Introduction and General Information

I visited the Koelbel Library, located in the Arapahoe Library District. Koelbel is a medium-sized public library in a rather affluent neighborhood in the southwest metropolitan area of Denver. The patrons are primarily Caucasian upper middle class, and include children, teens, adults, and seniors. In addition to books, DVDs, videos, and programming, the library offers business and educational resources, governmental information, reference and research materials for students and adults in the community.

Reference Area

The reference desk is located on the lower level of the library. A ready-reference section is near the reference desk, and consists of several stacks of materials. These resources are quite extensive: encyclopedias, yearbooks, handbooks, manuals, commentaries, atlases, dictionaries, almanacs, statutes, directories, guides, sourcebooks, indexes, and Criticism. The resources seem to be primarily geared toward American or European perspectives.

Discussion with Reference Librarian

A reference librarian at Koelbel provided me with a few examples of recent social science research questions.

1. Whether bilingual education works best for young children or adolescents. *For this she used print and online resources.*

2. The effect of water resources on the culture of the Middle East. *She used books and their bibliographic citations.*

3. The cultural influences that Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* had on pre-World War II German society. *She used history books and bibliographies.*
4. A wine distributor needed some kind of list to help him market his goods. They used *Wine Spectator Magazine*, an online search for the appropriate NAICS code, and then the RefUSA database.

5. A young student wanted some biographical information on Mother Cabrini. They used books and online searches.

6. Although not necessarily in the social sciences realm, a very popular reference question is locating information in *Consumer Reports*. The library has these in print, as well as online.

Since there was not one type of question provided in this interview that lent itself to any particular social science discipline, I chose to review Koelbel’s resources relating to Sociology.

Print Resources for Sociology at Koelbel

Print Resources in Ready Reference

I located a number of print resources which could be used for sociology related searches.

A sample list follows:

- Encyclopedia of Sociology (published 2007): This is a good general reference source.

- Demographics and Census Data

- Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity. This is a three-volume set published in 2005. Because my father was on the Bataan Death March, I was curious whether it was listed; there was an entry on death marches in general, which mentioned Bataan.

- Encyclopedia of American Immigration. Published in 2001, this four-volume set has a large number of contributors. Entries are fairly extensive; the entry on Japanese Internment takes up four pages.
• Greenwood Encyclopedia of Women’s Issues Worldwide (6 volumes), published in 2003. Each volume covers a different region of the world, and countries are listed alphabetically in their respective volume.

• Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural American Primary Documents (2 volumes, published in 1999). This is an interesting resource as it contains first-person essays for individuals in various ethnic groups.

• Racial and Ethnic Relations in America (3 volumes, published 2000). This is pretty general, but a good starting point with short entries with bibliographies.

• Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America (2 volumes, published 1995). The entries are listed alphabetically by group.

• Violence in America (3 volumes) published in 1999.


• Encyclopedia of Family Life. This five-volume set, published in 1999, is geared toward family life in America.

• 2007 Demographics USA—County Edition. Lots of statistics.

• Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice (4 volumes, Gale, published in 2002).

• Encyclopedia of World Crime (8 volumes, published 1990). This lists criminals and criminal organizations in alphabetical order. Entries are generally two to three paragraphs in length.

• Encyclopedia of Capital Punishment in the United States, published in 2001. This contains entries on many court cases.

• The Encyclopedia of American Crime (2 volumes, published 2001). Alphabetical list of criminals (e.g., Alphonso Capone) and events (Attica Prison Riot). The entries are short; this resource is a great starting place on the subject.
Print Resources in the Circulating Collection

A search in the OPAC for “Sociology” yielded 91 results, included novels and DVDs. Many of these were not particularly relevant to sociology issues. A number of titles exist on demographics, and the following seemed most relevant specifically to sociology:

- What To Do with Your Psychology or Sociology Degree
- Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings
- Dictionary of Sociology
- Encyclopedia of Sociology
- The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology
- Basic Concepts in Sociology / Max Weber
- 2001 Race Odyssey: African Americans and Sociology

Online Resources

The library’s website has a button titled “Research Tools”. By clicking on this, one can find various databases and online resources. Resources relevant to Sociology include the following (some more general in nature):

- Encyclopedia.com
- Merriam-Webster Online
- Worldbook Online Reference Center
- Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center
- Student Resource Center
- Access All Databases from EBSCO
- Access All Databases from Gale
- Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)
Print Resources

A search in PEAK of Sociology as an LC subject heading yielded 511 results. Resources are in various formats: book, microforms, periodicals, internet, and ebooks. The Reference section contains an extensive collection of 24 shelves of resources related in some way to Sociology. These include the following subjects: sociology, social justice, social psychology, community, violence, social history, sexuality, family, parenthood, children, aging, death and dying, men and masculinities, women studies, world slavery, world poverty, disability, crime and justice, terrorism, law enforcement, crime, and punishment. (Please see the Appendix for a list of just the Encyclopedias in that section.)

