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# Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 4.3  
Form Headings

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Policy and Standards Division  
Library of Congress  
[Spelled-out month] 2016

## Introduction and Definition

- Form headings and subdivisions
  - Indicate what a resource *is* rather than what is *about*
    - The format or arrangement
      - dictionaries, poems, maps
    - The publication pattern
      - periodicals, newspapers
    - The type of data
      - biographies, case studies, statistics

LCSH includes a wide variety of form headings and subdivisions that are used to identify what a resource is instead of what the resource is about.

By that we mean the format or arrangement of the resource itself, such as a map or dictionary or handbook or poems.

It could also mean the publication pattern, as in periodicals or newspapers, or the type of data that the resource contains. Types of data could include biographies, case studies, statistics, or scientific observations.

## Introduction and Definition

- This module
  - Types and characteristics of form headings
  - Assignment of form headings
- Module 6.17
  - Form subdivisions
- Not about *LC Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT)

In this module, we will talk about the types and characteristics of form headings, and provide some general advice on assigning them.

In module 6.17, we will do the same for form subdivisions.

Neither this module nor the module on form subdivisions is about *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms* (known as LCGFT). LCGFT is a separate vocabulary that can be used alongside LCSH – or any other subject vocabulary, for that matter. We will discuss LCGFT very briefly at the end of this module.

**Identifying Form Headings**

- A noun or noun phrase

**Action and adventure films**  
**Cartularies**  
**Charts, diagrams, etc.**  
**Limericks**  
**Maps**  
**Statutes**

Form headings consist of a plural noun or noun phrase, and the form being described is often immediately recognizable, such as

**Action and adventure films**  
**Charts, diagrams, etc.**  
**Limericks**  
**Maps and**  
**Statutes.**

Other form headings are used for resources that are quite a bit more obscure, such as **Cartularies**, which are medieval books that contain copies of charters and other legal documents of religious communities, corporations, or wealthy individuals, as well as evidence of their day-to-day business.

## Identifying Form Headings

- A noun or noun phrase
  - For literature, may indicate the class of persons of the creators

**Cancer patients' writings**

**Immigrants' writings**

**Police officers' writings**

Sometimes the heading indicates the class of persons that created the resource, as in the headings you see here.

### Identifying Form Headings

- May be qualified by nationality or region, ethnicity, and/or language

**Proverbs, Chadian**

**European drama**

**Kurdish newspapers**

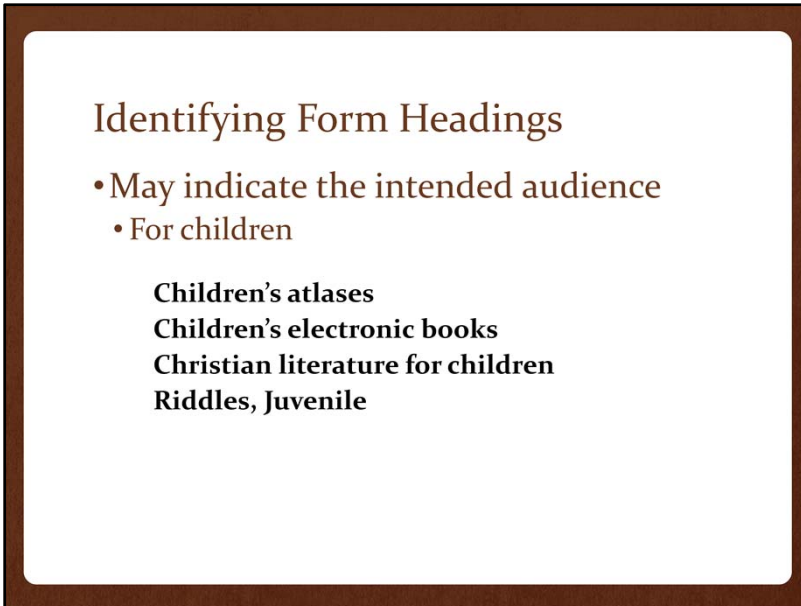
**Abbreviations, Hebrew**

**Indic fiction (English)**

In some disciplines, form headings may be qualified by a nationality or region, as in **Proverbs, Chadian** and **European drama**. They may be qualified by an ethnic group, like **Kurdish newspapers**; or by language, as we see in **Abbreviations, Hebrew**.

