Reformation and Early Modern Europe
Reformation and Early Modern Europe

a guide to research

Edited by

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Preface
New Schools, New Tools, and New Texts

In 1982, Steven Ozment began his preface to *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* by stating, “There is no field of historical study today that is more alive with change and fresh ideas than that of Reformation Europe.” This remains very true today, but for very different reasons than when Ozment edited that first guide to research, or even in 1992 when William Maltby edited the second.¹ These reasons are new schools, new tools, and new texts. I have used the phrase “new schools, new tools, and new texts” for some time in my first lecture on the European Reformations; it is catchy enough for students to remember easily and encompassing enough to be useful. Many students already know that the Reformation was born out of a newly established school, the University of Wittenberg, and they also know that new tools such as the printing press spread the message of the Reformers and their opponents far and wide, pouring out new texts at great speeds. But there are other new schools, tools, and texts of which they might never have heard: new schools of thought in areas as diverse as painting, or music, or philosophy; new tools that made possible advances in mapmaking, navigation, philology, and painting; and new texts that were born to new audiences and presented in new and exciting ways.

The explosion of these new texts and new tools enabled fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists and scholars to look at themselves and their

¹Maltby’s research guide, titled *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research II*, was also published by the Center for Reformation Research. Another volume, *Catholicism in Early Modern History: A Guide to Research* (by John W. O’Malley), was published in 1987.
world differently. Similarly, twentieth- and twenty-first-century developments in information technology have given scholars of early modern Europe access to methods and approaches to practicing history, a sort of contemporary version of "new schools, new tools, and new texts." When Ozment's Reformation research guide went to press, IBM was rolling out the first IBM PC, which ran an 8088 processor at 4.77 megahertz and had 16 kilobytes of memory. When Maltby edited the second Reformation research guide in 1992, the Internet did not exist. I managed to make it through my entire higher education journey without ever emailing a professor, and when I went to Germany to do dissertation research, I handwrote letters and licked stamps to mail them home. I did use disk-based databases for bibliographic research and as a work-study student even helped transfer a card catalog to a computer catalog, but throughout my educational experience one still had to double-check the card catalog and the paper indexes. Today card catalogs are gone from nearly all libraries and most indexes are not even put on disk anymore, let alone paper.

As I write this preface, I am sitting in my home office, which is linked to my office at the university. A four-gigabyte thumb drive on my key chain automatically syncs to my hard drive; it is roughly 62,000 times the size of the 8088 PC on which I wrote my senior thesis, my master's thesis, and at least half of my dissertation. Advances in information technology have transformed early modern historiography in dramatic and exciting ways. Traveling for archival research is becoming less and less essential, because often primary documents can come to you. It is now possible to sit in an office in the United States, and access the British Archives, search for a sea captain, and download a PDF copy of his last will and testament executed in March 1584. These texts also become part of a personal digital library of hundreds of thousands of pages of early modern texts. The ability to search full-text editions of sixteenth-century texts, such as Early English Books Online or the online edition of *Luthers Werke*, has only become available since 2000, and the implications of research that uses this technology to its fullest extent have barely been felt. These new tools have radically democratized the availability of scholarship.

There are still, of course, the haves and the have-nots; however, the gap is shrinking. Even as recently as ten to fifteen years ago, a scholar at a small teaching-intensive college with no chance for a sabbatical had very little opportunity to research archive-intensive projects. This is no longer true—archives and libraries across the globe are digitizing their collections;
the Google Books Library Project has massive numbers of books digitized and ready for download. While some must still make periodic treks to a research university to get access to subscription-based websites, many primary resources are freely available. In these ways, the new tools of Internet and online research have vastly increased the number of new schools at which one can do serious and sustained primary-source research.

