
Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 6.10
Geographic Subdivisions Part 3:
Which Subdivisions May Be Subdivided Geographically?

Policy and Standards Division
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Recap

- Three instructions guide the decision to use a geographic subdivision
 - May Subd Geog
 - Not Subd Geog
 - No decision
- Only headings with the notation (May Subd Geog) may be geographically subdivided

As we have seen, every heading has one of three instructions.

- May Subd Geog means that the heading may be subdivided geographically.
- Not Subd Geog means that the heading may not be subdivided geographically.
- No notation at all means that “no decision” has been made, but the practical effect is that the heading may not be subdivided geographically.

So the only time you can subdivide a heading geographically is when you see May Subd Geog.

Some topical subdivisions can also be subdivided geographically. They have the same notations, which mean the same things. We will discuss the rules for subdividing topical subdivisions geographically in this module. Those instructions are contained in *Subject Headings Manual* instruction sheet H 870, Interposition of Geographic Subdivisions.

Use with Other Subdivisions

- Some topical subdivisions may also be subdivided geographically

French language—Article (Not Subd Geog)

God—Buddhist interpretations

Hospitals—Accreditation (May Subd Geog)

Local transit—Finance—Law and legislation (May Subd Geog)

As you can see, heading/subdivision combinations may be marked Not Subd Geog, as in **French language—Article**. They may be marked as no decision, as in **God—Buddhist interpretations**. Or they may be marked May Subd Geog, as in **Hospitals—Accreditation**.

The final example on this slide, **Local transit—Finance—Law and legislation**, shows that even headings with two or more subdivisions may be marked May Subd Geog.

Please notice that every one of the subdivisions on this slide (**—Article**, **—Buddhist interpretations**, **—Accreditation**, and **—Finance—Law and legislation**) are topical subdivisions. Chronological and form subdivisions can never be marked May Subd Geog; only topical subdivisions can be.

Use with Other Subdivisions

- A heading may be subdivided geographically in only one place

Hospitals (May Subd Geog)
Hospitals—Accreditation (May Subd Geog)

An individual heading can be subdivided geographically in only once place, but sometimes both the main heading and one or more subdivisions may be subdivided geographically.

For example, **Hospitals** and **Hospitals—Accreditation** can both be subdivided geographically.

Use with Other Subdivisions

- A heading may be subdivided geographically in only one place

Hospitals (May Subd Geog)
Hospitals—Accreditation (May Subd Geog)

Accountants (May Subd Geog)
Accountants—Taxation (May Subd Geog)
Accountants—Taxation—Law and legislation (May Subd Geog)

So can **Accountants**, **Accountants—Taxation**, and **Accountants—Taxation—Law and legislation**.

So, how do we decide the best place to put the geographic subdivision, since the heading can be geographically subdivided only once?

There is a fundamental rule for deciding where to put the geographic subdivision.

Use with Other Subdivisions

- The geographic subdivision goes after the last element that can be geographically subdivided

Library materials (May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Biodegradation (May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Reproduction

If a heading and its topical subdivision can both be geographically subdivided, the subdivision goes after the last element that can be geographically subdivided. It goes as far to the end of the heading string as possible.

Library materials can be subdivided geographically. So can the subdivision —**Biodegradation**. Library materials differ from place to place, and the environment of the place in which they are stored affects how quickly, or if, they biodegrade.

On the other hand, the subdivision —**Reproduction** used after **Library materials** cannot be subdivided geographically, because methods of reproduction are pretty standard from place to place.

Use with Other Subdivisions

Library materials (May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Canada.

Library materials—Biodegradation
(May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Reproduction

If the resource is about library materials in Canada, we can assign the heading

Library materials—Canada.

Use with Other Subdivisions

Library materials (May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Canada.

Library materials—Biodegradation
(May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Biodegradation—Canada.

Library materials—Reproduction

If it is about the biodegradation of library materials in Canada, the main heading can still be subdivided geographically, but so can the subdivision.

We put the geographic subdivision at the end, and assign the heading **Library materials—Biodegradation—Canada.**

Use with Other Subdivisions

Library materials (May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Canada.

Library materials—Biodegradation
(May Subd Geog)

Library materials—Biodegradation—Canada.

Library materials—Reproduction

Library materials—Canada—Reproduction.

Now let's say that the resource is about the reproduction of library materials in Canada.

Library materials can still be geographically subdivided, but the subdivision —**Reproduction** cannot be.

