Abstract

The chapter gives an overview of information and documentation resources and activities in the social sciences. It describes some of the characteristics of social science information and reports on some findings from research into the needs and behaviour of social scientists in information matters, in order to identify some of the inadequacies of traditional services. A selection of representative information centres and specialised libraries is then presented. The most important information services and commercially distributed databases with worldwide impact are finally listed in a table and some of them discussed in detail. An outlook on future developments in information provision concludes the chapter.

Biographical note

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Introduction

When social scientists think of ‘information’ they most often mean statistical or other factual data. They seldom mention bibliographical reference services. This chapter tries to give an overview of this other aspect of the social sciences which is its general documentation and information infrastructure: the stocktaking and the retrieval of results of previous research and publications as well as the access to accumulated knowledge.
‘Social Science Information and Documentation’ has a long tradition in the social sciences and has attained quite a high level of service. It is usually well distinguished from data gathering and archiving activities, described in another chapter of this report. Despite the development of the Internet (also described in another chapter) these traditional information services still exist and are even considered the quality part of the Internet material. But normally this has the consequence that the traditional information services have to be paid for even when accessed through an Internet connection or through other international communication networks. They thus form a specific part of the global information market.

**Patterns of citation in the social sciences**

In order to better serve the information needs of a community one has to know what their activities are about. There have been several in-depth investigations of the nature of the social sciences and their information needs. The most prominent projects were undertaken at the University of Bath and are widely known under the acronyms INFROSS and DISISS: Line 1971, 1980; Brittain 1986, 1989; cf. Hogeweg-de Haart 1981; cf. Hurych 1986; cf. Slater 1988.

What differentiates social sciences from natural sciences or from the humanities that could be important for the information gathering and seeking processes? Scientometric studies suggest that they differ from the natural sciences in terms of homogeneity and integration: Eugene Garfield, the father of the citation indexes, calculated that the social sciences have a higher degree of overall integration (83% versus 56% in natural sciences), meaning that social science references are more widely used across disciplinary borders than in the natural sciences. Citation habits also indicate a difference in the age of the cited literature in social sciences; their half-life is much longer. On the other hand, the proportion of monograph literature (books) relevant in social sciences is as high as the number of journal articles, or even higher. In contrast, in the natural sciences only every eighth item is a book.

There are indeed a great number of secondary services like abstracting journals or databases for the social sciences, and the ratio to primary work is continuously increasing (1920 = 1:42; 1970 = 1:15). Psychology and economics have the best coverage by secondary information services because they mostly rely on their own discipline and cite less from other disciplines. But in general the social sciences do not seem to like review literature: studies such as
INFROSS have revealed that in the sciences every 45th article is a review article, compared to one in 133 for the social sciences.

Social sciences are sometimes characterised as ‘soft sciences’ as opposed to the natural sciences which are seen as ‘hard sciences’, because the former are supposed to be more ‘word-disciplines’ than ‘data-disciplines’. Social sciences do not have concise topical boundaries and have lower levels of normative integration. They suffer from terminology problems because they normally use everyday words with specific connotations and definitions, which are sometimes not the same in different sub-disciplines or from different ideological viewpoints. It can be said that their publication and discussion practice is more interpretative and informal than in the natural sciences (cf. Coleman 1993). This makes information services in the social sciences very difficult.

From an epistemological point of view the main difference seems to be the relative lack of cumulativeness in the social sciences: there is little replication and even little evaluation. One important difference between the social and natural sciences lies in the fact that a publication in the sciences reports on results in scientific research, while in the social sciences and humanities often the publication itself is the research. Social sciences depend more heavily on interpretation and on narratives, and thus every text is unique in itself, even in the empirical social sciences. In physics an article is often outdated by a subsequent publication of the same author or someone else. In social sciences and humanities you can consult older literature without being a historian of science. This characteristic can explain many of the differences between the scientific cultures. Science articles are often shorter, written by several authors and tend to be pure descriptions of observed facts. Social science texts bear more personal aspects of one author and are more often developed in monographs than in journal articles. This feature also indicates that secondary information services with their abstracting and synthesising activities tend to be inherently ‘unsatisfactory substitutes for the originals’ (Stoan 1991, 246).

