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# Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 4.12  
Geographic Regions

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Policy and Standards Division  
Library of Congress  
October 2016

## Introduction and Plan

- Region
  - Non-jurisdictional area based on a feature or a city and its surrounding territory
  - Exact size is indefinite and may vary according to the resource being cataloged
- Headings for regions
  - Some have to be established
  - Some are free-floating

Generally speaking, a geographic region is the non-jurisdictional area based on a geographic feature or a city and its surrounding territory.

Its exact size is indefinite and may vary according to the resource being cataloged.

Some regions have to be established in LCSH – that is, they have to be proposed and formally included – while others are free-floating.

## Introduction and Plan

- In this module
  - Which headings for regions must be established and which are free-floating
  - How to construct and assign a free-floating heading for a region
  - The differences among a region of a city, the city's suburban area, and the city's metropolitan area

In this module, we will explain which headings have to be established and which are free-floating, and show you how to construct and assign a free-floating heading for a region.

We will also explain the differences between a region based on a city, and a city's suburban area, and the same city's metropolitan area.

**Free-Floating Headings for Regions**

- Headings based on natural and man-made geographic features
  - The feature must be established first
  - Insert the word **Region**

**Pyrenees**  
**Pyrenees Region**

**Labrador Nature Reserve (Singapore)**  
**Labrador Nature Reserve Region**  
**(Singapore)**

First we will discuss free-floating headings for regions.

Regions that are based on natural and man-made geographic features are free-floating. The feature first has to be established in LCSH. Since the **Pyrenees** are established, we can create a free-floating heading to assign to a resource about the mountains and the region around them. Likewise, Labrador Nature Reserve in Singapore is a man-made geographic feature, and it is established in LCSH so a region heading can be constructed on a free-floating basis.

The heading for the region is created by inserting the word **Region** after the substantive portion of the heading for the feature and before its qualifier, if there is one.

**Free-Floating Headings for Regions**

- Headings based on natural and man-made geographic features
  - The feature must be established first
  - Insert the word **Region**

**Main River (Germany)**  
**Main River Region (Germany)**

**Autoroute de Normandie (France)**  
**Autoroute de Normandie Region (France)**

Here are two more examples.

Bodies of water can have regions, and so can highways. Notice in the heading **Autoroute de Normandie Region** that the word **Region** is used consistently, even if the heading for the feature is established in another language

Free-Floating Headings for Regions

- Construction of the heading
  - Do not change the heading for the feature from plural to singular form

**Rocky Mountains**  
**Rocky Mountains Region**

If the heading for the feature is established in the plural, keep it plural when adding the word **Region**.

**Free-Floating Headings for Regions**

- Construction of the heading
  - Also add a comma before the word **Region** if the heading for the feature is inverted

**Kilimanjaro, Mount (Tanzania)**  
**Kilimanjaro, Mount, Region (Tanzania)**

If the heading for the feature is inverted, include a comma before the word **Region**, as in Kilimanjaro [comma] Mount [comma] Region, qualified by Tanzania.

### Free-Floating Headings for Regions

- Construction of the heading
  - Retain the geographic qualifier for the feature as-is

**Titicaca, Lake (Peru and Bolivia)**

**Titicaca, Lake, Region (Peru and Bolivia)**

**Hood, Mount (Or.)**

**Hood, Mount, Region (Or.)**

You should always retain the geographic qualifier as-is. This is true even if the resource you are cataloging covers only one part of the region. For example, Lake Titicaca is on the border of Peru and Bolivia. You would assign the heading **Titicaca, Lake, Region (Peru and Bolivia)** even if the resource is about only the portion of the region that is in Peru.

In the same way, regions that extend far beyond the feature, including into other jurisdictions, have the same qualifier as the heading. Mount Hood is in Oregon, but is near Oregon's jurisdictional boundary with Washington State. The Mount Hood Region is sometimes considered to extend into Washington, but the qualifier for the region includes only Oregon.



### Free-Floating Headings for Regions

- Construction of the heading
  - Remove the generic qualifier denoting the type of feature, if present

**Perry Park (Colo. : Plateau)**

**Perry Park Region (Colo.)**

**Vermilion River (Alta. : River)**

**Vermilion River Region (Alta.)**

Sometimes names of geographic features conflict with names of other entities in the same jurisdiction. Many times, a feature has the same name as a jurisdiction that is near the feature. In those cases, a second qualifier is added to the heading for the feature, and it consists of a generic word or phrase that indicates the type of feature that it is. For example, there are both a river and a county in Alberta, Canada, called Vermillion River. The addition of the qualifier “River” to the heading for the geographic feature distinguishes between them.

