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 resource *is*, rather than what it is *about*, as most subject headings do. This introduction provides a brief history of the development of genre/form terms at LC and describes the characteristics and structure of *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT).

HISTORY

Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) has for many decades included headings that denote what a resource *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 resources, 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 American Folklife Center's *Ethnographic Thesaurus* 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.*, 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.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The development of *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT) began in 2007. The project was undertaken at the behest of the library community, which for many years had recognized the utility and value of such terms and had long petitioned the Library of Congress to create a genre/form thesaurus, along with policies for its use. LC's intent is to develop a dynamic, multi-disciplinary body of genre/form terms that is cohesive, unified, intuitive, and user-friendly.

Early on, the Policy and Standards Division (PSD) determined that each discipline should be handled as a separate project. This approach allows for incremental policy changes as issues are resolved. It also enables the terms in a particular discipline to be rolled out as a group, thereby causing less confusion among catalogers, reference librarians, and users than would occur if the terms were released piecemeal. Finally, it permits collaboration with individual constituencies, such as associations organized around a particular discipline or user group.

As of January 2016, projects for terms in eight areas have been completed: cartographic materials, "general" materials (e.g., dictionaries, encyclopedias), law materials,

literature, moving images (films and television programs), music, non-musical sound recordings (primarily radio programs), and religious materials.

The moving image project was first. The *Moving Image Genre-Form Guide* (MIGFG) and existing LC subject headings were used as the basis for development. The project served as an experiment to discover and resolve issues that would arise in the creation of genre/form terms. The resolutions to the issues then 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.

The 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 needed to be resolved before terms for additional disciplines were added to LCGFT. The first genre/form terms for radio programs were distributed in early 2008, and the thesaurus has since been expanded to include terms for other non-musical sound recordings, such as **Field recordings** and **Test pressings (Sound recordings)**.

The third project, for terms describing cartographic materials, was begun in early 2009 and was undertaken in cooperation with the Library of Congress' Geography and Maps Division. The first cartography genre/form terms were approved in May 2010. It was with this project that the need for a fully faceted vocabulary – in which each term represents a single concept, and multiple terms are assigned to bring out multiple concepts – became clear. The cartography project was also the first to precipitate changes to LCSH policy, with the cancellation of over a dozen form subdivisions.

Law materials was the fourth project and it was the first in which LC collaborated with another organization. The American Association of Law Libraries' Classification and Subject Cataloging Policy Advisory Working Group formed a task force to develop the law vocabulary, using William Benemann's *Genre Terms for Law Materials* as its starting point. Policy specialists in PSD, law specialists from throughout LC, and the task force then negotiated some fine points of terminology and scope before the terms were incorporated into LCGFT in November 2010.

Terms for general library materials constituted the fifth group to be added. The ALA Subject Access Committee's Subcommittee on Genre/Form Implementation (SGFI) formed the General Terms Working Group in 2012. The Working Group developed a list of desired terms, which were then negotiated by PSD and members of the Working Group. The terms were incorporated into LCGFT in January 2015.

The sixth group of terms to be added was for musical resources. In 2009, the Music Library Association's Bibliographic Control Committee (now the Cataloging and Metadata Committee) established the Form/Genre Task Force,

which partnered with PSD to develop of genre/form terms for music. Approximately 570 terms were approved in February 2015.

The literature project got underway in 2012, when SGFI formed the working group on LCGFT Literature Terms. After negotiation between the Working Group and PSD, the first group of approximately 230 literature terms was approved in May 2015; the second group of approximately 150 terms was added to LCGFT in October 2015.

The religion project was the final one to be completed for the 2016 edition of LCGFT. Beginning in 2010, the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) spearheaded this project by coordinating the efforts of ATLA members and members of the Association of Jewish Libraries, the Catholic Library Association, and the Council on East Asian Libraries, as well as the efforts of other interested parties. ATLA presented PSD with a thesaurus of genre/form terms related to religious materials, and after a period of negotiation 45 genre/form terms were added to LCGFT.

As of February 2016, there is one additional ongoing project: the Art Libraries Society of North America is partnering with LC to develop terms that will be used to describe works of art.

