceptual and theoretical apparatus and framework for our library

teaching development. The conferences, and later this study, used the specific SoTL framework of "The Utrecht University Roadmap for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning". The roadmap is eight steps where the framework involves critically examining educational practices, collecting and analysing data, and sharing findings to improve teaching quality and learning outcomes. It is based in relevant theory, focused on student learning, methodologically sound, and appropriately disseminated to the broader educational community (Utrecht University, n.d).

Enstad & Hagen (2026) identify the beginning of an international discourse in the literature and need for further studies within Professional military education (PME) and recognize that in professional military life there is no sharp distinction between theory and practise. PME demands operational ability, but also requires officers who can think critically, navigate complex information environments, and contribute to informed decision-making (King, 2019; Norwegian Armed Forces, 2024a; Snider, 2005). This can be seen in the increasing academic orientation in the officer education, with cadets at the NDUC completing a bachelor's degree while balancing intensive field exercises, classroom instruction, and preparation for operational duties (Norwegian Armed Forces, 2024b). These demands create a learning environment in which students are expected to develop academic competence, professional expertise, and critical thinking simultaneously.

The NDUC library has the potential to support cadets in their transition to higher education and in developing the academic skills required in officer education. Libraries have traditionally provided important support to higher education, but their pedagogical role within PME has received limited systematic attention. Research on information literacy and student learning increasingly emphasises how librarians can function as educational partners rather than simply as providers of services and resources as shown by McClurg et al. (2019) and Thorn (2022). Hartvig and Moring (2025) take the discussion further in their study of Copenhagen University Library, arguing that while embedded librarianship may increase access to library expertise and resources through practical embeddedness, it does not necessarily extend to discipline-specific or epistemological embeddedness. Their findings suggest that the pedagogical value of library involvement lies not only in providing access, but also in how instruction is contextualised within students' disciplinary and institutional frameworks. Bartnik et al. (2010) state that embedded librarianship includes a variety of activities such as faculty meeting attendance and class instructions.

Less is, however, known about how these perspectives translate to professional military education. While research has examined information literacy and embedded librarianship in higher education, the contribution of faculty-library collaboration to student learning and academic development in PME remains underexplored. There is limited knowledge about how library teaching about information literacy can be integrated into the disciplinary and professional context of officer education, where academic learning takes place alongside military training and operational preparation. LeMire et al. (2018) describe how effective library outreach to military cadets requires adaptation to their culture and context. Nevertheless, the contribution of libraries to PME is rarely examined beyond technical resource provision, despite calls to strengthen academic competencies as part of officer professionalisation (King, 2019; Snider, 2005).

Against this background, this study explores how faculty-library collaboration may contribute to student learning and academic development in professional military education. More specifically, the study asks: **How do faculty members understand the contribution of faculty-library collaboration to cadets' academic development, information literacy, and critical thinking?**

1.1. Case: The Norwegian Defence University College and Its Library

The Norwegian Defence University College (NDUC) is responsible for educating non-commissioned officers and officers for service in the Norwegian Armed Forces. NDUC is both an academically independent educational and research institution and a military unit within the Armed Forces (Norwegian Armed Forces, 2024a).

The NDUC Library supports education, research and professional development across the institution. In addition to providing access to academic recourses, librarians contribute to teaching activities related to information literacy, source evaluation, academic writing and research processes. Our study examines how these activities are understood and integrated in the institution's educational programmes.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study explores how faculty members understand the role of faculty-library collaboration in supporting cadets' academic development within PME. The study draws on data from six semi-structured interviews conducted at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy in Bergen and the Norwegian Military Academy in Oslo during 2024 and 2025. Given the study's focus on educational practices and academic development, qualitative interviews were considered the most suitable for exploring the participants' experiences and view of how library teaching might support student learning.

Adopting a SoTL perspective to the exploration of our own practice shifted our focus from what the library provides to how collaboration between librarians and faculty can support cadets' learning. It also encouraged a more systematic and learning-centred approach to educational development, where information literacy is integrated into teaching and learning rather than treated as separate library services. The Utrecht University Roadmap SoTL process contributed to a deeper understanding of existing educational practices and informed a more structured and cadet-oriented approach to teaching and learning (Utrecht University, n.d.; McClurg et al., 2019).

We conducted an informal pilot study in which we asked first-year cadets for feedback on our library teaching following one of our classes. Drawing on results of the pilot study, the SoTL project, and a review of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, we designed an initial interview guide with ten questions. The interview guide is provided as Appendix A. In addition, consistent with the principles of thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2022) our professional experience as librarians within a military academy context informed and enriched the shaping and refinement of these questions.

