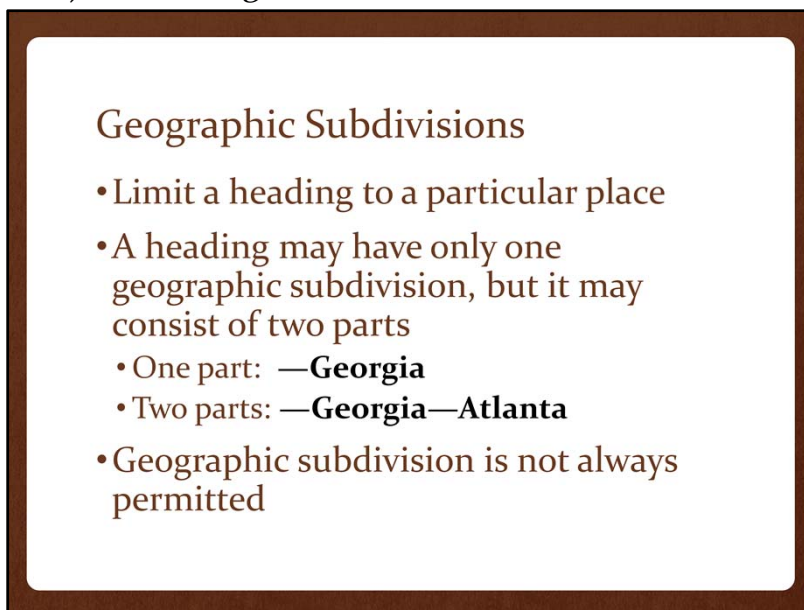# Library of Congress Subject Headings

Module 6.8
Geographic Subdivisions Part 1:
Which Headings May Be Subdivided Geographically?

Policy and Standards Division
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Geographic Subdivisions
- Limit a heading to a particular place
- A heading may have only one geographic subdivision, but it may consist of two parts
  - One part: **—Georgia**
  - Two parts: **—Georgia—Atlanta**
- Geographic subdivision is not always permitted

Geographic subdivisions limit a subject heading to a particular location and are used when the resource being cataloged focuses on a particular location. Geographic subdivisions may be combined with topical, chronological, or form subdivisions to make a very specific heading.

A heading can have only one geographic subdivision, but the geographic subdivision may consist of two parts, as you can see in the example on the screen. The subdivision **—Georgia** is a geographic subdivision with one part, and the subdivision **—Georgia—Atlanta** is a single geographic subdivision with two parts. The two parts will always appear together within a heading string.

Not every heading can include a geographic subdivision, though.

This series of modules on geographic subdivision will explain what to look for to know whether a heading can be subdivided geographically. It will cover the rule for determining the subdivision's location in a complete heading string, and it will describe how to create a geographic subdivision, among other things.

The general instructions on geographic subdivision can be found in the SHM instruction sheets H 364 and H 830-H 870.

This module will explain the instructions that indicate whether or not a heading or subdivision can be geographically subdivided. Because we have not yet discussed the formatting of geographic subdivisions, all the geographic subdivisions used in this module will be for countries, which are the simplest type because they match the form of the name of the country as established in the name authority file. For example, the heading for Germany is **Germany**, and the geographic subdivision is also **—Germany**).

May Subd Geog

- A topic must be able to exist in a particular location, or be able to be discussed in relation to a place

    Birdsongs (May Subd Geog)

    Festivals (May Subd Geog)

    Love poetry, Brazilian (May Subd Geog)

Headings that can be geographically subdivided are identified with the notation (May Subd Geog).

In order to be eligible for geographic subdivision, a topic has to be able to exist in a particular location, or be able to be discussed in relation to a specific place.

Birdsongs differ from place to place, for example. Festivals are location-specific, too, and resources often discuss the festivals of a particular place – whether that is a town, a state or province, a country, a region, or even a continent or hemisphere.

Brazilian love poetry can be geographically subdivided to bring out the specific place in Brazil where it was written; in the city of São Paulo, for example.

Many headings cannot be geographically subdivided, though, and they fall into two broad groups: those that are specifically marked as being ineligible for geographic subdivision, and those without a notation either way.

Some headings are specifically marked as not being eligible for geographic subdivision by the notation (Not Subd Geog).

There are several reasons why geographic subdivision may not be permitted.

