
Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 2.5
Broader Term and Narrower Term References

Policy and Standards Division
Library of Congress
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Recap

- Three types of hierarchical relationship
 - Genus/species (a.k.a. thing/kind or class/class member)
 - Whole/part
 - Instance

In earlier modules we learned that LCSH includes three types of hierarchical relationships.

Librarians are a kind of Library employee.

Your heart is part of your circulatory system.

The Mediterranean Sea is an instance of a sea.

Recap

- In LCSH, hierarchical relationships are represented with two notations
 - BT (Broader Term)
 - NT (Narrower Term)
- NTs are more specific than their BTs
- General rules for BTs and NTs are contained in SHM H 370

LCSH uses the notations BT and NT to represent hierarchical relationships.

BT is the broader term and NTs are the narrower terms. In other words, NTs are more specific than BTs.

The general rules for hierarchical references in LCSH are contained in *Subject Headings Manual* instruction sheet H 370.

In this module we will further investigate LCSH policies on hierarchical relationships.

General

- All BTs and NTs are authorized headings
- Display is reciprocal

Every BT and every NT in LCSH is an authorized heading in its own right.

Any BTs for a heading are listed in the entry for that heading, and if there are any NTs, they are listed in the entry, too.

General

- All BTs and NTs are authorized headings
- Display is reciprocal

Floor coverings (May Subd Geog)
[HD9937]

BT [Flooring](#)
[Interior decoration](#)

NT [Carpets](#)
[Linoleum](#)
[Rugs](#)

In this example, **Floor coverings** has the broader terms **Flooring** and **Interior decoration**.

Floor coverings are therefore a type of flooring and they are a component of interior decoration.

General

- All BTs and NTs are authorized headings
- Display is reciprocal

Floor coverings (May Subd Geog)
[HD9937]
BT [Flooring](#)
[Interior decoration](#)
NT [Carpets](#)
[Linoleum](#)
[Rugs](#)

The narrower terms – or more specific types – of **Floor coverings** are **Carpets**, **Linoleum**, and **Rugs**.

General

- All BTs and NTs are at headings
- Display is reciprocal

Floor coverings (May Subd Geog)
[HD9937]
BT [Flooring](#)
[Interior decoration](#)
NT [Carpets](#)
[Linoleum](#)
[Rugs](#)

Rugs (May Subd Geog)
[NK2775-2896 (Art)]
[TS1777-1778 (Manufacture)]
UF [Rug manufacture](#)
BT [Floor coverings](#)
[Textile fabrics](#)
RT [Carpets](#)
NT [Inscription rugs](#)
[Islamic rugs](#)
[Jewish rugs](#)
[Pictorial rugs](#)
[Rag rugs](#)
[Rugs, Braided](#)
[Rya rugs](#)
[Soumaks](#)

In Classification Web, I can click on any of the BTs or NTs and see the full entry.

It is vitally important that you do that whenever you are assigning headings.

Seeing the full entry allows you to understand what that heading really means.

General Categories of BTs

- Genus/species
 - Also called Class/class member or Thing/kind

Let's look at some more examples of the three categories of BTs in LCSH before we look at some of the special rules for particular types of headings.

The first main category is Genus/species.

General Categories of BTs

- Genus/species
 - Also called Class/class member or Thing/kind

Veterinary dentistry (May Subd Geog)
[SF867]
BT [Dentistry](#)
NT [Equine dentistry](#)

Veterinary dentistry is a kind of **Dentistry**, and **Equine dentistry** is a kind of **Veterinary dentistry**.

General Categories of BTs

- Genus/species
 - Also called Class/class member or Thing/kind

Veterinary dentistry (May Subd Geog)

[SF867]

BT [Dentistry](#)

Zoom lens photography (May Subd Geog)

BT [Photography](#)

Zoom lens photography is a kind of **Photography**.

General Categories of BTs

- Whole/part

Leaves (May Subd Geog)
[[QK649](#) (Botany)]
UF Foliage
BT [Plants](#)

The second main category is Whole/Part.

Leaves are a part of the whole, **Plants**.