Some headings have multiple qualifiers. For example, **Indic fiction (English)** is for fiction that was written by authors from the country of India in the language of English.

As you can see from the examples on this slide, form headings may be in natural-language order or inverted, and they may or may not include parenthetical qualifiers.



**Identifying Form Headings**

- May indicate the intended audience
  - For children

**Children's atlases**  
**Children's electronic books**  
**Christian literature for children**  
**Riddles, Juvenile**

Some form headings indicate the intended audience, and they usually refer to age groups.

Resources intended for children are indicated in two different ways:

First, if the heading is in natural-language form, it employs the word “children.”

Second, there are a few inverted headings that include the word “Juvenile.”

**Identifying Form Headings**

- May indicate the intended audience
  - For children
    - Children's atlases**
    - Children's electronic books**
    - Christian literature for children**
    - Riddles, Juvenile**
    - Teen films**
    - Youths' periodicals**

Other age levels are also represented.



## Identifying Form Headings

- May indicate the intended audience
  - For other groupings

**Adult party games**

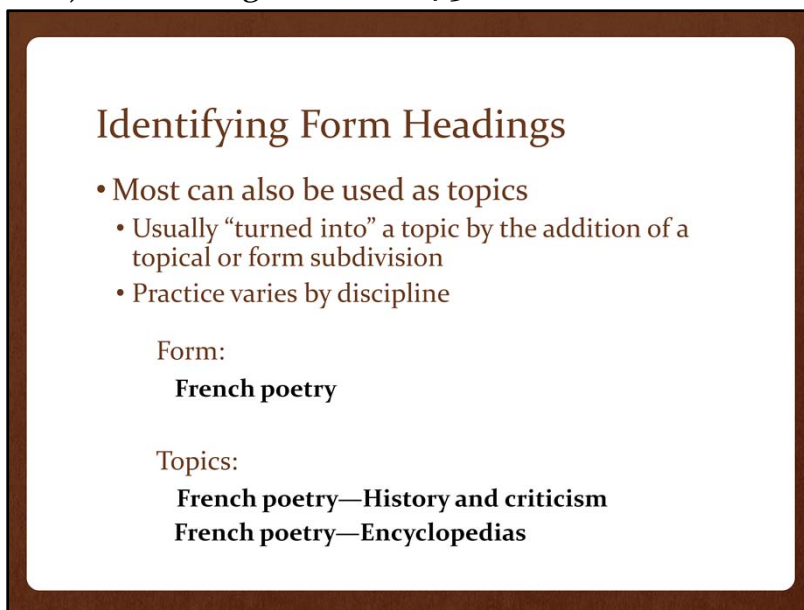
**Men's magazines**

**Motion pictures for men**

**Women's television programs**

**Women's wit and humor**

And so are other groups, such as adults, men, and women.



### Identifying Form Headings

- Most can also be used as topics
  - Usually “turned into” a topic by the addition of a topical or form subdivision
  - Practice varies by discipline

Form:  
**French poetry**

Topics:  
**French poetry—History and criticism**  
**French poetry—Encyclopedias**

There is one final characteristic of form headings that we should mention: most of them can also be used as topics for works *about* the form.

In the example on your screen, the form heading is **French poetry**; adding one or more free-floating form or topical subdivisions to it makes it topical. The heading **French poetry—History and criticism** expresses that the resource is a historical or critical work about French poetry. **French poetry—Encyclopedias** is an encyclopedia *about* French poetry.