Social sciences do not have the same ‘self-cleansing’ mechanisms against information overload as do the natural sciences, which function with a moving research front and cumulative consensus on shared evidence. Seldom in natural sciences do you find research that is not taken up by someone else in order to be developed further or to be refuted explicitly. In contrast, in the social sciences this seems to be common: a multitude of schools of thought live quite independently, dealing with the same social problem and very often not
coming to a single solution. Topics already discussed for centuries may re-appear, and even for new problems the social scientist will have to refer to older documents and ideas. There seems to be no definite measure to say a document is outdated and can be discarded from the knowledge base of the social sciences. In contrast, as Michael Brittain (1989) observes, the social sciences do not have penalties for ignoring previous evidence. In this sense the social sciences are quite cumulative in documents, but not in evidence and shared knowledge. Information providers react to this by trying to build large and retrospective collections.

Another very important characteristic of social science literature has also been pointed out by Michael Brittain (1989). He concluded from bibliometric studies that social sciences are inherently embedded in the local context. Publications from one country tend not to use material from outside their region. While it is commonly accepted that science is ‘universal’, Brittain concludes that the social sciences are ‘parochial’. This is especially the case for the Anglo-American domain which seldom cites foreign publications. This is a severe problem for the information-providing business. Another problem concerns the information-rich and the information-poor: third world social sciences do use and obviously need international information services, but these services do not meet the requirements of local research.

Michael Brittain summarised the situation thus: ‘Information providers (...) continue to plan and develop databanks and bibliographical services with worldwide coverage, but there is no convincing evidence that social scientists themselves want such systems’ (Brittain 1986, 635). We therefore should discuss what their information needs and behaviour are.

**Information behaviour and needs of social scientists**

Scholars generally build up their own information collection, with a great variety of material from conference papers to photocopied articles, pre-prints, research reports, books and general reference materials. Several studies on information behaviour indicate that the information-seeking process always starts from the personal collection. Especially for the social sciences and humanities scholar it is considered the most important source of information. The reason for this is the convenience of use and the high degree of specialisation sometimes reached by social scientists. They consider their institutional libraries only as last resort for more expensive or seldom used material.

This, in fact, coincides with a definition of traditional library services as available to a potential user ‘just in case’ of need. More modern library concepts follow the new
management trend of delivering their service ‘just in time’, no longer relying on not foreseeable potential use, but rather on actual needs. Of course, this paradigm change (as it is felt in the library world) has become possible mainly through the existence of information and communication technology and elaborate co-operation models for resource sharing and delivering by libraries. The most timely information resource for the scholar will remain his own collection. But with increased accessibility of resources on the Web, one may speculate that the library will lose importance and that even personal collections will change when Internet services become more reliable.

Generally, less than 10% of both scientists and social scientists make regular use of formal information resources such as databases in even a mediated way, although in the beginnings of the online information era it was observed that social scientists were more frequent database users than natural scientists (Stoan 1991; Hurych 1986). In contrast, humanities are generally reported in the few empirical studies to be heavy library users, but they use formal secondary services even less because they prefer browsing in open stacks arranged by subject classification (Stoan 1991, 244-6). Since some of the social sciences are fairly close to the humanities (e.g. history or political science), this is also an important element for them. Even scholars who have been trained in information retrieval techniques, or who are given more convenient access to the databases, continue to show the same information-seeking behaviour (Stoan 1991, 254).

The main studies on social science information behaviour in the 70s revealed that social scientists do not use formal information tools like bibliographies or reference databases, but rather rely on personal recommendations, browsing in journals, and citations found in other publications (often referred to as citation chaining) (Line 1971, 1980). They rely on monograph as well as on periodical literature, but their own citations refer to a large extent to primary data. Social scientists often use literature outside their own discipline (exceptions: psychology and economics) with the consequence that one may not always find relevant resources in just one database or information system. The data used by the social sciences does not always come from social science research, but is mainly taken from other contexts not indexed in social sciences information systems. Unlike the other broad scientific areas, social science information is not only used by researchers, but also by practitioners.

The social science research process seems to be so highly individualised that in general one may conclude (with the Bath studies) that: 1) one cannot come to a generalised model of
information behaviour, and 2) the information systems normally modelled on the information use pattern in the natural sciences may be completely inappropriate for the social sciences.