General Categories of BTs

- Whole/part
 - Leaves** (May Subd Geog)
[QK649 (Botany)]
UF Fc
BT Pl
 - Roots (Botany)** (May Subd Geog)
[QK644 (General)]
[QK776 (Movements)]
UF Plant roots
Plants—Roots
BT Plants

Roots are also a part of **Plants**.

General Categories of BTs

- Whole/part
 - Leaves** (May Subd Geog)
[QK649 (Botany)]
UF Fc
BT Pl
 - Roots (Botany)** (May Subd Geog)
[QK644 (General)]
[QK776 (Movements)]
Plant roots
Plants—Roots
Plants
 - Thorns** (May Subd Geog)
[QK650]
BT Plant defenses
Plants

And so are **Thorns**.

Each of those headings – **Leaves**, **Roots**, and **Thorns** – has the BT **Plants**.

Thorns also has another BT, **Plant defenses**, because thorns are a kind of plant defense.

General Categories of BTs

- Whole/part

<p>Plants (May Subd Geog)</p> <p>[GT5150 (Manners and cu</p> <p>[QK (Botany)]</p> <p>UF Flora</p> <p>Plant kingdom</p> <p>Plantae</p> <p>Vegetable kingdom</p> <p>Vegetation</p> <p>Wildlife</p> <p>BT Organisms</p> <p>RT Botany</p> <p>SA individual plants and gr</p> <p>headings beginning wit</p> <p>the prefix Phyto</p> <p>NT Acid-tolerant plants</p>	<p>Hyperaccumulator plants</p> <p>Inflorescences</p> <p>Island plants</p> <p>Leaves</p> <p>Littoral plants</p> <p>Low-allergen plants</p> <p>Meadow plants</p> <p>Mediterranean-type</p> <p>Metteniusaceae</p> <p>Mountain plants</p> <p>Mycorrhizal plants</p> <p>Myrmecophilous pl</p> <p>Night-flowering pla</p> <p>Nitrogen-fixing pla</p> <p>Oil flower plants</p>	<p>Roots (Botany)</p> <p>Ruderal plants</p> <p>Sand dune plants</p> <p>Seedlings</p> <p>Seeds</p> <p>Serpentine plants</p> <p>Shoots (Botany)</p> <p>Smokable plants</p> <p>Spines (Botany)</p> <p>Suburban plants</p> <p>Succulent plants</p> <p>Synanthropic plants</p> <p>Thorns</p> <p>Transmutation of plants</p>
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The headings for each of those parts is listed as one of the many NTs for **Plants**.

General Categories of BTs

- Instance

Tablet computers (May Subd Geog)
[\[QA76.893\]](#)
UF Pad computers
Slate computers
Tablets (Computers)
BT [Laptop computers](#)
NT [BlackBerry PlayBook \(Computer\)](#)
[iPad \(Computer\)](#)
[Microsoft Surface \(Computer\)](#)
[Nexus 10 \(Computer\)](#)
[Nexus 7 \(Computer\)](#)
[Samsung Galaxy Tab \(Computer\)](#)
[Xoom \(Computer\)](#)

The final category reflects an Instance relationship.

The iPad, Microsoft Surface, and Nexus 10, among others, are individual instances of tablet computers, and have the BT **Tablet computers**.

General Categories of BTs

- Instance

Tablet computers (May Subd Geog)

[\[QA76.893\]](#)

- UF Pad comp
- Slate com
- Tablets (C
- BT [Laptop co](#)
- NT [BlackBer](#)
- [iPad \(Cor](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Nexus 10](#)
- [Nexus 7 \(](#)
- [Samsung](#)
- [Xoom \(C](#)

France—Kings and rulers

- NT [Anjou, House of](#)
- [Aquitaine, House of](#)
- [Bourbon, House of](#)
- [Bourbon-Montpensier, House of](#)
- [Capet, House of](#)
- [Condé, House of](#)
- [Conti, House of](#)
- [Monarchy—France](#)
- [Orléans, House of](#)
- [Valois, House of](#)

The houses of Anjou, Aquitaine, and Bourbon, among others, are instances of ruling houses in France.

