

Evaluating Subject Proposals H 204

BACKGROUND: Proposals are made by catalogers who determine that either 1) the topic addressed in a work is not yet represented in LCSH and should be added to the vocabulary, or 2) the topic is represented by an existing heading, but the record should be revised to increase access to the topic. The revisions may take the form of changes to the heading itself or to the references or scope note.

This instruction sheet describes the subject proposal workflow within the Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division (PTCP). It also outlines in general terms the issues that policy specialists consider as they review the proposals that catalogers submit for consideration.

1. Compilation of the Tentative List. The proposal is scheduled for a Tentative List by PTCP.

Tentative Lists are published monthly and include all of the proposals that are under consideration in that month. The lists are made publicly available on the SACO home page (<http://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/index.html>).

PTCP accepts comments on the proposals from LC and SACO catalogers, other library and archive professionals, and from members of the general public. The email address to which comments should be directed is provided at the top of each list. The comment period lasts approximately one month, beginning when the Tentative List for a particular month is posted and continuing until the date indicated on the list.

2. Review of the Tentative List. The policy specialists consider the following factors for each proposal that appears on the Tentative List.

- Is the proposed heading appropriate for the work being cataloged?
- Is the concept already represented in LCSH, either through a main heading or a **[heading]**—**[subdivision]** combination?
- Has sufficient research been provided, according to the guidelines in H 202? Cataloging policy specialists may supply additional research on a case-by-case basis.
- Are the citations for both the work being cataloged and any reference sources consulted brief, clear, and understandable to users of authority records, as defined in H 203? Do they support the choice of the heading and references, and the scope note (if present)?

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2. Review of the Tentative List. (Continued)

- Does the proposed heading reflect the terminology commonly used to refer to the concept, according to the sources consulted?
- Is the proposed heading clear and unambiguous? Should it be qualified?
- Does the proposed heading employ neutral (i.e., unbiased) terminology?
- Does the proposed heading conform to patterns and precedents in LCSH with respect to wording, form, and style, and to guidelines provided in the SHM?
- Do the UFs, BTs, and RTs conform to patterns and precedents in LCSH, and to guidelines provided in the SHM?
- Is a scope note necessary to help catalogers and users understand the meaning of the proposed heading?
- If a classification number is provided, does it conform to the guidelines for inclusion of classification numbers as provided in H 365?

Each proposal is unique, so other factors may be considered for individual proposals. For example, if a proposal relates to foreign policy and a “strong sense of Congress” (as demonstrated by overwhelming bipartisan and bicameral support of a resolution or bill) can be determined, policy specialists consider the congressional action in addition to the position of the U.S. Department of State. Likewise, policy specialists consider laws and information in legal reference sources when appropriate.

Additional factors are considered if the proposal was made to revise an existing heading. They include the following.

- Is the proposed revision well-supported by the research provided?
- Does the proposed revision seek to remove pejorative or otherwise offensive terminology?
- Will the proposed revision enhance access to library resources? Would library users find it easier to discover resources of interest to them if the proposed change were to be approved?

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3. Determination of the disposition of the proposals. One of five statuses is assigned to each proposal. The statuses are defined as follows.

- *Approved.* The proposal was accepted as submitted, or as revised by cataloging policy specialists.
- *Not approved.* The proposal was not appropriate for LCSH.
- *Not necessary.* The proposal was not appropriate for the resource being cataloged, *or* a heading for the concept heading already exists in LCSH. If the latter, the heading is either printed in LCSH or may be constructed on a free-floating basis.
- *Resubmit.* The proposal was not accepted in its current form, but the cataloger may revise it and return it to PTCP for another review.
- *Withdrawn.* The proposal was removed from consideration that month. It may appear on a future list, or may be removed from consideration altogether.

4. Writing of the Summary of Decisions. The policy specialist in charge of the list writes the Summary of Decisions, which is the official record of the reasons why individual proposals on a Tentative List were marked *not approved*, *not necessary*, or *resubmit*. The summaries also occasionally include announcements about categories of headings. New, revised, or deleted free-floating subdivisions are also reported there.

The Summary of Decisions is made publicly available on LC's Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access webpage at <http://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/cpsaed/cpsaeditorial.html>.

5. Editing of the accepted proposals. Assistant editors in PTCP edit the authority records for approved proposals in accordance with decisions made by the cataloging policy specialists. The edits are then passed back to the cataloging policy specialists for a final review.

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6. *Compilation of the Approved List.* PTCP compiles and posts the Approved List. The Approved List includes all of the proposals that were accepted on that list, and reflects all of the changes that the cataloging policy specialists made to those proposals. It is made publicly available on the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access website at <http://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/weeklylists/>.

7. *Completion of the bibliographic file maintenance.* PTCP revises the subject headings in existing bibliographic records as appropriate to reflect newly approved proposals.