**Identifying Form Headings**

- Most can also be used as topics
  - Usually “turned into” a topic by the addition of a topical or form subdivision
  - Practice varies by discipline

Form:

- French poetry.**
- French poetry—Women authors**

Topics:

- French poetry—History and criticism**
- French poetry—Encyclopedias**

Not all topical subdivisions make a heading topical, though. The addition of the subdivision – **Women authors** to the heading **French poetry** only indicates the author group. The **heading—subdivision** combination is still a form. Adding –**History and criticism** to **French poetry** or to **French poetry– Women authors** would turn either heading into a topic. By the way, the subdivision –**Women authors** is not a class of persons, even though it looks like one, because of the special rules for cataloging literature. It is still about French poetry by women authors, not about the authors themselves. Which brings us to a really important point.

Some disciplines, such as literature, have unique policies regarding the use of subdivisions and form headings, and those policies are documented and explained in the SHM. As always, we strongly encourage you to consult the SHM as you do your work.

The slide is titled "Identifying Form Headings" and contains a bullet point: "• Most can also be used as topics". Below this is a callout box with a red border containing the heading "Allegories" followed by a small square icon. The text inside the box reads: "Here are entered collections of allegories. Works on allegory as a literary form are entered under the heading Allegory."

Notice that we've said that most form headings can be used as topics. Some of them cannot be, because resources about the form are assigned a different heading. Scope notes are provided in all of those cases.

Take for example the heading **Allegories**. The scope note indicates that it is used for collections of allegories, but works on the literary form are entered under **Allegory** instead.

The distinction is therefore between the singular and plural forms of the word, and that is very common in these situations.

## Identifying Form Headings

- Most can also be used as topics

**Allegories**

Here are entered collections of allegories. Works on allegory as a literary form are entered under the

**Short stories** (Not Subd Geog)

Here are entered collections of stories. Works on the short story as a literary form and on the art of short story writing are entered under Short story.

The headings **Short story** and **Short stories** follow the pattern.

### Identifying Form Headings

- Most can also be used as topics

**Allegories**   
Here are entered collections of allegories. Works on allegory as a literary form are entered under the

**Short stories** (Not Subd Geog)   
Here are entered collections of stories. Works on the short story as a literary form and on the art of short

**Constitutions** (May Subd Geog)   
Here are entered collections of constitutions or texts of individual constitutions. Works about constitutions or constitutional law are entered under Constitutional law.

Other headings do not, though, so it is important to always look up the heading you want to use and read the scope note.

The scope note for **Constitutions** reads,

Here are entered collections of constitutions or texts of individual constitutions. Works about constitutions or constitutional law are entered under **Constitutional law**.

### Identifying Form Headings

- Scope notes
  - Often indicate that the heading is used as a topic, but it can also be used as a form

**Flemish literature** (May Subd Geog)   
[PT6000-6466.36]  
Here are entered works on the Dutch literature of Belgium written after 1830.

At this point, we need to make a cautionary statement about scope notes for form headings. Some form headings have scope notes that indicate that the heading can be used as a topic, but do not indicate that it can actually be used as a form, too.

For example, this scope note for **Flemish literature** reads,

Here are entered works *on* the Dutch literature of Belgium written after 1830.

**Flemish literature**, though, can in fact be used to describe resources that consist of Flemish literature.

### Identifying Form Headings

- Scope notes
  - Often indicate that the heading is used as a topic, but it can also be used as a form

**Flemish literature** (May Subd Geog)   
[\[PT6000-6466.36\]](#)  
Here are entered works on the Dutch literature of Belgium

**Stories in rhyme** (May Subd Geog)   
Here are entered short fictional works written in rhymed text. Novel-length fictional narratives expressed in poetry are entered under Novels in verse.

The scope note for **Stories in rhyme**, though, does indicate that is assigned to resources that *are* stories in rhymed text.