We therefore interpose the geographic subdivision and assign **Library materials—Canada—Reproduction**.

Use with Other Subdivisions

French language (May Subd Geog)
 French language—Haiti.

French language—17th century
 French language—Haiti—17th century.

French language—Acronyms
 French language—Haiti—Acronyms.

French language—Spoken French (May Subd Geog)
 French language—Spoken French—Haiti.

Here is another example.

French language can be subdivided geographically.

French language subdivided by —**17th century** cannot be, so the geographic subdivision is interposed.

The same is true for the subdivision —**Acronyms**: the geographic subdivision has to be interposed because —**Acronyms** cannot be subdivided geographically.

But the subdivision —**Spoken French** can be geographically subdivided, so we should add —**Haiti** at the end.

Use with Other Subdivisions

Jones family (Not Subd Geog)
Jones family.

Jones family—Health
Jones family—Health.

Jones family—Monuments (May Subd Geog)
Jones family—Monuments—Wales.

Jones family—Political activity (May Subd Geog)
Jones family—Political activity—Wales.

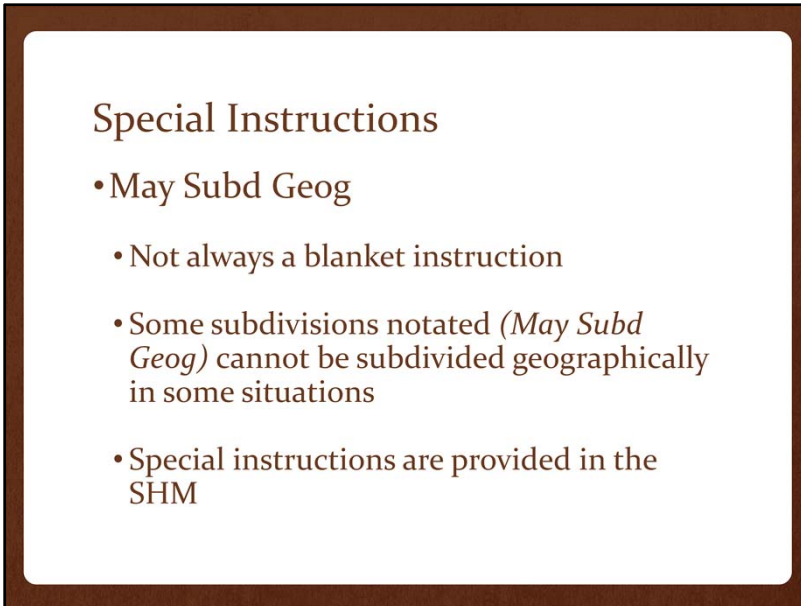
Sometimes main headings cannot be geographically subdivided, but topical subdivisions added to them can be.

Headings for families such as the Jones family may never be geographically subdivided, so if we are cataloging a resource about the Jones family in Wales, we cannot add a geographic subdivision to the main heading. If the geographic location of the family members is important, we would have to assign another heading to bring that out, perhaps **Wales—Genealogy**.

The subdivision —**Health** cannot be subdivided either, so in this heading we cannot bring out the fact that the resource is about the health of family members of the Jones family from Wales. Again, we could assign another subject heading to bring that out.

On the other hand, we are allowed to geographically subdivide the topical subdivision — **Monuments** when it is used after a family name. So we can assign the heading **Jones family—Monuments—Wales**.

The subdivision —**Political activity** can also be subdivided geographically when it is used after a family name, allowing for the heading string **Jones family—Political activity—Wales**.