An inductive, reflexive thematic analysis was conducted following the methodology outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). The coding process was developed from the content of the data, which led to the identification of initial themes. These themes were subsequently nuanced and lead to refined themes in response to the study's central research question.

2.1. The informants

The informants in this study were teachers, researchers and administrators at the Norwegian Defence University College. Three of the informants were civilians, while the other three have military ranks. The informants were all active library patrons.

The faculty members were selected due to their role in planning, delivering, and evaluating educational activities within the officer education, and were recruited based on existing collaboration with the librarians. Their perspectives were considered particularly relevant for understanding how faculty-library collaboration is experienced and how such collaboration may contribute to student learning and academic development. While the

sample size might limit generalisability, qualitative research does not necessarily require large samples to identify meaningful patterns (Braun et al., 2023). As Thagaard (2018) notes, the sample size should be small enough to allow for in-depth analysis.

A limitation of the study is that cadets were not included as informants. However, we did conduct the pilot study to achieve a general understanding of how the cadets perceive library teaching. At the time of our research, the cadets expressed fatigue as research objects, after having answered several questionnaires and other research data collections. The pilot study gave us the opportunity to firstly gain an overview through data collection from teachers and other staff. The findings therefore reflect faculty perspectives on student learning rather than the students' own experiences, giving us a foundation for future studies that could investigate how cadets themselves experience and evaluate faculty-library collaboration.

2.2. Data analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was employed as the methodological approach, offering a systematic framework for analysing qualitative data. The process involved several stages, beginning with familiarization with the dataset, followed by coding, theme development, and culminating in the analytical writing phase (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Further following Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic approach, we viewed our insider perspective positionality as shaping the research process and outcomes. Continuous reflexivity was essential in acknowledging how our institutional embeddedness influenced knowledge production and offers in-depth insights into a specific and unique military academic learning context.

Codes were generated from the transcripts and field notes using an inductive approach, whereby the data itself informed the development of codes rather than imposing pre-established categories. This allowed the dataset to shape the coding process organically. Interpretation played a crucial role in the development of themes, consistent with the principles of reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022), which recognises that researchers inevitably bring a degree of subjectivity to the interpretative process (Byrne, 2022). Nevertheless, this very aspect may also be regarded as a strength of reflexive thematic analysis. Rather than merely summarising and categorising informants' responses, the approach enables the researcher to actively and intuitively develop themes that ultimately construct a coherent and meaningful narrative (Finlay, 2021).

Recurring patterns in the informants' responses were identified through initial manual coding, resulting in nine codes. These were developed with particular attention to references concerning the library's teaching practices, collaborative dynamics, and the cadets' academic skills. The codes were then refined and organised into initial themes, facilitating the identification of underlying relationships between participants' experiences and observations, in accordance with established procedures for thematic analysis.

The initial themes were subsequently validated against the interview data to strengthen the analytical grounding of the findings, ensuring that they accurately reflected recurrent patterns. Further, the process led to the identification of refined themes based on the initial themes, with clear and direct relevance to the research questions. The codes, initial and refined themes, and their relations are illustrated in Table 1.

3. Findings and discussion

The analysis identified three interrelated refined themes: information literacy and academic development, pedagogical collaboration through embedded librarianship and contextual relevance for critical thinking. Collectively, these themes illustrate how the library supports academic writing and fosters information literacy within time-constrained military curricula, while simultaneously negotiating the dual demands of academic rigor

Codes	Themes (Initial)	Themes (Refined)
The cadets' academic skills	The cadets' academic skills and development	Lifelong learning The library plays a vital role in fostering academic development and promoting lifelong learning for both cadets and faculty members
The cadets' academic development		
Library teaching		
Information Literacy in library instruction/teaching	The content of the library instruction/teaching	Practical versus epistemological embeddedness in the planning process The library should be included and actively participate in the professional planning processes of the relevant academic curriculum.
Personal academic experience		
Embedded librarianship	The library's involvement in course planning and its integration into the teaching process	
Course and curriculum planning		
Professional competence in librarianship	Mutual professional understanding	Military professional relevance Teaching librarians must actively engage with the military profession and training to ensure credible and context-relevant services.
Military professional understanding		

and operational priorities. The discussion places these findings within broader debates on the academisation of professional military education and the evolving professional identity of officers in small-state and Scandinavian contexts (King, 2019; Snider, 2005).

