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# Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 6.2  
Free-Floating Subdivisions: Introduction

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Policy and Standards Division  
Library of Congress  
March 2017

Recap

- Two types of subdivisions
  - Specifically established
    - Airplanes—Airworthiness**
  - Free-floating

To recap, there are two basic types of subdivisions, those that are specifically established and those that are used on a free-floating basis.

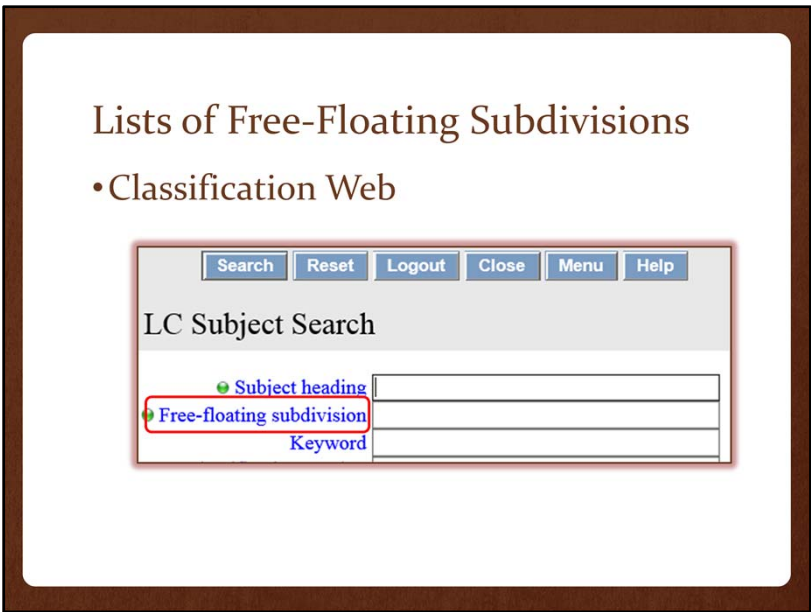
Specifically established subdivisions are printed in LCSH. In the introductory module for this unit, we said that **Airplanes—Airworthiness** is specifically established.

Free-floating subdivisions are the other type and they are not established in LCSH. Instead, the main heading is established in LCSH, and the subdivisions are provided in separate lists. Topical, form, and chronological subdivisions can sometimes be free-floating.

Free-floating subdivisions can be used:

- if they are appropriate to the heading being assigned,
- if they accurately reflect the resource being cataloged,
- if there is not a conflict in LCSH, and
- if the subdivision does not cause redundancy in the heading.

We will discuss each of those four criteria in turn in this module. First, though, let's find out where we can find the free-floating subdivisions.

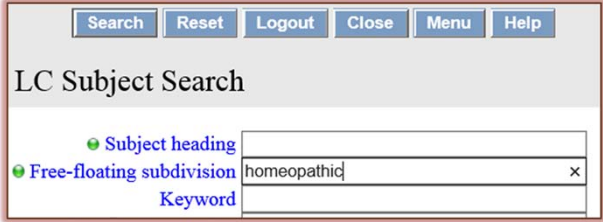


Free-floating subdivisions are part of LCSH, but are not established *in* LCSH. You will not find them in the main alphabetical list. Instead, they are in a separate section.

In Classification Web, they can be browsed by using the “free-floating subdivision” search box. With this function, you can browse all of the possible free-floating subdivisions in a single alphabetical list.

### Lists of Free-Floating Subdivisions

- Classification Web



The screenshot shows a web interface for 'LC Subject Search'. At the top, there are buttons for 'Search', 'Reset', 'Logout', 'Close', 'Menu', and 'Help'. Below these is the title 'LC Subject Search'. There are three search input fields. The first is labeled 'Subject heading' and is empty. The second is labeled 'Free-floating subdivision' and contains the text 'homeopathic'. The third is labeled 'Keyword' and is empty. A small 'x' icon is visible in the top right corner of the 'Free-floating subdivision' input field.

I can do a search for homeopathic...