Specific Situations

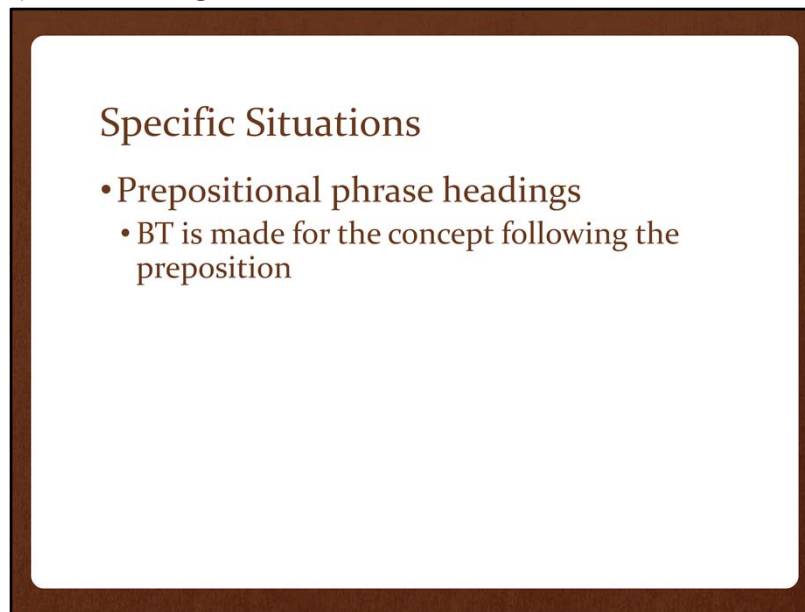
- Headings in the form [Topic A] and [Topic B]

Television and literature (May Subd Geog)
[PN1992.655]
UF Literature and television
BT Literature

When a heading is in the form of [**Topic A**] and [**Topic B**] and refers to the reciprocal relationship between the topics, a BT reference is made for Topic B.

In this example, **Television and literature**, the concept in the position of Topic B is **Literature**, so that is the BT.

Why? Well, the thinking is that in a card catalog or browse index, **Television and literature** would be filed after the heading **Television**, so **Television** is not needed as a BT.



Likewise, if the heading is a prepositional phrase, the BT reflects the part following the preposition.

Specific Situations

- Prepositional phrase headings
 - BT is made for the concept following the preposition

Pollen as food
[TX560.P6]
BT [Food](#)

Therefore, **Pollen as food** has the BT **Food**.

That makes sense when you think about it, because **Pollen as food** is a subset of the heading **Food** – it's the genus/species relationship.

Specific Situations

- Prepositional phrase headings
 - BT is made for the concept following the preposition

Pollen as food
[TX560.P6]
BT [Food](#)

Ethnicity on television
BT [Television](#)

Ethnicity on television refers to the depiction of ethnicity in television programming, so the BT **Television** also makes sense.

Specific Situations

- Prepositional phrase headings
 - BT is made for the concept following the preposition

Pollen as food
[TX560.P6]
BT [Food](#)

Chess for the blind
BT [Blind](#)

Ethnicity on television
BT [Television](#)

But **Chess for the blind** has the BT **Blind**, and does not fit into the genus/species, or whole/part, or instance relationship. **Chess for the blind** is not a subset of **Blind**.

This type of BT is an example of a compromise that was made several decades ago when hierarchy was added to LCSH.

The idea was to alert library users who were looking under the heading **Blind** that there was a more specific heading that might be of interest.

Specific Situations

- Prepositional phrase headings
 - BT is made for the concept following the preposition
 - Exceptions are sometimes made when there is a clear pattern

Rock climbing for children
[GV200.23.C35]
BT [Sports for children](#)

Exceptions to this rule are sometimes made, but only when there is a very clear pattern.

If we were to look in LCSH, we would see that all of the headings for individual sports for children have the BT **Sports for children** instead of just the heading **Children**, which we would expect if we were following the general rule.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT

Cruise missiles—Aerodynamics
BT [Aerodynamics](#)

Headings that have specifically established topical subdivisions often have a BT that corresponds to the subdivision.

Sometimes the subdivision and the BT are an exact match, as in **Cruise missiles—Aerodynamics**, which has the BT **Aerodynamics**.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT

Cruise missiles—Aerodynamics

BT [Aerodynamics](#)

Labor supply—Effect of foreign exchange rates on

BT [Foreign exchange rates](#)

Other times, the BT might be a particular phrase from the subdivision.

