Library of Congress Subject Headings: Module 8.2

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Module 8.2
MARC Authority Format

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In this module, we will provide an overview of the MARC authority format, with an emphasis on fields that provide practical assistance to catalogers as they code subject headings assigned to bibliographic records.

This is not a comprehensive description of the MARC authority format, so if you are not already familiar with the format, we suggest that you stop the video and read Understanding MARC Authority, which is available at the URL on the screen. The publication provides an in-depth yet concise overview of the authority format.

As always, we also encourage you to consult the official documentation. The MARC 21 Format for Authority Data can be found on LC’s website at the URL on your screen.
The purpose of the authority format is quite different from the purpose of the bibliographic format. The bibliographic format is used to describe resources – who is the author? What is the title? What are the subjects? And so on.

The authority format is used to create authority records, which contain the standardized forms of names for people, corporate bodies, meetings, titles, geographic places, and subjects.

The records also often contain cross-references and citations that support the form of heading and references, and may also include scope notes and guidance on heading assignment.
As in the MARC format for bibliographic records, the MARC format for authority data uses a system of three-digit tags to designate fields, two indicators in each field, and a variable number of subfields to code the data.
It is important to realize that although the authority format and the bibliographic format use the same tags, the tags mean different things.

For example, the 100 field in the bibliographic format is used for a main entry that is a personal name. The 100 field in the authority format is used to show the authorized form of a personal name, and that authorized form may be used in the 100, 600, 700, and 800 fields in a bibliographic record.

We will show you how this works in a few moments.
There is a single MARC authority format, with multiple implementations even within LC.

For example, some fields are used in LC subject authority records but are not used in name authority records. The most notable example is the 680 field, which is used for scope notes. It appears in LCSH, but not in the NAF.

Other vocabularies that are maintained at LC and elsewhere have other implementations.

This module will focus chiefly on the fields that are used in both the NAF and LCSH.
In the authority format, as in the bibliographic format, there are blocks of fields arranged by purpose.

The authorized headings and access points always appear in the 1XX fields.

The 4XX block is used for “see from” tracings. In LCSH, we call them Used For, or UF, references. In the NAF they are called variants.

The 5XX block is used for “see also from” tracings. In LCSH, those are the broader terms and related terms. In the NAF, they are related names and titles.

The 6XX block is used for citations, usage and scope notes, and for other purposes. The fields in this block contain a wide variety of information. Just a few of them are important for subject analysis purposes, and we will discuss them in this module.

The 7XX block contains the linking entry fields. The only 7XX field that we will discuss in this module is the 781 field, and you are already familiar with it. It is the field that contains the authorized form of a geographic subdivision.
Six types of 1XX fields are used in the Name Authority File and LCSH. The 100, 110, 111, 130, and 151 fields are used in both the NAF and LCSH.

Take the 151 field, geographic names, for example. The name of a city is established in the NAF because it is a jurisdiction, and it is coded in the 151 field.

A mountain is established in LCSH because it is a geographic feature, but it is also coded in the 151 field.

The 150 field is used only in LCSH, not in the NAF. It is used for topics, and topics can be established only in LCSH, never in the Name Authority File.
There are also four fields that are used to authorize free-floating subdivisions.

The 180 field is used for topical subdivisions and the 185 field is for form subdivisions.

The 181 and 182 fields, for geographic and chronological subdivisions, respectively, are also used.
The 1XX, 4XX, and 5XX blocks have parallel construction, to a large extent. It is easiest to explain this by using some examples.

The 150, 450, and 550 fields are all used for topical terms.

- The 150 is for the topical heading.
- The 450 is for topical term “see from” tracings (called UFs in LCSH).
- The 550 is for topical term “see also from” tracings (the BTs and RTs in LCSH).
Overview

• Parallel construction

150 Heading topical term
450 See from tracing-topical term
550 See also from tracing-topical term

100 Heading-personal name
400 See from tracing-personal name
500 See also from tracing-personal name

Likewise, the 100 field is for personal name headings, the 400 is for “see from” tracings, and the 500 field is for “see also from” tracings.
Overview

- Parallel construction
  - Indicators and subfields are identical in meaning across the 1xx, 4xx, and 5xx blocks

```plaintext
100 1# $a Hibbert, Eleanor, $d 1906-1993
400 1# $a Burford, Eleanor, $d 1906-1993
400 1# $a Hibbert, George Percival, $c Mrs.
500 1# $a Plaidy, Jean, $d 1906-1993
```

Within the 1XX, 4XX, and 5XX fields, the indicators and subfields are also parallel.

As you can see in this example, the first indicator is 1 (one) in all of the fields. First indicator 1 in the 100, 400, and 500 fields means that the personal name is provided in inverted order – surname first.

The first subfield is $a, and contains the name. The subfield $d contains birth and death dates. The subfield $c is present in only one of the fields on the screen, and it contains the title associated with the name. If there were a title associated with the name in any of the other fields on the screen, it would be in a subfield $c, as well.