When you are creating a region heading, you should retain the geographic qualifier – in this case, Alta. (for Alberta) – but remove the qualifier that indicates the type of feature.

This is reasonable since keeping it would be misleading. In this example, Vermilion River Region would be marked as a river, not a region.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- Constructed in the same way as regions for geographic features
- Insert the word **Region** into the established heading for the city

**Amsterdam (Netherlands)**  
**Amsterdam Region (Netherlands)**

**Burbank (Los Angeles County, Calif.)**  
**Burbank Region (Los Angeles County, Calif.)**

Free-floating headings for regions around cities are created according to the same general rules as those for regions based on features.

The city must always be established first, and the word Region is inserted between the substantive portion of the heading and the qualifier.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- Constructed in the same way as regions for geographic features
- Do not change the heading for the city from plural to singular form

**Woodlands (Tex.)**  
**Woodlands Region (Tex.)**

Although it may sound grammatically awkward, we never change the name of the city from plural to singular.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- Constructed in the same way as regions for geographic features
- Retain the geographic qualifier for the city as-is

**Philadelphia (Pa.)**  
**Philadelphia Region (Pa.)**

The geographic qualifier is retained as-is, even if the region covers several jurisdictions. In this example, Philadelphia is in the state of Pennsylvania, but its region also includes parts of the states of New Jersey and Delaware. Regardless, the heading for the region is **Philadelphia Region (Pa.)**.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- Regions based on the names of two or more cities
  - Create a separate heading for each

**Minneapolis (Minn.)**  
**Saint Paul (Minn.)**

✓ **Minneapolis Region (Minn.)**  
✓ **Saint Paul Region (Minn.)**  
✗ **Minneapolis-Saint Paul Region (Minn.)**

Sometimes cities are geographically so close to each other that they are referred to as a single unit, such as Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Saint Paul, Minnesota, which are often referred to as Minneapolis-Saint Paul.

If a resource is about the region of the two cities together, there should be separate headings for them, not a single combined heading.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- From H 790, Areas Associated with Cities
  - *City*  
The territory over which the city exercises its control, that is, the jurisdiction itself.
  - *[city] Region*  
The city itself and its surrounding territory, the exact size and boundaries of which are indefinite and may vary according to each individual work being cataloged.

In addition to the word Region, two free-floating phrases may be added to headings for cities: Metropolitan Area and Suburban Area. Each of these three options has a different meaning.

In LCSH practice, the heading for the city itself denotes the territory over which the city exercises its control. In other words, the jurisdiction itself.

We have already discussed the definition of Region, which in the case of cities is the city itself plus its surrounding territory, the exact size and boundaries of which are indefinite and may vary according to each individual work being cataloged.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- From H 790, Areas Associated with Cities
  - *[city] Metropolitan Area*  
A quasi-official name for a well-defined area consisting of the city itself and those densely populated territories immediately surrounding the city which are socially and economically integrated with it.

A metropolitan area refers to a well-defined area consisting of a city itself and the densely populated territories immediately surrounding it, which are socially and economically integrated with it.

Note that the city itself is part of the metropolitan area.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- From H 790, Areas Associated with Cities
  - *[city] Suburban Area*  
The territory associated with a city, including neighboring residential areas lying outside the city, as well as nearby smaller satellite jurisdictions; the territory designated does not include the city itself.

The city itself is not part of its suburban area, which is defined as the territory associated with a city, including neighboring residential areas lying outside the city, as well as nearby smaller satellite jurisdictions.



Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- Example

**Philadelphia (Pa.)**  
**Philadelphia Region (Pa.)**  
**Philadelphia Metropolitan Area (Pa.)**  
**Philadelphia Suburban Area (Pa.)**

A city can have a region, a metropolitan area, and a suburban area, and the rules for the creation of headings for suburban areas and metropolitan areas are the same as those for regions: use the same qualifier, and so forth.

So how do you know which free-floating heading to use?

The resource being cataloged is often the best guide, but let's provide a brief outline of the distinctions among the types of entities.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- **City:** the city itself
- **Metropolitan area:** the city and a well-defined area that is socially and economically integrated with it
- **Suburban area:** the city's neighboring residential areas and jurisdictions, but not the city itself
- **Region:** an amorphous region that consists of the city and the territory around it

When we use the heading for the city, the resource is about the city itself, not its surrounding territory.

A metropolitan area is often an official name, and can be quasi-jurisdictional. It includes the city itself and the areas around the city that are integrated with it; in many cases, a visitor who is unfamiliar with the jurisdictions in the area would not realize that a jurisdictional boundary had been crossed.

A suburban area does not include the city itself, and this is what distinguishes it from a metropolitan area.