Electronic Resources

Penrose has an entire category of databases for sociology researchers to use. There are currently 16 databases including SocINDEX with Full Text, and Sociological Abstracts, as well as some that are sub-discipline-specific such as the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Contemporary Women’s Issues (restricted to two Penrose computers), and Urban Studies and Planning. There is also a category for Criminology, which contains 12 databases. Some of these are listed under Sociology but Criminology also includes databases such as PsycINFO, LegalTrac, and the Restorative Justice Database. Databases in other categories could also be used for sociological research, such as those in Asian Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, Newspapers (current), Public Opinion, and Public Policy.
Evaluation and Conclusion

Although the ready-reference section at Koelbel Library has been weeded and the library is moving more toward online resources, it does have a good, although not great, collection of materials related to the discipline of Sociology. The online databases are quite extensive. The sociology researcher would primarily be helped by: Access All Databases from EBSCO, Access All Databases from Gale; ERIC; FirstSearch; and Academic Search Premier.

Using ERIC, one can do an advanced search and select the educational level of the material desired. A search for “crime” with the limiter Higher Education yielded 910 results (many relating to crime in academia). “Crime” with Junior High Schools returned 70. ERIC does provide full text in some of its results.

According to the website, Academic Search Premier (through EBSCO) is “a multi-disciplinary database providing full text for more than 4,500 journals, including full text for more than 3,700 peer-reviewed titles. PDF backfiles to 1975 or further are available for well over one hundred journals, and searchable cited references are provided for 1,000 titles.” (Accessed May 11, 2008) A search for “crime” with the limiter of scholarly journals yielded 31,489 results!! Narrowing the results by criminal justice policy reduced the results to 49.

It is apparent that one can get to a number of sociology related resources through the databases provided by Koelbel. As they are subscriptions, these databases are restricted to Arapahoe Library District cardholders.

As one would expect, the print and electronic resources at Penrose relating to Sociology are much more extensive, broader and deeper in scope than what is available at Koelbel. Simply browsing the reference stacks yielded a large amount of potential resource to the sociology researcher, witnessed by the list of encyclopedias alone. Penrose’s databases are far superior in
scope and breadth to what is available at Koelbel. In addition to using one’s own database collection and internet websites, the savvy public reference librarian should utilize databases available through the Penrose catalog (and those from other academic libraries as well). At Penrose, the following categories have free databases available to the public: Sociology (1), Criminology (4), Ethnic Studies (1), Gender and Women’s Studies (2), Newspapers (current) (2), Public Opinion (2), and Public Policy (4).
Appendix: Sociology Encyclopedias at Penrose

Encyclopedia of Relationships Across the Lifespan
Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Psychology
Encyclopedia of Propaganda
Encyclopedia of Violence
Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology
Encyclopedia of Social Theory
Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Popular Culture
Encyclopedia of Human Development
Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice
Encyclopedia of Community
Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Society
Encyclopedia of Environment and Society
Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict
International Encyclopedia of Social Policy
Encyclopedia of Social History
Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups
Encyclopedia of American Social History
Encyclopedia of American Social Movement
Encyclopedia of Modern American Extremists and Extremist Groups
Encyclopedia of European Social History
Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender
International Encyclopedia of Sexuality
Encyclopedia of Homosexuality
Encyclopedia of Parenting Theory and Research
Encyclopedia of Birth Control
Encyclopedia of Abortion in the United States
Encyclopedia of Applied Developmental Science
Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood
Cambridge Encyclopedia of Child Development
Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence
Encyclopedia of Youth and War
Encyclopedia of Aging
Encyclopedia of Aging and the Elderly
Encyclopedia of Death and Dying
Macmillan Encyclopedia of Death and Dying
International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities
Encyclopedia of Women and Gender
Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women
Women’s Studies Encyclopedia
Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World
Encyclopedia of Women in the Middle Ages
Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance
Greenwood Encyclopedia of Women’s Issues Worldwide
Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories
Encyclopedia of Women Social Reformers
Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women
Encyclopedia of Women and American Politics
Encyclopedia of Women in American Politics
Encyclopedia of Women’s History in America
Encyclopedia of Women in the American West
Encyclopedia of Urban Cultures
Encyclopedia of the City
World Encyclopedia of Cities
Encyclopedia of World Cities
Encyclopedia of American Urban History
Encyclopedia of Urban America
Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery
Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery
Encyclopedia of White Power
Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Work
Encyclopedia of World Poverty
Encyclopedia of Disability
Encyclopedia of Disability and Rehabilitation
Encyclopedia of Homelessness
Encyclopedia of Alcoholism
Encyclopedia of Smoking and Tobacco
Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol and Addictive Behavior
Encyclopedia of Drug Abuse
Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice
Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment
Encyclopedia of Criminology and Deviant Behavior
Encyclopedia of Women and Crime
Encyclopedia of Assassinations
Encyclopedia of Genocide
Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity
Encyclopedia of Bioterrorism Defense
Encyclopedia of World Terrorism
Encyclopedia of Terrorism
Encyclopedia of Terrorism and Political Violence
Encyclopedia of Domestic Violence
Encyclopedia of Law Enforcement
Encyclopedia of Organized Crime in the United States
Encyclopedia of Murder and Violent Crime
Encyclopedia of Suicide
Encyclopedia of Rape
Encyclopedia of White-Collar and Corporate Crime
Encyclopedia of Capital Punishment
Encyclopedia of Juvenile Justice
Encyclopedia of Juvenile Violence
Encyclopedia of Prisons and Correctional Facilities