Table 1. From codes to themes

3.1. Information literacy and academic development

The first theme revealed by the thematic analysis, shows how the library can take part in fostering academic development and promoting lifelong learning. The informants universally agreed with our own previous observation that there is considerable diversity in the cadets' academic backgrounds. A few of the cadets have a civilian bachelor's degree, while most have no prior higher education. One informant stated:

> Yeah, it really varies. Some are familiar with citation standards and have a much better understanding of how to use sources — even though, in theory, that's something you're supposed to learn already in high school. But in my experience, most students are quite weak in that area when they start out. [...] I think for a lot of them, it's not until they start working on their bachelor's thesis that they develop an understanding of how to use sources.

Another informant suggested that the cadets' general motivation might be assumed to be less oriented towards academic achievements than the more practical tasks. This observation is consistent with broader patterns and aligns with the professional judgment and institutional knowledge of the librarians at the NDUC, as might be reasonably anticipated.

The library's function as academic support is available during their time as cadets, but also as facilitator for lifelong learning. A recurring theme among informants was the need for continuous practice of academic skills, much like physical or tactical training. As one informant remarked: "When you're learning to shoot, you don't become an expert on your first try. But, with academic skills, there's often this assumption that once they've been introduced, you can just tick the box and move on."

It is generally expected that professional practical skills are cultivated through practice. Military practical expertise, such as shooting and resilience, but also information literacy needs active engagement, repetition and practise to support professional development. Lifelong learning, moreover, thrives on individual initiative and continuous engagement. As one officer remarked: "You do not become ready to be a general simply by turning fifty."

Informants demonstrated a clear awareness of the library's teaching content covering information literacy, assessment of source reliability, search strategies, information retrieval, and academic referencing, and acknowledged its pedagogical value. It is also an expressed expectation that librarians are familiar with emerging digital tools. However, it must be mentioned that the selected informants are themselves individuals who make consistent use of library services with positive library experiences, and they recognize the value of expertise in information literacy.

Engaging with relevant literature is commonly thought to provide a solid foundation for informed decision-making, particularly when combined with practical experience and experiential learning. In a military context the responsibilities of being in command grow proportionally with increasingly higher level of rank. King (2019) repeatedly points out the complexity of being a military leader in the 21st century describing the military division as a "complex organizational system" (p. 438). King further states that «The staff requires the expertise to collate information about every element of the division and its activities so that they can provide direction and guidance to those subordinate units and inform the commander's decision-making about each function" (p. 305). The command effectively is not only to give orders, but to organize and plan, strategize, forge alliances, and inspire those who must fight the battles.

Cadets enrolled at military academies, such as the NDUC, constitute a distinct patron

group within military libraries. Unlike student veterans or active-duty service members, who typically possess substantial military experience, cadets often resemble traditional civilian college students, having had limited exposure to military life prior to commencing their education. Sjøgren (2022) describes how contemporary military commanders understand command in the context of standardised planning processes (doctrines) and a supporting staff organization. He argues that commanders make key decisions in the planning process based on professional experience and judgement by drawing on a repertoire of patterns they had collated from experience. Sjøgren further points out that "King's work has more to do with 21st century staff work related to mission management than with command". The library's role both within NDUC, but also as a supporting role for military professional practice and lifelong learning, is easier to define relating to King's management vision rather than a command perspective. The library may contribute to the foundation upon which decisions are made by strengthening the knowledge base and providing robust methods for locating, organizing, and retrieving information to support evidence-based decision-making.

Over time, the officers that NDUC educate contribute to reshaping the academic landscape, leading to the emergence of core military-relevant texts within academic journals and publishers. This development challenges the notion of a strict divide between military and academic domains, suggesting instead that these spheres represent nuanced variations of shared practices. The officers' contextual expertise, combined with the library's role in fostering academic engagement, might enhance operational practice through informed reflection and critical inquiry. Genuine integration, however, entails more than simply being included in the curriculum; it requires sustained collaboration, mutual adaptation, and a recognition of the value each domain brings to the other.

The findings of this study indicate a shared understanding that the NDUC library plays a vital role in supporting academic lifelong learning, spanning from the cadet level to advanced research activities. How the library can support teaching and learning information literacy in universities and colleges is well documented (Mullins & Boyd-Byrnes, 2024; Brage & Svensson, 2010; Larsen et al., 2017). This aspect is also deeply integrated in the professional identity of librarians and constitutes a recurring theme throughout the librarian degree education (OsloMet, 2025).