**Social sciences vs. information services**

The above-mentioned factors show how difficult is the relationship between social sciences and their information services.

Online information systems were at first considered as big magic boxes where you can get all relevant information just by pressing the button. This has turned out to be an illusion. Several studies revealed the limited effectiveness of online retrieval systems, and most of the studies on computer retrieval performance have been undertaken in natural sciences where conceptual and terminological problems are far less. So one can say that social sciences have a twofold problem with information systems: the rigid methods of the computer with regard to storing and retrieving information, and the fuzzy object and informal scientific behaviour of the scholars.

Sometimes social sciences information suppliers do recognise the irrelevance of their traditional document-based services for the most pressing information needs of their clients (Slater 1988, 235). But seldom does this insight incite them to initiate fundamental change. Usually the scholars themselves undertake the first steps to create their own new infrastructure - not always realising that they are duplicating existing efforts. An example for this might be the worldwide ‘metadata’ discussion, which is mainly led by researchers and observed suspiciously by librarians.

Practitioners, on the other hand, do have problems in not having the right information for their day-to-day tasks, but they feel that the mass of information proposed to them does not fit their needs. Information for practitioners should be more targeted and pre-digested because of the lack of time for desk research. This has been shown in the UK information need studies initiated by INFROSS, and in subsequent replications (Slater 1988).

Even under economic pressure - or because of it - social scientists tend to believe that social science information is a public good which has to be produced within some national infrastructure (Slater 1988, 234; Tyagi 1994; etc.). But in fact they ask more for the provision of data and facts than for bibliographical references. When social science scholars talk about recent developments, they express feelings of relief about the current situation in the data
archives sector and the statistical and government information services, which now make heavy use of Internet technology.

Another strong demand is felt in the area of methodology. The most striking example is the test collection serving the psychologist or the reliable questionnaire for social surveys. It has even been asserted that methodological information is the main information need amongst social scientists and it is therefore striking that in this sector there are very few worldwide services. The only database specialising in methodology is SRM based at Rotterdam (Netherlands) and another good example for fulfilling this need is the specialised institutional setting which has been created in Germany with GESIS (Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen), where three services work closely together, namely the bibliographical reference information centre (IZ), the data archives (ZA) and the methodological counselling service (ZUMA), each with its own information services and databases.

Current research information systems (CRIS), on the other hand, are abundant all over the world; they indicate who is researching on what topic at a given time. These services are most often sponsored by national bodies in order to avoid duplication in research. An example of this kind of service is the new European co-operation of research databases called ERGO.

Different disciplines within the social sciences have quite different information needs: e.g. anthropology often has a multimedia approach. Philosophy has more to do with debate and discussion, and there have been interesting developments for this community in the Internet using its interactive possibilities. It is the discipline which had one of the first electronic journals: *Postmodern Culture*, and was the first to experiment with e-mail listservs. Economics depending on real-time data or official publications from large financial institutions like IMF or OECD are now well served by new services of these institutions on the Internet, and so is political science by the electronic publication of political documents.

**Instruments for information search**

One of the problems of the field is that the social sciences do not attempt general theoretical unification as does physics, but stay with middle-range theories. Documentation by nature wants absolute order, not only for aesthetics, but for simplifying storage and access to the documented information. Although existing classification schemes like the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) or the Library of Congress Classification prove to be more or less
inadequate (cf. Studwell 1994, Pathak 1995), they continue to be used quite often in the social sciences. Classifications even saw some sort of renaissance with the growing information flood of the Internet, and several search instruments adopted them in an attempt to bring an order into the information chaos.

For the rather fuzzy concepts in the social sciences this does not seem to be the right instrument for information retrieval. As social sciences so often have to deal with texts and words, most information providers concentrate on developing thesaurus systems that allow systematic and constant indexing on the one hand and controlled retrieval on the other. Nearly every database producer in the social sciences has constructed his own thesaurus over the years (e.g. Chall 1987) and only rarely have there been co-operative projects in this area across country borders (e.g. Hobohm 1996) or across disciplines. There is no general thesaurus for the social sciences although there are some other similar instruments. One useful instrument is *The Contemporary Thesaurus of Social Science Terms and Synonyms. A Guide For Natural Language Computer Searching* (ed. by Sara D. Knapp. Phoenix, AZ.: Oryx Press, 1993) which, in fact, is not really a thesaurus but more a dictionary of synonyms established in order to help searchers in social sciences online databases. Another one is the *UNESCO Thesaurus : A Structured List of Descriptors For Indexing and Retrieving Literature in the Fields of Education, Science, Social and Human Science, Culture, Communication and Information* (Paris: UNESCO, 1995) which is a real thesaurus. It has the advantage of being very widely used all over the world, mainly in smaller regionally oriented databases and special libraries. It even has found an Internet-accessible, interactive development called HASSET (Humanities And Social Science Electronic Thesaurus) based at the UK Social Science Data Archives in Essex, UK. 1