**Lists of Free-Floating Subdivisions**

- **Classification Web**

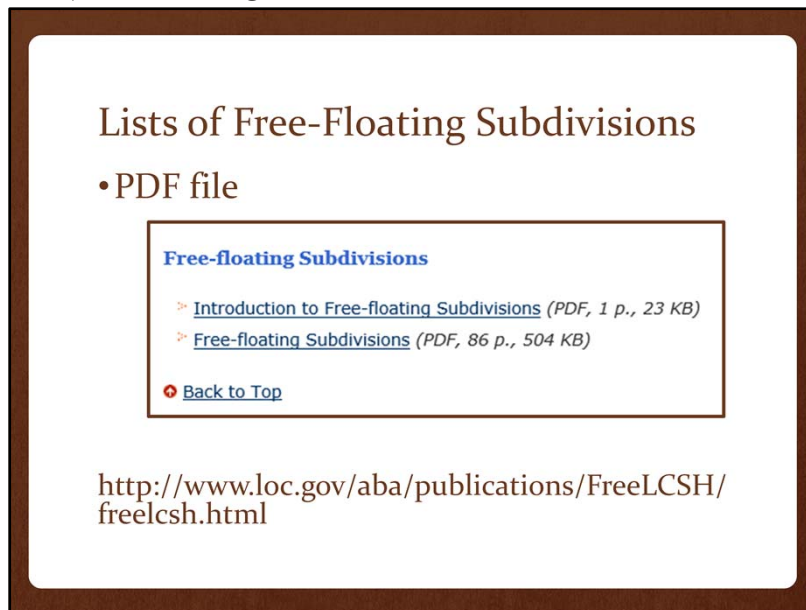
—**Homeopathic treatment** (May Subd Geog)   
Use as a topical subdivision under individual diseases and types of diseases.  
BT [—Treatment](#)  
NT [—Diseases—Homeopathic treatment](#)

—Homes  
USE [—Homes and haunts](#)

and enter the browse list at **—Homeopathic treatment**.

At this entry, it tells me a bit about the kinds of headings to which this subdivision may be applied: individual diseases and types of diseases.

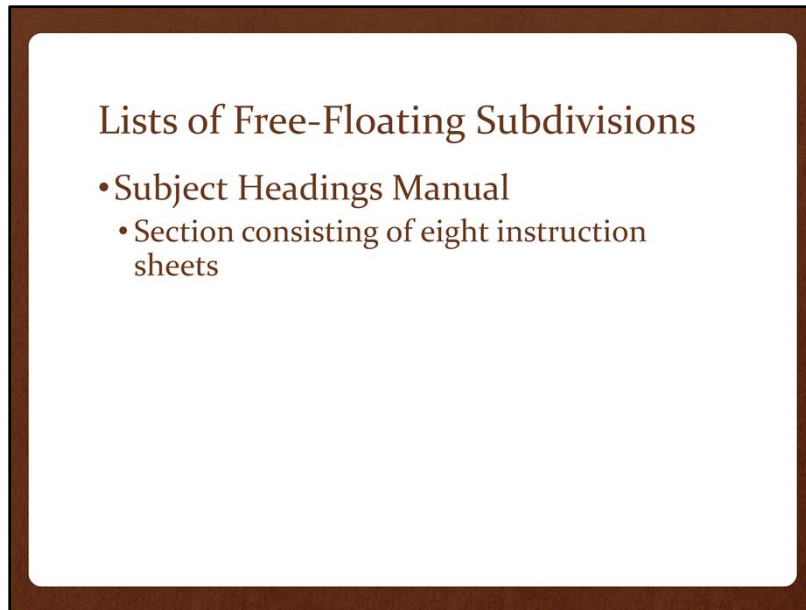
It also mentions both narrower and broader subdivisions that might be of interest.



The screenshot shows a webpage with a dark brown border. At the top, the title "Lists of Free-Floating Subdivisions" is displayed in a serif font. Below the title is a bullet point "• PDF file". A smaller rectangular box with a thin brown border contains the following content: a blue heading "Free-floating Subdivisions", two blue links with right-pointing chevrons: "Introduction to Free-floating Subdivisions (PDF, 1 p., 23 KB)" and "Free-floating Subdivisions (PDF, 86 p., 504 KB)", and a blue link "Back to Top" with a small red circular icon to its left. Below this box, the URL "http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCSH/freelcsh.html" is written in a serif font.

