Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 6.14
Chronological Subdivisions Part 1:
Format of Chronological Subdivisions

Policy and Standards Division
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Recap and Plan
- Chronological focus
  - The time period covered, not the time period in which the resource was created
    - Creation date of resource can be useful when determining which heading or subdivision to assign
  - Brought out by
    - Chronological headings
    - Chronological subdivisions

As we saw in Unit 4, when we refer to the chronological focus of resources we are referring to the time period covered in the *content* of the resource.

However, the date of creation, publication, etc., can be useful when determining which heading or subdivision to assign.

An example we used was a resource that claims to be about a topic in the 21st century, but it was published in 2003. It is not really about the 21st century, because it is about only three years of the 21st century, at most.

The chronological focus of a resource can be brought out by a chronological heading or a chronological subdivision used with a topical, geographic, or form heading.

Recap and Plan

- Three modules on chronological subdivision
  - This module
    - Styles and formats of subdivisions
    - Specifically established v. free-floating subdivisions
  - Module 6.15: Use of the free-floating subdivision –**History**
  - Module 6.16: Assignment of chronological subdivisions

This set of three modules will explore

- the ways that chronological subdivisions are formatted,
- the differences between specifically established and free-floating subdivisions,
- the use of the subdivision **—History**, and
- the assignment of chronological subdivisions.

This module is based on SHM instruction sheet H 620, Chronological Headings and Subdivisions, and we recommend that you refer to it for additional information.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

• Specific centuries

Church history—11th century
Europe—History—15th century
Portrait painting—21st century

Broadsides—15th and 16th centuries
Catalan poetry—16th-18th centuries
Sicily (Italy)—History—15th-18th
centuries

First we will describe the eight styles, or forms, of chronological subdivisions.

Some chronological subdivisions refer to a single century or to a span of centuries, as in

Church history—11th century

and

Sicily (Italy)—History—15th-18th centuries.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

• Unspecified starting date

Art, Japanese—To 1868

India—Economic conditions—To 1000

Macedonia—History—To 168 B.C.

Virginia—Politics and government—
To 1775

Sometimes the date at which a time period began is unknown, or so little is published about the early history of a topic or place that it is considered to be unnecessary to have separate chronological subdivisions for the early period, or there is a lot published but it seems useful to keep all of the materials on the time period together.

In all of those cases, the subdivision consists of the word **—To**, followed by the ending date of the period, as in the headings

> **Art, Japanese—To 1868**
> **India—Economic conditions—To 1000**
> and the others on the screen.

By the way, the Macedonia referred to in the third example on your screen is ancient Macedonia, not the current country of Macedonia. The current country is established as **Macedonia** (**Republic**).

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

• Unspecified ending date

Argentina—Social conditions—1982-

Belgium—Foreign relations—1951-

Madagascar—History—2010-

New York (N.Y.)—History—1951-

Arab-Israeli conflict—1993-

At other times, the *ending* date of the chronological period is unspecified, as in the headings you see on your screen.

They occur almost exclusively with geographic headings, but are occasionally found on topical headings, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict which began in 1993.

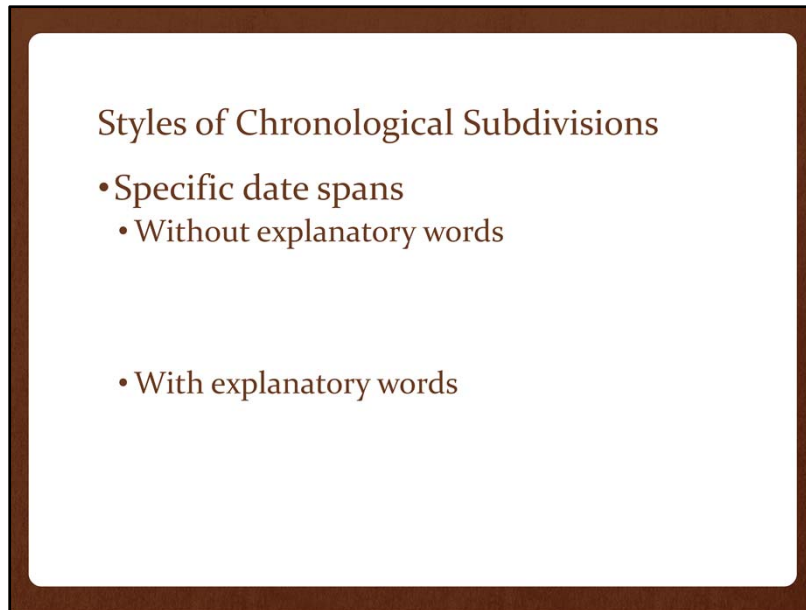These dates are called open dates, and are sometimes revised to include an ending date.

