

Internet Researcher: Selected U.S. Supreme Court Sources

By John E. Christensen

John E. Christensen is Library Director and Professor of Law at Washburn University School of Law where his teaching responsibilities include seminars in advanced legal research and computers and cyberlaw. This is the first in a series of articles on using the Internet for legal research prepared especially for Kansas legal practitioners. Sites described herein were last visited February 4, 2002. If you wish to notify the author of errors or other related recommended sites, send email to zzcabri@washburn.edu. A Web version of this article is maintained at <http://washburnlaw.edu/facstaff/chripub.htm>

The Internet provides a Kansas attorney ready access to a vast array of legal research resources. The purpose of this article is to highlight selected web sites and sources related to the U.S. Supreme Court. Opinions, briefs, oral arguments, docket and other court information and current news stories are a few clicks away. E-mail notification services can alert one to the granting of cert, oral argument, and the release of an opinion. Almost all of the sites mentioned herein are available at no charge.

Official Web Site

In April 2000 the United States Supreme Court initiated its official web site <<http://www.supremecourtus.gov>>, which is stocked with a range of research aids of interest to legal researchers and Court watchers. The web site is not the Court's first foray into the realm of computer-assisted research. In May 1990 the court started Project Hermes as an experiment in disseminating its opinions electronically. In 1993 electronic dissemination was made official. In spring 1996 the Court launched an electronic bulletin board system to provide online access to its automated docket, slip opinions, and other aids (most files are now incorporated in the web site). The bulletin board is still operational and may be accessed by dialing (202) 554-2570. For all practical purposes the bulletin board has been superseded by the web site.

The U.S. Supreme Court's official web site is well-organized and easy to

use. Links on the home page direct one to pages on the following topics: About the Supreme Court, Docket, Oral Arguments (including calendars and schedules), Bar Admissions, Court Rules, Case Handling Guides, Opinions, Orders and Journal, Visiting the Court, Public Information, and Related Websites. A Site Map link enables the researcher to view a detailed outline of the entire site. "What's New" notes features have been recently added. A Search feature permits keyword searching of the Docket files and the files at the web site.

About the Supreme Court. A dozen topics are treated briefly in this section:

- Constitution of the United States of America
- A Brief Overview of the Supreme Court
- The Court and Constitutional Interpretation
- The Court as an Institution
- The Court and Its Traditions
- The Court and Its Procedures
- The Justices' Caseload
- Biographies of Current members of the Supreme Court
- Members of the Supreme Court (1789 to Present)
- The Supreme Court Building
- Circuit Assignments of Justices

All topics but the first are PDF files which require Adobe Acrobat software to view or print the information. If you do not already have Adobe Acrobat loaded on your machine there is a link at the site to permit a free download.

Docket. "The automated docket system is the Court's case tracking system. It contains information about cases, both pending and decided. The docket provided on this page contains information regarding the status of cases for both the current Term and the prior Term. The Court's term begins on the first Monday in October and ends on the preceding day the next year. The October Term 2001 began on October 1, 2001. Information on the docket is updated on the day after an entry is made on the docket.

"Users can search for cases by using a Supreme Court docket number, a lower court docket number, or a case name. The format for Supreme Court docket numbers is 'Term year-number' (e.g., 99-123; 00-45; 00-5001.). Word searches can also be accomplished." (Quoted directly from Docket page.)

Oral Arguments. The following files are available in PDF format and contain information about the current term:

Court Schedule	Supreme Court Calendar	Argument Calendars
Day Call	Hearing Lists	

Helpful general information is provided in the following files:

Visitor's Guide to Oral Argument	Where to Find Briefs
Availability of Oral Argument Transcripts	Argument Transcripts
Guide for Counsel in Cases to be Argued	

Beginning with the October 2000 term, oral argument transcripts will be permanently archived at this web site. Transcripts are usually posted 15 days after completion by the court reporting service. "Where to Find Briefs" includes a listing of law libraries serving as depositories of printed Supreme Court briefs.

Bar Admissions. An application for admission to practice and instructions for admission to the United State Supreme Court Bar are available in PDF format.

Court Rules. The Order Adopting Revised Rules and Rules of the Supreme Court, adopted January 11, 1999, effective May 3, 1999 are available in PDF format.

Case Handling Guides. A Guide to Filing Paid Cases, a Guide to Filing In Forma Pauperis Cases, and a Guide for Counsel in Cases to be Argued are available in PDF format.