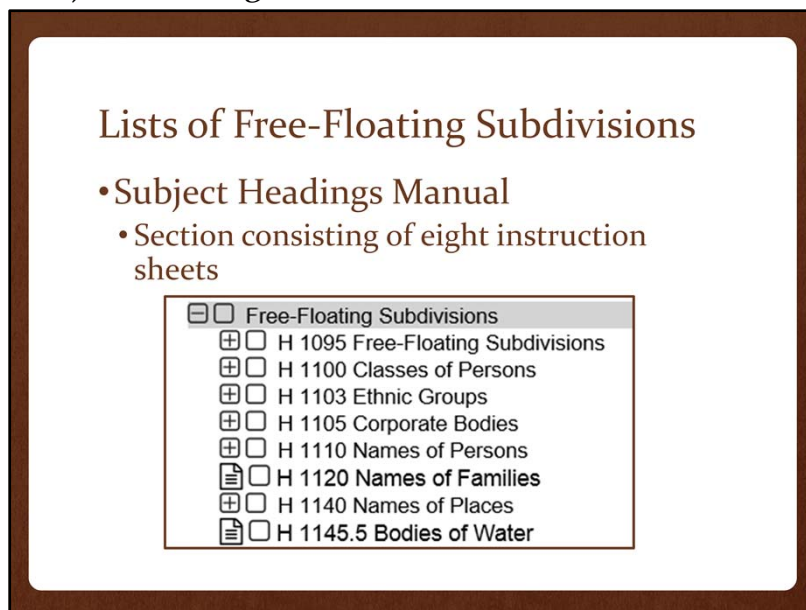
For those of you who are using the PDFs of LCSH, the free-floating subdivisions are provided in their own file. This image is from the LCSH free PDF downloads page.

Again, the subdivisions are presented there in a single alphabetical list.



Free-floating subdivisions can also be found in the *Subject Headings Manual*.

They are in a section that consists of eight instruction sheets, corresponding to the eight categories of free-floating subdivisions.



This is a screenshot of the titles of the instruction sheets, as shown in Cataloger’s Desktop.

As you can see, the eight categories of free-floating subdivisions are:

- free-floating subdivisions,
- classes of persons,
- ethnic groups,
- corporate bodies,
- names of persons,
- names of families,
- names of places, and
- bodies of water.

In the SHM, the subdivisions are arranged by the type of heading to which they apply. The subdivisions that can be assigned to headings for bodies of water are listed in H 1145.5.



### Lists of Free-Floating Subdivisions

- Subject Headings Manual
  - Section consisting of eight instruction sheets

- [Sx](#) Alluvial plain
- [Sx](#) Channelization
- [Sx](#) Channels
- [Sx](#) Fertilization
- [Sx](#) Navigation
- [Sx](#) Navigation [Sx](#) Law and legislation
- [Sx](#) Power utilization
- [Sx](#) Regulation
- [Sx](#) Water rights

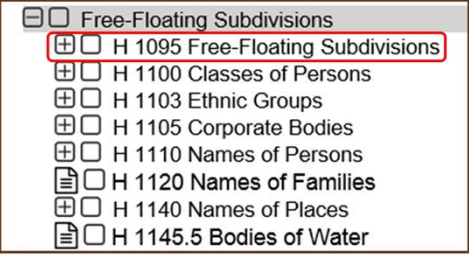
The SHM instruction sheet H 1145.5 contains a very short list of subdivisions, and here it is.

These instruction sheets also provide a lot of information on the circumstances under which the subdivisions can be used. We will discuss the use of the instruction sheets in much more depth in the next module.

For now, just know that we recommend that you always check the manual when using subdivisions. It is a very quick process, and will help you avoid mistakes in your cataloging.

### Lists of Free-Floating Subdivisions

- Subject Headings Manual
  - Section consisting of eight instruction sheets



H 1095, the free-floating subdivisions, deserves special mention.

This is the longest instruction sheet in the entire SHM, and the longest list of subdivisions. It contains all of the free-floating subdivisions that do not fit into any of the specific categories listed on the screen.

Because it is unique in some ways, we will discuss it in a separate module.

