

## SOURCES FOR THESES IN EARLY MODERN HISTORY

### Secondary literature

You can explore what has been written about the field you wish to work in using bibliographies. To begin with, use Faculty bibliographies for papers you have studied or others relevant to your area of interest. For British history, the Royal Historical Society on-line bibliography at <http://www.rhs.ac.uk/bibl/> enables you to go deeper. For other countries, the Historical Association's *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature*, available in print or on-line through OLIS from vol. 81 (1997), provides an overview with commentary of each year's publications in any period and field, while the *English Historical Review* includes a section every year with brief summaries of articles in dozens of journals. National bibliographies such as the *Bibliographie annuelle de l'histoire de France* are available on the open shelves of the Upper Reading Room in the Bodleian, while journals such as the *Welsh History Review* contain annual surveys of publications on national history. Some specialised fields also produce international bibliographies or journals with regular reviews of periodical literature, such as the *Economic History Review*.

### Archives and manuscripts:

Vast holdings of original documents survive in archives and libraries across Britain and Europe; not just national archives, but also regional archives at the level of counties or similar units, town archives, diocesan or cathedral archives, school and college archives and private family archives. The records of families, towns, parishes and so on have often been deposited in county record offices or their equivalent, but some have not. Some may be in Latin rather than English or other vernaculars. Most will require the acquisition of some skill in palaeography to read, but many books and some websites (such as <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc> or <http://www.scottishhandwriting.com>) are available to help in this and skills improve fast with practice. Guides to the holdings of many archives and libraries in Britain and abroad are shelved in Duke Humfrey's Library. Some also have on-line catalogues such as the National Archives' PROCAT (<http://catalogue.pro.gov.uk/>). More guidance on using archives is available in the relevant set of notes. Many important collections of documents such as the State Papers Domestic from Henry VIII to George III, and some more unusual material, is available on microfilm in the Bodleian.

### Early printed books:

Many subjects can be studied through contemporary books published in Britain and abroad, of which the Bodleian and other Oxford libraries have extensive holdings. Others are available on microfilm in the Bodleian or online from resources such as EEBO (<http://www.odl.ox.ac.uk/eebo/>) or Gallica (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/>).

### Editions of documents:

Many countries have national societies or government agencies that publish volumes of historical documents. Those that have published long series include the Camden Society, the Scottish Record Society, the Société de l'histoire de France, the Commission royale d'histoire, Rijks geschiedkundige publicatiën, Colección de documentos inéditos, Publicationen aus den königlichen preussischen Staatsarchiven, and so on. The Bodleian

holds these series and many more. Most English counties have a record series – they are shelved in the galleries in Duke Humfrey’s library – and there are many specialist series such as the Navy Record Society, the Canterbury and York Society, the Selden Society and the Hakluyt Society. Their publications are listed in E.L.C. Mullins, *Texts and calendars: an analytical guide to serial publications* (2 vols, London, 1958–83). Similar societies exist in many other countries, producing publications such as Documenti per servire alla storia di Sicilia, Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert, or Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer.

### **Calendars of archive documents:**

Many great archive collections have been calendared in such a way that one can read summaries of documents instead of, or as a preparation for, reading the documents themselves. On the open shelves or in the stacks of the Bodleian you will find many collections such as *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII; Calendar of State Papers, Domestic and Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* for the reigns of many English monarchs; *Catalogue des actes de François I<sup>er</sup>*; *Les papiers de Richelieu*, and so on. In Britain such calendars have been prepared for many private or corporate archives by the Historical Manuscripts Commission and these are shelved in Duke Humfrey’s Library.

### **Varieties of sources:**

A remarkable range of material survives from early modern Britain and Europe. Some sources, such as letters and diaries, may be more engaging to read than others. But sources which are apparently dull or intractable can be made to yield fascinating results, as the use of wills, churchwardens’ accounts and church court proceedings by historians of the Reformation shows. There are also many opportunities for the analysis of surviving visual sources such as paintings and buildings and for the use of literature as historical evidence.

### **Read the footnotes:**

Think about the sources used by the historians you read and how they have used them. Think too about the sources you may have used for an optional subject or further subject in this area. Browse general bibliographies – such as C. Read, *Bibliography of British History: Tudor Period 1485–1603* (Oxford, 1959), M.F. Keeler, G. Davies, *Bibliography of British History: Stuart Period, 1603–1714* (Oxford, 1970), H. Hauser, *Les sources de l'histoire de France: xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1494–1610* (Paris, 1906–15) or É. Bourgeois, L. André, *Les sources de l'histoire de France: xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1610–1715* (Paris, 1913–35) – to find both secondary and printed primary sources. Discuss possible sources with your tutor or other adviser, but try to equip yourself beforehand to ask well-focussed questions: ‘what issues might I investigate using this collection of letters?’ or ‘what sources might I use to investigate social problems in this town?’ rather than ‘what shall I write my thesis about?’