Ever since the publication of the first edition in 1938, the American Merchant Seaman's Manual has been the standard text for maritime education.

Using the revisions of the seven editions (1938, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1957, 1981 & 2003) of the American Merchant Seaman's Manual as a guide, I have attempted to trace the development of maritime education over the past seventy years. By analyzing both the new topics incorporated in the manual over the years, along with the subjects that were eliminated in later editions, I have established an outline of the changes in the scope and variety of skills demanded for both teaching and learning in the maritime environment.