**Social science information infrastructure with worldwide impact**

The most prominent examples of reference services in the social sciences were mostly initiated by the scholarly societies of the respective disciplines. In the beginnings, i.e. in the late nineteenth century, the social sciences were dominated by historical disciplines and by German scholars. Thus, the first bibliographies for a specific discipline (history) were: *Jahresberichte der Geschichtswissenschaft* (1880 - 1913), and the first more comprehensive one was the *Bibliographie der Sozialwissenschaften* (from 1905, still existing under the title of *Bibliographie der Wirtschaftswissenschaften*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, annual), which has always had a scope oriented towards economics and political sciences.
At the time other important examples of early reference services were developed by librarians or library institutions, e.g. the still-working Wilson International Index (from 1907, now in several different series) or PAIS (Public Affairs Information Service Bulletin, from 1914) or even one of the first Subject Index to Periodicals edited by UK librarians and later on known as the British Humanities Index (from 1915, now also in a different series). The H.W. Wilson Company was also the founder, and still is the publisher, of two other important services, namely the Industrial Arts Index, (from 1926, which in 1958 became Business Periodicals Index) and the Education Index (from 1929). But the greater part of the reference services of specific disciplines were initiated by their respective societies: the International Bibliography of Historical Sciences, by the International Committee of Historical Sciences (1926), the Psychological Index, by the Psychological Association (from 1927), the Population Index, by Population Association of America (from 1935) or the Sociological Abstracts by the American Sociological Association (from 1953), to quote some examples. The first commercial players started only after World War II with e.g. Historical Abstracts (ABC-Clio, from 1955), and the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) with Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI, from 1969) - the revolutionary new concept of referencing by citations invented by E. Garfield.

In the first decades, the social sciences did not generate significant information services. The American Social Science Research Council (SSRC) tried to improve this situation in 1928 by establishing Social Science Abstracts, but they soon had to realise that such an endeavour was far too expensive to be carried out by one institution alone, and in 1932 were compelled to give it up. Just after the war, several studies revealed that in view of the extraordinary growth of the sciences in terms of publications their coverage in reference systems was not satisfactory. Important deficits were identified, especially for the social sciences. One of these studies was undertaken by UNESCO, which then created the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS). This is still one of the most important social science bibliographies. It is now compiled by the British Library of Economic and Political Science at the London School of Economics, with financial support from UNESCO. It is published in four series covering sociology, political sciences, economics, and social and cultural anthropology.

After a further take-off in the technology-based information infrastructure, mainly in the United States due to the "sputnik shock" at the end of the 50s, we can observe a period of consolidation in the seventies and eighties, and in recent years an increasing pressure from the
financing authorities, which have begun to consider social science information as not sufficiently important socially to be subsidised continually. Many of the social science information producers, originally installed as public infrastructure for research (for example libraries, which have always been considered as public institutions), were ‘going private’ or had to obtain their own income from services offered.

There have been and still are several attempts to co-ordinate and standardise social science information infrastructures throughout the world in order to face the growing information gaps in the field. However, as said before, this general interregional perspective misses one of the main characteristics of social science information, i.e. the fact that it is deeply embedded in local and regional cultures (or, as Michael Brittain puts it, its parochial nature). For the development of the one-stop shop for all social sciences of all disciplines and regions, the need is simply not pressing enough. Nevertheless there are centralised worldwide efforts. Mainly UNESCO has played a key role in supporting international initiatives and projects in this area. Its Social and Human Sciences Documentation Centre in Paris is producing the database DARE - the Directory in Social Sciences - Institutions, Specialists, Periodicals (from 1974) - which may serve as the main entry point for information-seeking, since it includes in its ca. 12,000 entries almost 10% of meta-information about other social science information and documentation services worldwide.