In some cases, geographic subdivision would not make any sense. For example, the heading **World health** is assigned to resources that discuss health from the global perspective. It would not be logical to assign a specific place after that heading.

Not Subd Geog

- Second category
  - Meaning of the geographic subdivision would be ambiguous

Palaces in art (Not Subd Geog)

In other cases, the meaning of the geographic subdivision would be ambiguous at best. If we were to subdivide **Palaces in art** by Italy, for example, what would that even mean?

Italian palaces that are depicted in art?
Italian palaces as venues for artists to work?
Or Italian palaces as the inspiration for art?
Or maybe even Italian palaces *as* art?

Since the meaning of the subdivision would be unclear, geographic subdivision is prohibited.

Not Subd Geog

- Second category
  - Meaning of the geographic subdivision would be ambiguous

  Palaces in art (Not Subd Geog)

  Palaces in literature (Not Subd Geog)

  Palaces in motion pictures (Not Subd Geog)

Here are two more examples**: Palaces in literature** and **Palaces in motion pictures**, which refer to the depiction of palaces in literature and motion pictures, respectively.

Adding a place name to either one of these headings would be ambiguous, too.

Oftentimes, LCSH provides another way of bringing out the geographic emphasis of the resource. In some cases, a different heading can be assigned.

Short stories cannot be subdivided geographically, so we cannot create the heading **Short stories—Pakistan** for short stories from Pakistan.

Not Subd Geog

- Third category
  - LCSH provides an alternative method for expressing the location of the topic
    - Assign a different heading

      Short stories (Not Subd Geog)

      ✗ **Short stories—Pakistan**

      Short stories, Pakistani (May Subd Geog)

LCSH provides literary form headings qualified by nationality, so the heading **Short stories, Pakistani** is assigned instead.

Not Subd Geog

- Third category
  - LCSH provides an alternative method for expressing the location of the topic
    - Assign a different heading

      Short stories (Not Subd Geog)
      ✗ **Short stories—Pakistan**

      Short stories, Pakistani (May Subd Geog)
      Short stories, Pakistani—Canada.

Short stories, Pakistani can be geographically subdivided, so we can subdivide the heading by — **Canada** if the Pakistanis who wrote the stories live in Canada.

Not Subd Geog

- Third category
  - LCSH provides an alternative method for expressing the location of the topic
    - Assign an additional heading

Other times, we can assign a complement of headings to bring out the place emphasized in the resource.

Not Subd Geog

- Third category
  - LCSH provides an alternative method for expressing the location of the topic
    - Assign an additional heading

      Palaces in motion pictures (Not Subd Geog)
      ✗ **Palaces in motion pictures—France.**

Let's go back to our earlier example, **Palaces in motion pictures**.

It cannot be subdivided geographically, so how do we bring out the fact that the resource we are cataloging is about palaces as depicted in French films?

We assign an additional heading.

Not Subd Geog

- Third category
  - LCSH provides an alternative method for expressing the location of the topic
    - Assign an additional heading

      Palaces in motion pictures (Not Subd Geog)
      ✗ **Palaces in motion pictures—France.**

      Motion pictures (May Subd Geog)
      Motion pictures—France.

The heading **Motion pictures** can be subdivided geographically, so we can assign **Palaces in motion pictures** along with **Motion pictures—France** to bring out the scope of the resource.

Not Subd Geog

- Third category
  - LCSH provides an alternative method for expressing the location of the topic
    - Assign a geographic heading subdivided by a topic

    Egypt—Antiquities.

    Paris (France)—Buildings, structures, etc.

    United States—Economic conditions.

Sometimes LCSH provides for the assignment of a geographic heading instead of a geographic subdivision.

We will cover this situation in the next module.

Not Subd Geog

• Fourth category
  • Blanket decisions have been made
    • Royal houses, dynasties, and families

      Tudor, House of (Not Subd Geog)

      Chakri dynasty (Not Subd Geog)

      Myers family (Not Subd Geog)

There have also been blanket decisions made for certain types of headings.

Headings for royal houses, dynasties, and families are always marked (Not Subd Geog).