We will discuss the reasons for closing the dates in a few moments.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

• Unspecified starting and ending date
  • Only for geological periods

  Geology, Stratigraphic—Devonian

  Paleobotany—Permo-Carboniferous

  Paleontology—Eocene

Logically enough, because some subdivisions have no beginning date and some have no ending date, there are a few subdivisions that do not specify a beginning *or* an ending date. This happens only with geological periods, and as you can see, the subdivision consists only of the name of the period, era, epoch, etc.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

- Specific date spans
  - Without explanatory words

  - With explanatory words

Chronological subdivisions can also consist of a specific date span, that is, a span with a beginning *and* an ending year. Some of them include explanatory words or phrases, which appear before the date span itself.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

•Specific date spans
  •Without explanatory words

     Korean poetry—1894-1919
     Romania—Economic policy—1945-1989

  •With explanatory words

Examples of subdivisions with specific date spans, but without explanatory words are **Korean poetry—1894-1919** and **Romania—Economic policy—1945-1989**.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

• Specific date spans
  • Without explanatory words

    Korean poetry—1894-1919
    Romania—Economic policy—1945-1989

  • With explanatory words

    Art, Chinese—Song-Yuan dynasties, 690-1368
    Egypt—History—Saladin, 1171-1193
    Porto (Portugal)—History—Siege, 1832-1833

Subdivisions that include explanatory words and phrases provide context for the user. Take a look at these examples.

Most users probably do not know when Saladin ruled Egypt, but they can search for **Egypt—History**, scan the list of subdivisions, and easily find the materials that are about his reign.

Subdivisions that include explanatory words and phrases are established only under the subdivision **—History**, and art and literature headings where there is a well-established pattern of doing so, as in the heading for Chinese art that you see on the screen.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions

• Specific dates
  • Without explanatory words

     Depressions—1929
     Olympic host city selection—2012

  • With explanatory words

     Great Britain—History—Edward VIII, 1936
     Rome (Italy)—Annexation to Italy, 1870
     Vesuvius (Italy)—Eruption, 1944

Finally, some subdivisions consist of a *specific* date, usually a year. As with date spans, they may or may not include an explanatory word or phrase. **Depressions—1929** does not include an explanatory word or phrase, but **Vesuvius (Italy)—Eruption, 1944** does.

Now that we know what types of chronological subdivisions exist, let's look at some of the subdivisions established for a particular geographic place and see how they are arranged.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions
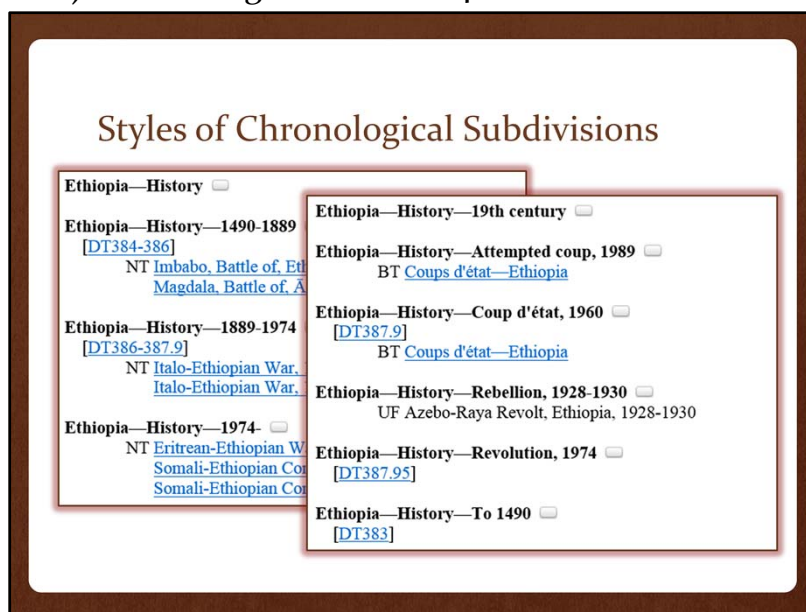
The default arrangement in Classification Web is the typical computer-generated order, with numerals coming first from smallest to largest, with words being filed alphabetically after the numerals. As you can see in this example for the history of Ethiopia, the time periods get mixed up.

The first heading listed for the history of Ethiopia is for the period 1490-1889, followed by 1889-1974, and then the open date that starts with 1974.

Those are followed by a heading for the 19th century, then an alphabetical list consisting of an attempted coup in 1989, a coup in 1960, a rebellion from 1928-1930, and a revolution in 1974. And then finally, we see the heading for the early history of Ethiopia to 1490.

