

New Database: ProQuest Supreme Court Insight

BENJAMIN J. KEELE
Research and Instructional Services Librarian
Ruth Lilly Law Library
Robert H. McKinney School of Law
IUPUI

Decisions of the United States Supreme Court are important documents in legal, political, and social studies, but sometimes, researchers want to go beyond what the Court said and examine the arguments made by the parties (as well as those of amici curiae—generally advocacy groups providing input to the Court).

These arguments, contained in briefs and memos, have been relatively scattered across resources. Researchers might scour legal databases, microfilm collections, and perhaps even hope a party has posted a brief on its website. The most complete digital product of older briefs, Gale's U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs, 1832-1978, provides good coverage up to 1978, but briefs from 1980s and 1990s have been more difficult to find in digital form.

A new database recently acquired by the Ruth Lilly Law Library helps researchers obtain much more ready access to these briefs. ProQuest Supreme Court Insight is a comprehensive collection of briefs filed in the Supreme Court from 1969 to 2016. The briefs that will likely be in highest demand are those filed in cases for which the Court heard oral argument and issued a full opinion, but also important (and up to now, the most difficult to find), are briefs asking the Court to grant review (called granting a writ of certiorari (cert.)). The Court declines to review the vast majority of appeals it receives, and the briefs filed with these appeals have generally been lost to obscurity. Supreme Court Insight contains these "cert. denied" briefs, making it a unique and useful new database. Researchers can now investigate what cases and legal questions the Court was offered but opted not to hear and decide.

In addition to its strong coverage, Supreme Court Insight has more search features than those available in other products. Researchers can retrieve briefs by case numbers, legal citations, and case names. In addition to full-text searching, it is also easy to search by judge, subject, party, or attorney, allowing a researcher to find, for example, all briefs filed or cosigned by the Indiana Attorney General. This example would give the researcher insight into the legal and political agenda of the Attorney General.

Supreme Court Insight is available to anyone on the IUPUI network, and IU librarians can contact the Ruth Lilly Law Library with questions about searching for and obtaining briefs.