In many ways, headings for regions are the broadest in meaning, because they include the city itself and any other territory around the city. They are not limited to a quasi-jurisdictional idea of a metropolitan area or to the suburbs.

Free-Floating Headings for Regions, Etc.,  
Based on Names of Cities

- In case of doubt
  - Metropolitan area v. region
    - Create and assign a heading for the region
  - Suburban area v. region
    - Create and assign a heading for the region

That being the case, if you are unsure whether a resource is about a metropolitan area or a region, or a suburban area or a region, assign the heading for the region.

## Geographic Subdivision

- All free-floating headings for regions, suburban areas, and metropolitan areas may also be used as geographic subdivisions

**Housing development—France—  
Autoroute de Normandie Region.**

**Traffic congestion—Netherlands—  
Amsterdam Metropolitan Area.**

**Wildlife—Titicaca, Lake, Region (Peru  
and Bolivia)**

All of the free-floating headings for regions, suburban areas, and metropolitan areas may also be used as geographic subdivisions.

We will discuss the rules for geographic subdivision in Unit 6.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

1. Regions that are associated with geographic features but are well known by alternative name forms

Not all headings for regions can be created on a free-floating basis. In fact, there are six categories of headings that must be specifically established before they can be used.

We'll briefly discuss each one.

First, regions that are associated with geographic features but are well known by alternative names must be established. Recall that the general rule is to use the heading for the feature and add the word Region to it. That does not work well when the region has a different name.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

1. Regions that are associated with geographic features but are well known by alternative name forms

**Pacific Area**


- UF Asia-Pacific Region
- Asian-Pacific Region
- Asian and Pacific Council countries
- Pacific Ocean Region
- Pacific Region
- Pacific Rim

For example, the region around the Pacific Ocean is most commonly called the Pacific Area.

We want to use the common terminology, so the heading **Pacific Area** is established, and it has UFs for variant names, including *Pacific Ocean Region*.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

1. Regions that are associated with geographic features but are well known by alternative name forms



**Pacific Area**

- UF Asia-Pacific Region
- Asian-Pacific Region
- Asian and Pacific Council countries
- Pacific
- Pacific
- Pacific

**San Francisco Bay Area (Calif.)**

- UF Bay Area, San Francisco (Calif.)
- San Francisco Bay Region (Calif.)
- San Francisco Region (Calif.)

The area around San Francisco Bay is generally called the San Francisco Bay Area, so that has been specifically established, too.

Note the UFs for *San Francisco Bay Region* and *San Francisco Region*.

**Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions**

1. Regions that are associated with geographic features but are well known by alternative name forms

<b>New York (N.Y.)</b>	<b>Washington (D.C.)</b>
<b>New York Metropolitan Area</b>	<b>Washington Metropolitan Area</b>
<b>New York Region</b>	<b>Washington Region</b>
<b>New York Suburban Area</b>	<b>Washington Suburban Area</b>

Those UFs brings us to another point: sometimes the regions, metropolitan areas, and suburban areas of cities are so well-known or cover so much territory in so many jurisdictions that exceptions are made to the general rule that the qualifier for the city has to be retained.

In those cases, though, the headings are specifically established, as these headings for New York City and Washington, D.C., and their regions, metropolitan areas, and suburban areas are.

These types of headings do not generally have UFs.



Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

2. Regions that have unique and proper  
names

**Four Corners Region**

Here are entered works on the area adjacent to  
the intersecting boundaries of Colorado,  
Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

The second type of heading that has to be established is those regions that have unique and/or proper names that are not based on the name of a feature or city.

For example, the Four Corners Region is the area adjacent to the intersecting boundaries of the U.S. states: Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

2. Regions that have unique and proper names

**Four Corners Region**   
Here are entered works on the area adjacent to

**Midlands (Ireland)**   
Here are entered works on the region  
comprising the counties of Laois, Longford,  
Offaly, Westmeath, and Kildare.  
UF Central Plain (Ireland)

The Midlands in Ireland is also a region with a unique name.

As you can see from the UF, it is also known as the Central Plain of Ireland.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

3. Regions based on the names of international organizations, if no regional heading exists

**Group of Ten countries**

Here are entered works on the member countries of the Group of Ten (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States). Works on the Group of Ten as an international body are entered under Group of Ten.

UF G 10 countries  
G10 countries

Regions that are based on the names of international organizations are established in LCSH if no regional geographic heading to represent the countries exists.

The heading **Group of Ten countries** is established because the G-10 includes countries from Europe, North America, and Asia.