This is a short list of subdivisions so we can easily scan it to find the subdivision that we need for a resource. But some countries have dozens and dozens of date subdivisions, which get mixed up and can be hard to use.

If you are using the free PDFs, the headings are in date order regardless of the format of the subdivision, and there is a feature in Classification Web that allows for the same display.
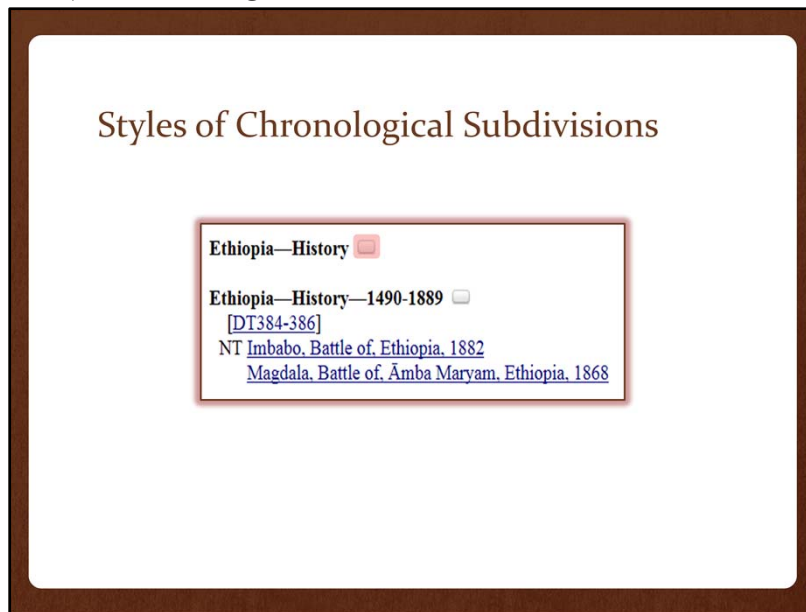
In Class Web, click on the icon next to the heading that you want to appear first in your display.

Here, we will click on the icon next to **Ethiopia—History**.

Styles of Chronological Subdivisions
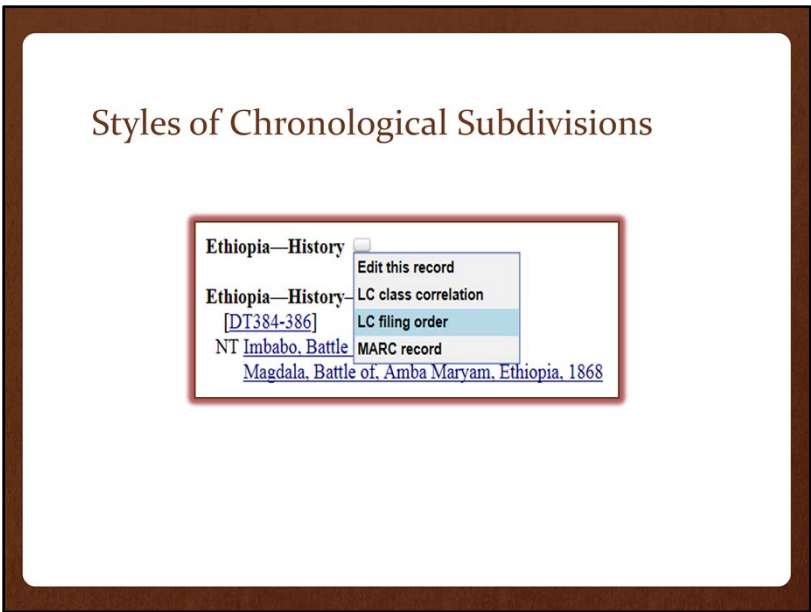
You will see a pop-up menu, and one of the options is "LC filing order."

Click on that, and a new window will open with the headings in order by the date in the subdivisions.

Now the subdivisions are in the proper chronological order so we can examine them.

As you can see, even in this short entry we find a mix of subdivision styles. We have a "To" subdivision, a century subdivision, several specific dates or date spans with explanatory text, and several without.

Note that the subdivisions for spans and open dates overlap slightly.

Dates are based on significant periods in the history of the place or topic, and are usually determined by specific events. Those events usually do not happen on January 1st, so it is standard practice to use the closing date for one time span as the opening date for the next time span. A resource might discuss the place or topic up to that specific event, which may be in the middle of a year, or the place or topic since that event.

All of the chronological subdivisions that we have seen so far are specifically established, meaning that they may be used only for the heading with which they are listed.

The list of subdivisions under **Great Britain** includes several centuries. They were established, most likely, as a matter of convenience, based on publication patterns.