The International Committee for Social Science Information and Documentation (ICSSD) was established in 1950, again on the initiative of UNESCO. Until the late 1980s, it was based in Paris at the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques. Its secretariat recently moved to Argentina but it is still in close co-operation with the UNESCO information activities, namely with the MOST (Management of Social Transformations) clearinghouse. Two other international bodies deserve attention in this context, namely the Fédération Internationale d'Information et de Documentation (FID) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), which have special interest groups on social science information and documentation. One recent outcome of the joint efforts of the three institutions is the Social Science Information and Documentation Bibliography (Ruokonen 1994), which continues as a living and interactive database maintained by the social sciences libraries section of the IFLA.

Most of the Social Science Research Councils in the world are more or less involved in information and documentation activities. The International Social Science Council (ISSC)
sponsored until 1998 an important terminological project called COCTA. The Latin-American CLACSO\textsuperscript{11} (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales), the African CODESRIA\textsuperscript{12} (Council for the Development for Social Science Research in Africa) as well as the AICARDES (Association des Instituts et Centres arabes de Recherche pour le Développement économique et social) for the Arab World are all involved in their own information and documentation activities for their areas. On the other hand, there are also specialised regional networks within the information infrastructure like APINESS (Asia-Pacific Information Network in Social Sciences) or ECSSID (European Co-operation in Social Science Information and Documentation). Besides the specialised international organisations, most of the big professional organisations carry committees or special interest groups which help to foster communication and information in the social sciences (e.g. the very active ASSIG\textsuperscript{13} in the UK ASLIB or the very traditional Social Science Division of the Special Libraries Association\textsuperscript{14} in USA).

**Institutions for social sciences information at local or regional level**

But, in fact, these more or less worldwide operating organisms are not the immediate source of information for the social science scholar, who normally has to deal with a local or regional library at least for the provision of information resources. Scholars also often use their national libraries because of the size of their collections. In countries with a good information infrastructure like the USA or Europe, the access to these collections is often more or less restricted because they have to play the role of a ‘last recourse depository’ and will refer to other, mostly more specialised, collections. In other countries national libraries are simply the best equipped and therefore the place of choice for many researchers, not only in the social sciences. Some national libraries even have explicitly strong collections in the social sciences - for example, the British Library\textsuperscript{15} or the National Diet Library in Japan. Some countries have developed national libraries (or libraries with a nationwide mission) which specialise in social sciences. An example, which is one of the biggest social sciences libraries in the world, is hosted by INION\textsuperscript{16} (Institut Nauchnoi Informatsii po Obshchestvennym Naukam RAN - Institute of Scientific Information in the Social Sciences) in Moscow. Other examples are the smaller Korea Social Science Library in Seoul and, for specific disciplines, the National Library of Education\textsuperscript{17} (NLE) in the United States, which sponsors ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) with one of the most important databases in education, or the
Zentralbibliothek für Wirtschaftswissenschaften\textsuperscript{18} (Central Library for Economics) in Kiel, Germany, producer of the database ECONIS.

But public libraries can also be of interest for social scientists, and not only when they contain large collections like the famous New York Public Library\textsuperscript{19}. In some countries (such as France or, on another level, Russia) there is a tradition of supporting information needs of social work and social sciences through the local libraries.

Social scientists will generally refer to the library or library system which best serves their demands, and for practitioners or social science teachers e.g. the starting point may be the public library, while the researchers will refer to their next university library or other academic library. At several universities there are strong collections in the centralised library or at some specialised research institutes within faculties, such as those at Harvard or the Free University in Berlin.
But the most convenient type of library for the social scientist will be the so-called special library which is maintained by some university or social science institution as an autonomous information centre. Most of these can be found in general directories like the Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers from Gale Research which covers over 22,000 specialised information institutions in the world (cf. Figure 1).

For certain categories of libraries, there are several specialised guides published by different working groups of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), for example the Directory of Geography and Map Libraries currently being prepared.