## Identifying Form Headings

- Scope notes
  - Some headings may *only* be used as topics

**Criticism, Textual**   
[P47 (Philology)]  
[PA47 (Classical philology)]  
Here are entered works on the investigation of written documents to determine their origin, history, or original form.  
UF Textual criticism  
BT [Editing](#)  
SA subdivision **Criticism, Textual** under literatures, literary forms, names of individual persons, and individual works (author-title or title entries)

Just to make things even more interesting, some of the scope notes that indicate a heading can be used as a topic really do mean that they should *only* be used as a topic, even if it looks like the topic should also be used as a form. In many cases, there is something in the record to make that clear.

In this example, we often say that a resource is textual criticism. The heading **Criticism, Textual** cannot be used as a form, though. The scope note says,

Here are entered works on the investigation of written documents to determine their origin, history, or original form.

Therefore, the heading *can* be used for resources that discuss the history and practice of textual criticism. Why can we not use it as a form heading? Because the See Also reference says that we can use a subdivision under literatures, literary forms, names of individual persons, and individual works in any subject, which covers the universe of possibilities. The heading **Criticism, Textual** is used only for the most general resources about textual criticism. More specific resources, including resources that *are* textual criticism, are cataloged using the subdivision instead.

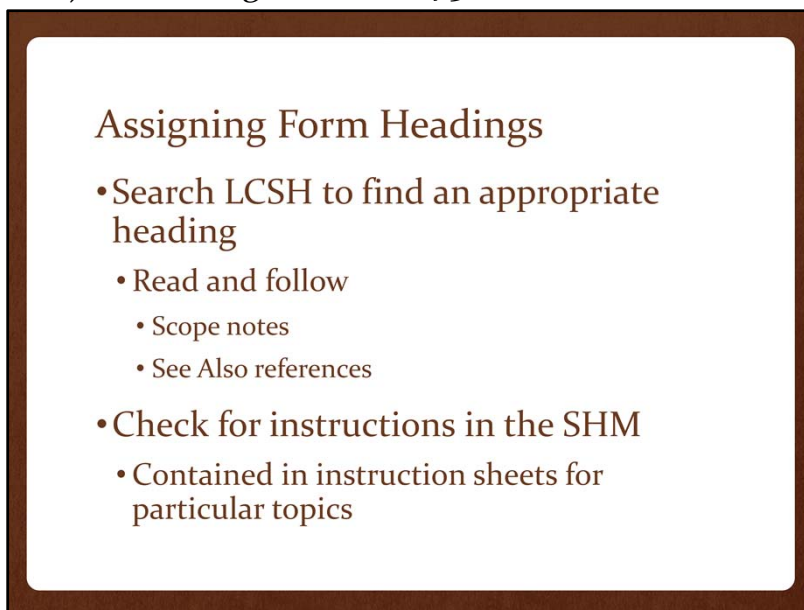
## Assigning Form Headings

- Determine the form of the resource
  - What does it call itself?
    - Wording of title
    - Description on the cover, container, etc.
    - The contents
    - The formatting of the contents
  - Many library resources are not assigned a form heading

Now that we can identify form headings, let's discuss how they are assigned.

The first step, of course, is to analyze the resource. We described that process in Unit 1. In brief, you want to determine what the resource is and what it is about. With regard to form, you want to consider what the resource calls itself. The title may give you an indication; a lot of dictionaries use the word "dictionary" in the title, for example. Other clues may be found in the publisher's description. You should also look at the resource to determine what the contents are and how they are arranged.

If the form is not immediately identifiable, do not force the issue. Many library resources are not assigned a form heading.



Assigning Form Headings

- Search LCSH to find an appropriate heading
  - Read and follow
    - Scope notes
    - See Also references
- Check for instructions in the SHM
  - Contained in instruction sheets for particular topics

Once you know what the form is, there are a couple of steps to ensuring that you are assigning the proper heading, and you can do them in whatever order you wish.

You should search LCSH to find the appropriate heading, and follow any instructions you find in scope notes and See Also references.