Specifically Established Subdivisions

- May be used only with the heading for which they are established
  - For generally recognized periods in the history of the place or topic
  - Begin and end with significant dates

Most of the established subdivisions for the history of Great Britain, though, have beginning and/or ending dates. The dates are based on research that was done to determine the generally recognized periods in the history of the topic or place. The dates are therefore significant.

Specifically Established Subdivisions

- May be used only with the heading for which they are established
  - For generally recognized periods in the history of the place or topic
  - Begin and end with significant dates

    Great Britain—History—Tudors, 1485-1603

    Great Britain—History—Charles I, 1625-1649

    Great Britain—History—Regency, 1811-1820

The subdivisions for these periods in the history of Great Britain all include explanatory text, and their significance should be clear, even if you are not familiar with Great Britain's history.

The House of Tudor reigned Great Britain from 1485-1603; Charles I reigned from 1625-1649; and the Regency period lasted from 1811-1820.

Specifically Established Subdivisions

• May be used only with the heading for which they are established
  • For generally recognized periods in the history of the place or topic
  • Begin and end with significant dates

    Great Britain—History—To 1066
    Great Britain—History—1485-
    Great Britain—History—1660-1714

The significance of the dates on some of the other subdivisions may not be as clear.

The year 1066 marked the Norman Conquest and is often viewed as the beginning of the medieval period in Great Britain.

In 1485 the House of Tudor took the throne. Since there are many resources about Great Britain since 1485, that date span has been left open as a convenience to catalogers and users alike. Without that heading, resources that cover the country's entire history since 1485 would either have to be assigned over a dozen headings, or only **Great Britain—History**. But we will explain more about heading assignment in the next modules.

Open date spans are sometimes revised to include a closing date when a significant event marks a change in the history of a place. The heading **Great Britain—History—1485-** is unlikely to ever be closed off because it has remained open as a matter of convenience. On the other hand, though, subdivisions specific to particular rulers are regularly closed as those rulers die, abdicate, or leave office for another reason.

In LCSH, there is a practice of creating separate headings for the individual American presidential administrations.

For instance, George W. Bush was president of the United States from 2001-2009. When he took office, the heading **United States—Foreign relations—2001-** was created, and when he left office in 2009, the heading was revised to its current form: **United States—Foreign relations—2001-2009**.

As we record this module, the United States is in the midst of a presidential campaign to determine who will replace Barack Obama as president in 2017.

When the new president takes office in 2017, the heading **United States—Foreign relations—2009-** will be provided with the ending date 2017, and a new heading **United States—Foreign relations—2017-** will be created to reflect the new president's term in office.

Free-Floating Subdivisions

- Free-floating centuries
  - Used under names of countries, cities, etc., individual corporate bodies, and under classes of persons, ethnic groups, and topical headings

    —History—16th century
    —History—17th century
    —History—18th century
    —History—19th century
    —History—20th century
    —History—21st century

In addition to specifically established chronological subdivisions, LCSH also includes some free-floating chronological subdivisions. As you already know if you have been viewing these modules in order, there are thousands of free-floating subdivisions representing topical aspects of concepts, or the forms of resources. The list of free-floating chronological subdivisions is quite short in comparison.

The most common are the free-floating centuries, which are preceded by the topical subdivision —**History**. They can be used under names of countries, cities, etc., individual corporate bodies, and under classes of persons, ethnic groups, and topical headings.

In other words, there are restrictions on their use, just as there are with most free-floating topical and form subdivisions.

Other free-floating chronological subdivisions are found in the lists of pattern and free-floating subdivisions in the SHM.

As you can see from this small sample of free-floating chronological subdivisions found in the SHM, they can look quite different from the free-floating century subdivisions.

The subdivision **—History—To 1500** from H 1095 can be used under topics, making the headings **Writing materials and instruments—History—To 1500** and **Mathematics, Greek—History—To 1500** possible.

The subdivision **—10th century** from H 1148 is a century, but it is not preceded by the subdivision **—History**. Headings such as **Art, Indic—10th century** can therefore be created.

H 1155.2, Groups of Literary Authors, includes the subdivision **—Early modern, 1500-1700**. Following the instructions in that instruction sheet, the subdivisions may be assigned to headings such as **Authors, Italian** and **Poets, Scottish**, as appropriate.

Like free-floating topical and form subdivisions, it is important to read and understand the rules for assignment of the free-floating chronological subdivisions and free-floating centuries. The rules for assigning the subdivisions that appear in the pattern and free-floating lists can be found in the instruction sheets for those lists. The rules for using the free-floating centuries may be found in H 1647, History.