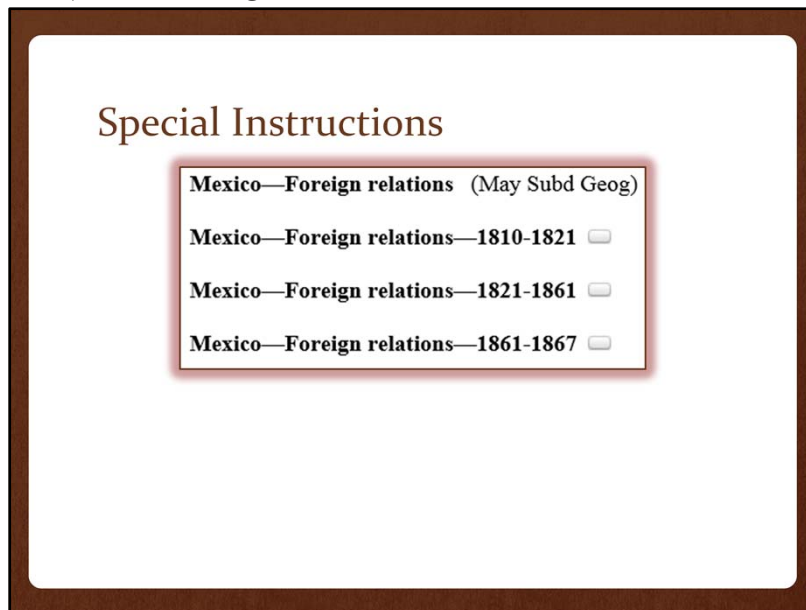


Special Instructions

- May Subd Geog
 - Not always a blanket instruction
 - Some subdivisions notated (*May Subd Geog*) cannot be subdivided geographically in some situations
 - Special instructions are provided in the SHM

Sometimes a subdivision may be marked May Subd Geog, but it is not intended to be an across-the-board instruction because there are occasionally situations in which *that* subdivision may *not* be geographically subdivided.

When this occurs, instructions are provided in the SHM.



The image shows a screenshot of a web page titled "Special Instructions". It contains a list of subject headings for "Mexico—Foreign relations" with checkboxes to the right of each. The headings are: "Mexico—Foreign relations (May Subd Geog)", "Mexico—Foreign relations—1810-1821", "Mexico—Foreign relations—1821-1861", and "Mexico—Foreign relations—1861-1867".

Special Instructions

- Mexico—Foreign relations (May Subd Geog)
- Mexico—Foreign relations—1810-1821
- Mexico—Foreign relations—1821-1861
- Mexico—Foreign relations—1861-1867

The subdivision —**Foreign relations** is a good example.

It can be subdivided by specifically established chronological subdivisions, as you can see from this partial list of subdivisions under Mexico. You can also see that it may be subdivided geographically.

Special Instructions

Mexico—Foreign relations (May Subd Geog)

Mexico—Foreign relations—1810-1821

Mexico—Foreign relations—1821-1861

Mexico—Foreign relations—1861-1867

X Mexico—Foreign relations—United States—
1861-1867.

If we use the standard instructions, we could interpose a geographic subdivision between —**Foreign relations** and a chronological subdivision, as you see in the example here. That heading, however, would be invalid.

Special Instructions

- From H 1629, Foreign Relations

Further subdivide the subdivision —**Foreign relations** by place for works that discuss the diplomatic relations between two regions or countries. Make an additional subject entry with the two places in reversed positions.

Do not further subdivide headings of this type by period subdivisions. If appropriate, assign additional headings to bring out a specific time period.

We stress throughout this training that it is always important to look at the entry for the heading, and to look in the SHM to find any special instructions, and this is why. SHM H 1629 sec. 2 says that we should:

Further subdivide the subdivision —**Foreign relations** by place for works that discuss the diplomatic relations between two regions or countries. Make an additional subject entry with the two places in reversed positions. Do not further subdivide headings of this type by period subdivisions. If appropriate, assign additional headings to bring out a specific time period.

In other words, the subdivision —**Foreign relations** cannot be geographically subdivided if you are also adding a chronological subdivision.

Special Instructions

Mexico—Foreign relations (May Subd Geog)

Mexico—Foreign relations—1810-1821

Mexico—Foreign relations—1821-1861

Mexico—Foreign relations—1861-1867

Mexico—Foreign relations—United States.
United States—Foreign relations—Mexico.
Mexico—Foreign relations—1861-1867.
United States—Foreign relations—1861-1865.