Not Subd Geog

- Fourth category
  - Blanket decisions have been made
    - Groups of fictitious and legendary characters

      X-Men (Fictitious characters) (Not Subd Geog)

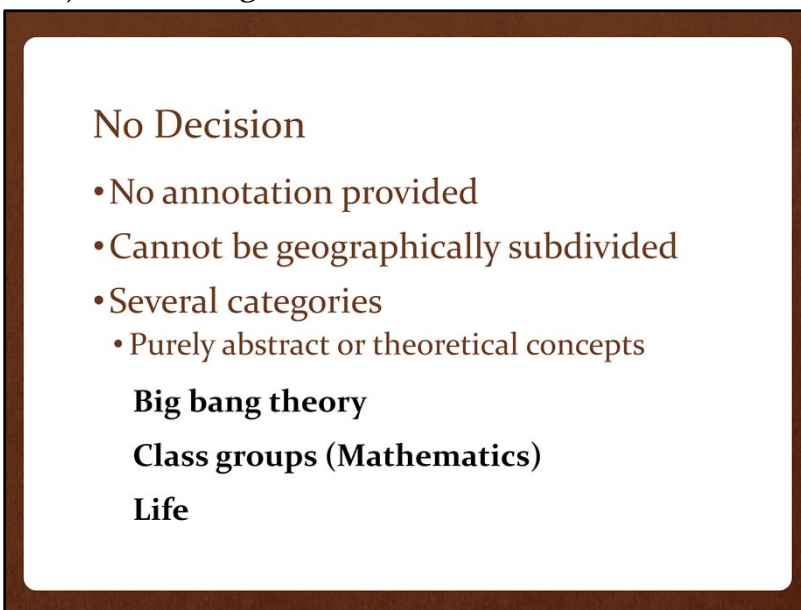   **Horatii (Legendary characters)** (Not Subd Geog)

Headings for fictitious and legendary characters also are always (Not Subd Geog).

Not Subd Geog

- Fourth category
  - Blanket decisions have been made
    - Groups of fictitious and legendary characters

      X-Men (Fictitious characters) (Not Subd Geog)

      Horatii (Legendary characters) (Not Subd Geog)

    - Named products

      iPad (Computer) (Not Subd Geog)

And so are headings for named products, such as the iPad.

No Decision

- No annotation provided
- Cannot be geographically subdivided
- Several categories
  - Purely abstract or theoretical concepts

    Big bang theory

    Class groups (Mathematics)

    Life

We need to discuss one more group of headings. These headings do not have a notation in browse displays. We refer to these as "no decision."

The practical effect is the same as if they said (Not Subd Geog); they cannot be subdivided geographically.

Why do they not say "Not Subd Geog" then?

Perhaps because it would look quite strange. Most of the headings that are "no decision" are for things that could never be discussed in relation to various places.

They include headings for purely abstract or theoretical concepts, such as the big bang theory, class groups in mathematics, and the concept of Life.

No Decision

- No annotation provided
- Cannot be geographically subdivided
- Several categories
  - Named events that include the location in their qualifier

    El Alamein, Battle of, Egypt, 1942

    Madrid Train Bombings, Madrid, Spain, 2004

Named events that include their locations in their qualifiers are also marked no decision.

No Decision

- No annotation provided
- Cannot be geographically subdivided
- Several categories
  - Named buildings and other structures

    Palacio de Gobierno (Quito, Ecuador)

    Tour Eiffel (Paris, France)

    Channel Tunnel (Coquelles, France, and Folkestone, England)

Named buildings and other structures are qualified by their location, so geographic subdivision is not necessary.

No Decision

- No annotation provided
- Cannot be geographically subdivided
- Several categories
  - Geographic features

    Andes

    Ness, Loch (Scotland)

    Patagonia (Argentina and Chile)

And finally, geographic features also cannot be subdivided geographically.

As you can see from the examples on the screen, sometimes geographic features are qualified by their location. Regardless, though, a geographic feature cannot be in multiple places at once. If a resource discusses an extensive geographic feature like the Andes Mountains in relation to a specific jurisdiction, an additional heading is assigned to bring out the jurisdiction being discussed.

In Summary

- Three instructions guide the decision to use a geographic subdivision

  - May Subd Geog

  - Not Subd Geog

  - No decision

In summary, headings and subdivisions may be annotated (May Subd Geog), (Not Subd Geog), or may not be annotated at all.

Those marked (Not Subd Geog) or where there is no decision – those that are not explicitly marked – may not be subdivided geographically.