

Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)

Quick Guide

Purpose of LCSH

- Subject access for catalogue records across broad range of subjects.
- Primarily to serve the U.S. Library of Congress (since 1898).
- However, far more widely adopted and suggestions can be made via SACO (UCL not a member).
- In practice tied closely to the LC Name Authorities.
- Coverage decided by “literary warrant” rather than a comprehensive treatment of human knowledge.
- Originally printed in the Red Books.

General Structure



Not a faceted scheme!

Structure and formatting 1

Preferred term

UF

BT

RT

SA

NT

Preferred term

Used For

Broader Term

Related Term

See Also

Narrower Term

Non preferred term

USE [Preferred term](#)

Non preferred term

Use [Preferred term](#)

Structure and formatting 2

Term--Subdivision

Double dashes (or a long dash) separate main terms from subdivisions. In MARC these are replaced with subfield codes.

--Subdivision

Terms and subdivisions always start with capital letters.

USE

Fish

USE [Fishes](#)

Preferred term

Fishes (May Subd Geog)

UF Fish

Pisces

BT [Aquatic animals](#)

[Vertebrates](#)

RT [Fisheries](#)

[Fishing](#)

[Ichthyology](#)

SA names of orders, families, etc. of fishes, e.g. **Perciformes; Salmonidae; Tarpon**

NT [Agnatha](#)

[Air-breathing fishes](#)

NT and BT

Aquatic animals (May Subd Geog)

UF Aquatic fauna

Water animals

BT [Animals](#)

[Aquatic organisms](#)

NT [Aquarium animals](#)

[Aquatic invertebrates](#)

[Fishes](#)

RT

Fisheries (May Subd Geog)

- UF Coastal fisheries

 - Commercial fisheries

 - Farms, fish

- BT [Aquaculture](#)

 - [Wildlife utilization](#)

- RT [Fishery sciences](#)

 - [Fishes](#)

- NT [Anchovy fisheries](#)

 - [Arctic grayling fisheries](#)

Specificity

Cats

- Library cats
- Longhair cats
 - Maine coon cat
 - Persian cat
 - Himalayan cat
 - Turkish Angora cat
 - Turkish Van cat

Foldex cats = **Cats**

Longhair cats = **Longhair cats**

Persian cats = **Persian cat**

Himalayan cats = **Himalayan cat**

Chinchilla longhair = **Persian cat**

LC Names as LCSH

Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616

Chaucer, Geoffrey, -1400

Meehan, Thomas.

England

London (England)

Camden (London, England)

Walmer Road (London, England)

How many headings?

1. Which topics:

- For topics comprising at least 20% of the work
- Subtopics:
 - Generally, up to three subtopics can be treated separately.
 - Otherwise, use the broader topic that covers all the subtopics.
 - Sometimes, for very broad headings and very narrow subtopics, it may be appropriate to enter up to four subtopics separately, but no more than four.
 - Use common sense and judgement and, if in doubt, use broader topics.
 - (See SHM H 180 sections 8 and 9 for more details and examples)

2. How many headings per topic/subtopic:

- Use the most specific heading available.
- Use a broader heading if necessary to cover a topic.
- Use two or more headings to bring out aspects of a topic.

3. No more than 10 headings.

LCSH Subdivisions

There are four types of subdivisions:

- Topical
- Chronological
- Geographical
- Form

In general, they are added in the above order, separated by double dashes.

Topical subdivisions

--**Social aspects** (May Subd Geog)

Use as a topical subdivision under topical headings for works on the effect of the item, activity, discipline, etc., and society on each other.

NT [—Emigration and immigration—Social aspects](#)

--**Social life and customs**

Use as a topical subdivision under names of countries, cities, etc., and under classes of persons and ethnic groups.

UF —Customs

NT [—Colonies—Social life and customs](#)

Chronological subdivisions

--20th century

Use as a chronological subdivision under headings for art and art forms of all nations, regions, and ethnic groups. Also use under individual languages and groups of languages, groups of literary authors, individual literatures, including drama, and forms and types of musical compositions.

—History—20th century

Use as a topical subdivision under names of countries, cities, etc., and individual corporate bodies, and under classes of persons, ethnic groups, military services, Christian denominations, and topical headings.

