

During the first meeting of my history class, Roots of Human Trafficking, we were told that there would be a series of papers culminating into a final project. Being a methodical writer, I began brainstorming ideas for my final paper at the end of class. My ideas ranged from Korean comfort women to Ovimbundu child soldiers, but I ultimately decided to research child beggars in the UK. However, choosing to research this topic was not an immediate revelation. Various library resources and staff helped me develop my research interest and complete my paper on the differences in governmental attitudes toward child beggars in the UK in the 17th and 21st centuries.

My research process began when I was assigned to find and compare two images that depicted slavery. After Google Images led me to several non-reputable sources, I visited the library to explore more credible databases. At the Center for Digital Scholarship (CDS), I learned about the Visual Resources Center (VRC). On the VRC's website, a link to Flickr led me to images from the Library of Congress of 18th century child laborers.<sup>1</sup> Although I did not use these images for my assignment, they sparked my interest in child labor issues which led to seeking other sources on the topic. This was when I came across a BBC documentary that outlined the daily lives of child beggars in the present day UK. I found the documentary interesting because it discussed a type of human trafficking that is often overlooked for more prevalent forms, such as sex trafficking. Intrigued by this documentary, I added "British child beggars" to the bottom of the list I created at the beginning of the semester and began researching the topic in earnest.

Using Boolean search methods I had learned during my freshman year from Teaching and Learning Services Librarian Leslie Morgan, I was able to find several chapters, books, and newspaper and academic articles on the topic. I also found 17th century primary sources, such as

ballads and essays, that referenced British child beggars. However, I was reluctant to examine these early sources because the only primary sources I had ever read from before the 19th century were analyzed in a classroom setting under the guidance of an instructor. These concerns were soon put aside when my class went to Rare Books and Special Collections. After being presented with several centuries-old primary sources, I realized that independently reading and interpreting older documents would not be impossible and would certainly enhance the historically-based arguments in my research project. I was further encouraged to pursue my research topic when Dr. Julie Tanaka highlighted the differences between OneSearch and NDCatalog, offered suggestions on how to navigate both resources, and gave me a list of library resources to use as needed.

With the suggestions from Dr. Tanaka, I was able to take the sources I had previously found and narrow my focus to 17th and 21st century primary and secondary sources. My new goal was to extract useful information from each source so that I could synthesize it with class readings, one of the requirements for the paper. This proved to be very challenging because a lot of class readings were centered around slave systems in various African countries. Since my geographic focus was the UK, I was afraid that incorporating these class readings would seem forced. However, because many class readings were available online, I used basic text mining methods -- something I had learned about through materials from a CDS workshop -- to find information that was specific to the UK as well.

It was now time to synthesize primary and secondary sources and class readings into a cohesive paper. I needed a space that would allow me to map out the differences in governmental concern for child beggars in the 17th and 21st centuries. Thankfully, the portable whiteboards on

the first floor of the library helped me complete this task. The larger writing area allowed me to create a Venn diagram and add many small details and arrows as needed. While this is something that could be done on paper, using the whiteboard helped because my notes were not cramped like they would have been on paper, and I was able to easily erase, rewrite, and add new content as needed.

Finally, with an outline in hand, I wrote the first draft of my research paper, followed by a lengthy revision process. I had previously worked with a tutor in the Coleman-Morse Writing Center who had looked at my shorter papers over the course of the semester. However, I wanted a different tutor to look at my paper so that I could see what did and did not make sense to an outsider. I booked an appointment at the Hesburgh Library branch of the Writing Center for several reasons. First, as a Writing Center tutor myself, I am very familiar with the other tutors at the Coleman-Morse branch. Because we work in a fairly small room, I know that many of them have already overheard my essay, which would not give me an outsider's perspective. Second, in my experience, the sessions in the library are generally quieter, making it easier to focus on the session. Most importantly, the library branch has more immediate access to outside sources if needed. For these reasons, I was able to use the library's branch of the Writing Center to receive feedback on my research paper.

From coming up with a research idea, to finding sources to include in my paper, to outlining, writing, and revising, the library and its vast array of resources have been central to my research experience. It would be an understatement to say that the library enhanced my research process. In truth, my research paper would not have been written without its resources. This experience not only improved my understanding of child beggars in the UK, but the process

of acquiring useful information exposed me to numerous library resources that I can use in future academic endeavors.