These new tools have opened a wealth of new texts to scholarly investigation, making early modern historians resemble early humanists exclaiming with joy over a newly found classical text. Of all historians, Reformation scholars have perhaps the most to gain from the texts these new tools make available. For historians of the classical and medieval eras, the dependence upon hand copying limited the number and volume of potential texts to be found and examined. While unknown classical or medieval texts do crop up in old libraries and secluded monasteries, these are rare and even more rarely earthshaking. For modern historians, personal papers, memoranda, and the like remain hidden away in archives, but printed works are widely disseminated, easily found, and freely available through interlibrary loan. The early modern historian of earlier generations, in contrast, had to deal with exponentially exploding numbers of texts that are rare, valuable, and never loaned. Certainly many important texts were available in critical editions, but the editors of critical editions often distorted these texts by impressing their own perspectives on them. Today, because of the Internet, PDF versions of early modern editions make it possible to see what people read in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries without editorial lenses getting in the way. Certainly, in earlier eras, texts were microfilmed or microfiched, but these copies, too, were often difficult to track down and do not nearly approach the width and breadth of texts currently available online. The availability to find, download, and analyze these newly available texts is transforming our understanding of the early modern era.

The previous research guides helped a generation of young scholars orient themselves to the field of sixteenth-century European history. These previous guides continue to have great value in that they track where the scholarly community was ten and twenty years ago, but like maps that must be updated with new roads and name changes, the guides must be updated to be of any practical use. This new research guide has eighteen chapters of varying lengths. There has been no attempt to duplicate information on the previous research guides; instead, we have worked to update what needs to
be revised and pointed out the ways in which the fields are continuing to evolve. Some topics are completely new and are therefore longer.

As in previous research guides, three questions have guided this volume: What is the present state of research in the field, especially the trendsetting new studies that are challenging (or perhaps trying to reassert) traditional views? What are the key issues scholars in the field are struggling with and trying to resolve? And what are the fundamental works in the field and where are the strategic collections or centers of research? In other words, where are we now, where are we going, and how do we get from here to there? Many of the essays include a discussion of the Internet’s role in the field; even where the Internet and its new tools and new texts may not touch scholarship today, they will soon. The students who read this volume today will no doubt help write that story.

While the articles are organized thematically and geographically, there are places of overlap among many of the articles. This is a conscious choice—one cannot study sixteenth-century art without understanding sixteenth-century religious and political realities. This volume is designed so that one may read just one article; however, the authors hope that reading one article will raise enough questions and spark enough interest that readers will want to look at others as well.

Acknowledgments
I would like to thank a few persons who helped make this project possible. Daria Schaffnit, a divinity student at United Theological Seminary, helped me convert diverse author styles into a consistent presentation. I also thank the authors in this volume who realized the importance of issuing a new research guide and who have kept before them the mission of helping new students acclimate themselves to the field of early modern studies. Members of the Society for Reformation Research stepped into the gap to take ownership of the idea behind the research guides when the Center for Reformation Research ceased to exist. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, then president of SRR, encouraged me to undertake the task when I raised it as an idea. My wife, Laurel, and daughter, Abby, who remind me of the importance of the twenty-first century even while patiently listening to me rattle on about the sixteenth. Finally, in a volume dedicated to helping students, I would like to thank two historians who taught me to love history. First and foremost, I thank my father Charles. Though he left the ranks of professional historians to become a Methodist pastor, he has
remained a historian by avocation. He worked his way through graduate school as a researcher for the Minuteman National Park Project (now the Minuteman National Historic Park) in Concord, Massachusetts. When we were growing up near Concord, my dad would take my brother and me to the Old North Bridge and tell us stories of the men who fought and died there. I still remember hiding behind a stone wall with him and my brother to get a feel for what the patriots did. My childhood was a running history lesson, and he is more responsible for my love of history than any other person. I also thank Professor Karlfried Froehlich of Princeton Seminary, who was the first to introduce me to the life of the professional historian. His simple joy in teaching and depth of scholarship inspired me to continue my studies. I cannot thank him enough for his encouragement. He will no doubt recognize in this preface echoes of a lecture on Scholasticism from many years ago.
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