Great Britain—History—20th century

Great Britain—History—Anne, 1702-1714

NT [Scotland—History—Union, 1707](#)

Form subdivisions

--Congresses

Use as a form subdivision under subjects for the proceedings or reports of proceedings of conferences or congresses on those subjects.

UF –Conference proceedings

--Congresses—Abstracts

--Congresses, conferences, etc. [Former subdivision]

--Meeting proceedings

--Proceedings of conferences

--Seminar proceedings

--Symposia proceedings

--Symposium proceedings

--Workshop proceedings

Use as a topical subdivision under subjects for works about conferences or congresses on those subjects.

UF –Conferences

--Congresses, conferences, etc. [Former subdivision]

--Meetings

--Symposia

--Symposiums

Geographic subdivisions: when they can be used 1

Art (May Subd Geog)

Yes

Art, Modern (Not Subd Geog)

No

Paper stretching (Art)

No

Geographic subdivisions: where they can be used 2

For a book on teaching about modern art in Scotland, given the following...

Art, Modern (Not Subd Geog)

--**Study and teaching** (May Subd Geog)

--**Scotland**

Art, Modern—Scotland—Study and teaching is **wrong**.

Art, Modern—Study and teaching—Scotland is **correct**.

Geographic subdivisions: where they can be used 3

For a book on teaching about art in Scotland, given the following...

Art teachers (May Subd Geog)

--**Social conditions**

--**Scotland**

Art teachers—Scotland—Social conditions is **correct**.

Art teachers—Social conditions—Scotland is **wrong**.

Geographic subdivisions: form

Generally, geographic subdivision follows the authorised heading but is entered in reverse as Country followed by City.

England

--England

London (England)

--England--London

Camden (London, England)

--England--London

Walmer Road (London, England)

--England—London

River Thames (England)

--England—River Thames

Rhine River

--Rhine River

Geographic subdivisions: example

For a book on the social conditions of art teachers in Leith, given the following...

Art teachers (May Subd Geog)

--**Social conditions**

--**Leith (Edinburgh, Scotland)**

...the following headings would be appropriate:

**Art teachers—Scotland—Edinburgh—Social conditions
Leith (Edinburgh, Scotland)**

Where to find subdivisions

Subject Headings Manual (SHM)

On Cataloger's Desktop. There are lists of types of heading and the subdivisions you can use, as well as detailed guidance on the subdivisions themselves.

<http://desktop.loc.gov/>

Pattern headings

E.g. **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616** for literary authors.

Any subdivision used under pattern headings can be used under other headings of the same type. Lists of pattern headings are available on The SHM, including:

For individual educational institutions, follow the pattern of **Harvard University**.

For types of educational institutions, follow the pattern for **Universities and colleges**.

Classification Web

Free-floating subdivisions can be searched and browsed just like main headings, and with scope notes, etc. Also of course the main headings for the patterns can be consulted on Classification Web.

<https://classificationweb.net/>

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Accessing LCSH

Classification Web

- Password protected: UCL has subscription.
- LCSH and LC Names clearly separated.
- Arguably clear display and navigation.
- Clear when you (May Subd Geog)
- Can search free-floating subdivisions separately.

<https://classificationweb.net/>

Library of Congress Authorities

- Freely available.
- LC Names included in subject searches.
- Arguably unclear display and navigation.
- Not clear when you (May Subd Geog)
- MARC display available

<http://authorities.loc.gov/>

LC Linked Data Service

- Freely available.
- LCSH and LC Names clearly separated.
- Arguably unclear display and navigation.
- Clear when you (May Subd Geog)
- Can't search free-floating subdivisions separately
- No MARC display

<http://id.loc.gov/>

Finding out more

Broughton, Vanda. *Essential Library of Congress Subject Headings*. London : Facet, 2012.

9781856046183

Chan, Lois Mai. *Library of Congress Subject Headings : principles and application*. 3rd edition.

Englewood, Colorado : Libraries Unlimited, 1995.

9781563081910

Library of Congress. *Subject Headings Manual (SHM)*.

<http://desktop.loc.gov/>