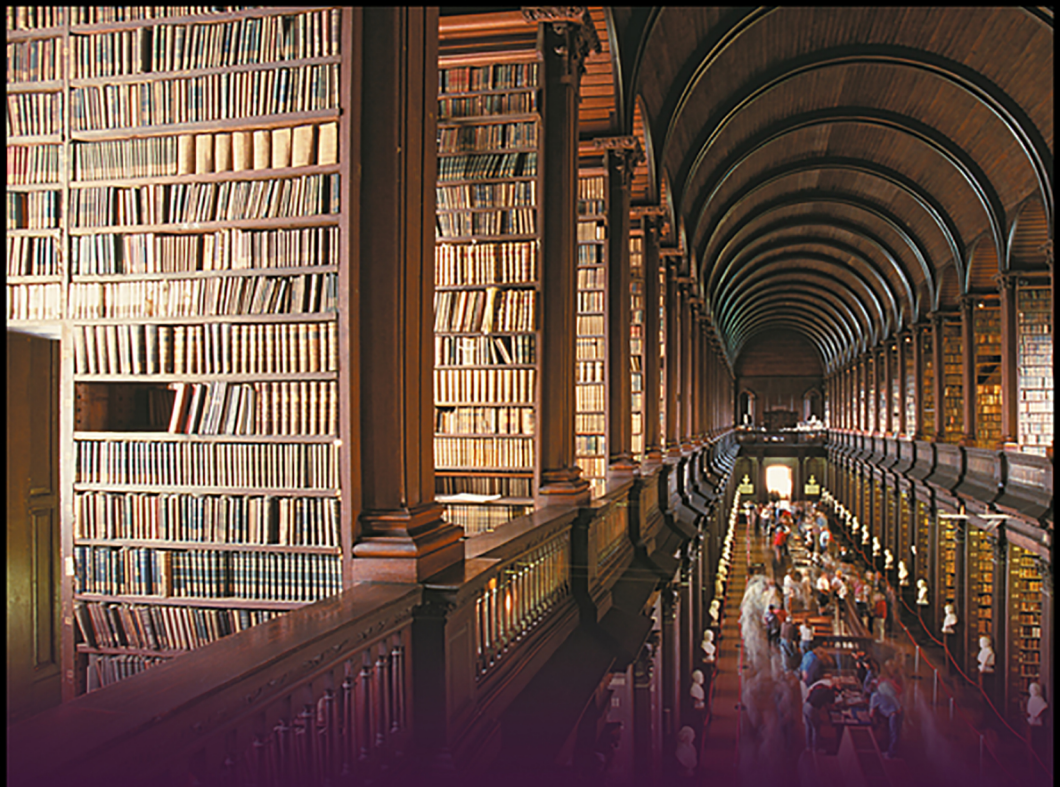

GOING TO THE SOURCES

A GUIDE TO HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING

SIXTH EDITION

ANTHONY BRUNDAGE

WILEY Blackwell

Going to the Sources

It's been almost 30 years since the first edition of *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing* was first published. Newly revised and updated, the sixth edition of this bestselling guide helps students at all levels meet the challenge of writing their first (or their first "real") research paper.

Presenting various schools of thought, this useful tool explores the dynamic, nature, and professional history of research papers, and shows readers how to identify, find, and evaluate both primary and secondary sources for their own writing assignments.

This new edition addresses the shifting nature of historical study over the last twenty years. *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing* includes:

- A new section analyzing attempts by authors of historical works to identify and cultivate the appropriate public for their writings, from scholars appealing to a small circle of fellow specialists, to popular authors seeking mass readership
- A handy style guide for creating footnotes, endnotes, bibliographical entries, as well as a list of commonly used abbreviations

Advanced Placement high school and undergraduate college students taking history courses at every level will benefit from the engaging, thoughtful, and down-to-earth advice within this hands-on guide.

Anthony Brundage is Professor of History Emeritus at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, USA. Among his publications are seven books, the most recent of which, co-authored with Richard Cosgrove is *British Historians and National Identity: From Hume to Churchill*.

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This edition first published 2018

Edition History
Harlan Davidson, Inc. (1e, 1989; 2e, 1997; 3e, 2002; 4e, 2008) John Wiley & Sons, Ltd (5e, 2013)

Registered Office
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

Editorial Office
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

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Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Brundage, Anthony, 1938- author.
Title: Going to the sources : a guide to historical research and writing / Anthony Brundage.
Description: Sixth edition. | Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016052002 | ISBN 9781119262749 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781119262855 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: History–Methodology. | History–Research. | History–Research–Data processing. | Historiography.
Classification: LCC D16 .B893 2017 | DDC 907.2–dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016052002

Cover image: © clu/Gettyimages
Cover design by Wiley

Set in 10/12pt WarnockPro by Aptara Inc., New Delhi, India

1 2018

To My Students

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Preface

This book developed out of a course on history methods that I have taught to upper division history majors for many years. As anyone who has taught a methodology course can attest, it can be either a uniquely rewarding or a deeply frustrating experience; usually it is both. Typically students approach the course with some apprehension. Up to this point their academic encounters with history have been chiefly in the form of lecture-discussion courses, a format with which they feel relatively secure. In the History Methods class they suddenly find themselves on unfamiliar terrain, confronted with new, sometimes perplexing challenges. Fortunately, often mingled with this apprehension is a sense of excitement about the prospect of achieving new levels of understanding the discipline, as well as of acquiring a new set of research and writing skills. It was in the hope of fostering the excitement, allaying the apprehension, and developing these skills that I undertook the writing of this book.

