

Library of Congress Subject Authority Records H 40

BACKGROUND: *Online subject authority records in Classification Web and the LC Database take precedence over all printed products as authority for the non-free-floating elements of subject headings. Additionally, subdivision authority records have been created to control the more than 3,200 free-floating subdivisions. These records, used in conjunction with name authority records in the LC Database and the lists of free-floating subdivisions and other elements in the **Subject Headings Manual**, constitute final authority for the assignment of subject headings.*

A copy of each subject authority record in Classification Web also resides in the LC Database. In addition to being the most authoritative list of subject headings, Classification Web is also used for products such as the Subject Headings Tentative Lists and Library of Congress Subject Headings, which was published annually in print form until 2013. LCSH is now available as free PDF files on the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access website.

1. Characteristics of subject authority records.

a. Records for approved headings. An existing heading that is approved and valid for use is represented in Classification Web and the LC Database by a single authority record with a record ID number in the 010 field having the prefix **sh**.

b. Records for newly proposed headings. Proposed headings reside in the Subject Heading Proposal System, which is a module of Classification Web. The record ID number in the 010 field has the prefix **sp**. The heading is not valid for use until it has been approved during the editorial process. Once the [Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division](#) has assigned the proposal to a tentative list, the list number can be found in the 907 \$t subfield of the MARC authority record in the Subject Heading Proposal System.

c. Records for headings being updated. An existing heading that is being changed in any way is represented in the Subject Heading Proposal System by two authority records, one having a record ID number with the prefix **sh** in the 010 field, and the other having the same record ID number but with the prefix **sp**. In order to determine the nature of the update being performed, it is necessary to compare the “sh” record with its “sp” counterpart. Once the [Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division](#) has assigned the proposal to a tentative list, the list number can be found in the 907 \$t subfield of the MARC authority record in the Subject Heading Proposal System.

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2. Assigning valid headings as subjects. Before assigning a subject heading to a work being cataloged, ascertain that either (1) it is an RDA name heading represented by a name authority record in the LC Database (cf. H 430); or (2) it is represented in the LC Database or in Classification Web by a single subject authority record that has an 010 field with an **sh** record number; or (3) if it is represented in the Subject Heading Proposal System by two subject authority records one of which has an 010 field with an **sp** record number, the change being made is to a field other than the 1XX field; or (4) it is authorized by free-floating provisions (cf. H 362 for free-floating terms and phrases, H 1090 for multiple subdivisions, and H 1095-H 1200 for free-floating subdivisions).

Do not assign headings that have both “sh” and “sp” records unless the proposed change is in a field other than the 1XX field, that is, unless the heading itself is unaffected by the change. If the 1XX field is being changed, the proposal has appeared on a tentative list, and editorial process is complete (as shown by the tentative list number in the 907 \$t subfield in the MARC authority record in the Subject Heading Proposal System), consult the approved list posted on the [Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access website](http://www.loc.gov/aba/) (<http://www.loc.gov/aba/>) to determine whether the proposed change was approved. “sp” records in the Subject Heading Proposal System are converted to “sh” records approximately 3-4 weeks after the date on the tentative list.

3. Non-authoritative subject heading sources. The following sources, although useful tools for reference purposes, may not be treated as authority for the assignment of a subject heading:

- Bibliographic records in the LC Database
- Tentative lists of new subject heading proposals (including those proposals marked **(A)**).