Each project is considered finished when the commonly used terms for a given discipline are incorporated into LCGFT and are implemented at LC. As additional terms are needed, they may be proposed by LC catalogers and by members of the Subject Authority Cooperative (SACO) program. Likewise, LC catalogers and SACO members may propose revisions to existing terms.

USE WITH THE GENRE/FORM TERMS MANUAL

LCGFT should be used with the *Genre/Form Terms Manual*, which contains instructions that are essential for those who wish to understand and apply Library of Congress genre/form terms correctly. The instruction sheets comprising the *Manual* may be freely downloaded from LC's web site at <URL http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCGFT/freelcgft.html >.

Additional information on each of the topics below may be found in the *Manual*.

SCOPE OF THE VOCABULARY

Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials is a stand-alone vocabulary that may be used in conjunction with any subject heading system and descriptive cataloging code. It was initially part of LCSH, but was formally separated from it in May 2011. LCGFT diverges significantly from LCSH in its scope as well as in the format and

application of its terms, but it does retain a fundamental characteristic of LCSH: literary warrant. New genre/form terms, or revisions to existing terms, may be proposed as needed for new cataloging, and are based on information provided in the resources being cataloged as well as on research.

Terms that describe works and expressions (as defined in *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records*) are eligible for inclusion in LCGFT. Therefore, the terms indicate the intellectual or artistic expression of the work and also the original mode of issuance, where applicable. The physical carrier of the manifestation being cataloged is indicated through descriptive elements. For example, a television series released on DVD is assigned genre/form terms indicating that it is a television program, not a DVD. There are a few exceptional manifestation-level terms in LCGFT (e.g., **Video recordings for the hearing impaired**), but they should not be considered precedents.

Genres and forms may be broadly defined as categories of resources that share known conventions. More specifically, genre/form terms may describe the purpose, structure, content, and/or themes of resources. Genre/form terms describing content and themes most frequently refer to creative works and denote common rhetorical devices that usually combine elements such as plot and setting, character types, etc. Such terms may be closely related to the subjects of the creative works, but are distinct from them.

Several other characteristics of works and expressions are closely related to genres and forms, but are not eligible for explicit inclusion in LCGFT: ethnicity, nationality, or other characteristics of the creator; intended audience; time period of creation; geographic location (e.g., a work set in New York City); the popularity of the work (e.g., blockbusters); and, in the case of music, the medium of performance (e.g., trumpet). Also ineligible are terms that by their nature require a value judgment on the part of catalogers and users (e.g., racist films).

The above excluded characteristics may occasionally be implicit within a genre or form. For example, the time period of creation and the geographic setting are implicit in **Rubble films**, which refers to films produced in the years after World War II that featured the exteriors of burned-out buildings in Europe. As with the manifestation-level terms, LCGFT also currently includes some terms that are technically out of scope, such as **Children's films**, which should not be considered precedents.

COMPONENTS OF ENTRIES

Authorized terms

Each term in LCGFT consists of a single genre or form, and may consist of a single word, as in **Constitutions**, **Encyclopedias**, **Globes**, and **Novels**, or a phrase, as is the case with **Handbooks and manuals**, **Papal documents**, **Steampunk**

music, and **Tongue twisters**. Terms may include a parenthetical qualifier when it is necessary to distinguish between homonyms (e.g., **Thrillers (Motion pictures)**; **Thrillers (Radio programs)**).

The preference is for broader, rather than narrower, terms. Most literary and artistic resources provide only a broad indication of their genres and forms. Broader terms can therefore expedite cataloging and also serve the users, who do not have to search several very narrow sub-genres or forms to find materials of interest to them. There are times in which a narrow term is warranted and may be proposed however, such as in the case of **Coutumes**, compilations of French medieval customary law.

Used For (UF) references

Sometimes called "see" references, UF references display the equivalence relationship. They lead the user from a non-preferred term to the authorized term. Under the heading referred to, the notation is UF, but if the user searches for the non-preferred term, a USE reference is generated.