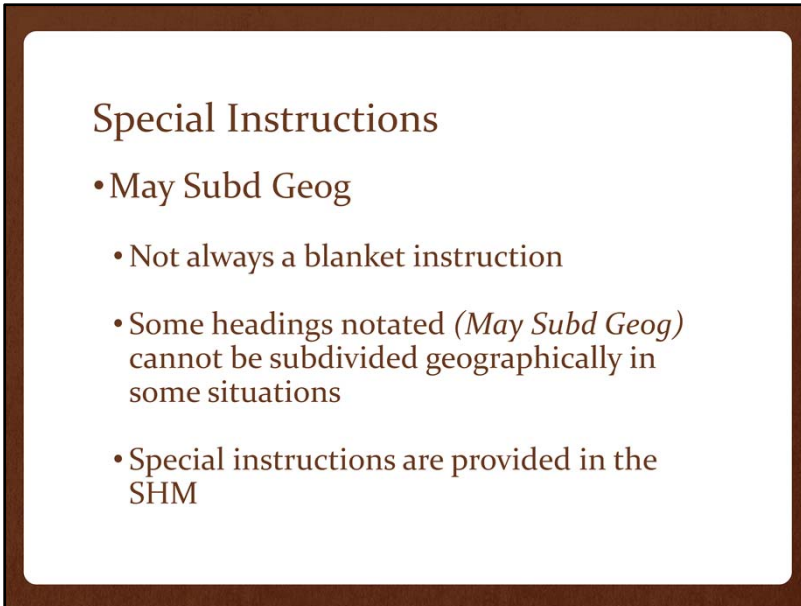
By following these instructions, we end up with the following heading array:

Mexico—Foreign relations—United States
United States—Foreign relations—Mexico
Mexico—Foreign relations—1861-1867 and
United States—Foreign relations—1861-1865.

The first two headings are paired, following the instruction sheet.

Because we cannot assign a chronological subdivision and a geographic subdivision following — **Foreign relations**, we have to assign a separate heading to bring out the time period for each place. One heading is assigned for Mexico, and another for the United States.

Note that the two time periods do not match; that often happens, because they are based on significant periods in the history of those places.



Special Instructions

- May Subd Geog
 - Not always a blanket instruction
 - Some headings notated (*May Subd Geog*) cannot be subdivided geographically in some situations
 - Special instructions are provided in the SHM

The same is occasionally true for headings. The notation May Subd Geog in an entry for a heading is sometimes overridden by special instructions in the SHM when certain topical subdivisions are assigned to the heading.

Special Instructions

Arms race (May Subd Geog)

Here are entered works on the competitive buildup and improvement of the military power of two or more nations or blocs, particularly as regards weapons.

UF Arms proliferation
Proliferation of arms

BT [Security, International](#)

RT [Arms control](#)
[Arms transfers](#)
[Disarmament](#)
[Military readiness](#)

Arms race—Religious aspects

Arms race—Religious aspects—Buddhism, [Christianity, etc.]

Take this example, **Arms race**. It may be subdivided geographically. However, the subdivision — **Religious aspects** cannot be.

Normally, you would be able to interpose the geographic subdivision, such as *Arms race—United States—Religious aspects*, but that heading is invalid because of instructions in the SHM.

Special Instructions

- From SHM H 1998, Religious Aspects of Topics

Do not interpose geographic subdivisions between the topic and the subdivision
—**Religious aspects**. Bring out place by assigning an additional heading of the type **[topic]—[place]**.

Section 1.a of instruction sheet H 1998, Religious Aspects of Topics, states in part:

Do not interpose geographic subdivisions between the topic and the subdivision —**Religious aspects**. Bring out place by assigning and additional heading of the type **[topic]—[place]**.

Special Instructions

Arms race—Religious aspects.

Arms race—United States.

Arms race (May Subd Geog)

Here are entered works on the competitive buildup and improvement of the military power of two or more nations or blocs, particularly as regards weapons.

UF Arms proliferation
Proliferation of arms
BT [Security, International](#)
RT [Arms control](#)
[Arms transfers](#)
[Disarmament](#)
[Military readiness](#)

Arms race—Religious aspects

Arms race—Religious aspects—Buddhism, [Christianity, etc.]

By following those instructions, we assign two headings, **Arms race—Religious aspects** and **Arms race—United States**.

Summary

- Some topical subdivisions can be subdivided geographically
 - A heading can be subdivided geographically in only one place
 - As far to the end of the heading as possible
- Read the SHM for special instructions

In summary, some topical subdivisions can be subdivided geographically, just like topical headings can. The same notations of May Subd Geog, Not Subd Geog, or No Decision are used.

Oftentimes, the main heading and its topical subdivision may both be subdivided geographically. When that happens, the geographic subdivision is placed as far to the end of the heading string as possible. That is, the geographic subdivision goes after the last element that can be geographically subdivided.

There are occasional situations in which a heading or subdivision *cannot* be subdivided geographically even if it is notated May Subd Geog. All of those situations are explained, however, in the SHM, so it is very important that you always consult the SHM when assigning subject headings.