

LCSH Policy Change Proposal to Allow the Use of RDA Family Name Authorized Access Points as Subject Access Points

Proposal:

The Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs (PTCP) Division of the Library of Congress (LC) wishes to change current practice and allow family name authorized access points from the National Authority File (NAF) to be used as subject access points. In order to maintain full accessibility for genealogical study, this proposed policy change would require the related subject authority record for the base family name to be used on the same record whenever a descriptive family name is used as a subject access point.

This is a change from current policy.

LC wishes to make this change to subject practice for the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. We invite the library community to offer comment on this proposed change. Please send all comments to policy@loc.gov with the subject line of “Family NARs as subjects” by Friday, March 3, 2023.

Background:

LC has received multiple requests from the wider library community to allow the use of name authority records for family names from the national authority file to be used as subject access points. Consider this fictional example:

Title: <i>History of the Robert and Russell Middleton families of Kentucky, Illinois, Texas, and California</i>	
Subject access for current practice:	Subject access for proposed practice:
From LCSH: 600 30 \$a <i>Middleton family</i> .	From LCSH: 600 30 \$a <i>Middleton family</i> . From NAF: 600 30 \$a <i>Middleton (Family : \$d 1750-2022)</i>

There are several considerations to this proposed approach:

- For books of family history or archival materials related to a family group, this type of access point would be enormously helpful in specifying exactly which branch of the family a resource discusses.
- For extremely common names, this type of access allows a researcher to narrow their search more effectively. This approach aligns with the *LCSH* principle of specificity for subject access.
- Many of the resources that provide the information for this type of name authority record would not automatically receive this access point according to descriptive practice; consequently, the power to narrow a search that is provided by these access points is lost to the researcher.

- However, in discussing the proposed change with LC's [Local History & Genealogy Reference Services](#), PTCP also wished to address their concern about losing the power of collocation offered by the use of the subject authority records for families. LCSH subject headings for families are broad, "umbrella" headings that collocate resources about all branches of a family, regardless of the location of the family, or the spellings used for the family name. Thus, many researchers would also benefit from being able to browse all resources about a family name grouping and perhaps find resources that are primarily about other specific branches, but may nonetheless provide information beneficial to their own research.
- LC's practice, as will be stated in the *SHM*, would be to have both the access point for the specific branch of the family expressed through the family NAR, as well as the general access point for the family as a whole expressed through the subject authority record. When a corresponding LCSH heading for the family as a whole is not established, catalogers must propose a new LCSH heading to conform to this new policy.
- LC will not augment description for already cataloged material with more specific NAR-based subject access points. Other libraries may of course do so according to their own institutional policy.

Related work

PTCP will lead at least two action items related to this proposed change:

1. All family NARs will need to have the 667 removed that restricts their use as subject access points. The 008/11 field would also need to be updated from "n" to "a" to allow their use as LCSH access points. This will require consultation with the NACO nodes and the CDM Section here at LC.
2. PTCP would update all documentation related to this policy. This includes *Subject Headings Manual (SHM)* H 1631, and any other *SHM* documentation that mentions family names, *Descriptive Cataloging Manual (DCM)* Z1 667 section and 008/11 section, and the NACO Training Module 3.