You should also check the SHM for instructions. No single instruction sheet provides information about assigning form headings. Instead, instructions related to form headings available in instruction sheets for the form, discipline, or topic of the resource.

We will demonstrate this procedure with several examples.

## Assigning Form Headings

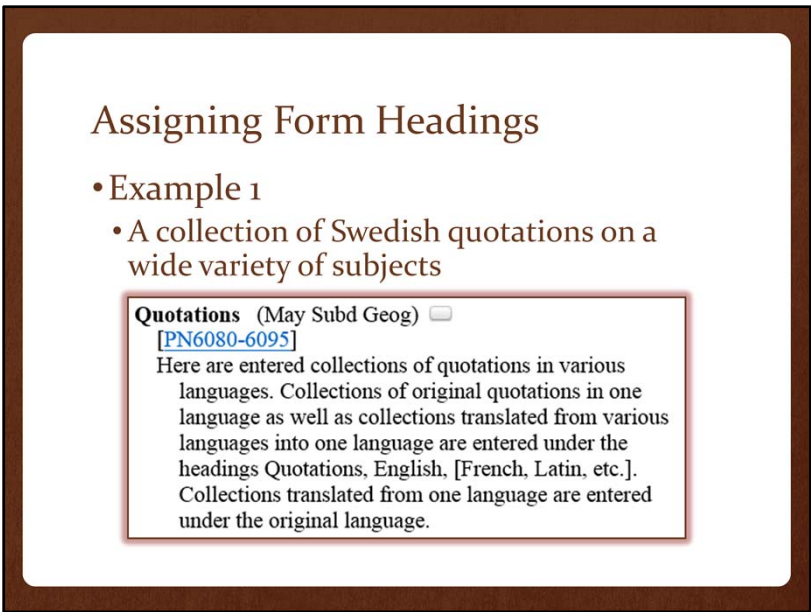
- Example 1
  - A collection of Swedish quotations on a wide variety of subjects

**Quotations, Swedish** (May Subd Geog)  
[PN6095.S8]  
UF Swedish quotations

Our first example is a collection of Swedish quotations on a wide variety of subjects. In other words, it does not have a topical focus.

There is a subject heading **Quotations, Swedish**, but it does not have a scope note. But form headings that are qualified by a language, ethnic group, or nationality often do not have scope notes.

Any notes on the base heading – in this case **Quotations** – apply to qualified headings, too. So let's see if the heading **Quotations** has a scope note.



The screenshot shows a heading entry for 'Quotations' with a subheading '(May Subd Geog)' and a call number '[PN6080-6095]'. Below the heading is a descriptive paragraph explaining that the heading covers collections of quotations in various languages, including original quotations and translations. The text is enclosed in a red-bordered box within a larger white box with a dark border.

## Assigning Form Headings

- Example 1
  - A collection of Swedish quotations on a wide variety of subjects

**Quotations** (May Subd Geog)   
[\[PN6080-6095\]](#)  
Here are entered collections of quotations in various languages. Collections of original quotations in one language as well as collections translated from various languages into one language are entered under the headings **Quotations, English, [French, Latin, etc.]**. Collections translated from one language are entered under the original language.

It does, and it says,

Here are entered collections of quotations in various languages. Collections of original quotations in one language as well as collections translated from various languages into one language are entered under the headings **Quotations, English, [French, Italian, etc.]**. Collections translated from one language are entered under the original language.

The resource in hand consists of quotations in a single language, so it looks like we can indeed assign **Quotations, Swedish**.

**Quotations** (May Subd Geog)

[\[PN6080-6095\]](#)

Here are entered collections of quotations in various

SA subdivision **Quotations** under names of individual persons, families, and sacred works, and under classes of persons and ethnic groups; also subdivision **Sacred books—Quotations** under religions, e.g. **Buddhism—Sacred books—Quotations**; and subdivision **Quotations, maxims, etc.** under names of countries, cities, etc., and topical headings

But there is also an SA reference on **Quotations**, so we should read it first. It says,

See Also the subdivision **Quotations** under names of individual persons, families, and sacred works, and under classes of persons and ethnic groups; also the subdivision **Sacred books—Quotations** under religions, e.g. **Buddhism—Sacred books—Quotations**; and subdivision **Quotations, maxims, etc.** under names of countries, cities, etc., and topical headings.