Foreign exchange rates is the heading that most closely corresponds to the subdivision –**Effect of foreign exchange rates on**.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT

Cruise missiles—Aerodynamics

BT [Aerodynamics](#)

Labor supply—Effect of foreign exchange rates on

BT [Foreign exchange rates](#)

Diseases—Causes and theories of causation

[[RB151-214](#)]

UF Aetiology

Etiology

BT [Pathology](#)

Other times, the BT might look very different from the subdivision, but the meaning is the same.

Diseases—Causes and theories of causation has the BT **Pathology** because pathology is the study of the causes of diseases.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT
 - Exception 1: subdivisions that are normally free-floating but are established because of special circumstances

The major exception to this rule relates to free-floating subdivisions.

Headings with free-floating subdivisions are rarely established in LCSH. Sometimes they are, though, due to special circumstances. When that happens, a BT corresponding to the subdivision is not made.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT
 - Exception 1: subdivisions that are normally free-floating but are established because of special circumstances

Italian language—Etymology
NT [Ananasso \(The Italian word\)](#)
[Camorra \(The Italian word\)](#)
[Capriccio \(The Italian word\)](#)

For instance, —**Etymology** free-floats under headings for languages, so a heading for a language subdivided by —**Etymology** would not normally be established in LCSH.

Instead, a cataloger would simply make up the heading **Italian language—Etymology** according to the rules. It was specifically established, though, because it was needed as a BT for headings for individual words in the Italian language. **Italian language—Etymology** does not have a BT.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT
 - Exception 1: subdivisions that are normally free-floating but are established because of special circumstances

Italian language—Etymology

NT [Ananasso \(The Italian word\)](#)

[Camorra \(The Italian word\)](#)

[Capriccio \(The Italian word\)](#)

Mississippi River—Alluvial plain

Other subdivided headings were established before some subdivisions became free-floating in the 1970s, such as this heading for the alluvial plain of the Mississippi River. Because these headings would not be established today, they do not have BTs, either.

Specific Situations

- Headings with topical subdivisions
 - The heading that corresponds to the subdivision is the BT
 - Exception 1: subdivisions that are normally free-floating but are established because of special circumstances
 - Exception 2: sometimes there is not a heading to correspond to the subdivision

Burns and scalds—Complications

The other major exception is when there is not a heading that corresponds to the subdivision, such as **—Complications**.

Number of BTs

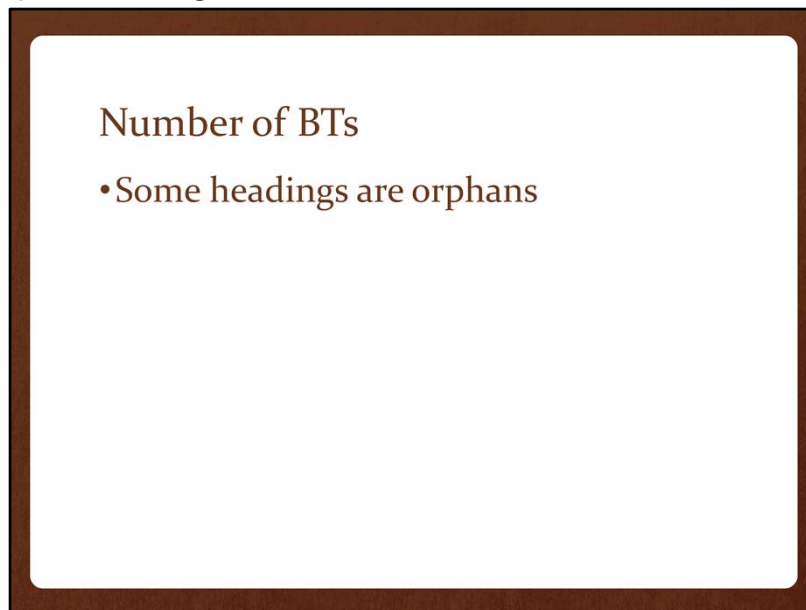
- Most headings have at least one BT
 - Some have two or three
 - Typically four is the limit
- Only for the next level of hierarchy

Women ethnobotanists
BT [Ethnobotanists](#)
[Women scientists](#)

Most headings in LCSH have at least one broader term, and they may have up to four.