Central to my own sense of the excitement of history is an appreciation of it as an open-ended and dynamic field. Developing that awareness in others is an important source of satisfaction for me as a teacher of history. I have therefore structured my course and this book around the concept of history as a dynamic process. The common tendency to view history as fixed and static is best overcome by exploring the ways in which historians actually go about examining the past, constantly searching for fresh patterns and meanings, and developing new methodologies to achieve them. Accordingly, an introductory chapter on historiography (the history of history writing) sets the stage for a discussion of the types of historical sources and of the organization of the historical profession in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3, on how to locate your sources, is the central chapter as far as research methods are concerned. It is a detailed, practical guide through the various resources that enable you to identify and obtain the most important books, articles, essays, and other materials relating to your topic. Once this knowledge is acquired, the essential bibliography on any historical topic can be located readily. Fostering one's ability to operate as a competent, self-directed researcher is one of the major goals of this book.

Chapter 4 explains how to give any work of history a critical reading; it provides you with the tools to grasp the structure of the work and the author's main interpretive points. By comparing two books seemingly on the same topic, it shows the different approaches and strategies historians deploy in creating their work. It also explains the major points one should include when writing a book review. Chapter 5 considers the uses of visual media by historians, both in enhancing scholarship and in posing some critical challenges to authors as well as to readers.

Chapter 6, entirely new to this edition, considers the various publics with an interest in history, and the ways in which historians have responded to their needs, including the use of early electronic media like radio. The ways in which some journalists provide significant historical material and perspective to their readers, viewers, and listeners is also considered. Finally, we examine the field of public history, which provides valuable engagement with historical materials and sites for visitors to the many museums, libraries, national parks, galleries, and similar institutions both public and private.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the methods of writing two common assignments: the historiographic essay (an annotated example of which is included) and the research paper. This follows the sequence of my own teaching, in which a historiographic essay (based chiefly on secondary sources) is the centerpiece of the History Methods class, while a longer research paper (using primary as well as secondary sources) is assigned in the Senior Thesis and Seminar. Chapter 9 recapitulates some of the major points made in the book, in particular the theme of the open-ended nature of history. The achievement of creative insights and analyses is shown to be closely linked to the concept of history as a dynamic intellectual discipline.

Online databases for historical researchers have improved enormously in recent years, as have college library gateways to these databases. Internet research has become such a vital and central component of the historian's toolkit that this edition gives it extended

treatment. The book concludes with five helpful appendices, four of which provide easy-to-follow examples of formatting for footnotes, endnotes, and bibliography entries, while a final one lists commonly used abbreviations in scholarly works.

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The Ever-Changing Shape and Texture of the Past

Static and Dynamic Concepts of History

A conversation I had at a cocktail party years ago made me acutely aware of some common misconceptions about my chosen field of study. After being introduced to a psychologist, I listened with keen interest to his enthusiastic account of some of the latest approaches and interpretations in his discipline. Having expostulated on this topic with obvious relish, he said, "I don't suppose there's much new going on in your field." Stunned by this remark, I scrutinized his face for signs of either humor or intentional offense. Seeing neither, I was forced to conclude that he genuinely believed history to be a passive, if not dormant, discipline. I attempted to disabuse him of this unfortunate view by explaining some of the recent – and important – developments in history: social history, women's history, cliometrics, psychohistory, microhistory, and postmodernism. The mention of psychohistory produced a detectable flash of interest, and I would like to think that he has since begun to question his assumption that history is a dull, lifeless chronicle.

Reflecting later on this encounter, I realized that my companion's attitude was by no means unusual, even among highly educated persons. The reasons for this are readily apparent. The popular conception of history simply as a record of past events seems to have the idea of history's basic unchangeability as an obvious corollary. Many see history as a vast array of facts, largely political and military in character, arranged more or less chronologically. Thus conceived, history is unalterable, except through the occasional unearthing of a lost city or the

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discovery of a trunk full of letters in an attic. At its best, it is an exciting and vivid costume drama; at its worst, it becomes a tedious, turgid catalog of dates and names designed to torment the young. We should not be surprised that it is the latter viewpoint that predominates. Not only is modern American culture remorselessly present-minded, but quite often the way in which history is taught in our precollegiate schools only confirms its reputation as dull.

