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Sam Burgess Undergraduate Library Research Award

The summer before beginning this paper, I discovered an exhibition done by the British Museum about an ancient board game called The Royal Game of Ur. The exhibit largely researched by Irving Finkel illustrated how games could be a useful way of examining historic leisure activities and societies. The British Museum, however, only examined the Royal Game of Ur. This led me to my initial research question “How can other historic games teach us about the societies in which they were played?” I decided to explore the card game whist because I knew it was a popular game in 18th century Britain, a time period with which I was familiar. In order to address this research question, I identified three areas of research—primary sources about whist, secondary sources about whist, and secondary sources about 18th century British society. By researching these topics, I was able to formulate the structure for my paper.

I began my research by exploring whist primary sources. In order to get an overview of the primary sources available to me at Indiana University, I did a couple of keyword searches on IUCAT. From those initial searches I discovered several useful sources located across Indiana University’s library network. For example, I located a primary source called the *Humor of Whist* which was a satirical play about the whist card community. This source came from the Lilly Library, where I also found some other whist manuals and letters as well as pamphlets concerning whist. Being able to go to the Lilly Library and read an original copy of the *Humor of Whist* was the most useful source because the source revealed the social stigma that was attached to the game as well as how different groups viewed the card game.

Outside of the initial keyword searches in IUCAT and physical primary sources located at IU, I decided to use several of the paid online archival data bases available to IU students. Some of the databases I used were Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Electronic Enlightenment, and Eighteenth-Century Journals. These online library resources allowed me to view primary sources that I would never have had access to in Bloomington. In particular, I used these resources to as a way to examine the societal debates over the proper role of whist in 20 society. The Eighteenth-Century Journals provided me with access to several women magazines which had opinionated articles that discussed the of role female whist players.

The primary sources I read provided me with evidence to back up my claim. However, most of the primary sources were only relevant to whist. In order to answer my research question, I needed to link whist to the rest of British society. Since this paper was due in one semester, I didn't have the time to conduct my own research on British society. I decided to use secondary sources to set the context of my whist primary sources and show how whist can help us understand 18<sup>th</sup> century British society. By doing this I was able to use the thousands of hours of quality research done by other historians into my paper without having to do the research myself. Also, by incorporating other historians' research into my own paper I was able to address the historiography on the topic as well. I found most of my secondary sources through IUCAT and Jstor.