**Subject Indexing for Pictures: An Overview**
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**Tip.** To understand how subject indexing works in online catalogs, search for records using subject terms from a formal authority file such as AAT, LCSH, or TGM. Ask yourself:
- If I needed pictures on ‘abc’ topic, would I be glad a subject heading brought me to these records?
  - Did I get too many records (e.g., pictures that barely show the topic) or too few?
- What approach the indexing follow-- broad (general categories) or detailed (very specific terms)?
- How easy is it to gauge the relevance of the indexed material to the subject I’m pursuing?

**Subject information in catalog records can appear in:**
- Title
- Notes
- Subject headings and subdivisions
- Classification scheme codes

**Subject note patterns:**
- [Type of material] shows … [summary of overall key topics; the ‘of’ factor]
- Includes … [more specific topics; the ‘about’ factor]
- Also has … [topics of interest, but in low quantity or not directly related to the core scope]

**Subject headings and notes should accomplish the following:** *(with less done in minimal level cataloging)*
- Be specific to the overall scope of the material. (What the pictures are ‘of’ or depict.)
- Convey what the pictures are “about.” (What the pictures “about;” their meaning, purpose, or function.)
- Mention predominant subjects.
- Point out unusual subjects, even if shown in only one picture among many. (Alternatively, make an item-level records for special pictures.)
- Provide name headings, e.g., for individual buildings, people, events.
- Include generic or topical headings, e.g., for types of kinds of buildings or occupations depicted.
- Refer to a finding aid or item records for more detailed subject access to large or diverse collections.
- Rely on a thesaurus to guide people from broad subjects (e.g., animals) to the specific subject in the pictures (e.g., rats), rather than assign broad and narrow terms to the same catalog record.

**General Observations**
- Make it clear in the title or a note why a subject was assigned and where it appears in a collection.
- Set up a priority order among subject indexing tools, e.g., Start with LCSH, then TGM, then AAT.
- Establish subdivision practice, e.g., use of “Pictorial works,” or chronological and geographic.
- Propose new terms to AAT, TGM, LCSH as you need them.
- Needed: subject systems that distinguish between primary and secondary subjects.
- Needed: subject systems that distinguish “of” from “about.”
- Needed: thesauruses integrated with online catalogs for easy retrieval of records indexed by terms connected through broad, narrow, and synonym relationships.

**Basic Reading List:**