Introduction to Children’s Subject Headings

The Children’s and Young Adults’ Cataloging Program (CYAC; formerly called the Annotated Card Program, or AC Program) provides data tailored to the needs of children and young adults who use school and public libraries. The cataloging is available from many sources because of its distribution in the Library of Congress MARC files and inclusion in the Library of Congress Cataloging-In-Publication Program. Records are prepared using the MARC 21 format for authorities, RDA instructions, valid Library of Congress subject headings, valid children’s subject headings, current Library of Congress subject cataloging policies and practices, and current children’s subject cataloging policies and practices.

The Literature Section in the U.S. Programs, Law and Literature Division of the Library of Congress is responsible for Children’s Subject Headings. The Section catalogs items in scope for the children’s subject cataloging program by creating a bibliographic citation complete with children’s subject headings and a brief noncritical summary, develops new children’s subject headings and proposes changes to existing headings as necessary, and monitors the policies and practices of children’s subject cataloging.

This introduction provides a brief history of the program and outlines ways in which children’s subject headings differ from standard LC headings in form and application. Terms not used, sources consulted in establishing headings, and subdivisions that are an exception to LC standard policies or patterns are described. The Children’s Subject Headings list includes headings that vary in application or form from the standard LC subject headings and those especially created for the Children’s and Young Adults’ Cataloging Program. The Children’s Subject Headings list must be used in conjunction with Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), and its cross-reference structure is to be observed except as noted. When headings that appeared in earlier editions of Subject Headings for Children’s Literature are incorporated into LCSH, they are removed from the following list if the children’s subject cataloging interpretation and LC interpretation are identical.

In MARC 21 bibliographic records children’s subject headings are identified by the second indicator of 1 in 6XX fields. Records created prior to January 1, 1999, have the notation AC in subfield $b of the 001 field. Records created or updated after January 1, 1999, have the notation lcac in subfield $a of the 042 field.

HISTORY

In the fall of 1965 the Library of Congress initiated the Annotated Card Program. The purpose of this program was to provide a more appropriate and in-depth subject treatment of juvenile titles and to offer easier subject access to those materials. This was accomplished chiefly through a more liberal application of the subject headings in LCSH. In some cases the rules for application were changed and headings were simplified; in a few instances headings were created where none had previously existed.

In 1969 the first edition of Subject Headings for Children’s Literature was published. The Annotated Card Program list was a list of exceptions to the Library of Congress subject headings list and therefore was to be consulted and used in conjunction with it. It explained guiding principles of the AC program and listed those headings that varied from LCSH in application or form.

While the AC list contained certain departures from LCSH, it was intended primarily to provide a liberal extension of LCSH. Any departure from LCSH was to be guided by the headings in the Sears List of Subject Headings (Sears), the advice of the ALA/RTSD/CCS Cataloging of Children’s Materials Committee, and the needs of children’s libraries as articulated by authorities in the field.

Since then the list has continued to evolve. New policies have been initiated and old ones changed or terminated as the Literature Section catalogs the wide range of material published for children and young adults and receives feedback from the American Library Association ALCTS/CaMMS.
In establishing a heading that varies from LCSH, term thought to be the most effective for children’s subject catalogers consult numerous sources in order to arrive at the heading cataloging when appearing in the following catalog. For those names not used instead of the scientific ones. For those names not appearing in the following catalog. For those names not associated with a disease, headings are used such as: Switzerland—Fiction; Drug abuse—Fiction; AIDS (Disease)—Fiction. Abstract concepts are also recognized, such as Friendship—Fiction and Self-reliance—Fiction.

