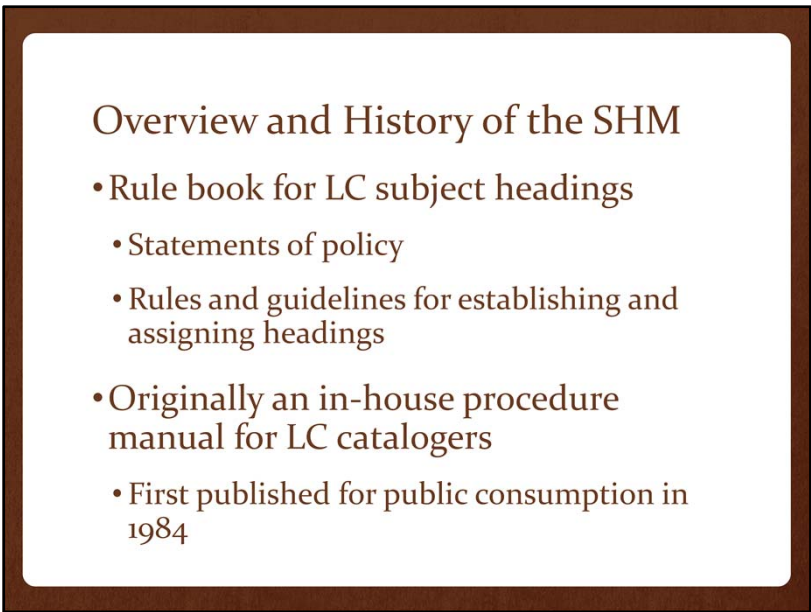# Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 3.1:
Introduction to the Subject Headings Manual

Policy and Standards Division
Library of Congress
September 2016

Overview and History of the SHM

- Rule book for LC subject headings
  - Statements of policy
  - Rules and guidelines for establishing and assigning headings
- Originally an in-house procedure manual for LC catalogers
  - First published for public consumption in 1984

The *Subject Headings Manual*, or SHM, is the instruction manual that accompanies *LC Subject Headings*. It contains statements of subject cataloging policy, and also the rules and guidelines for establishing and assigning headings.

For years, subject cataloging policy was updated by memos circulated among LC's subject catalogers. Those memos were compiled into binders for future consultation and became a procedure manual that was available only to LC staff. Catalogers in other libraries who wished to follow the same rules that LC catalogers did, asked that the manual be published for general use, as did professors in library schools, because they wished to teach LC policies to their students.

The preliminary edition of the *Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings* was published in 1984, and it has gone through several editions. It was renamed the *Subject Headings Manual* in the 2008 edition.

Overview and History of the SHM

- Revisions
  - Until 2011, instruction sheets were revised semi-annually
    - Manual was kept up-to-date with loose-leaf updates
  - Since 2011, instruction sheets are revised quarterly
    - Electronic only

The SHM used to be kept up to date with loose-leaf updates that were published twice per year. In 2011, though, the decision was made to cease publication and sale of the loose-leaf updates.
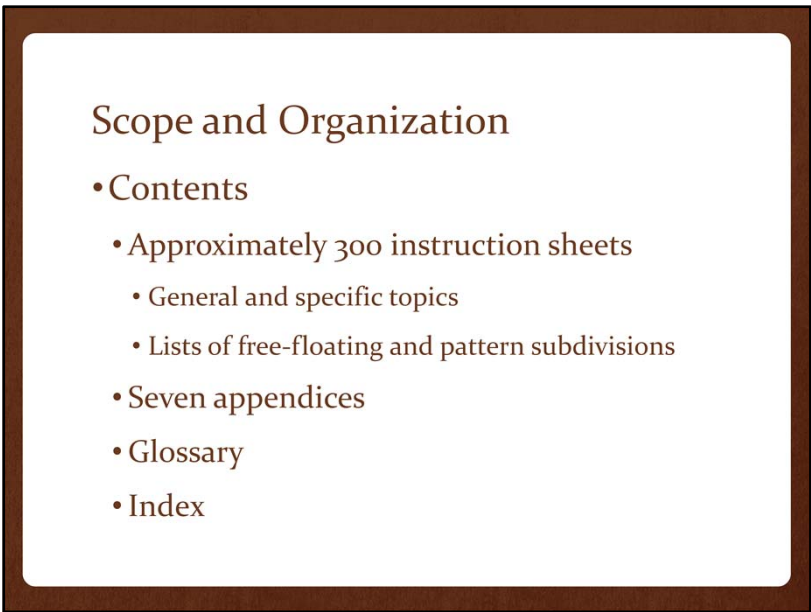
Since then, instruction sheets are revised as needed, but at least quarterly. The manual is now available only in electronic form.

