For my Spring 2017 political science course, the final paper topic was rather open-ended: We were tasked with choosing a political issue that engages the Congress in some manner, and producing a 15-page analytical paper. Initially, I was drawn to writing about the Voting Rights Act of 1965 due to its complexity; it was that very complexity that necessitated the use of Fondren’s resources – resources that I could not have produced my paper without.

While I had initially intended to focus my research on the Voting Rights Act during its enactment, the constitutional debate that begun during the act’s incipience and has persisted to the present day piqued my interest. I pivoted the topic of my paper to consequently explore the history of the Voting Rights Act through a constitutional lens. However, as a political science undergraduate, I was forced to go beyond the bounds of my coursework to fully address the legal dimension of the issue. As my central argument revolved around the constitutional inconsistencies in the Supreme Court’s majority decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), Fondren’s databases, books, and access to scholarly articles enabled me to craft an informed argument within the parameters of my legal knowledge.

I began my research by establishing a sense of the historical landscape during the Voting Rights Act’s enactment as well as the history of the act itself. In order to do so, I used Fondren’s Classic Catalog to locate books that directly engaged with the Voting Rights Act as their central topic, as well as ones that addressed the legislation more peripherally. The books in the stacks were invaluable in establishing a strong framework for my understanding of the issue. Similarly, I explored the political science section of the stacks in order to find books on constitutional theory that was leveraged by both sides during the Supreme Court decision.

Furthermore, my access to scholarly articles and databases through Fondren Library was similarly integral in my research. I read and utilized many articles from JSTOR in particular, which allowed me to engage with the more legal-oriented research necessary for my paper. Scholarly articles that sought to examine the Voting Rights Act through a similar lens as me enabled me to contextualize my research, which was crucial in my argument development. From these articles, I was able to analyze the constitutionality of the act from a critical perspective, and understand the previous scholarly discussion that had contributed to the debate.
Finally, capitalizing on Fondren’s access to WestlawNext Campus Research was an incredibly important part of my research. As the Supreme Court majority decision I argued against in my paper was premised on numerous other decisions, it was extremely beneficial for me to utilize the footnotes in cases, as well as case summaries to gain a clearer understanding of both the legal methodology applied and the impacts of each decision.

Ultimately, as I sought to explore a topic with dimensions beyond my immediate course of study, Fondren’s resources were invaluable in providing me historical and methodological context, providing me the tools to delve deeper into my research than I would otherwise be able to. I am incredibly grateful to have such a vast and in-depth resource at my disposal, which served to be an essential component in my research paper.