# Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 5.3
Order of Subject Headings

Policy and Standards Division
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Recap

- Resources may be assigned one or more headings to …

  - summarize the resource as a whole.

  - provide access to topics that constitute at least 20 percent of the resource.

The first two modules of this unit covered the principles of heading assignment. While there are some specific rules, the high-level principles can be summed up as follows: we assign headings that summarize the resource as a whole, and we also assign headings for topics that constitute at least twenty percent of the resource. In many cases, this cannot be accomplished with a single heading.

This module will cover the principles by which we decide the order of headings when we have to assign more than one. The principles are contained in *Subject Headings Manual* instruction sheet H 80.
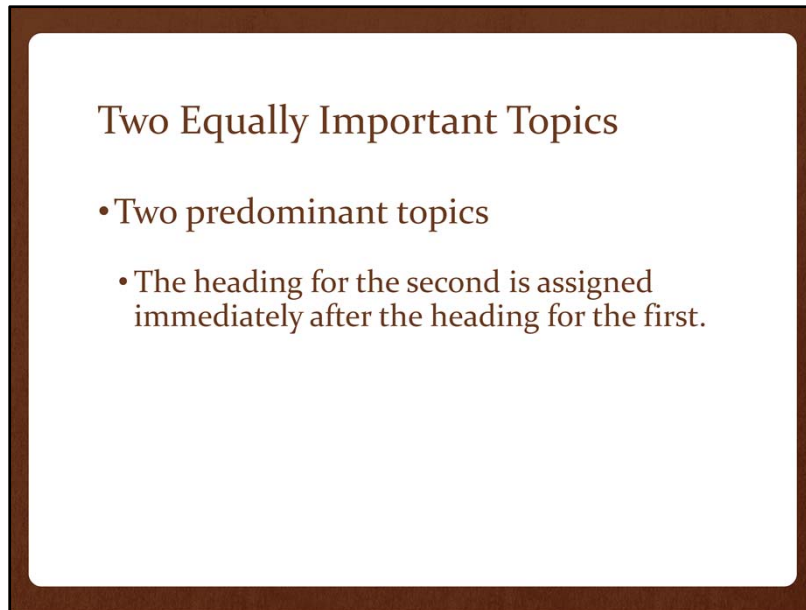
## General Rule

- The first heading represents the predominant topic of the resource.
  - It corresponds to the classification number assigned.
  - If the predominant topic cannot be represented by a single heading, the first two headings, taken together, constitute the predominant topic.
    - It does not matter which of the two comes first.

The general rule is that the first heading assigned should represent the predominant topic of the resource.

It generally corresponds to the classification number assigned, but not always.

Oftentimes, the predominant topic of a resource cannot be contained in a single heading. In that case, the first two headings listed should be the two that, taken together, reflect the predominant topic. Generally speaking, it does not matter which of the two comes first, but if the classification number is more closely related to one of them, that one should be listed first.
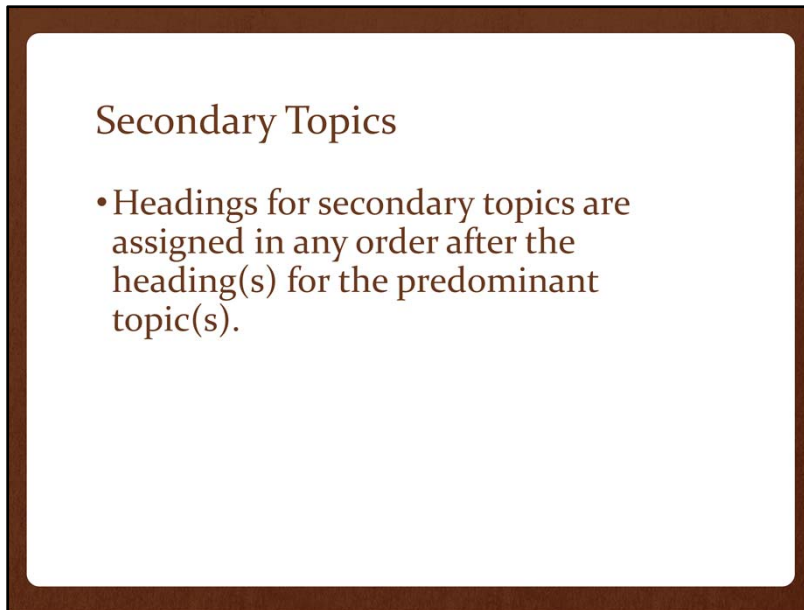
## Two Equally Important Topics

- Two predominant topics

  - The heading for the second is assigned immediately after the heading for the first.

Sometimes the resource consists of two equally important topics.

When that happens, the headings for those topics should be the first and second headings assigned.

## Secondary Topics

- Headings for secondary topics are assigned in any order after the heading(s) for the predominant topic(s).

After assigning the headings that reflect the predominant topic, the headings for any other topics are assigned in any order, unless there are instructions to the contrary.