There are also resources to be found in information centres or libraries of the governments and parliaments which normally have sophisticated information services, which however are not always accessible to the outside researcher. The most prominent example of this kind of resource is, of course, the American Library of Congress with its congressional information system THOMAS. But museums, historical and contemporary archives as well as genuine documentation centres are also very important resources for primary information in several social science disciplines. Historical research is simply not possible without the repositories of original records in local, state or national archives, and anthropology is not thinkable either without collections of objects in ethnographic museums.

FIGURE 1. Social Sciences disciplines covered by special libraries and information centres in the world (ed. 17 and 20 from the Gale Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers, 1994 and 1997) (# of entries in the subject index)
On the other hand, there are, of course, international organisations and very highly specialised institutions that have an information centre or library with a worldwide impact: e.g. the International Labour Office\textsuperscript{21} (ILO) in Geneva, the library of the United Nations\textsuperscript{22} in New York, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific\textsuperscript{23} (ESCAP) in Bangkok, and the already mentioned MOST clearinghouse of UNESCO in Paris.

Often there is a confusion between a scholarly or scientific mission, the respective library activities and the information business. The London School of Economics, for instance, is hosting the so-called British Library of Political and Economic Science\textsuperscript{24}, which for a long time published a key source (indeed the largest) for the social sciences called, with understatement, \textit{A London Bibliography of the Social Sciences} (1931-1990), and now produces the IBSS. Also the Helsinki School of Economics\textsuperscript{25} is known for its database and information products (e.g. \textit{HELECON}\textsuperscript{26} which groups several important European resources and the \textit{HELECON Asia Online Services}). In other European countries the social science information services have been integrated in national information service institutions. For example, in France the activities of the CDSH (\textit{Centre de Documentation en Sciences Sociales et Humaines}) are now taken over by the INIST\textsuperscript{27} (\textit{Institut de l'Information Scientifique et Technique}) in Nancy. Its big social sciences and humanities database \textit{FRANCIS}, the electronic version of the prestigious \textit{Bulletin signalétique} from the French National Research Centre (CNRS, from 1961, split into a multitude of series), is one of the most wide-ranging social sciences databases in the world in terms of regional and disciplinary coverage. The same model of incorporating the social sciences in a general scientific information service is followed in the Netherlands where SWIDOC has recently been integrated in NIWI\textsuperscript{28} (\textit{Nederlands Instituut voor Wetenschappelijke Informatiediensten}) or in Spain with CINDOC\textsuperscript{29} (\textit{Centro de Información y Documentación Científica}) with its social sciences database \textit{ISOC}.

Yet another model is the already-mentioned German social science infrastructure which integrates in one institution the information centre, the data archives and the methodological counterpart. This is the German GESIS\textsuperscript{30} (\textit{Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen}). Recently, the South African HSRC\textsuperscript{31} (Human Science Research Council) together with SADA\textsuperscript{32} (South African Data Archives) seems to follow a similar direction of disciplinary integration of social science information services. Other countries concentrate more on the traditional information provision in one centralised institution, often
in the Academy of Sciences, like the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) with a vast library and a multitude of information services, or the Russian INION which produces several important databases like PHILOS or ECON with a broad coverage (not only for Eastern Europe).

The Indian National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC) stands for another type of specialised central institution. It fulfils the same mission but on an other level: integrating scholarly infrastructure, library facilities, bibliographical services and regional networking. In another region of the world the Information Retrieval Center for the Social Sciences of the Henrietta Szold Institute in Israel could also stand as an example. An even more typical model of information provision in the social sciences may be the smaller university institute that has an impact far beyond the university or even the country. For example, the database CLASE produced by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico is one of the most comprehensive online databases concerning information on Latin America. As figure 1 shows, there are many library-like institutions in the world of the social sciences, and most of them provide information and database services so that it is impossible even to mention the most important. Those indicated above may only stand as representatives; for a more detailed overview one should refer to the UNESCO database DARE or any directory of special libraries or information centres.

Reference databases

Nowadays most information services lead to either online or CD-ROM databases. The most prominent print bibliographies mentioned above are almost all available in powerful search-engine environments called database hosts. Some others are also available directly on the Internet with a less sophisticated interface. A large number of very specialised databases may be found dispersed widely on the Internet and sometimes brought together by some virtual library or information gateway like the Social Science Virtual Library at the Australian National University or SOSIG (Social Science Information Gateway) based at Bristol, UK.