A broader term is made only for the next level of hierarchy. **Ethnobotanists** and **Women scientists** can both be BTs of **Women ethnobotanists** because **Ethnobotanists** and **Women scientists** are neither broader nor narrower than each other.

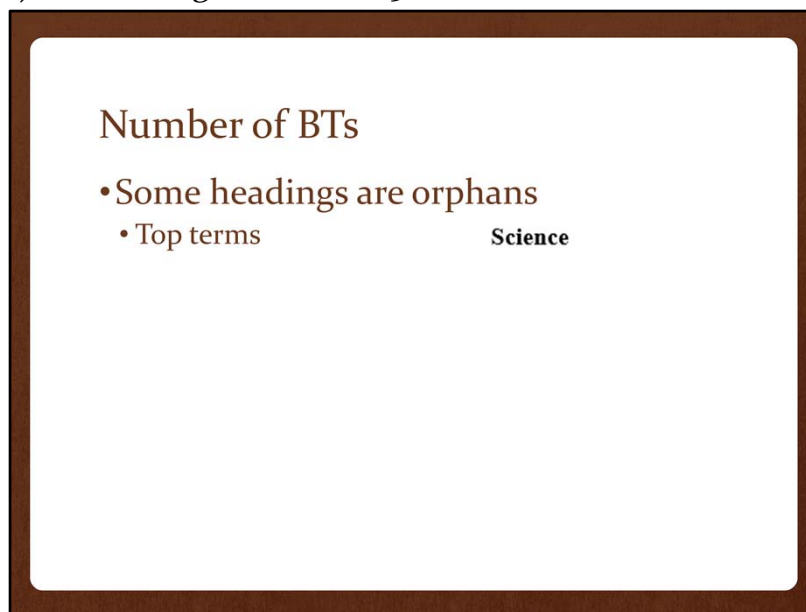
There are a very few exceptions to this rule about making BTs for only one level of hierarchy, such as headings for languages and language groups. Those exceptions are made according to well-established patterns.



Some headings do not have parent terms, or BTs.

Logically enough, they are called orphans.

They include the following categories of headings.



Number of BTs

- Some headings are orphans
 - Top terms **Science**

Top terms such as **Science** and **History**. Unless LCSH had a heading for “entire world of knowledge,” there is no BT to assign.

Number of BTs

- Some headings are orphans
 - Top terms **Science**
 - Geographic regions **Europe, Eastern**

Geographic regions. Although it would be logical for Eastern Europe to be considered an NT of Europe, by policy geographic headings for regions do not have BTs.

Number of BTs

- Some headings are orphans
 - Top terms **Science**
 - Geographic regions **Europe, Eastern**
 - Family names **Myers family**

Family names are established in LCSH when they are needed as subjects. Those headings do not have BTs.

Number of BTs

- Some headings are orphans
 - Top terms **Science**
 - Geographic regions **Europe, Eastern**
 - Family names **Myers family**
 - Fictitious characters **Hardy Boys (Fictitious characters)**

Neither do fictitious characters, such as the Hardy Boys.

Number of BTs

- Some headings are orphans
 - Top terms **Science**
 - Geographic regions **Europe, Eastern**
 - Family names **Myers family**
 - Fictitious characters **Hardy Boys (Fictitious characters)**
- Some prepositional phrases **Flowers in literature**

Another category consists of some prepositional phrases.

As we discussed earlier, general policy is to assign a BT for the part of the heading following the preposition.

In the example **Flowers in literature**, that would be **Literature**. There are literally thousands of headings in the form **[topic] in art**, **[topic] in literature**, and **[topic] in whatever**, and it was not practical to provide a BT for each one of them.

The list of NTs under **Art** and under **Literature** would be pages and pages – or screens and screens – long, and would be unmanageable, so this exception to the general policy was made.

Number of BTs

- Some headings are orphans
 - Top terms **Science**
 - Geographic regions **Europe, Eastern**
 - Family names **Myers family**
 - Fictitious characters
Hardy Boys (Fictitious characters)
- Some prepositional phrases
Flowers in literature
- Inverted headings qualified by languages, nationalities, ethnic groups, or time periods
Maxims, Irish Art, Balinese Armor, Ancient

Inverted headings that are qualified by a language, nationality, ethnic group, or time period also do not have BTs.