Opinions. The official opinions of the Supreme Court of the United States are

contained in the bound volumes of the United States Reports. The Court's opinions and related materials are disseminated to the public in three temporary printed forms prior to issuance of the U.S. Reports: (1) bench opinions (which are transmitted electronically through the Court's Project Hermes); (2) slip opinions (which are posted at the Court's web site); and (3) preliminary prints (advance sheets). In cases of discrepancy, the opinion in the printed bound volume controls.

The following opinion files are available from the Opinions page of the web site:

- Latest Slip Opinions (2001 Term Opinions of the Court)
- 2001 Term In-Chambers Opinions (stay applications, etc.)
- 2001 Term Opinions Relating to Orders (dissents from denial, etc.)

- 2000 Term Opinions of the Court
- 2000 Term In-Chambers Opinions
- 2000 Term Opinions Relating to Orders

An opinion of the Court is retained at the web site until published in the bound volume of U.S. Reports.

Other files accessible from the Opinions page are:

Sliplists. Each of these lists indicates the U.S. Reports volume and part numbers for a preliminary print (advance sheet), gives case name, citation, docket number, date of issuance, and brief summary of each case included therein.

Counsel Listings. A counsel listing identifies all Supreme Court bar members who participated in a particular case argued before the Court.

Bound Volumes. PDF files for bound volumes of U.S. Reports from 1991 Term (502 U.S.) to date.

Information about Opinions. This file contains a helpful explanation of the printed publications and computerized services used by the Court to disseminate its opinions to the public.

Where to Obtain Supreme Court Opinions. Updated annually each August, this list in PDF format provides contact information for vendors of opinions in various formats (print, electronic [online and CD-ROM], microfiche/microfilm, and fax).

Case Citation Finder. This feature provides the official citations in the form recommended by the Reporter of Decisions for every signed, per curiam, and in-chambers opinion published (or to be published) in the U.S. Reports. Use the "edit" and "find" features of your web browser to locate a specific case citation. Decisions from 1790 to date are grouped in eight lists to facilitate searching.

Orders and Journal. Links to the following files are found on the Orders and Journal page:

Orders of the Court (from the current and next most recent terms).

Granted/Noted Cases List (for the upcoming, current, and next most recent terms). In docket number order, the list contains case name, court appealed from, date cert was granted, argument date, date decided, author of majority opinion, author(s) of other opinion(s), result.

Opinions Relating to Orders (for the current and next most recent terms).

Journal. The Journal contains the official minutes of the Court. Files from the October 1993 term to date are available in PDF format. New journal entries are posted about two weeks after an event.

Visiting the Court. The Supreme Court building is open

Monday-Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Helpful information for visitors is contained in five PDF files: Visitor Services, Visitor's Guide to the Supreme Court, Visitor's Guide to Oral Argument, The Supreme Court Building, and Map. Photographs from the Supreme Court Collection contains exterior and interior views. Architectural Information contains photos and descriptive notes of prominent building features.

Public Information. Links to the following are provided on the Public Information page:

Where to Send Comments, Press Releases, Media Advisories, Speeches, Chief Justice's Reports on the Federal Judiciary, Helpful Telephone Numbers, A Reporter's Guide to Applications, Career Opportunities (position announcements), Supreme Court Fellows Program, Judicial Internship Program, and Building Regulations.

Related Websites. Links to fifteen other web sites are provided, including the Federal Judicial Center (which contains an extensive History of the Federal Judiciary) and the Supreme Court Historical Society (which contains a digital library of publications and a list of Significant Oral Arguments of the Supreme Court, 1955-1993).

Current Awareness Services

Several no-cost e-mail alert services can keep one apprised of recently released opinions and/or activities of the Court. The following two are recommended:

The LIIBULLETIN, provided by the Legal Information Institute of Cornell Law School since 1993, distributes the syllabi of U.S. Supreme Court decisions via e-mail within hours after their release. To subscribe to the liibulletin, either use the Web subscription form at <<http://www.law.cornell.edu/focus/bulletins.html>> or send an e-mail message (in plain text) to: listserv@listserv.law.cornell.edu

Anyone with an Internet accessible e-mail address can subscribe. The message needs to read:

subscribe liibulletin [followed by your name, all on one line]

You will receive e-mail bulletins containing summaries of several decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court shortly after they have been released, along with instructions on how to access the full text of those decisions.