Despite an obvious Anglo-American dominance of the social science information services (see table 1: ‘Selected databases’) there are a multitude of services in third world countries (cf. for Latin America: Alonso-Gamboa and Reyna-Espinosa, 1995), but they are mostly available only on local level, sometimes on CD-ROM as their recording becomes more affordable. Those regional social science resources usually do not find their way to the big international
commercial information suppliers or hosts like the Dialog Corporation, BRS or Data-Star, because of their institutionalisation within academe. One can suppose that the great majority of relevant databases and information sources in the social sciences in the world is therefore simply not known by their potential users or out of reach for them. There is hope that this will change with the spread of the Internet technology.

One of the big advantages of having access to one of the hosts with many databases is that it often gives the possibility of searching several databases at the same time. One of the drawbacks of such online systems is the fact that they provide the information only on a commercial basis and cannot be accessed without user-id and password for an ‘account’. Some big library consortia or even countries (e.g. UK) give free access to the most important databases for their entire scientific community, but if one is not a member online searching in commercial hosts can be very expensive. Here also one should contact the local, regional or special library which normally has an account with several such services.

The databases accessible on international commercial hosts are listed most completely in the *Gale Directory of Databases* (Detroit: Gale Research, semi-annual; also an online database itself). Screening this directory very scrupulously one might count about 400 bibliographical social science databases which are about 7 % of the total information market. In table 1 is a selection of those often considered to be the most important.

**Conclusion**

In fact, as we have seen in the first paragraphs of this chapter, these formal information services do not fully meet the needs of the social sciences scholars - if they are used at all. Usually, informal channels of information gathering are used. For these no general recommendation can be given, but one can state that the informal communication mode has become increasingly important with the development of the Internet. The Internet, often described as the big communication machine, gives direct and rapid access to institutions and persons. This can be a substantial advantage, especially for third world scholars. Another informal information resource we have observed with the social science scholars is citation chaining. Here, of course, the ‘World Wide Web’ shows its full potential as a hypertext system: when electronic texts are properly edited, i.e. with direct links to the cited material, they provide just this process. The Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) has recognised this and are now offering what they call the *Webs of Research*, which are sophisticated WWW-
versions of their citation indexes allowing ‘navigation’ in the entire ‘space’ of scientific publications. But ISI is not the only information provider experimenting with these new aspects of cyberspace publishing (Hobohm 1995).

The new possibilities of information technology are quite astonishing and in some respects technology has become more user-friendly. But this does not mean that the library and information world automatically improves its services to scholars. It is more or less by chance that more needs are met with the new technology. The knowledge acquired over a period of nearly three decades of research into the needs and behaviour of social science scholars does not seem to have been absorbed by the information providers. Especially the new Internet services, which are often experimental projects exploring only technological possibilities, seldom take such matters into account. On the other hand, scholarly behaviour certainly has changed since the investigations in the 70s and 80s. We therefore may be at a point where we should have another, closer look at the social science scholar as a potential client of the social science information and documentation activities all over the world.
Notes

* I am greatly indebted to Monika Zimmer, M.A. at the German Social Science Information Centre, Bonn, for desk research, intensive discussions and help with gathering information. Table 1 is based on preliminary work done by her.

