Diving into the RA Pool: Starting and Managing a Student Library Research Assistant Program

SEAALL Annual Meeting - March 2017
Library Research Services Department (LRS)

➢ Law Center Faculty:
   Full-time: 133
   Part-time: 247

➢ LRS Staff:
   3 LRS Librarians
   1 Patron Services Assistant
   1 Interlibrary Loan Assistant
   7-10 Research Assistants (100 hours per week)

➢ Workload:
   1400 document delivery items (100 per month)
   300-400 projects (30 per month)
LRS Research Assistants

- **Hiring:**
  - 2nd Year
  - Writing sample
  - Professional demeanor
  - Enthusiastic attitude

- **Training:**
  - Research training (Rombauer strategy)
  - Orientation (library resources, office etiquette)
  - Library manual (memorandum & document delivery templates)
Assigning a Project

- Provide step-by-step instructions (topics, search strategies and resources)

- Presentation of memorandum (analysis and sources consulted)

- Work folder (drafts and documents)

- First and final drafts (spot check and corrections)
Coordination

- Establish timeline with faculty member
- Supervising librarian and research assistant partnership
- Task list (faculty member, librarian & RA, timeline, correspondence, final draft)
Question Presented:

Find petitions for writ of certiorari and writ of error from 1916 to 1953 to determine the number of petitions filed in criminal cases.

The petitions are to be requests for review by persons criminally convicted in state court. We also need to find the outcome of those petitions.
Gale Digital Collection:
Contains records and briefs brought before the U.S. Supreme Court in the period 1832-1978.
Source: The Library of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (Depository for appellate records with its collection dating back to 1832).

Similar Collections:
Bound Collection: The Library of Congress (Depository)
Microform Collection: Academic Microform, Inc.
Making of Modern Law: U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs, 1832-1978

- Search:
  - criminal AND (petition for certiorari OR writ OR error) in [Full Text]
  - (state OR people OR commonwealth) in [Case Name]

Advanced Search

Enter search term(s) and select index type(s). Indicate choice of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Index Type</th>
<th>Boolean Op</th>
<th>Fuzzy Search Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>criminal</td>
<td>Full Text</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petition for certiorari or writ</td>
<td>Full Text</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state or people or commonwealth</td>
<td>Case Name</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limit Your Search:

by Term Year(s): 1916-1953 × (yyyy-yyyy)
## Cert Petitions and Writs of Error, 1916-1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term Year</th>
<th>Case Name</th>
<th>Case Number</th>
<th>Type of Case</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Final Outcome</th>
<th>Gale Document Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Cardona v. Porto Rico</td>
<td>244 U.S. 645 (1917)</td>
<td>Writ of Error</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
<td>DW3905519995</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Nones v. New Jersey</td>
<td>243 U.S. 650 (1917)</td>
<td>Cert</td>
<td>Denied</td>
<td>Denied</td>
<td>DW3909874057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Ascarate v. New Mexico</td>
<td>245 U.S. 625 (1917)</td>
<td>Writ of Error</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
<td>Dismissed</td>
<td>DW3905658861</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Preliminarily, the data concerning the number of such filings are consistent with this thesis. The table in the Appendix indicates the number of requests for review filed in the Supreme Court between 1916 and 1953 by persons convicted of crimes in state court. Column A lists the number of requests for review filed by writ of error each year. Column B lists the number of requests for review by writ of certiorari filed each year. Column C indicates the number of petitions for certiorari denied in each year. The table shows that, until 1933, the number of certiorari petitions filed was in the single digits except for one year (1928) in which eleven certiorari petitions were filed. With such a low number of petitions to consider, it is plausible that the Court’s decisions on petitions for certiorari brought by state prisoners reflected the Justices’ views on the merits of the claims presented. Between 1934 and 1939, the number of petitions each year was in the teens (or lower). The annual number was in the twenties from 1940 to 1945, and thereafter was in the 30s and 40s. With this larger number of petitions, it is plausible that the Justices came to conclude that it was no longer feasible for it to continue to base its decisions regarding certiorari on its views of the underlying merits of the claims raised.
Presentation of Findings

APPENDIX

Table 1. The number of requests for review filed in the U.S. Supreme Court between 1916 and 1953 by persons convicted of crimes in state court.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR REVIEW FILED BY WRIT OF ERROR</td>
<td>NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR REVIEW FILED BY WRIT OF CERTIORARI</td>
<td>NUMBER OF PETITIONS FOR CERTIORARI DENIED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources Consulted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Petitions</th>
<th>Number of Decisions</th>
<th>Number of Denials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A search for petitions for writ of error and petitions for writ of certiorari from 1916-1953 was conducted through the Gale Cengage Learning’s digital collection, *The Making of Modern Law: U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs, 1832-1978*. Following the selection of the petitions filed by persons convicted of crimes in state court, a search for the decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court for each of those cases was conducted through the WestlawNext’s database, *U.S. Supreme Court Cases*, whose coverage begins in 1790. Each case was recorded with its filing year, name, citation, type of petition, and decision of the Court. The number of requests filed by each petition type and the number of petitions in which the Court denied certiorari for each year were then determined based on the collected data.
Summary

- Start Date:  August 15, 2014
- Completion Date: October 6, 2014

- First Research Assistant:
  - From mid-August to end of September, for 15 hours a week, he reviewed 2,533 documents and recorded 775 cases.

- Second Research Assistant:
  - From mid-September to beginning of October, for 15 hours a week, she reviewed and recorded the outcome of 760 cases.
Thank you

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Georgetown Law Library
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