Things tend to improve at college level, where those who have not already developed an attitude of unremitting hostility toward history often discover that it offers them an exciting new set of intellectual challenges and vistas. Yet, even at this level, introductory courses sometimes only solidify students' negative attitudes. This is not a matter of bad teaching; knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and articulate history teachers abound at every level. The problem lies in presenting history as a story with a fixed plot and cast of characters. It is true that this approach is natural and to some extent unavoidable, particularly with students who receive their first systematic exposure to history. But it is also possible, indeed critically important, to offer at least a glimpse of a very different concept: history as a dynamic process. By this I mean a rich, varied, evolving intellectual system that allows us to achieve a deeper and better understanding of our world, indeed of ourselves. In this vein history still deals with the past, but it conceptualizes a past in constant dialog with an ever-advancing present, one that responds to new questions and reveals fresh insights into the human condition. This is history as it is understood (and enjoyed) by professional historians, and it is high time that others were let in on the secret.

Obviously this concept of history stands in sharp contrast to the static one that prevails when we think of history merely as a fixed story. In the former, the past becomes kaleidoscopic, offering different answers to each inquirer. This should not be taken to mean that every person can fashion whatever he or she wishes and call it history. There are rigorous procedures one must observe in the framing of historical questions, in the selection and interpretation of sources, and in the presentation of one's findings. Moreover, the pursuit of objectivity, though impossible to achieve fully, must remain a central concern of the historian. Not everyone finds the dynamic concept of history appealing; there is, after all, something comforting in the notion that the past is unchangeable. A shift from the static to the dynamic can be

as disconcerting as our recent awakening (and I mean "recent" in terms of natural history) to the fact that the *terra firma* on which we walk is in fact an array of seething, grinding tectonic plates (an example all too familiar to a native Californian). The difference, of course, is that, while shifting tectonic plates seem to promise only devastation in the form of violent earthquakes and tsunamis, the concept of a dynamic historical past holds the promise of intellectual excitement.

Revising Our View of the Past

Rather than simply presenting a rigidly fixed view of the past, historians constantly search for fresh sources, approaches, methodological tools, and interpretations, in an effort to offer an ever-new past to whatever the present is. It may be more precise to say that historians offer us a multitude of new pasts, since each historian's view of the past is at least slightly different from another's, and sometimes dramatically so. In other words a vigorous, many-sided debate among scholars is not only unavoidable but essential to the discipline. Even when differences are subtle, they can be important. When an interpretation entails a more sweeping challenge to an established way of interpreting a past event, process, or person, we call it revisionist.

Revisionism, together with less extensive shifts in approaches and interpretations, has been practiced since at least the time of the ancient Greeks, as anyone who has examined the history of historiography (that is, of history writing) will know. Revisionism has, however, become particularly pronounced in the last few centuries, with the dramatic transformations that have taken place in social, economic, and political life. As the pace of change quickens and the magnitude of change increases, a corresponding pressure arises that we revise our presently held accounts of the past. This happens because one of the most fundamental dimensions of our identity is provided by history and, as we change, so must it, too. When a young United States was mainly an agrarian society with few large cities, no complex technology, and no vital role to play in the world, one kind of history sufficed. As the nation grew, became industrialized, and developed an array of perplexing social problems, Americans needed to ask new questions about their past: What was life like on the frontier, and how had these experiences shaped the development of our national

character? What was the historical experience of hitherto disempowered or exploited groups: African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, and women? How did mass immigration affect politics, society, culture, and the economy? How did the different social classes interact historically, and how and why are the old patterns changing? How was the United States' posture vis-à-vis the rest of the world changing? These are only a few of the questions that have been posed by generations of historians since the late nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, a multiplicity of new approaches and interpretations has been offered in response, and hitherto neglected records and remnants of the past have become primary-source material.

Americans did not, of course, initiate these new ways of looking at the past. Many European societies had begun to experience social and economic change much earlier, and this was reflected in their historical accounts. The *philosophes* of the European Enlightenment developed a decidedly revisionist view of history and used it to great effect in their campaign against ignorance, superstition, and tyranny. Writers like Voltaire and Gibbon broke with long-established tendencies to write reverentially about states, rulers, and legal and ecclesiastical institutions. Their works, still rightly regarded as great classics in the writing of history, served as manifestos in the eighteenth-century struggle to advance the cause of liberty and reason.

New Forms of Historical Consciousness

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the attendant political unrest and demographic change at the end of the eighteenth century, some writers were moved to ask novel questions about the past. Thomas Malthus, that "gloomy" economist who began to point with alarm to the rapid and accelerating growth of population, complained that "the histories of mankind which we possess are, in general, histories only of the higher classes." He went on to suggest the composition of a history of the habits and mores of the general population on the basis of accurate statistical information. Malthus was well aware of the massive intellectual labors that would have to be expended on such a project, but he nonetheless called upon future scholars to shoulder the burden:

> A satisfactory history of this kind, of one people and of one period, would require the constant and minute attention of many observing minds in local and general remarks on the state