## Lists of Free-Floating Subdivisions

- Criteria to consider

1. Is the free-floating subdivision appropriate to the heading being assigned?
2. Does the [**heading**]—[**subdivision**] combination accurately reflect the resource being cataloged?
3. Is there a conflict in LCSH?
4. Does the subdivision cause redundancy in the heading?

For now, we would like to introduce the four criteria to apply when you are considering the use of a free-floating subdivision:

- Is the free-floating subdivision appropriate to the heading being assigned?
- Does the [**heading**]—[**subdivision**] combination accurately reflect the resource being cataloged?
- Is there a conflict in LCSH? and
- Does the subdivision cause redundancy in the heading?

Appropriate?

- For the heading being assigned

H 1145.5, Bodies of Water

<a href="#">Sx</a> Alluvial plain
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channelization
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channels
<a href="#">Sx</a> Fertilization
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation <a href="#">Sx</a> Law and legislation
<a href="#">Sx</a> Power utilization
<a href="#">Sx</a> Regulation
<a href="#">Sx</a> Water rights

First, then, is the subdivision appropriate to the heading being assigned?

The fact that a subdivision is free-floating does not mean that it can be used just anywhere. There are restrictions. Most free-floating subdivisions can be used only under certain types of headings.

Let's look at the list of subdivisions for bodies of water again. These subdivisions free-float only under bodies of water.

Appropriate?

- For the heading being assigned

H 1145.5, Bodies of Water

<a href="#">Sx</a> Alluvial plain	<b>Nile River—Power utilization.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channelization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channels	<b>Atlantic Ocean—Navigation.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Fertilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation <a href="#">Sx</a> Law and legislation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Power utilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Regulation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Water rights	

Since the Nile River and the Atlantic Ocean are both bodies of water, we can choose subdivisions from this list to make heading combinations.

We can compose **Nile River—Power utilization** and **Atlantic Ocean—Navigation**, for example.

Appropriate?

- For the heading being assigned

H 1145.5, Bodies of Water

<a href="#">Sx</a> Alluvial plain	<b>Nile River—Power utilization.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channelization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channels	<b>Atlantic Ocean—Navigation.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Fertilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation <a href="#">Sx</a> Law and legislation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Power utilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Regulation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Water rights <b>X</b>	<b>Cities and towns—Navigation.</b>

We cannot, however, create the heading *Cities and towns—Navigation*, even though we often talk about navigating through or around cities, because cities and towns are not bodies of water.

Accurate?

- For the resource being cataloged

H 1145.5, Bodies of Water

<a href="#">Sx</a> Alluvial plain	<b>Erie, Lake—Water rights.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channelization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channels	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Fertilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation <a href="#">Sx</a> <u>Law and legislation</u>	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Power utilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Regulation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Water rights	

The second criterion is that the heading and subdivision combination must accurately reflect the resource being cataloged.

This one is pretty simple.

If the resource is about water rights related to Lake Erie, you would assign **Erie, Lake—Water rights**.

Accurate?

- For the resource being cataloged

H 1145.5, Bodies of Water

<a href="#">Sx</a> Alluvial plain	<b>Erie, Lake—Water rights.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channelization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channels	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Fertilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation <a href="#">Sx</a> <u>Law and legislation</u>	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Power utilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Regulation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Water rights	
<b>X</b> <b>Great Lakes (North America)—Water rights.</b>	

You would not assign *Great Lakes (North America)—Water rights* to a resource about water rights to Lake Erie, despite the fact that Lake Erie is one of the Great Lakes in North America.

Don't forget that rule of specificity we talked about in earlier modules!



Accurate?

- For the resource being cataloged

H 1145.5, Bodies of Water

<a href="#">Sx</a> Alluvial plain	<b>Erie, Lake—Water rights.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channelization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Channels	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Fertilization	<b>Erie, Lake—Power utilization.</b>
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Navigation <a href="#">Sx</a> Law and legislation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Power utilization	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Regulation	
<a href="#">Sx</a> Water rights	
<b>X</b>	<b>Great Lakes (North America)—Water rights.</b>

Likewise, you would not assign *Erie, Lake—Power utilization*, although the ability to use Lake Erie for power production may be part of water rights.