Availability of the SHM

- Cataloger's Desktop
  - LC's fee-based online documentation service
- Free PDFs
  - http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeSHM/freeshm.html
- Do not trust the four-volume printed manual!

Before we talk about the organization and contents of the *Manual*, we want to explain how to access it.

- The preferred method is through Cataloger's Desktop, LC's fee-based online subscription documentation service. We recommend that you use Cataloger's Desktop since it provides full-text searching of the *Manual*.

- Freely available PDFs of the instruction sheets are also available on LC's public website at the URL on your screen.

- Some of you may still have access to the printed four-binder edition of the SHM. Please do not use it, since dozens of instruction sheets have been revised since the last loose-leaf update was published. If you do choose to use it, though, *please do not trust it*. Verify everything with either the PDFs or with the version in Cataloger's Desktop.

Scope and Organization

- Contents
  - Approximately 300 instruction sheets
    - General and specific topics
    - Lists of free-floating and pattern subdivisions
  - Seven appendices
  - Glossary
  - Index

Today, the SHM includes approximately 300 instruction sheets, seven appendices, a glossary, and an index.

The instruction sheets, which are sometimes called memos, contain all the information that you need to propose and assign LC subject headings.

There are instruction sheets on very general topics, such as the principles of subject heading assignment, to very specific topics, like how to catalog resources about professional ethics, or marketing, or quotations.

It also includes almost three dozen lists of free-floating and pattern subdivisions; each list is contained in its own instruction sheet.

An examination of the table of contents will show just how extensive it is.

Library of Congress Subject Headings: Module 3.1

Table of Contents

<u>This was a live demo. The slides on the handouts do not precisely match the slides in the audio-visual lecture.</u>

The first thing you should notice is that the instruction sheets are separately numbered, and each number begins with the letter H. LC has several other manuals whose instruction sheets are prefixed with other letters, including F, G, J, and L. So if you look for the H you will know that you are in the manual for LCSH.

As you can see, the first section of the manual consists of instruction sheets covering general topics. They include H 80, "Order of Subject Headings," and H 180, "Assigning and Constructing Subject Headings." Those two instruction sheets form the foundation of all subject heading assignment and you really should study them. We will discuss them in depth in a series of modules later in this training.

This section also includes information on assigning subject headings to new editions of resources and to serials. If you catalog materials in Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Korean, or Japanese, you should become familiar with the special provisions in H 181 and H 182.

The next section is entitled "Making Subject Heading Proposals." The instruction sheets in that section provide technical information on the use of the Proposal System to make proposals to add, revise, or cancel headings from LCSH. It also includes instruction sheets detailing the type and amount of research that is necessary to establish a new subject heading, and how to cite that research.

Library of Congress Subject Headings: Module 3.1

"Formulating Subject Headings" comes next. This section provides the rules that govern the decision to use singular or plural in subject headings, the use of foreign terms and phrases in headings, parenthetical qualifiers, and more. If you have been viewing these modules in order, much of this should look familiar to you because we covered the highlights in modules 2.2 and 2.3. If you ever want to know why a heading is formatted the way it is, this is where you should look. And of course, if you are proposing headings, you should always consult these instruction sheets.

	References
H 370	Broader Terms, Narrower Terms, and Related Terms
H 371	General See Also References
H 373	"Used for" References
H 374	General See References
H 375	[*Topic*]—[*Place*] Broader Term References
H 400	Scope Notes
H 405	Establishing Certain Entities in the Name or Subject Authority File
H 430	***Name Headings as Subjects***
H 432	Subject Usage Information in Name Authority Records
H 436	Provisional Name Headings
H 460	Name Changes in Non-Jurisdictional Corporate Bodies
H 475	Subdividing Corporate Name Headings by Place
H 620	Chronological Headings and Subdivisions
	Geographic Headings and Subdivisions
H 690	Formulating Geographic Headings
H 708	Linear Jurisdictional Name Changes in Name Authority Records
H 710	Jurisdictional Mergers and Splits
H 713	First Order Political Divisions of Countries
H 715	Extinct Cities
H 720	City Sections
H 760	Geographic Regions
H 790	Areas Associated with Cities
H 800	Rivers, Valleys, Watersheds, etc.
H 807	Islands
H 810	Qualification of Geographic Headings