There is another subfield used in 4XX and 5XX fields: subfield $w. It can be used to show relationships between headings and references. Please consult LC’s documentation for more information about this subfield.

Now that we have introduced the parallel fields, we will explain how some of the other fields are used.
The 360 field, officially titled complex see also reference-subject, is used for general SEE ALSO references. Recall from earlier modules that these references appear with authorized headings and show related subdivisions and/or other headings of interest.

The record for Capitalization, an authorized heading, provides a general SEE ALSO reference to the subdivision –Capitalization, which is used under names of languages.
In this record for the authorized title heading Vedas, there is a general SEE ALSO reference to headings in the form [topic] in the Vedas.
General SEE ALSO references, which we just discussed, are in 360 fields and appear in records for authorized headings.

Field 260, which is used for general SEE references, are used when the 1XX field is not an authorized heading. Yes, that’s right – some 1XX fields are not actually authorized for use in bibliographic records.

We discussed these types of references in Module 2.8. Recall that in Classification Web, the reference is not boldfaced the way that headings are, and LCSH provides a USE instruction that instructs you on the correct form of heading to search.

In the example on your screen, Rumanian ... is the reference, and the instructions are to “USE subject headings beginning with or qualified by the word Romanian.”
This is the same entry, but in the MARC format.

Whenever you see a 260 in an LCSH authority record, it means that you may not use the data in the 1XX field as a heading in a bibliographic record.

There are two other clues that this record does not represent a valid heading, and they are both in the fixed field.
Byte 9 of the fixed field is set to the value “b,” which means that the record represents an untraced reference, and byte 15 is also “b,” meaning that the 1XX field is not appropriate for use as a subject heading.
This is the full MARC authority record for Rumanian, and as you can see, it has all three markers.

Bytes 9 and 15 of the fixed field are both set to “b,” and the record includes a 260 field.

We want to point out another use for fixed field byte 15, while we are here.
Byte 15 is also set to “b” in some name authority records, when the authorized access point that is represented by the 1XX field cannot be used as a subject heading.

Recall from earlier modules that these include earlier names of jurisdictions when the jurisdiction has undergone a linear name change, corporate name access points for heads of state, and certain uniform titles that include additions like the language, among others.

It is a good idea to get into the habit of looking at byte 15 in name authority records to determine whether the access points can be used as a subject headings. However, be aware that some access points cannot be used as subject headings according to LCSH policy, but byte 15 says they can be (by using value “a”).

Always follow the instructions in the SHM when trying to assign access points as subjects, instead of completely trusting the coding.

The other values that may appear in fixed field bytes 9 and 15 are defined in the full documentation for the MARC authority format.

Now let’s discuss the note fields that are used in LCSH and the NAF.
The 680 field is officially called the public general note, and in LCSH it is used for the scope note.

As we have emphasized many times in this training, it is always important to read the scope note if one is present.
As we have seen, scope notes also appear in the list of free-floating subdivisions.

The scope notes in those records also appear in 680 fields.
The 667 field, which is called the nonpublic general note, provides important information about the heading or subdivision. There are three main uses of this field.

Overview

- 667 Nonpublic general note
- Provides information about the authorized heading or subdivision in the 1xx field
The field is used in some authority records for subdivisions (the records with a 180, 181, 182, or 185 tag). In these records, the note usually indicates that the subdivision may be further subdivided by subdivisions from another pattern list of subdivisions.

In the example on your screen, the topical subdivision –Patients, which is from the pattern instruction sheet for diseases, H 1150, can be further subdivided by subdivisions used under classes of persons, which is instruction sheet H 1100.
For subdivisions, it is particularly important to read the 667 note in conjunction with the scope note in the 680 field to gain a fuller understanding of the subdivision.

But remember, specific instructions about the assignments of the subdivision are found only in the SHM!
In the NAF, the 667 field is sometimes used to provide information on the correct heading to use when there has been a linear jurisdictional name change.

See Module 4.10 of this training if you would like to review the concept of linear jurisdictional name changes.
The 667 field is also used in both the NAF and in LCSH to indicate that a geographic heading cannot be used as a geographic subdivision.

We discussed the use of the note, “This heading is not valid for use as a geographic subdivision,” back in Module 6.13.
Also recall from Module 6.13 that geographic headings have *either* the 667 note explaining that the heading cannot be used as a geographic subdivision *or* a 781 field showing how the heading is reformulated into a geographic subdivision. We have seen numerous examples of the use of the 781 field throughout this entire training.
The 670 field, source data found, is used for a citation to the resource that caused the heading to be made. 670 fields also contain citations of other sources that were consulted, if necessary. The citations support the heading and any references that were made. In LCSH, they also often provide definitions of the heading.

A 670 field is not present in every authority record, and is notably absent in most of the records that were converted from 3” x 5” cards into the MARC format in the 1980s. However, one or more 670s is usually present in the millions of authority records created since then.