WLO-USSC (Willamette Law Online - United States Supreme Court). Sponsored by Willamette University College of Law, and predominantly staffed by students, WLO-USSC provides case summaries and updates on the U.S. Supreme Court at the cert granted, oral argument, and decision stages. "The certiorari summaries focus on the facts and decision from the lower court. The week prior to oral arguments we provide an outline of the issues presented to the Court, as argued in the briefs. The summaries at the decision stage provide the holding from the United States Supreme Court and a brief overview of the Court's reasoning." (Quoted from web site.) The summaries (since October 1997) are grouped by year and may be viewed online at <<http://www.willamette.edu/wucl/wlo/us-supreme/index.htm>>. At this site one may also subscribe to receive weekly e-mail updates at no cost.

Another opinion alert option is **USSC+ Express E-mail Digest Service**. It is a free service provided by InfoSynthesis, Inc. Subscribers receive email digests of recently decided United States Supreme Court cases. Each email contains a subject matter designation for the case, a

one-paragraph opinion summary, and a link to the full text of the opinion in PDF format. In exchange for the free service InfoSynthesis includes marketing information for its own products but no outside advertising. One may subscribe at <<http://www.uscplus.com/express/index.html>>.

U.S. Supreme Court Records & Briefs

FindLaw, one of the most popular legal research portals on the Web <<http://www.findlaw.com>>, began providing full text of U.S. Supreme Court briefs at <http://supreme.findlaw.com/supreme_court/briefs/index.html> with the October 1999 term. Listed in alphabetical order by case name, principal briefs and amicus briefs are accessible in PDF format. Docket numbers are included with case names in the listing.

Briefs filed by the Solicitor General in recent years are available at <<http://www.usdoj.gov/osg/>>. Virtually all briefs from 1998 are keyword searchable. Selected briefs are keyword searchable for 1982-1996.

For a fee, briefs from the October 1984 term to date are available from **BriefServe.com** <<http://www.briefserve.com>>. **Lexis** <<http://www.lexis.com>> contains U.S. Supreme Court Briefs from January 1979. **Westlaw** <<http://www.westlaw.com>> coverage begins in 1990 for Merits briefs and 1995 for Amicus briefs.

While this article is focused on Internet resources it may be of interest to note that both KU and Washburn law school libraries have collections of U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs in microform. KU's holdings begin with 1939 and Washburn's start with 1974. Regionally, the University of Iowa has the most extensive collection with coverage beginning in 1832. Both Washburn and KU have "Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States," a set of over 100 bound volumes containing materials from 1793- selected by scholars Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper. Washburn has volumes 1-100 and KU has volumes 101- date.

Oral Arguments

Audio recordings of oral arguments before the United States Supreme Court have been made since 1955 and are in custody of the National Archives. The **Oyez! Project** web site <<http://oyez.nwu.edu>>, developed at Northwestern University by Jerry Goldman, provides web access to oral arguments of over 600 constitutional law decisions via digital audio streaming technology. Real Player or similar software, available at no cost, is required to listen to the digitized recordings. From the home page click on "Cases". The database is searchable by case name, subject (25 topic headings), date of decision, or U.S. Reports citation. Access is also provided to the written decisions through a transparent link to the FindLaw collection. A docket entry, abstract (facts, question, conclusion), and voting record are provided for each case.

Oyez! has other features of interest: On This Date in US Supreme Court History, The Current Justices, List of Justices in Appointment Order, List of Justices in Alphabetic Order by Last Name, Search Justices by Name, Virtual Tour of the Supreme Court Building, Frequently Asked Questions, and Info about a CD multimedia collection called *The Supreme Court's Greatest Hits*.

As noted above, transcripts of oral arguments from the

October 2000 term forward are being permanently archived at the official U.S. Supreme Court web site. Selections of the most significant oral arguments (1955-1993) are noted at the web site of the Supreme Court Historical Society <<http://www.supremecourthistory.org>>. Kansas attorneys may wish to know that transcripts of oral arguments are available in microfiche at the law school libraries of both Washburn and KU.

Opinions

Extensive collections of U.S. Supreme Court opinions are available on the Web. Some sources are free and others are fee-based. The major sites are noted in the accompanying table and briefly described in the following paragraphs. Vendors are listed in order by size of collection of U.S. Supreme Court opinions.