Both **Erie, Lake—Power utilization** and **Great Lakes (North America)—Water rights** are valid headings, just not for this particular resource.

### Conflict?

- Some **[heading]**—**[subdivision]** combinations are UFs to other headings
  - Cannot be assigned
  - Use the established heading instead

The third criterion for determining whether a free-floating subdivision can be assigned with a particular heading is whether the **[heading]**—**[subdivision]** combination is a UF.

If it is, the combination cannot be assigned and the heading specifically established in LCSH has to be used instead.

### Conflict?

- Some **[heading]**—**[subdivision]** combinations are UFs to other headings
  - Cannot be assigned
  - Use the established heading instead

***Always*** search the combination  
against LCSH!

For this reason, you should *always* search the combination you are thinking about using against LCSH, even if you think you know you can actually use it!

Conflict?

- Some [heading]—[subdivision] combinations are UFs to other headings

**Tay, Firth of (Scotland)**   
UF Firth of Tay (Scotland)  
Tay River Estuary (Scotland)  
BT [Estuaries—Scotland](#)

Let's look at an example.

Say that you are cataloging a resource about the alluvial plain of the Firth of Tay in Scotland. First you would check to see how the Firth of Tay is established in LCSH, and you would find **Tay, Firth of (Scotland)**.

Conflict?

- Some [heading]—[subdivision] combinations are UFs to other headings

**Tay, Firth of (Scotland)**   
UF Firth of Tay (Scotland)  
Tay River Estuary (Scotland)  
BT [Estuaries—Scotland](#)

**Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain.**

We know from our previous discussion that the free-floating subdivision –**Alluvial plain** can be used with bodies of water. The Firth of Tay is an estuary, which is a body of water.

So you can use *Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain*, right?

Conflict?

- Some [heading]—[subdivision] combinations are UFs to other headings

**Tay, Firth of (Scotland)**   
UF Firth of Tay (Scotland)  
Tay River Estuary (Scotland)  
BT [Estuaries—Scotland](#)

**✘ Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain.**

Wrong!

Conflict?

- Some **[heading]**—**[subdivision]** combinations are UFs to other headings

Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain  
USE [Gowrie, Carse of \(Scotland\)](#)

If we search that combination against LCSH, we find that there is a reference to the heading for the Carse of Gowrie.

Conflict?

- Some [heading]—[subdivision] combinations are UFs to other headings

Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain

USE **Gowrie, Carse of (Scotland)**

UF Carse of Gowrie (Scotland)  
Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain

BT [Alluvial plains—Scotland](#)

We therefore have to use **Gowrie, Carse of (Scotland)** when we are cataloging the resource, not *Tay, Firth of (Scotland)—Alluvial plain*, which is a reference.



Redundant?

- Avoid redundant [**heading**]—**[subdivision]** combinations
  - ✗ **Belief and doubt—Philosophy**
  - ✗ **Equality—Social aspects**
  - ✗ **Political parties—Political aspects**
  - ✗ **Recessions—Economic aspects**
  - ✗ **Burns, Robert, 1759-1796—Poetic works**

There is one more vital point that we need to make about the use of free-floating subdivisions: Never make redundant combinations!

**Belief and doubt** is a philosophical concept, and therefore the addition of the subdivision – **Philosophy** is redundant.

**Equality** is a social concept, and adding the subdivision –**Social aspects** is redundant.

**Political parties** are inherently political. Adding –**Political aspects** is redundant.

**Recessions** are inherently economic, so the subdivision –**Economic aspects** should not be added.

This can even apply to headings for persons and corporate bodies. For example, you would not assign the subdivision –**Poetic works** after the heading for Robert Burns, the national poet of Scotland, because we expect materials about Robert Burns to be about his poetry.

**Redundant?**

- Avoid redundant [**heading**]—  
[**subdivision**] combinations

- ✓ **Belief and doubt**
- ✓ **Equality**
- ✓ **Political parties**
- ✓ **Recessions**
- ✓ **Burns, Robert, 1759-1796—Criticism  
and interpretation**

Instead of creating redundant combinations, assign the heading without the subdivision, or, as in the final example of the screen, with a more appropriate subdivision.