The informants agree that from the moment cadets enter NDUC until their graduation three or four years later, there is a clear progression in their academic development, particularly in terms of information literacy. The educational journey culminates in a bachelor's thesis that adheres to the same academic standards and expectations as those found in civilian higher education bachelor programs. One informant stated: "There's something about this thing with lifelong learning and things like that becoming increasingly important. Keeping oneself informed and so on... I think teachers have a central role in conveying that we can use the library for that". This quote is an example of how the library is considered by the informants as an important component for information literacy and competence, and for contributing to the first phases of the cadets' lifelong learning.

3.2. Pedagogical collaboration through embedded librarianship

The second refined theme of the study shows the benefits of being included and actively participating in the professional planning processes of the relevant academic curriculum. Cadets at NDUC experience a heavy workload, as full-time studies are combined with physical demands, training, and exercises.

Previous studies stress the value of an embedded library services and active library participation in planning processes. Schulte (2012) did an extensive literature review and

the Danish study by Hartvig and Moring (2025) is well recognized in the library communities. Our findings contribute to this understanding.

It is often mentioned by the informants that for the library staff to claim their rightful place in the curriculum and subject schedule it is important to be a part of the planning process. Although all informants expressed a positive attitude toward involving the library in curriculum planning, this intention often falls by the wayside when confronted with the practical demands of everyday operations. As a result, the library might be overlooked in planning meetings. Adding to the complexity, the library is situated under different lines of command at NDUC depending on context; sometimes aligned with educational functions, other times with more daily operational structures.

A recurring claim in the informants' responses is a general lack of communication and promotion of the library's services. A staff member gave a quite clear recommendation: "I think the most important thing then is that we need to know more about what the librarians can do. I think the library actually needs to do a bit more marketing. [...] Like, this is what we can do. Maybe we could meet up and talk about it." The library's professional competence is not in question, but the services and expertise could be more visible in the appropriate forums. As this quote illustrates the library and its staff are welcomed and recognized as pedagogical components of the college's educational support facilities and services. The findings indicate potential for further clarification of the library as contributors towards the institution, as illustrated by the quote: "So I would have liked the library to be in a completely different place in the school, that it was, in a way, a centre of the school, so that it would also have that kind of symbolic weight." In addition to the more visible contributions associated with the physical library space, the library undertakes a range of less immediately observable support activities. These include the provision and maintenance of access to academic journals and databases, the administration of reading lists and distribution of digital course literature, as well as targeted support for research-related processes.

Integrating library teaching into the broader military curriculum may be understood as operating on two complementary levels: practical embeddedness and epistemological embeddedness. Practical embeddedness refers to the organisation of library teaching, adapting to the existing schedule and cadet learning activities. This includes the coordination of timing and course content to ensure that academic skills training occurs when cadets most need it. For cadets, this enhances accessibility and relevance: academic support is received "just in time," reducing cognitive overload and allowing them to apply new skills directly within their disciplinary studies. For teachers, practical embeddedness ensures that library instruction supports course objectives rather than being an "add-on," thereby strengthening coherence across the curriculum (Hartvig & Moring, 2025).

Epistemological embeddedness, by contrast, refers to a more profound integration, in which the library's contribution is conceptual more than just a logistical matter. Information literacy, including critical reading, information evaluation, and evidence-based argumentation becomes embedded with the epistemic culture of military education itself. In this deeper form of integration, library teaching helps cadets understand that academic inquiry and professional military reasoning are parallel practices: both demand disciplined thinking, analytical precision and ethical judgement (Felten, 2013; Kirschner et al., 2006). For cadets, library epistemological embeddedness encourages intellectual autonomy and the confidence to approach complex problems with critical and reflective reasoning, capacities central to both academic success and effective command (King, 2019). For teachers, library epistemological embeddedness promotes shared responsibility for cultivating these competencies, encouraging pedagogical collaboration and reflection on what counts as "knowledge" in military education.

From a reflexive analysis perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2022) it emerges that achieving epistemological embeddedness can result in the library and faculty together positively shaping the norms and values of academic work within the military college. Such collaborations can shift library teaching from a supplementary support function into a more active contributor to the Institutions' pedagogical mission potentially benefiting both cadets and educators by aligning scholarly and professional learning goals. From a SoTL-perspective, collaboration and integration between the library and the teaching faculty can be strengthened by a more transparent and including planning process which aligns with the SoTL principles. Our project is an example of how we can clarify potential hindrances in the planning process and potential solutions towards solving the challenges of library visibility and involvement. Sharing the process of our project with colleagues in- and outside the SoTL-project at NDUC, presenting at local, national and international conferences, has provided opportunities to test ideas and receive feedback. The SoTL-cycle of inquiry, collaboration, reflection and practice development has been a useful catalyst for reflection on how library teaching can be even more integrated into institutions' educational practice and supporting the academic development of the cadets.