**Group of Ten countries**, the subject heading, is valid for resources on the member countries as territorial entities.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

3. Regions based on the names of  
international organizations, if no  
regional heading exists

- ✓ **North America**
- ✗ **North American Free Trade Agreement  
countries**
  
- ✓ **Southeast Asia**
- ✗ **Association of Southeast Asian Nations  
countries**

Resources about the countries that belong to regional organizations are assigned the heading for the region.

For example, we assign the heading **North America** instead of *North American Free Trade Agreement countries* because the three signatories of NAFTA are Canada, Mexico, and the United States – the three countries in North America.

Likewise, we assign **Southeast Asia**, not *Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries*.

The heading for the treaty or the organization itself can be assigned as an additional heading for the resource, if considered necessary.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

4. Regions based on the names of corporate bodies or military installations

**Idaho National Laboratory Region (Idaho)**  
**National Space Technology Laboratories Region (Miss.)**  
**Randolph Air Force Base Region (Tex.)**

The fourth category of headings for regions that has to be specifically established is that of regions based on the names of corporate bodies or military installations.

This situation is so rare that two of the three examples provided in the SHM are not even established yet. They are the heading for the Idaho National Laboratory Region, the heading for the National Space Technology Laboratories Region in Mississippi, and the Randolph Air Force Base Region in Texas.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

5. Regions with directional qualifiers, if  
the region is well-defined and  
generally recognized by that name in  
English-language reference sources

**Africa, Northeast**

**Europe, Western**

**Virginia, Northern**

Regions whose name consists of a geographic name and a directional qualifier are also established in LCSH, but only if the region is well-defined and is generally recognized by that name in English-language reference sources.

Specifically Established Headings  
for Regions

6. Watersheds and estuaries, river  
valleys, and river deltas

**Nile River Delta (Egypt)**  
**Nile River Valley**  
**Nile River Watershed**

**Yellow River Delta (China)**  
**Yellow River Estuary (China)**  
**Yellow River Watershed (China)**

And finally, headings for watersheds and estuaries, river valleys, and deltas also need to be specifically established.

As discussed earlier, though, headings for regions of rivers are free-floating.

### Geographic Subdivision

- All specifically established and free-floating headings for regions may also be used as geographic subdivisions

**Jet planes—Texas—Randolph Air  
Force Base Region—Noise.**

**Tourism—Ireland—Midlands.**

All specifically established and free-floating headings for regions may also be used as geographic subdivisions.



**Geographic Subdivision**

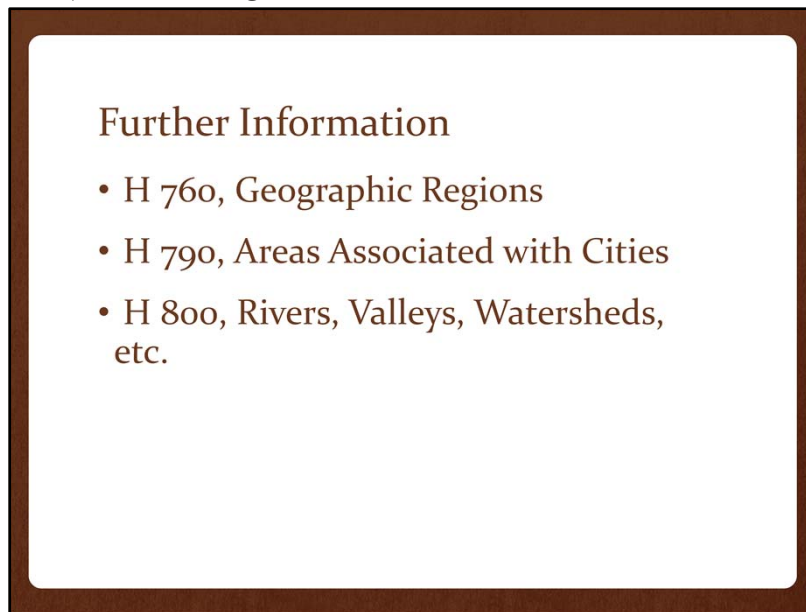
- All specifically established and free-floating headings for regions may also be used as geographic subdivisions
- Headings with directional qualifiers and those without parenthetical qualifiers are used directly

**Mountains—Europe, Western.**

**Public utilities—Washington Suburban Area.**

Headings that have directional qualifiers, such as **Europe, Western**, and those that do not have a parenthetical qualifier are used directly.

We will discuss the rules for geographic subdivision in Unit 6.



Further Information

- H 760, Geographic Regions
- H 790, Areas Associated with Cities
- H 800, Rivers, Valleys, Watersheds, etc.

Three instruction sheets provide more information on the topics covered in this module:

- H 760, Geographic Regions;
- H 790, Areas Associated with Cities; and
- H 800, Rivers, Valleys, Watersheds, Etc.