None of that appears to apply. The quotations are not about an individual person, family, sacred work, class of persons, ethnic group, religion, place, or topic.

## Assigning Form Headings

- Example 1

- A collection of Swedish quotations on a wide variety of subjects

2. —*Quotations, maxims, etc.* ...

*Note: Assign headings of the type [name of language or language group]—Quotations, maxims, etc. to collections of quotations, maxims, etc., about the language or languages. Do not assign headings of this type to general collections of quotations, etc., in a particular language. To such collections, assign **Quotations, [name of language]; Maxims, [name of language]**, and similar headings.*

SHM H 1969, *Quotations and Maxims*, also provides assistance.

Most of the instruction sheet discusses the use of the subdivisions —**Quotations** and —**Quotations, maxims, etc.**, but a paragraph of section 2 is pertinent.

It states,

Note: Assign headings of the type **[name of language or language group]—Quotations, maxims, etc.** to collections of quotations, maxims, etc., about the language or languages. Do not assign headings of this type to general collections of quotations, etc. in a particular language. To such collections, assign **Quotations, [name of language]; Maxims, [name of language]**, and similar headings.

### Assigning Form Headings

- Example 1
  - A collection of Swedish quotations on a wide variety of subjects

**Quotations, Swedish** (May Subd Geog)  
[\[PN6095.S8\]](#)  
UF Swedish quotations

Based on our reading of the scope note and SA reference, along with the instructions in the SHM, we should assign **Quotations, Swedish** to the resource.



## Assigning Form Headings

- Example 2
  - A collection of historical fiction by various European authors

Our next example is a collection of historical fiction by various European authors. The collection does not have a particular topical or geographic focus.

Let's start our research with the SHM this time.

Assigning Form Headings

- Example 2
  - A collection of historical fiction by various European authors

From H 1790, Literature: Fiction

2. *Designating the form of collections.*

a. Bring out the form of a collection by assigning headings of the type **American fiction—20th century**; **Short stories, American**; **Epistolary fiction**; etc. ...

H 1790 section 2 describes the practice for cataloging collections of fiction by various authors.

It begins,

Bring out the form of a collection by assigning headings of the type **American fiction—20<sup>th</sup> century**; **Short stories, American**; and so on.

## Assigning Form Headings

- Example 2
  - A collection of historical fiction by various European authors

From H 1790, Literature: Fiction

*2. Designating the form of collections.*

*a.* Certain phrase headings combine both form and topical aspects into a single heading, for example, **Detective and mystery stories, American; Science fiction, American;** etc. These headings are used to designate both the form and the topic of collections, and no additional heading is usually required.

It continues,

Certain phrase headings combine both form and topical aspects into a single heading, for example, **Detective and mystery stories, American; Science fiction, American;** etc. These headings are used to designate both the form and the topic of collections, and no additional heading is usually required.

Based on this, then, we should start by determining whether there is a heading for historical fiction.

### Assigning Form Headings

- Example 2
  - A collection of historical fiction by various European authors

**Historical fiction** (Not Subd Geog)   
[PN3441 (General history)]  
UF Historical novels  
History—Fiction  
BT [Fiction](#)  
SA subdivision **History—Fiction** or subdivision  
**History—[period subdivision]—Fiction** under names  
of countries, cities, etc.; and subdivision **Fiction** under  
names of historical events and persons

There is one. It does not have a scope note, but it does have a See Also reference. The See Also reference does not apply, though, since the fiction is not about a particular place, historical event, or person.

Now let's see if there is a heading with an appropriate qualifier.