The idea here is that **Maxims, Irish** would file directly after **Maxims**, which would have been its BT.

In a browse list, the BT would not serve a useful purpose because the headings are collocated anyway.

Purpose of BTs

- To collocate headings into broad categories
 - Organize the world of knowledge
 - Help users to find the best level of specificity to answer their needs

Now that we know some of the rules for making BTs in LCSH, we need to ask why we do this at all.

The purpose of BTs – that is, hierarchical references – is to collocate headings into broad categories. Doing so organizes knowledge; without that organization, we would have a jumble of headings.

In a vocabulary the size of LCSH, it would be very difficult to find anything without BTs. By categorizing headings in a systematic way we can help users find the best heading to suit their needs.

Let's look at an example.

Purpose of BTs

Cookies (May Subd Geog)
[TX772]
UF Biscuits, English
BT [Cake](#)
NT [Bars \(Desserts\)](#)
[Biscotti](#)
[Chocolate chip cookies](#)
[Fortune cookies](#)
[Gingerbread houses](#)
[Gingerbread men](#)

[Girl Scout cookies](#)
[Macarons](#)
[Moon Pies](#)
[Shortbread](#)
[Tea cakes](#)
[Whoopie pies](#)

Let's say that I enjoy baking cookies, and I want to find information on other types of baked goods to try. I can start by searching for the known concept: **Cookies**.

The entry has a nice list of NTs – types of cookies. Looking at them, I think that the entry for **Fortune cookies** looks promising.

Purpose of BTs

Fortune cookies (May Subd Geog)
BT [Cookies](#)

Fortune, Dan (Fictitious character) (Not Subd Geog)
UF Dan Fortune (Fictitious character)

Fortune family (Not Subd Geog)

Fortune hunters (May Subd Geog)
UF Gigolos
Gold diggers
BT [Persons](#)

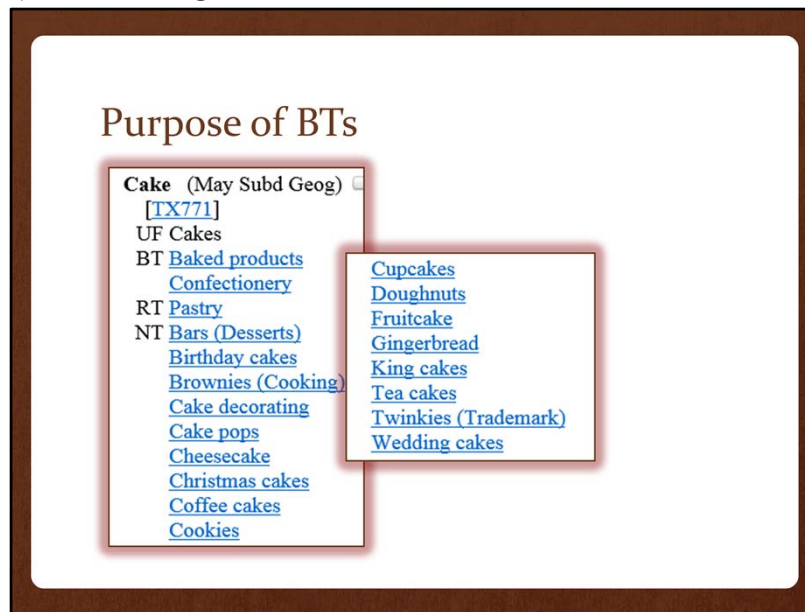
I had never thought about making fortune cookies! I can click the NT to find the entry for **Fortune cookies**. But I decide that I want to broaden my horizons, not narrow them. I can click on the BT **Cookies** and get right back where I started.