UF references may refer from a synonym or different spelling, or provide a different form of the authorized term. The latter is most commonly represented with inverted references, which bring significant words to the front. *Examples:*

Case digests
USE Law digests
   [Synonym]

Catalogues
USE Catalogs
   [Variant spelling]

Blessings, Papal
USE Papal blessings
   [Inverted reference to bring the significant word to the front]

UFs are occasionally made from terms that are not strictly synonymous when it is impractical to establish separate terms for the concepts. Foreign-language UFs are not made to English-language terms unless the foreign word or phrase is typically found in English-language reference sources. *Examples:*

Actualités (Motion pictures)
USE Actualities (Motion pictures)
   [French term found in English-language sources]

Legislative amendments
USE Statutes and codes
   [Not synonymous, but considered impractical to establish separate terms]

UF references are also made from earlier forms of authorized terms. Those UFs are followed by the legend [Former heading].

> Radio commercials
> UF Radio commercials (Advertisements) [Former heading]

Broader Term (BT) and Narrower Term (NT) references

Broader terms and narrower terms display the hierarchical relationship. An NT is a subgroup of the class represented by the BT. BT/NT is a reciprocal relationship, but only the BT is explicitly coded in the MARC 21 authority records. The computer generates the NT references.

The disciplines of cartography, law, literature, moving images, music, religion, and non-musical sound recordings each have a single "broadest term," to which all other terms in the discipline are hierarchically subordinate. Their broadest terms are **Cartographic materials**; **Law materials**; **Literature**; **Motion pictures**; **Music**; **Religious materials**; **Television programs**; and **Sound recordings**. Terms for general library materials may have one or more of ten broadest terms: **Commemorative works**; **Creative nonfiction**; **Derivative works**; **Discursive works**; **Ephemera**; **Illustrated works**; **Informational works**; **Instructional and educational works**; **Recreational works**; and **Tactile works.** Excepting the broadest terms, every authorized term has at least one BT. *Example:*

> **Horror films**
> BT Motion pictures
> NT Slasher films
> NT Splatter films
>
> **Motion pictures**
> NT Horror films
>
> **Slasher films**
> BT Horror films
>
> **Splatter films**
> BT Horror films

All splatter films and slasher films are by definition horror films (horror films is the class and splatter and slasher films are the class members). However, not all horror films are slasher or splatter films. Likewise, all horror films are motion pictures, but not all motion pictures are horror films.

Terms may occasionally belong to more than one hierarchy, and may even cross disciplines. **Podcasts** belongs to three hierarchies, reflecting the fact that podcasts may originate in different media. *Example:*

> **Podcasts**
> BT Motion pictures
> BT Sound recordings
> BT Television programs

The strict hierarchies allow all of the terms in a discipline to be found by searching up and down the levels.

Related Term (RT) references

Related terms display the associative relationship; that is, the terms are mentally associated to such a high degree that it is desirable to provide a link between them to indicate that the other term may be of interest to the user. The terms tend to be used somewhat interchangeably or have meanings that overlap to an extent, but the relationship is not hierarchical. RT references are reciprocal, and are explicitly coded in the record for each of the terms. *Example:*

> **Census data**
> RT Vital statistics
>
> **Vital statistics**
> RT Census data
>
> *[Census data refers to official counts of the population, while vital statistics are official public records of births, deaths, etc.]*

Scope notes (SN)

Scope notes are definitions that are intended to help catalogers maintain consistency when assigning the term, and to help users determine whether the term covers the material that they seek. Generally, a scope note is provided when a term may be unfamiliar to most users, or when reference sources disagree on the meaning of a term and the term must therefore be defined for the LCGFT context. *Examples:*

> **Official gazettes**
> SN Official journals that promulgate laws and that often include regulations, public notices, and other official announcements.
>
> **Peep shows (Motion pictures)**
> SN Short films intended to be viewed through a small hole or magnifying glass.

Contrasting scope notes may also be provided when two or more authorized terms are closely related or overlapping in meaning. *Example:*

Military films
SN Films that feature the military lifestyle and loyalty to the armed forces and its codes and are generally set during peacetime. For films that feature military conflicts see War films.

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SN Films that feature military conflicts. For films that feature the military lifestyle and loyalty to the armed forces and its codes and are generally set during peacetime see Military films.

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*, *Library of Congress Medium of Performance Thesaurus for Music*, *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms*, 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 Linked Data Service**. Genre/form records are included in the LC Linked Data Service 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 1868 terms established through January 2016.

CONTACT

Questions and comments may be sent to:

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