## Assigning Form Headings

- Example 2
  - A collection of historical fiction by various European authors

**Historical fiction, European** (Not Subd Geog)  
UF European historical fiction  
BT [European fiction](#)

**Historical fiction, European** does exist, and we should assign it to the resource.

Form Headings vs. Genre/Form and  
Demographic Group Terms

- *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT)
  - Separate vocabulary
  - Used alongside subject vocabularies
- *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms* (LCDGT)
  - Separate vocabulary
  - Describes audiences and creators/contributors

This module has been about the use of LCSH form headings to bring out what something *is*.

Since 2007, LC has been developing *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials*, which is a separate thesaurus that can be used alone or with any subject vocabulary, including LCSH. Terms in LCGFT are assigned to bring out what a resource *is*, rather than what the resource is *about*.

LC is also developing *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms*, which is a vocabulary that describes the audiences of resources and also the creators of and contributors to those resources.

LCGFT and LCDGT are still being developed, and are only partially implemented. For now, we are assigning LCSH form headings as usual, and *also* assigning terms from LCGFT and/or LCDGT where they are pertinent.

Form Headings vs. Genre/Form and  
Demographic Group Terms

Constitutions of European countries  
Subject heading: **Constitutions—Europe.**  
Genre/form term: **Constitutions.**

For example, a collection of constitutions from various countries in Europe would be assigned **Constitutions—Europe** (the subject heading) and also the genre/form term **Constitutions**.

Form Headings vs. Genre/Form and Demographic Group Terms

Constitutions of European countries  
Subject heading: **Constitutions—Europe.**  
Genre/form term: **Constitutions.**

A collection of French poetry by women  
Subject heading: **French poetry—Women authors.**  
Genre/form term: **Poetry.**  
Demographic group terms: **French; Women**

A collection of French poetry by women would be assigned the subject heading **French poetry—Women authors**, as well as the genre/form term **Poetry** and the demographic group terms **French** and **Women**.



Form Headings vs. Genre/Form and Demographic Group Terms

An Arabic phrase book for soldiers who speak English

Subject heading: **Arabic language—Conversation and phrase books (for soldiers)**

Genre/form term: **Phrase books.**

Demographic group terms: **Soldiers; English speakers**

Some form subdivisions are also duplicated by genre/form and demographic group terms. We will discuss form subdivisions in module 6.17, but we will give you a brief example here.

An Arabic phrase book for soldiers who speak English would be assigned the subject heading **Arabic language—Conversation and phrase books (for soldiers)**, the genre/form term **Phrase books**, and the demographic group terms **Soldiers** and **English speakers**.

### Form Headings vs. Genre/Form and Demographic Group Terms

- Policy in 2016
  - Assign LC subject headings as usual, including form headings and form subdivisions
  - Also assign
    - LC genre/form terms
    - LC demographic group terms

As of mid-2016, LC subject headings – including form headings and form subdivisions – are assigned as usual, according to the rules and guidelines in the SHM. Terms from LCGFT and LCDGT are assigned in addition to the subject headings.

This policy is necessary because integrated library systems and discovery layers do not yet take full advantage of the new terminologies, and it is unlikely that they will do so until there is sufficient data in the records to take advantage of it.

We therefore need to continue to assign LC subject headings to designate forms in order to provide access to our users while we are waiting for systems to catch up to the new vocabularies.

Form Headings vs. Genre/Form and  
Demographic Group Terms

- Information about LCGFT and LCDGT  
<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/genreformgeneral.html>
- LCGFT and Manual  
<http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreelCGFT/freelcgft.html>
- LCDGT and Manual  
<http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreelCDGT/freelcdgt.html>

Because this training is about LCSH, we will not discuss the rules for assigning LC genre/form and LC demographic group terms in this module.

However, information about those vocabularies may be found on LC's information page and on the pages that include the LCGFT and LCDGT vocabularies themselves and the manuals.

The URL for each is on your screen.