Next comes a section on references, which contains an instruction sheet for "Broader, Narrower, and Related Terms," and one for "'Used For' references," along with sheets about "General See Also" and "General See References." We covered highlights of these instruction sheets in modules 2.5 to 2.8.

The next instruction sheet is H 400, "Scope notes." It contains all of the guidelines for including scope notes in proposals and for interpreting scope notes in existing entries. We covered scope notes in Module 2.4.

The next instruction sheet is H 405, "Establishing Certain Entities in the Name or Subject Authority File." It consists chiefly of lists of types of headings that are established in LCSH and in the Name Authority File. We will discuss this instruction sheet in Unit 4.

The next section provides information about personal and corporate names as subjects, followed by a single instruction sheet on chronological headings and subdivisions.

The next section, instruction sheets H 690-H 910, consists of instruction sheets that provide just about anything you will ever want to know about proposing geographic headings, and using geographic headings and subdivisions.

Contents

H 925	China and Taiwan
H 928	Congo
H 945	Germany
H 955	Great Britain
H 975	Hawaii
H 978	Hong Kong
H 980	Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, West Bank, and Palestine
H 985	Latin America
H 987	Malaysia and Malaya
H 990	New York (N.Y.)
H 1023	Soviet Union
H 1045	Vatican City
H 1050	Washington (D.C.)
H 1055	Yugoslavia

H 925 through H 1055 provide information about the cataloging of resources about places that need some special instructions because of their history or their political circumstances.

The SHM is packed with information, and it can be overwhelming for a beginner. In the next module we will explain how the instruction sheets are arranged and also demonstrate their use. Exercises in some of the modules will also require you to use the SHM, so that you can develop some confidence with it. For now, we would like to leave you with some general tips on using the *Manual*.

H 1075	*Subdivisions*
H 1078	Dates in Subdivisions for Specific Events
H 1090	Multiple Subdivisions
H 1095	*Free-floating subdivisions*
H 1100	Classes of Persons
H 1103	Ethnic Groups
H 1105	Corporate Bodies
H 1110	Names of Persons
H 1120	Names of Families
H 1140	Names of Places
H 1145.5	Bodies of Water
H 1146	*Subdivisions Controlled by Pattern Headings*
H 1147	Animals
H 1148	Art
H 1149	Chemicals
H 1149.5	Colonies
H 1150	Diseases
	Educational Institutions
H 1151	Individual Educational Institutions
H 1151.5	Types of Educational Institutions
H 1153	Industries
H 1154	Languages
H 1154.5	Legal Topics
H 1155	Legislative Bodies
	Literary Authors
H 1155.2	Groups of Literary Authors
H 1155.6	Literary Works Entered Under Author
H 1155.8	Literary Works Entered Under Title
H 1156	Literatures

