



From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods

By Martha C. Howell, Walter Prevenier

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From Reliable Sources is a lively introduction to historical methodology, an overview of the techniques historians must master in order to reconstruct the past. Its focus on the basics of source criticism, rather than on how to find references or on the process of writing, makes it an invaluable guide for all students of history and for anyone who must extract meaning from written and unwritten sources.

Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier explore the methods employed by historians to establish the reliability of materials; how they choose, authenticate, decode, compare, and, finally, interpret those sources. Illustrating their discussion with examples from the distant past as well as more contemporary events, they pay particular attention to recent information media, such as television, film, and videotape.

The authors do not subscribe to the positivist belief that the historian can attain objective and total knowledge of the past. Instead, they argue that each generation of historians develops its own perspective, and that our understanding of the past is constantly reshaped by the historian and the world he or she inhabits.

A substantially revised and updated edition of Prevenier's *Uit goede bron*, originally published in Belgium and now in its seventh edition, *From Reliable Sources* also provides a survey of western historiography and an extensive research bibliography.

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"Among the books designed to teach aspiring historians proper procedures for their work, this volume ranks high. . . . Readers will especially appreciate the care taken to show the link between methodological innovations and the historical contexts in which they occurred."?Choice, January 2002, Vol. 39, No. 5

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About the Author

Walter Prevenier is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Ghent (Belgium) and the author or coauthor of numerous books, including *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, also from Cornell, and *The Promised Lands: The Low Countries Under Burgundian Rule, 1369–1530*.

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