3.3. Contextual relevance for critical thinking

The third refined theme concerns military professional relevance and is perhaps the most significant finding of the study. The results confirm the significance for the library of having a platform to teach and being part of planning processes to best support the information literacy and academic skills of the cadets and faculty. However, this study has revealed that what is just as important is the librarians' professional understanding of military library patrons and their operational domain.

The competence acquired during academic training remain relevant well beyond graduation from the NDUC. This includes the proficiencies for critical thinking, reflective practice, and the ability to navigate the broader landscape of military knowledge. Informants emphasized that the library staff needs to maintain familiarity with the military domain in addition to the standard academic materials found in civilian university libraries. The problem with classified material is specified by one informant, who also tells how they must go beyond the library for some sources:

> Publications that we often use, I find are a bit challenging to get hold of, because it is restricted. And the way the libraries are here, they are the open, unclassified … It can be a bit of a hassle for us if we need to get hold of some NATO publications and things like that. But, I mean, we do have channels through which we are able to get hold of them.

Given that education at NDUC integrates both military training and academic studies, it is essential that library staff incorporate practical military subject matter into their teaching. This dual focus ensures that academic support remains relevant and aligned with the cadets' operational reality. The library services' quality and relevance benefit from the library staff's continuous learning and evaluation, and staff should seek to adapt to the unique demands of the military context. Military science forms a core element of the military academy librarian's expertise and to offer optimal support and resources, it is imperative to cultivate a thorough grasp of the military's operational and applied context. One of the informants pinpoint this argument as follows: "[...] Many of the civilian support staff and support functions here would be doing both themselves, the cadets, and the training program a favour by exposing themselves to the core of what we are supposed to

teach the cadets [...]."

To provide optimal support to cadets and faculty in the development of academic competencies and scholarly practices within a military educational setting, it is important for librarians to possess a nuanced understanding of both the institutional context and the military pedagogical environment in which they operate. This includes recognizing the distinct characteristics of military education, its hierarchical structures, and the specific demands placed on learners and educators in such contexts.

The military library operates not merely as a repository of information, but as a pedagogical partner that facilitates both practical learning and epistemological development (Felten, 2013; Hartvig & Moring, 2025). Beaulieu-B and Dufort (2017) define military epistemology as the way military professionals create, validate, and use knowledge about war and strategy. In the context of reflexive military *practice*, it argues that traditional military *epistemology* focused on fixed rules, rational planning, and measurable outcomes needs to evolve and be replaced by a reflexive military epistemology that recognizes that knowledge in warfare is contextual, dynamic, and self-critical. It values learning through reflection, adaptation, and ethical awareness rather than just applying standardised doctrines. It is how the military knows what it knows, and how it can think more critically about its own assumptions, methods, and sources of understanding.

Libraries promote academic freedom by providing a wide range of sources that support rigorous scholarship and enable the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. Academic freedom is vital also in the military context (e.g. Hess, 2025). What distinguishes academic speech from general freedom of speech is specialized expertise and professional standards. Academic freedom is grounded in an individual's expertise, professional ethics, and adherence to the standards of their academic discipline, which includes a responsibility to the quality and integrity of their research and teaching and facilitate the free exchange of ideas essential for academic inquiry (European Parliament, 2023).

The military is not only a profession, but an integrated lifestyle, impacting private life, physical demands, and requirements for mobility and relocation. At NDUC, individuals do not merely train to become officers. They are officers in the making from the moment they enter the institution. The process is not simply educational, it is a formative journey, a professional and personal transformation. The nature of this journey is distinct within the military context and can be said to be something more of an integrated lifestyle than being a nurse, a doctor, a lawyer, or a librarian. The core mission of NDUC is to prepare and motivate cadets, trainees, and students to serve in the defence of Norway across the full spectrum of peace, crisis, and armed conflict (Norwegian Armed Forces, 2022; Norwegian Armed Forces, 2024b). The ultimate trust is in the ability to conduct decision making, to give your life or to take other lives if the situation demands it to defend the country. One cannot rehearse war in the same way one can simulate and practise working in a library, a police unit, or a hospital. This raises a fundamental question: How does one prepare for war? And how can the librarians at NDUC contribute to this preparation?

