

Introduction to Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials

In 2007 the Library of Congress began a project to develop genre/form terms, which describe what a work *is*, rather than what it is *about*, as subject headings do. This introduction provides a brief history of the development of genre/form terms at LC and outlines the ways that genre/form terms differ from *LC Subject Headings* in application.

HISTORY

Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) has for many decades included headings that denote what a work *is* rather than what it is *about* (e.g., **Horror films**, **Detective and mystery stories**, **Constitutions**). While these headings refer to genres and forms of works, that information is often not made explicit to library users, through notes, computer displays, or otherwise.

Since the 1980s the Library of Congress has supplemented *LCSH* by developing discipline-specific guides and thesauri of genre/form terms, including for example the *Thesaurus for Graphic Materials*, compiled by the Prints and Photographs Division; the *Radio Form-Genre Guide* and *Moving Image Genre-Form Guide*, both compiled by the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division (MBRS); and Martha M. Yee's *Moving Image Materials: Genre Terms*, which was coordinated by MBRS and published by LC's Cataloging Distribution Service. Additionally, other discipline-specific thesauri developed at the Library of Congress, such as the *Ethnographic Thesaurus* developed by the American Folklife Center and the *Children's Subject Headings*, include genre/form terms.

The Library of Congress has also used genre/form thesauri compiled by third parties, such as *Guidelines on Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama, Etc.*, which is

published by the American Library Association, and the *Art & Architecture Thesaurus*, developed by the Getty Art History Information Program and published by Oxford University Press. The LC online catalog also includes genre/form terms from *Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)*, a system that is developed and maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

The development of LC-authorized genre/form terms was undertaken in 2007 at the behest of the library community, which for many years has recognized the utility and value of such terms and has long petitioned the Library of Congress to create a genre/form thesaurus, along with policies for its use. *LCGFT* mimics the structure of *LCSH* while incorporating terminology from other genre/form lists and thesauri. The intent is to develop a dynamic, multi-disciplinary body of genre/form terms that is cohesive, unified, intuitive, and user-friendly.

In 2007 a pilot project was conducted to establish genre/form terms in the area of moving images (films, television programs, and video recordings). The *Moving Image Genre-Form Guide (MIGFG)* and existing LC subject headings were used as the basis for development. Since the existing subject headings constitute a relatively small, defined subgroup of *LCSH*, the project served as an experiment to determine and resolve issues that would arise in the creation of genre/form terms. The resolutions in turn served as the model for later projects. In September 2007 the first moving image genre/form terms were approved and distributed through the Cataloging Distribution Service.

A second project, for radio program genre/form terms, was begun in late 2007. Based on the *Radio Form-Genre Guide (RADFG)* and LC subject headings, this project was smaller than the first, but it helped identify issues that will need to be resolved as terms for additional disciplines are added to *LCGFT*.

Two more projects, for the disciplines of cartography and law, built on the success of the moving image and radio program projects. In 2009 LC began to develop terminology to describe the genres and forms of cartographic materials, and the terms for this third project were approved in May 2010.

The fourth genre/form project, to develop terms for law materials, was undertaken in partnership with the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). Shortly after LC's moving image project was launched, AALL's Classification and Subject Cataloging Policy Advisory Working Group started developing a list of genre/form terms for law. The working group and LC soon agreed that they should team up to develop the terms. Approximately 80 terms for law materials were approved in November 2010.

CONSISTENCY BETWEEN GENRE/FORM TERMS AND SUBJECT HEADINGS

In most cases, the wording of genre/form terms and subject headings is identical, although the headings serve different purposes (e.g., the genre/form term **Animated films** is identical to the subject heading **Animated films**). This assists searchers because they can use the same terminology to discover works *about* a genre or form as they use to discover *examples of* the genre or form.

There are a few cases in which the same general concept is represented by both genre/form terms and subject headings, but the headings are phrased differently because of their different purposes. For example, a cinéma vérité film is entered under the genre/form term **Cinéma vérité films**, but a work about the cinéma vérité movement and style is entered under the subject heading **Cinéma vérité**.

There are also some genre/form terms that do not currently have an equivalent subject heading, and instead introduce new terminology (e.g., **Casebooks**). Since *LCSH* is a dynamic system, it is anticipated that subject headings mimicking the genre/form terms will be proposed as they are needed for works *about* individual genres and forms.

Although the wording of genre/form term and subject heading pairs is usually identical (as in the **Animated films** example above), computer systems and applications are able to distinguish between them based on MARC 21 tagging conventions. Genre/form terms employ MARC 21 tag 155 in authority records and tag 655 in bibliographic records, while topical subject headings use tags 150 and 650, respectively. This ability to differentiate on the basis of the MARC tag allows the two types of headings to be manipulated and searched separately if desired.

APPLICATION OF GENRE/FORM TERMS

The chief difference between genre/form terms and subject headings in the *LCSH* system lies in their application. Unlike most subject headings, genre/form terms are intended to be used as facets without further subdivision.

Full descriptions of the rules for the application of genre/form terms are provided in the *Subject Headings Manual (SHM)*. Instruction sheets specific to the type of works being cataloged should be consulted (e.g., H 1969.5 provides information about the application of genre/form terms for radio programs).

REFERENCES AND SCOPE NOTES

References within *LCGFT* follow the same rules that references for LC subject headings do. A note may also be included to define the scope of the genre/form term. The rules for references and scope notes are described in full in the *SHM*.

PRODUCTS

Five services provide information about new and revised genre/form terms.

1. **MARC Distribution Service.** Genre/form terms are distributed as part of the MARC Distribution Service Subject-Authorities product that provides records in MARC 21 and MARCMXL formats via FTP. This fee-based subscription service provides new and updated records on a weekly basis to supplement the master database of subject authority records.
2. **Monthly Lists.** New and changed genre/form terms appear on *LC Subject Headings Monthly Lists*, which are posted on the World Wide Web at <http://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/weeklylists>; free subscriptions to the *Monthly Lists*, via e-mail or RSS feed, can be arranged at <http://www.loc.gov/rss>.
3. **Classification Web.** *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* is included in *Classification Web*, a fee-based World Wide Web service that also provides access to *Library of Congress Subject Headings* and *Library of Congress Classification*.
4. **LC Authorities.** Genre/form records are included in LC Authorities <http://authorities.loc.gov>, a free web-based database that allows for browsing, display, and download (in MARC 21 format) of the authority records.
5. **LC Authorities & Vocabularies.** Genre/form records are included in LC Authorities & Vocabularies <http://id.loc.gov>, a free-web based service that allows for browsing, display, and bulk download (in various formats) of the authority records.

COVERAGE

The genre/form list contains 734 terms established through March 2012.

CONTACT

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