Purpose of BTs

Cookies (May Subd Geog)
[TX772]
UF Biscuits, English
BT [Cake](#)
NT [Bars \(Desserts\)](#)
[Biscotti](#)
[Chocolate chip cookies](#)
[Fortune cookies](#)
[Gingerbread houses](#)
[Gingerbread men](#)

[Girl Scout cookies](#)
[Macarons](#)
[Moon Pies](#)
[Shortbread](#)
[Tea cakes](#)
[Whoopie pies](#)

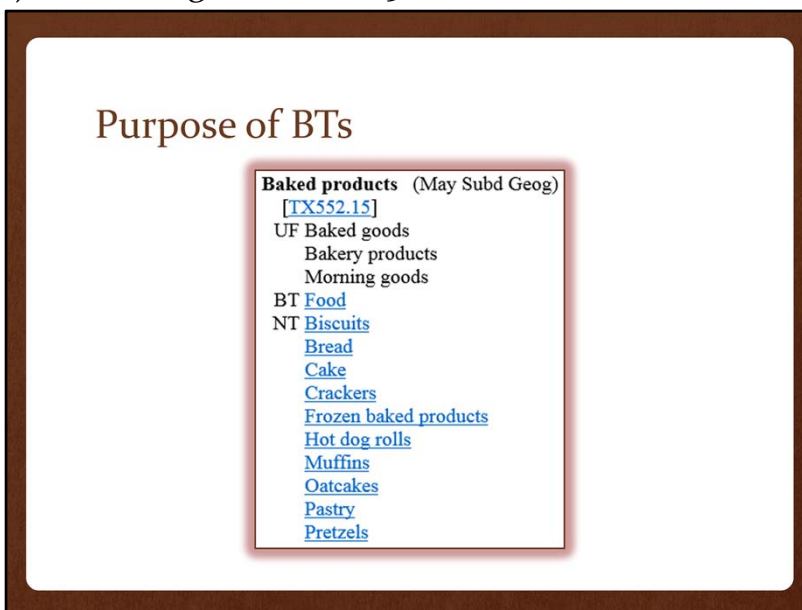
I had no idea that cookies are a type of cake. What if I click the BT to see what is listed under **Cakes**?



There are all sorts of cakes to choose from, from dessert bars to coffee cakes to doughnuts and tea cakes, not to mention wedding cakes.

But I decide that I would like to explore further. What would happen if I click on the BT **Baked products**?

Purpose of BTs



The image shows a screenshot of a Library of Congress Subject Heading hierarchy. The main heading is 'Baked products (May Subd Geog)'. Below it are several sub-headings: '[IX552.15]', 'UF Baked goods', 'Bakery products', 'Morning goods', 'BT Food', and 'NT Biscuits'. Under 'NT Biscuits', there is a list of specific types of biscuits: 'Bread', 'Cake', 'Crackers', 'Frozen baked products', 'Hot dog rolls', 'Muffins', 'Oatcakes', 'Pastry', and 'Pretzels'. The 'BT' and 'NT' labels indicate the type of relationship between the parent and child headings.

- Baked products** (May Subd Geog)
 - [\[IX552.15\]](#)
 - UF Baked goods
 - Bakery products
 - Morning goods
 - BT [Food](#)
 - NT [Biscuits](#)
 - [Bread](#)
 - [Cake](#)
 - [Crackers](#)
 - [Frozen baked products](#)
 - [Hot dog rolls](#)
 - [Muffins](#)
 - [Oatcakes](#)
 - [Pastry](#)
 - [Pretzels](#)

Now, this is broad! It lists bread, biscuits, crackers, muffins, and more! I'd like to try my hand at making bread, so I can click the NT and see what types of bread there are to choose from.

Purpose of BTs

Baked products (May Subd Geog)

Bread (May Subd Geog)
[TX769 (Bread making)]

UF Breads

BT [Baked products](#)

RT [Cooking \(Bread\)](#)

NT [Bagels](#)

[Breeding](#)

[Cassava bread](#)

[Challah \(Bread\)](#)

[Corn bread](#)

[Croissants](#)

[Dough](#)

[Focaccia](#)

[Fruit breads](#)

[Fry bread](#)

[Hametz](#)

[Hot dog rolls](#)

[Pita bread](#)

[Rye bread](#)

[Sourdough bread](#)

[Toast \(Bread\)](#)

[Tortillas](#)

[Whole wheat bread](#)

There is a list of over a dozen specific types of bread, and I might find library materials under any one of these headings.

But what if I want to go back to where I started? It's easy!