5. Use of specific together with general subject headings. In a catalog for a children’s collection, a young reader can locate works through both a specific and a general approach, whereas the regular assignment of subject headings may provide only the specific subject heading. Examples of this expanded analysis are: 1. Incas. 2. Indians of South America. 1. Yosemite National Park (Calif.) 2. National parks and reserves., and 1. Veterinary medicine—Vocational guidance. 2. Vocational guidance. Only the first subject would be assigned in regular cataloging.
(6) Use of both popular and scientific terms, sometimes assigned to the same work. For material intended for very young children, the popular term is used, as in the headings Weather and Fossils. When the book is intended for older children, both the popular and scientific terms are frequently assigned. Thus a single record may carry such headings as 1. Weather. 2. Meteorology. or 1. Fossils. 2. Paleontology. When books are intended for young adults, ordinarily only the scientific term is provided: Meteorology or Paleontology.

(7) Use of headings denoting form or kind. Such headings, created to make certain types of material more accessible to the reader, include Jokes; Stories in rhyme; Spanish language materials.

SUBDIVISIONS

While many of the most commonly used LC subdivisions can be used in a catalog devoted exclusively to children’s literature, some subdivisions require modifications in form or application. The following subdivisions are exceptions to LCSH form and practice. Other subdivisions are used as they are in standard LC practice.

Adaptations

The subdivision —Adaptations is used under name, name/title, and title headings, and also under headings for literatures, for individual or collected works whose form has been changed from the original (e.g., drama to prose, prose to graphic novel).

Biography

Used for both collected and individual biographies but only under names of ethnic groups, as in Indians of North America—Biography, and under subject fields where no specific term designates the profession or contributions of the biographee, as in Aeronautics—Biography. However, where a term designates the profession, such as Engineers, the subdivision is not used.

Cartoons and comics

Used on topical materials presented through cartoons and comics.

Collections

Used for belles-lettristic publications containing works by more than one author with the exception of works that take specific form headings such as Nonsense verses; Short stories; Humorous stories; Horror stories; Humorous poetry; Humorous plays; Nursery rhymes; Science fiction; Mystery and detective stories; Fairy tales; etc.

Fiction

Used under all subjects for individual or collected works of fiction on identifiable topics.

Habits and behavior

Used under any kind of animal, bird, reptile, or fish.

Humor

Used on topical wit and humor, including jokes and riddles.

Illustrations

Not used. See Pictorial works.

Pictorial works

Used under all subjects presented exclusively or predominantly through pictorial matter.

REFERENCES

While complete hierarchies are usually not provided for terms in the Children’s Subject Headings list, most headings have at least one reference. The most common reference occurs when one term is used to designate a particular topic or concept, and UF (Used for) references are made from synonyms or alternative expressions to that heading. For example, for children’s subject cataloging purposes the term Tumbleweeds is preferred to the LC heading Russian thistle and a UF reference reflects this fact. If a complete hierarchy is needed, consult the LC list under Russian thistle.

In some cases, a valid heading from LCSH may be printed in the Children’s Subject Headings list in order to provide references that show how the term is related to others for children’s subject cataloging purposes.

When a heading appears with no references, it usually means that the spelling or form differs from that used in LCSH. Wood carving has no references; it appears in Children’s Subject Headings list as two words but is hyphenated in LCSH.

SCOPE NOTES

A note may be included to define the scope of a heading, especially if it is being used in a way that differs from LCSH.

PRODUCTS

Five services provide information about new and changed Children’s Subject Headings.

(1) Children’s Subject Headings are distributed as part of the Internet FTP distribution service that provides headings in the MARC 21 authorities format on a weekly basis to supplement the master database of children’s subject heading authority records.

(2) Children’s Subject Headings appear at the end of L.C. Subject Headings Monthly Lists which are posted monthly to the World Wide Web at http://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/weeklylists.

(3) Children’s Subject Headings are included in Classification Web, a fee-based World Wide Web service that also provides access to Library of Congress Subject Headings, the Library of Congress Medium of Performance Thesaurus for
(4) Children’s Subject Headings 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) Children’s Subject Headings 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 Children’s Subject Headings list contains 997 headings established for use through March 2020.

CONTACT

Questions about children’s subject cataloging and the construction and use of Children’s Subject Headings should be sent to:

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