

The "Monumenta Germaniae historica" were established by the "Society for older German History" which was founded by Freiherr vom Stein in the year 1819. The "Monumenta Germaniae historica" were a private enterprise of the Society at first, supported by contributions of the different members of the German Confederation. Since 1873 the leader was nominated by the Reich and the whole enterprise was more and more changed into an institute under the administration of the Reichsinnenministerium. Since 1935 the Monumenta Germaniae historica are subordinate to the Minister of the Reich for Sciences and Public Education (Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung) and their name is Institute of the Reich for Medieval German History (Monumenta Germaniae historica).

The task of the Monumenta Germaniae historica was from the very beginning to publish the sources for German history from 500 to 1500 and the research of medieval history (excluding history of arts and literature). The first volume of the "Monumenta Germaniae historica" was published 1826, followed regularly by the later publications; now altogether 36 folio- volumes, ca 100 quarto- and ca 100 octavo- volumes. The periodical edited by the "Monumenta Germaniae historica" includes 68 volumes in 3 series, besides 9 volumes of "Schriften des Reichsinstituts für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde" have been published.

By their editions of the sources for medieval history the "Monumenta Germaniae historica" have founded and perfected the method of modern critical research. "Today it stands unsurpassed in its field, even when similar national enterprises, such as the Rolls Series for England and the Documents Inédits for France, are taken into account," as it is pointed out in the American dissertation of W. Th. Miller Gamble (Washington 1927).