Purpose of BTs

Bread (May Subd Geog)
[TX769 (Bread making)]
UF Breads
BT [Baked products](#)
RT [Cooking \(Bread\)](#)
NT [Bagels](#)
[Breeding](#)
[Cassava bread](#)
[Challah \(Bread\)](#)
[Corn bread](#)
[Croissants](#)
[Dough](#)
[Focaccia](#)

Baked products (May Subd Geog)

Fruit breads
[Fry bread](#)
[Hametz](#)
[Hot dog rolls](#)
[Pita bread](#)
[Rye bread](#)
[Sourdough bread](#)
[Toast \(Bread\)](#)
[Tortillas](#)
[Whole wheat bread](#)

On **Bread**, I can click on **Baked products**.

Purpose of BTs

The screenshot shows a web-based interface for Library of Congress Subject Headings. The main heading is "Baked products (May Subd Geog)". Below it is a list of terms, some of which are underlined and blue, indicating they are clickable. The terms are: [TX552.15], UF Baked goods, Bakery products, Morning goods, BT Food, NT Biscuits, Bread, Cake, Crackers, Frozen baked products, Hot dog rolls, Muffins, Oatcakes, Pastry, and Pretzels. To the left of the main list, there is a partial view of another list with terms like Bread, [TX76], UF Bre, BT Bal, RT Coc, NT Bag, Bre, Cas, Cha, Cor, Cro, Dot, and Foc.

Term	Relationship
[TX552.15]	UF
Baked goods	UF
Bakery products	UF
Morning goods	UF
Food	BT
Biscuits	NT
Bread	
Cake	
Crackers	
Frozen baked products	
Hot dog rolls	
Muffins	
Oatcakes	
Pastry	
Pretzels	

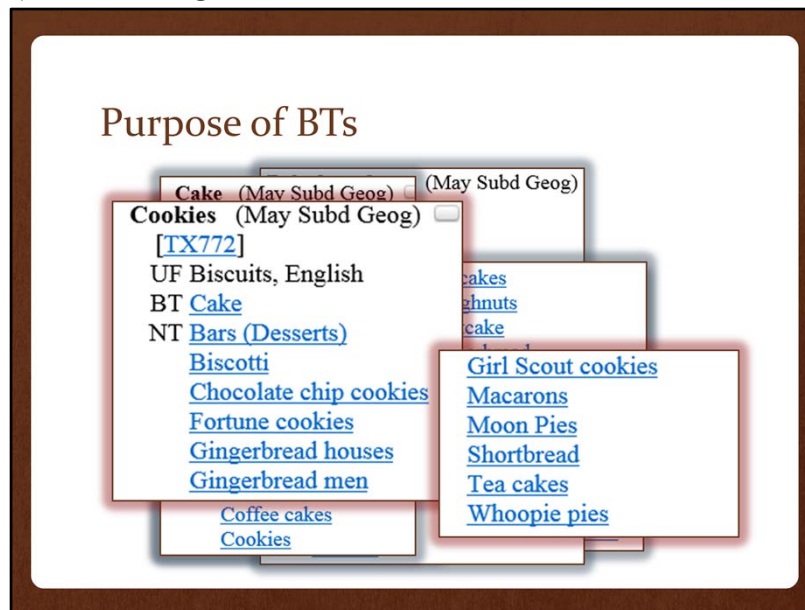
On **Baked products**, I can click on **Cake**.

Purpose of BTs

Cake (May Subd Geog) [TX771] (May Subd Geog)

- UF Cakes
- BT [Baked products](#)
 - [Confectionery](#)
 - [Cupcakes](#)
 - [Doughnuts](#)
 - [Fruitcake](#)
 - [Gingerbread](#)
 - [King cakes](#)
 - [Tea cakes](#)
 - [Twinkies \(Trademark\)](#)
 - [Wedding cakes](#)
- RT [Pastry](#)
- NT [Bars \(Desserts\)](#)
 - [Birthday cakes](#)
 - [Brownies \(Cooking\)](#)
 - [Cake decorating](#)
 - [Cake pops](#)
 - [Cheesecake](#)
 - [Christmas cakes](#)
 - [Coffee cakes](#)
 - [Cookies](#)

Now I can click on **Cookies**.



And I'm back where I started!

In this way, catalogers and users can go up and down the hierarchies to find the heading that best fits their needs.