Special Instructions

• Specialized instruction sheets sometimes prescribe a specific order of headings.

A few instruction sheets on particular topics prescribe a particular order for the headings.

Special Instructions

From H 1928, Personal Narratives

**4. Order of headings.**

*a. Narratives that include personal information about the author.* If an individual personal narrative contains a significant amount of personal information regarding the author, assign the name of the author as the first subject heading.

*b. Narratives with little personal information about the author.* If the narrative is essentially an eyewitness account of what happened with little personal information about the author, assign the name of the war or event as the first subject heading; assign the name of the author as an additional subject heading.

For example, H 1928 for Personal Narratives says in section 4 that if an individual personal narrative contains a significant amount of personal information about the author, the name of the author is assigned as the first subject heading.

If the narrative is essentially an eyewitness account with little or no personal information about the author, however, the name heading for the author is a secondary heading.

## Special Instructions

### From H 1225, Archaeological Works:

"The arrangement of headings used in the text and examples below is not significant, since the actual order of headings used in an individual case depends upon the emphasis of the work and the class number assigned to it."

In most cases, though, specialized instruction sheets are silent on the issue of the order of headings, and expect you to follow the provisions in H 80. If they address the order of headings at all, specialized instruction sheets might have a statement similar to this one from H 1225 for Archaeological Works. It indicates that the order in which headings are discussed in the instruction sheet is not significant.

Sometimes catalogers develop their own particular style. For example, when I was cataloging personal narratives on the world wars, I always put the heading for the military unit directly after the heading for the personal name if it was applicable, then the regimental histories heading or "group in the war" heading, then the personal narratives heading, then the biography heading (if it was applicable). Keeping the headings in the same order – when it made no difference to classification – helped me know quickly whether I had forgotten one.

A cataloger I knew always organized her subject headings for secondary topics by length, so her records are immediately recognizable. I cannot imagine how much time she must have spent on those headings in order to line them up perfectly!

The point is: unless there are specific instructions to the contrary, it does not matter whether you use a standard order for secondary headings, or whether your order matches the way someone else does it. As long as the heading or headings for the predominant topics are listed first, you can organize the rest of them in any way you wish.

Let's look at several examples of records.

## Examples

*Community oriented policing and problem solving*

**Community policing—California.**
**Crime prevention—California—Citizen
    participation.**
**Police administration—California.**
**Police patrol—California.**
**Police-community relations—California.**

*Classification number:*

    *HV7936.C83    Community policing*

In this example entitled *Community oriented policing and problem solving*, the predominant topic is clearly community policing, so the heading for that concept was the first heading assigned, and it does match the classification number that was assigned.

The order of the second through fifth headings is immaterial; they can appear in any order.

## Examples

*Concrete and steel construction : quality control and assurance*

**Concrete construction—Standards.**

**Building, Iron and steel—Standards.**

**Construction industry—Quality control.**

*Classification number:*

*TH1461     Concrete building construction*

This resource is about standards in concrete construction and steel construction.

The author does not stress one type of construction more than the other, so the headings for those topics are assigned one after the other, and before the more general heading for quality control in the construction industry.

The cataloger chose to classify the resource with concrete building construction, so that heading appears first.

## Examples

*Make your voice heard : an actor's guide to increased dramatic range through vocal training*

**Acting.**

**Voice culture.**

*Classification number:*

PN2071.S65    *Speech as a topic in acting*

Two headings were needed to cataloging this resource on vocal training for actors, **Acting** and **Voice culture**.

The classification schedules include a section for acting that includes various special topics, including speech. The cataloger chose to assign **Acting** first, since that is the section of the classification schedules to which the resource was assigned.

## Examples

*The Roman army*

**Rome—Army—History.**
**Rome—History—Empire, 30 B.C.-284 A.D.**
**Rome—History—Republic, 510-265 B.C.**

*Classification number:*

    *U35       Ancient Roman military science*

This resource, *The Roman army*, is clearly about the history of the Roman army, but a significant portion of it is about the history of Rome during the Empire and the Republic. The first heading covers the predominant topic and matches the classification number assigned.

Note that the secondary headings for the two periods of Roman history are in reverse chronological order. Since those headings are for secondary topics, the order in which they appear does not matter.

## Examples

*Cruising with your four-footed friends : how to have a happy voyage with your cat or dog*

**Boating with dogs.**

**Boating with cats.**

**Pets and travel.**

*Classification number:*

*SF427.456 Boating as a topic in the care of dogs*

Finally, this example (*Cruising with your four-footed friends: how to have a happy voyage with your cat or dog*) was assigned three headings.

The first two reflect the equivalent main topics, and the third is a secondary topic.

Often, catalogers will assign equally important headings in the same order in which they are listed in the title. In this case, the title refers to cats and dogs, but the headings are in the opposite order; the cataloger chose to class the resource with dogs. Perhaps the contents of the resource discuss dogs first. Or, perhaps not.