1 http://dasun1.essex.ac.uk/services/intro.html
2 http://www.isinet.com
3 http://www.ssrc.org
4 http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/infoserv/doc/shsdc.html
5 http://www.unesco.org/most/icssd.htm
6 http://www.unesco.org/most
7 http://fid.conicyt.cl:8000
8 http://www.ifla.org/
9 http://www.fh-potsdam.de/~IFLA/
10 http://www.uta.fi/laitok.set/hallinto/issc.htm
11 http://www.clacso.edu.ar/
12 http://wsi.cso.uiuc.edu/CAS/codesria/codesria.htm
13 http://www.aslib.co.uk/sigs/assig/index.html
14 http://www.sla.org
15 http://www.bl.uk
16 http://www.inion.ru
17 http://www.ed.gov/NLE
18 http://www.uni-kiel.de:8080/ifw/zbw/econis.htm
19 http://www.nypl.org
20 http://www.loc.gov
21 http://www.ilo.org
22 http://www.un.org
23 http://www.unescap.org
24 http://www.blpes.lse.ac.uk
25 http://www.hkkk.fi
26 http://helecon.hkkk.fi/library
27 http://www.inist.fr
28 http://www.niwi.knaw.nl
29 http://www.cindoc.csic.es
30 http://www.social-science-gesis.de
31 http://www.hsrc.ac.za
32 http://www.hsrc.ac.za/sada.html
33 http://www.szold.org.il
34 http://www.szold.mx
35 http://coombs.anu.edu.au
36 http://sosig.ac.uk
TABLE 1. Selected international databases in the social sciences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># Entries</th>
<th>Subject coverage</th>
<th>Producer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences Citation Index / Social SciSearch</td>
<td>3 m</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>ISI - Institute for Scientific Information (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBSS / Internat. Bibliography of the Social Sciences</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>London School of Economics / British Library of Political and Economic Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCIS</td>
<td>1.7 m</td>
<td>Social Sciences; Humanities</td>
<td>INIST - Institut de l’Information Scientifique et Technique (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library Catalogue:HSS</td>
<td>1 m +</td>
<td>Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences Index</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>H.W. Wilson Company (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIS International</td>
<td>400,000 +</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Public Affairs Information Service (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Index</td>
<td>1.2 m</td>
<td>Social Sciences; Humanities</td>
<td>Information Access Company (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABI/Inform</td>
<td>530,000</td>
<td>Economics; Business</td>
<td>University Microfilms, Inc. (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Contents</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>Economics, Business</td>
<td>Information Access Company (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONIS</td>
<td>500,000 +</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>German National Library for Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EconLit</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>American Economic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>IFI - Plenum Data Corp. (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Records</td>
<td>Subject(s)</td>
<td>Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts</td>
<td>(North Am./internat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Political Science Abstracts</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>International Political Science Ass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAO / World Affairs Online</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>Political Science; Economics</td>
<td>Fachinformationsverbund Internationale. Beziehungen &amp; Länderkunde (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociological Abstracts</td>
<td>480,000</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Sociological Abstracts, Inc. (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsycINFO</td>
<td>1.1 m</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>American Psychological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labordoc</td>
<td>220,000+</td>
<td>Labour and employment</td>
<td>ILO - International Labour Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSIA / Applied Social Sciences Index &amp; Abstracts</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>Social work and services (UK / North America)</td>
<td>Bowker-Saur Ltd. (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Index / Abstracts</td>
<td>380,000</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>H.W. Wilson Company (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC</td>
<td>1 m</td>
<td>Education (USA)</td>
<td>US Department. of Education (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International ERIC</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>DIALOG (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Abstracts</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>ABC-CLIO (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLBA / Linguistics &amp; Language Behavior Abstracts</td>
<td>150,000+</td>
<td>Linguistics, Communication studies</td>
<td>Sociological Abstracts, Inc. (USA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POPLINE / Population Information Online</td>
<td>240,000</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>U.S. National Library of Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRM / Social Research Methodology</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Methodology; Social Sciences</td>
<td>University of Rotterdam / SRM-Documentation Centre (NL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some guides and further information instruments

ABY, St. H. 1997. *Sociology. A Guide to Reference and Information Sources*. 2nd ed. - Englewood : Libraries Unlimited. (Despite the title, not only confined to sociology but also gives a good source guide for neighbouring disciplines as well as special applied fields. Lists also Internet addresses.)


*Gale Directory of Databases*. 2 vol., Detroit etc. : Gale Research, semi-annual. (One of the most comprehensive directories of databases.)


UNESCO, Social and Human Sciences Documentation Centre 1998. Selective inventory of social science information and documentation services. Oxford; Cambridge (Mass.): Blackwell (World social science information directories; 6). (see in the text)


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BRITTAINE, J. M. 1989. ‘Cultural boundaries of the social sciences in the 1990s; new policies for documentation, information and knowledge creation’, International Social Science Journal 41: 105-114


HOBOHM, H.-C. 1995. ‘Entering the New Market Place: on the Role of Traditional Social Science Information Providers within the Internet Community’, IFLA Journal 21: 26-30

in a Changing Europe, ed. by H. Best, U. Becker and A. Marks, Bonn: IZ Sozialwissenschaften: 393-403


LINE, M. B. 1980. ‘Secondary services in the social sciences: the need for improvement and the role of librarians’, Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian 1: 263-273