Free Sources of U.S. Supreme Court Opinions on the Web

Provider	URL	Coverage
LexisONE	www.lexisone.com	1790-
FindLaw	supreme.findlaw.com	1893-
USSC+ Online	www.uscplus.com	1897-
FLITE/Fedworld	www.fedworld.gov/supcourt/index.htm	1937-1975
Cornell	supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/	1990-, Historical

LexisONE <<http://www.lexisone.com>>. LexisONE is a site operated by Lexis to attract solo practitioners. Free resources include the most extensive collection of U.S. Supreme Court opinions (1790-date), a selection of federal and state cases from January 1, 1996, a Legal Internet Guide (22,000 links in 32 categories), and a free forms bank. Registration is required. Opinions are searchable by citation or keyword.

FindLaw <<http://supreme.findlaw.com>>. West Group purchased FindLaw in 2001 but indicates that many of the features at this popular portal will remain free of charge. Its collection of U.S. Supreme Court Opinions begins with volume 150 of U.S. Reports and covers the years 1893 to date. It is browsable by year and by U.S. Reports volume number. It is keyword searchable by case name, citation, or full text. A "Supreme Court Center" <http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/resources.html> pulls together information on cases, docket, decisions, orders, briefs, rules, guides and calendar. Other features at FindLaw include Supreme Court news and the ability to subscribe to e-mail newsletters and opinion summaries.

USSC+ Online <<http://www.uscplus.com>>. InfoSynthesis, Inc. provides free access to over 18,000 U.S. Supreme Court opinions from volume 144 of U.S. Reports and covers the years 1892 to date. The data base is searchable by subject (2,800 terms), citation, party, and word or phrase. Registrants can receive email digests of new opinions within hours of release. InfoSynthesis sells two CD-ROM products of possible interest: USSC+ CD-ROM Full Edition (\$79) and a version containing the 1,000 most-cited cases, USSC+ CD Top 1000 CD-ROM (about \$30).

FedWorld <<http://www.fedworld.gov/supcourt/index.htm>>. An early computer-assisted legal research project was the Air Force's Federal Legal Information Through Electronics (FLITE). Its full-text database of U.S. Supreme Court opinions, covering volumes 300-422 of U.S. Reports from 1937 to 1975, is made available at the FedWorld site. The ascii text files are searchable by keyword or case name.

Cornell University's **Legal Information Institute** <<http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/>> maintains two collections of U.S. Supreme Court opinions. Current opinions from 1990 to date are updated by distributions received electronically from the Court's Project Hermes. There is also an assortment of case lists and finding aids. The LII Collection of Historic Decisions of the US Supreme Court is available on the Web and as a CD-ROM which may be purchased (\$25). It currently contains 621 of the Court's most important decisions. Finding aids including lists of cases by opinion author, party name, and topic are available.

Fee-based Sources of U.S. Supreme Court Opinions on the Web

Because U.S. Supreme Court opinions are readily available on the Web for free, only brief mention will be made here of accessibility through commercial vendors. One of the files at the official web site <<http://www.supremecourtus.gov>>, "Where to Obtain Supreme Court Opinions," is updated each August and contains a comprehensive listing of known vendors, including those providing electronic access. The following table lists some of the more popular vendors. Details on cost can be obtained at the respective web sites or by contacting the vendors using the telephone numbers provided. A later article in this series will comparatively discuss the extent of their case law databases (beyond U.S. Supreme Court opinions).

Vendor	URL	Coverage	Phone
Lexis	www.lexis.com	1790-	800-227-4908
Westlaw	www.westlaw.com	1790-	800-762-5272
LOISLaw	www.loislaw.com	1899-	800-364-2512
Versus Law	www.versuslaw.com	1900-	425-250-0142
Quicklaw America	www.quicklawamerica.com	1900-	800-387-0899
National Law Library	www.itislaw.com	1754-	877-484-7529

News Stories

Yahoo! News Search <http://fullcoverage.yahoo.com/fc/us/supreme_court/> provides the headlines and links to full stories from major news organizations like AP, Reuters, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe, and the Washington Post. Headlines are displayed in reverse chronological order (most recent stories first).

Law.com's United States Supreme Court Monitor <http://www.law.com/us_supreme_ct/news.html> provides synopses and links to full stories from major legal news organizations like American Lawyer Media and National Law Journal as well as pertinent Associated Press stories. Synopses are also displayed with most recent stories first.