If you do not understand the meaning of an LC subject heading and there is not a scope note, it is a good idea to check the 670s for information.
For example, the source citation in this record for Diseases in the theater shows that the resource being cataloged was about how actors portray disease.

You can infer, then, that the heading should be used for resources on the subject of the portrayal of disease onstage. The heading is not about how diseases are transmitted in theaters!
There is one more data element that we should discuss before we explain how headings and access points that appear in authority records are translated into subject access fields of bibliographic records: byte 6 of the fixed field, which shows whether a heading may be subdivided geographically.

There are three values used in LCSH.

Blank means that the heading may not be subdivided geographically. It generates the legend “Not Subd Geog.”

The value “i” means that the heading may be subdivided geographically, and generates the legend “May Subd Geog.”

The fill character, which is usually represented by a black box or a vertical bar, means “no decision” and does not generate a legend.

If you would like to refresh your memory on the meaning of the three categories – May Subd Geog, Not Subd Geog, and No decision, see Module 6.8 in this training.

Recall that the only time you are permitted to use a geographic subdivision is when you see the legend “May Subd Geog” – and therefore the value “i” appears in this byte of the authority record.
Now that we have discussed the fields that can be considered the most significant when assigning LC subject headings, we would like to show you how to use the authority records as tools to determine the proper MARC coding for the subject access fields in bibliographic records.

Our discussion will begin after the headings have been constructed and need to be coded in MARC format.

Before we get started, we want to assure you that the more you use MARC format, the more the tags, indicators, and subfield codes will become second nature. However, every cataloger has to look up the correct coding occasionally. Using the authority record takes much of the guesswork out of the process.

We will revisit some of the examples from the previous module to demonstrate the process.
The first example is **Computers—Access control**.

The entire heading string is authorized by a single authority record, so the process is very straightforward.
As you can see, tag 150 in the authority record turns into a 650 in the bibliographic format.
The indicators are blank in the authority file.

The first indicator stays blank in the bibliographic record, but the second indicator turns into a 0 (zero).

The second indicator 0 shows that the heading is from LCSH.
The subfield coding is then copied directly from the authority record.

Finally, a period is added to the end of the heading in the bibliographic record.

(Headings in authority records do not end in a period unless the period is needed for grammatical purposes, such as when a heading ends in an abbreviation.)
For this heading, **Diphtheria—Vaccination—Yemen (Republic)**, we need to consult two authority records.

The heading **Diphtheria—Vaccination** is authorized in a single authority record, and the form of the geographic subdivision is provided in the 781 field of the authority record for **Yemen**.
As we saw in the previous example, the 150 field becomes a 650.
The indicators are changed from two blanks to a blank and a 0 (zero).
And the subfield coding is transferred as-is to the bibliographic record.
Because the heading is already constructed, I’m sure we already verified the format of the geographic subdivision by checking the 781 field.

When we code the subdivision in the bibliographic record, we skip the tag and the indicators and just take the subfield coding and the contents.
We have to consult just one authority record for the heading United States. Congress—Committees—Rules and practice.

As you should now expect, the 110 turns into a 610.

The first indicator in the 110 field is a 1, so that is carried into the bibliographic record.

The second indicator in the 110 field is a blank, and we have to change it into a 0 (zero) when we move it to the bibliographic record.

All of the subfield coding is copied as-is.
Now let’s look at **College students—Massachusetts—Boston—Economic conditions—21st century**.

The authority record for the main heading helps us with the tag, indicators, and the first subfield. The tag and the second indicator change, as we have seen several times.
The coding and format for the geographic subdivision are provided in the 781 field. Remember, the tag 781 itself is not included in the bib record, only the subfield coding is.
And the coding for the topical and chronological subdivisions comes from the authority record for the free-floating subdivision.
Occasionally, the subfield coding in the authority record is not appropriate for the bib record, and that is because most form subdivisions (that is, subfield $v$) can also be used as topical subdivisions (subfield $x$).

Instead of relying completely on the authority record, you have to use your knowledge of the resource and the meaning that you intend to convey with the subject heading in order to determine the correct coding.

Let’s look at two very similar heading strings that have two very different meanings. Recall that **Crocheting—Patterns** is used for resources that are crochet patterns, while **Crocheting—Patterns—History** is a resource about the history of crochet patterns.
The subfield coding, including the subfield $v$, can simply be copied from the authority record for **Crocheting—Patterns**.

The subfield $v$ indicates that the resource is patterns.
However, the coding for the subject heading assigned to the resource that is *about* crochet patterns cannot include a subfield $v$. Instead, you have to use your knowledge to change it into a subfield $x$. 
We have just one caution for you before we finish this module, and it also relates to the use of form subdivisions as topical subdivisions.

Recall that in the free-floating and pattern list of subdivisions in Classification Web, such dual-use subdivisions have two scope notes: one indicating that it is used as a form and the other indicating that it is a topic.

In cases like this, the authority record retrieved will always be for the form subdivision.

The text of the scope note makes it clear that the subfield $v$ should be changed to a subfield $x$ when you want to use the subdivision as a topic.