Within this unique educational environment, military librarians play a potentially relevant yet often overlooked role in shaping the intellectual and ethical development of future officers. While librarians cannot teach cadets how to shoot, throw grenades, or take lives in defence of the nation, they contribute meaningfully to the formation of officers by fostering critical awareness and intellectual resilience. Through the facilitation of information literacy, critical thinking, and the ability to navigate and evaluate scholarly literature, librarians support the development of decision-making grounded in research, history, and science. This contribution can be of substantial significance towards

cultivating the mental resilience and reflective capacity required of military officers and leaders in complex and high-stakes environments.

Historically, libraries at NDUC have functioned primarily as book archives or logistical support units, providing access to printed materials, assisting with practical tasks such as printing, and supplying basic stationery. Today, however, military libraries are evolving into dynamic academic partners, supporting both character formation and learning. Civilian librarians working within military academies might face limitations in the ability to fully support officer education unless they develop a deeper understanding of the military profession and its institutional culture.

Another key finding is the need for librarians to actively engage with and immerse themselves in the military profession. Furthermore, drawing on our own experience, field visits to military camps during cadet education, undertaken not as passive observers or 'military tourists', but as engaged academic participants, has demonstrated significant educational value. This form of experiential learning represents a notable dimension of professional development. Such experiences contribute to a deeper understanding of military life and operational contexts, thereby enhancing the capacity to provide meaningful and contextually informed support within officer education. Vestvik shares this view when she writes: "Faculty-library collaboration requires mutual respect, shared understanding, and constructive engagement across professional perspectives" (Vestvik, 2026, p. 2 [our translation]).

NATO (2017) Framework for Future Alliance Operations is a strategic document that emphasizes the need for a knowledge-based and adaptive officer profession. According to the Framework a security environment characterized by complexity, technological advancement, and unpredictable threats, future officers must be capable of combining operational decisiveness with analytical proficiency. This necessitates an educational framework that not only conveys doctrine, but also cultivates critical thinking, interdisciplinary understanding, and research-informed decision-making.

4. Conclusion

The study explores how faculty members comprehend and value the contribution from library teaching, and how this faculty-library collaboration contributes to the cadets' academic development, information literacy and critical thinking.

The findings show that faculty consider the librarians valuable pedagogical partners, contributing to the cadets' academic progression throughout their education. Information literacy is understood not as a skill acquired through one-time instruction, but as a complex competence requiring continued practice and application, much like other more practical military distinctive capabilities such as shooting or physical training.

Successful faculty-library collaboration requires more than integrating library teaching into the curriculum, although this is an important step and necessary due to strict time restraints. The study suggests embedded librarianship within professional military educational environments for the collaboration to realize its full pedagogical value. To thrive, collaboration depends not only on continuous collaboration and participation in the educational planning processes, but, most importantly, on the librarians' understandings of the military context. This understanding enables librarians to apply their information expertise to the specific needs and requirements of both the cadets and faculty.

From the faculty perspective, information literacy contributes to developing critical and reflective thinkers who can engage thoughtfully with information and knowledge, navigate uncertainty, and exercise informed judgement. This capacity may be particularly significant for future military leaders facing complex and contested information

environments, including crisis and war. The faculty-library collaboration can therefore help bridge academic and military professional learning and strengthen the foundations for lifelong learning and professional decision-making.

Further research could appropriately explore library teaching and information literacy, lifelong learning and critical thinking, based on data derived from the cadets' perspective and learning outcomes.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

These questions aim to gain insight into how teachers perceive the library's role in the education, as well as to identify opportunities for better integrating library services with the aim to strengthen the cadets' academic skills.

1. What are your experiences with library instruction at the school?

- Follow-up question: Have you previously collaborated with the library as a support function to develop the cadets' academic skills?
- Follow-up question: Do you personally address topics such as literature searching, source evaluation, or referencing in your teaching?

2. How do you assess the cadets' academic skills at the start of their education?

- Follow-up question: Do you observe a development in the cadets' skill levels from the first to the third year?

3. How can library instruction contribute to strengthening the cadets' ability to approach their academic assignments in a scholarly manner?

- Follow-up question: Which specific academic skills do you think should be prioritized?

4. Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve collaboration between the library and the teachers to better integrate library instruction into the courses?

- Follow-up question: What do you believe is the key to more effective collaboration, and how can we best implement this in practice?