Court Information

Several sites, noted herein, provide useful background information about the Supreme Court, its Justices, and its history. The following are particularly recommended: the official web site <<http://www.supremecourtus.gov>>; FindLaw <http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/resources.html>; Cornell's Legal Information Institute <<http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct>> and JURIST <<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/supremecourt.htm>>. JURIST, known as the "Legal Education Network," contains several unique features including a guide to Pres. George W. Bush's potential appointments to the Supreme Court, and information about appointments, retirements, deaths and burial places of former Justices.

This overview of selected U.S. Supreme Court sources on the Web has not been comprehensive. For example, no mention has been made of papers of Supreme Court Justices (e.g., Louis D. Brandies' papers are at U. of Louisville Law Library <<http://athena.louisville.edu/library/law/brandeis.html>>; Lewis F. Powell's papers are at Washington and Lee University School of Law <<http://www.wlu.edu/~powell/>>; and Fred M. Vinson's papers are at the University of Kentucky <<http://128.163.2.27/Libraries/Special/mpa/vinson.html>>).

Prominent commercial publications such as U.S. Law Week from BNA were also omitted. Law firm web sites and most law school web sites were also excluded. "Extreme" court watchers are referred to Jill Ann Duffy and Elizabeth Ardella Laub Lambert, *Researching the Supreme Court of the United States: Available Resources for Commonly Asked Questions*, 18 LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES QUARTERLY 25-60 (2000) for a recent overview of resources (hard copy and electronic) commonly available in law school libraries that provide answers to frequently asked questions about the Justices, the Court and its procedures, publications, building, and history.

Selected U.S. Supreme Court Sources

For opinions:

www.lexisone.com
supreme.findlaw.com
www.uscplus.com
supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/
www.supremecourtus.gov

For briefs:

supreme.findlaw.com/supreme_court/briefs/index.html

For oral arguments (audio):

oyez.nwu.edu

For Court info:

www.supremecourtus.gov
jurist.law.pitt.edu/supremecourt.htm
supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/resources.html
supct.law.cornell.edu/supct

For e-mail alerts:

www.law.cornell.edu/focus/bulletins.html
www.willamette.edu/wucl/wlo/us-supreme/index.htm

For news:

fullcoverage.yahoo.com/fc/us/supreme_court
law.com/us_supreme_ct/news.html



KANSAS BAR
ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' BULLETS

February 8, 2002 • Topeka

On Friday, February 8, 2002, the KBA Board of Governors held its regular meeting at the Kansas Law Center office in Topeka. The Board heard the following reports and took the following actions:

- The Board approved the appointment of Paul Post, John Francis, Peggy Grant Cobb, David Arst, and Mel Sauer to the Kansas Legal Services Board of Directors.
- The Board received the report of the KBA Legislative Committee and reviewed various legislative issues. The Board voted unanimously to vigorously oppose HB 2755 that proposes to assess lawyers licensed in Kansas up to \$600 per lawyer to fund the judicial system, noting that courts are there to serve the citizens of Kansas, not the lawyers.
- The Board agreed to join the National Association of IOLTA Programs in its amicus efforts to uphold the constitutionality of the Texas and Washington State IOLTA programs.
- The Board voted to hold the 2004 KBA Annual Meeting in Topeka on approximately June 17-19, 2004, and in Vail, Colorado in June of 2005.
- The Board received a report from Mary Beth Blake, chair of the KBA CLE Committee, about the CLE Committee's efforts to explore the use of technology to deliver CLE programming. The Board also heard from Martha Hodgesmith, the KBA representative to the CLE Commission's committee studying possible CLE rule changes to allow the delivery of CLE programming through alternative methods.
- The Board authorized the President to establish a task force to study the need for changes to the Kansas Rules of Professional Conduct, with an eye towards the recently approved ABA Ethics 2000 Commission report, and to make recommendations about what changes, if any, should be adopted in Kansas.
- The Board voted to re-establish the KBA Legal Assistants Committee after hearing from Mike Kennalley and Blanche Bunce.
- The Board voted to authorize the President to appoint a committee to review the 1999 Mandatory Malpractice Insurance Task Force Report and make recommendations to the Board of Governors.
- Chief Justice McFarland joined the Board of Governors for lunch and reported on the bleak financial situation facing the Kansas judicial system.

For a full set of minutes containing all of the Board's actions, please contact Dennis Harwick, KBA Executive Director, at dharwick@ksbar.org, P.O. Box 1037, Topeka, KS 66601-1037, 785/234-5696.