Next are three sections that explain the style and format of subdivisions and their application. The section titled "Subdivisions" provides general information, as well as information on the use of dates in subdivisions. It also has an instruction sheet on "Multiple Subdivisions," which is a special type of subdivision that we will discuss in Unit 6. The next two sections provide instructions for using free-floating and pattern subdivisions, which are subdivisions that can be assigned to headings without being established if the headings belong to the category to which the subdivisions can be assigned. In Module 4.1 we will explain the purpose of categories and also discuss how you determine what heading belongs to which category. In Modules 6.6 through 6.7 we will discuss the use of free-floating and pattern subdivisions in great detail.
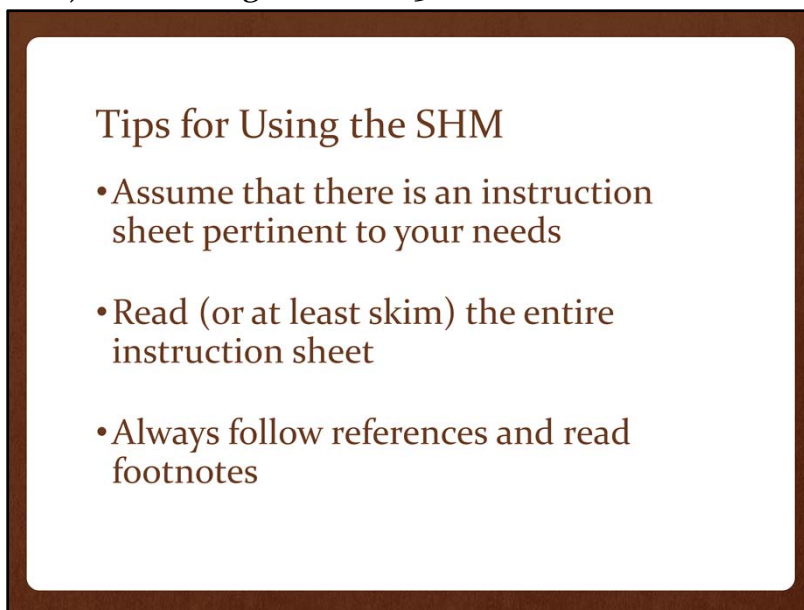
	Special Topics, Materials, Subdivisions, etc.
H 1205	Abstracts
H 1206.5	Acronyms
H 1210	Addresses, Essays, Lectures
H 1210.5	Aerial and Space Photography
H 1211	Airports
H 1223	Arabs
H 1225	Archaeological Works
H 1230	Archives and Archival Resources
H 1250	Art and Fine Art
H 1255	Artistic Photography
H 1265	Awards
H 1285	Battles
H 1295	Bible: Special Topics
H 1300	Bible and Other Sacred Works
H 1322	Bibliographies about Individual Persons
H 1325	Bibliography of Bibliographies
H 1328	Bio-bibliography
H 1330	Biography
H 1332	Biological Names
H 1333	Books and Reading
H 1333.5	Boundaries
H 1334	Buildings and Other Structures

The longest section in the SHM is called "Special Topics, Materials, Subdivisions, Etc." These 170 or so instruction sheets provide information on establishing and assigning subject headings and subdivisions in a wide range of situations. As you can see, they are arranged alphabetically by title.

Topics in the SHM include guidelines for addressing acronyms, cataloging resources about battles, and addressing various forms, such as bibliographies, and biographies, and bio-bibliographies. There are instruction sheets for cataloging resources about comics, congresses, cooking, disasters, and exhibitions. There are four instruction sheets about the cataloging of legal resources and six on literature. And we have only scrolled through half the list so far!

The SHM concludes with a glossary of terms used in the SHM, several appendices, and an index.

Tips for Using the SHM

- Assume that there is an instruction sheet pertinent to your needs

- Read (or at least skim) the entire instruction sheet

- Always follow references and read footnotes

First, you should always assume that there is an instruction sheet to answer whatever question you may have about the assignment of LC subject headings, or about proposing them.

Sometimes that will be a general instruction sheet such as the one that provides the rules for geographic subdivision, and at other times, an instruction sheet in the special topics and materials section will specifically address your question.

When you find an instruction sheet that appears to answer your question, we recommend that you read the entire sheet. The first sections, or paragraphs, may seem to provide all the information you need, but there may be much more detailed information later in the sheet.

We have not yet mentioned footnotes and references in the SHM, but they are numerous. You should always follow references to make sure that you are looking at the most appropriate instruction sheet for your needs; and footnotes often provide information that is vital to the proper assignment of a particular heading or subdivision. We will demonstrate footnotes and references throughout this training, when appropriate to the discussion.

Tips for Using the SHM

• Do not assume that you know what the instruction sheet says

Remember:

It is not a sign of weakness to look it up!

Next, never assume that you know what the instruction sheet says. Memories can be faulty, and instruction sheets are revised regularly. If you remember only one thing from this module, it should be this:

It is not a sign of weakness to look it up!

The SHM provides instructions – sometimes even step-by-step instructions (like a cookbook does) – for the creation of valid subject heading strings and subject arrays that accurately describe the contents and forms of resources.

Please explore the manual and become familiar with it. Consulting it regularly will help you catalog more accurately, and, although it sounds counter-intuitive, it will actually speed up your cataloging when you become proficient with it because it provides a recipe to follow.