Principles of the Sears List
of Subject Headings

Certain principles and practices of subject cataloging should be understood before an attempt is
made to assign subject headings to library materials. The discussion that follows makes reference to
the Sears List of Subject Headings, henceforth referred to as the Sears List or the List, but the
principles are applicable to other lists of subject headings as well.

The Purpose of Subject Cataloging

All library work is a matter of the storage and retrieval of information, and cataloging is that aspect
of library work devoted to storage. The best cataloging is simply that which facilitates the most
accurate and complete retrieval. The two basic branches of cataloging are descriptive cataloging and
subject cataloging. Descriptive cataloging makes possible the retrieval of materials in a library by
title, author, date, etc. — in short all the searchable elements of a cataloging record except the
subjects. Only by conforming to the standards for descriptive cataloging can a librarian assure the
user accurate retrieval on the descriptive elements. Those standards are codified in Resource
Description and Access (RDA), the successor to the older Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules,
second revised edition (AACR2).

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, descriptive cataloging was the only library
cataloging that was found necessary. Libraries were much smaller than they are today, and scholarly
librarians then were able, with the aid of printed bibliographies, to be familiar with everything
available on a given subject and guide the users to it. With the rapid growth of knowledge in many
fields in the course of the nineteenth century and the resulting increase in the volume of books and
other library materials, it became desirable to do a preliminary subject analysis of such works and
then to represent them in the catalog in such a way that they would be retrievable by subject.

Subject cataloging deals with what a book or other library item is about, and the purpose of subject
cataloging is to list under one uniform word or phrase all the materials on a given topic that a library
has in its collection. A subject heading is that uniform word or phrase used in the library catalog to
express a topic. The use of authorized words or phrases only, with cross-references from
unauthorized synonyms, is the essence of bibliographic control in subject cataloging. The purpose
of a subject authority, such as the Sears List, is to provide a basic vocabulary of authorized terms
together with suggestions for useful cross-references.

The two most common types of subject authorities are the thesaurus and the subject heading list. A
true thesaurus, in the realm of information science, is a comprehensive controlled vocabulary of
discrete unit terms, called descriptors, arranged is such a way as to display the hierarchical and
associative relationships among terms. It is usually limited to a particular realm of knowledge, as in
the case of the Art and Architecture Thesaurus. The American national standards for thesauri are
Poisons and poisoning
Railroad accidents
Shipwrecks
Space vehicle accidents
Traffic accidents
Wounds and injuries

Related Term(s):
Disasters
First aid

Accidents — Prevention
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 363.1; 658.3
Use For: Prevention of accidents; Safety measures
See Also: subjects with the subdivision Safety devices or Safety measures, e.g. Railroads — Safety devices; Radiation — Safety measures; etc. [to be added as needed]

Narrower Term(s):
Aeronautics — Safety measures
Radiation — Safety measures
Railroads — Safety devices
Safety education
Safety regulations
Water safety

Related Term(s):
Safety devices

Acclimatization
Use:
Adaptation (Biology)
Environmental influence on humans

Accompaniment, Musical
Use:
Musical accompaniment

Accompaniments (Music)
Use:
Musical accompaniment

Accountability
Use:
Liability (Law)
Responsibility

Accountability in government
Use:
Government accountability

Accountants
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 920
Use For: Bookkeepers; Certified public accountants

Related Term(s):
Accounting

Accounting
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 657
Use For: Financial accounting
See Also: types of industries, professions, and organizations with the subdivision Accounting [to be added as needed]

Broader Term(s):
Business
Business education
Business mathematics

Narrower Term(s):
Corporations — Accounting
Cost accounting

Related Term(s):
Accountants
Auditing
Bookkeeping

Accounting machines
Use:
Calculators

Accounts, Collecting of
Use:
Debt Collection

Accreditation
Use types of hospitals and service institutions, types of educational institutions, and names of individual institutions with the subdivision Accreditation, e.g. Colleges and universities — Accreditation, and subjects with the subdivision Study and teaching, for accreditation of programs of study in those subjects, e.g. Mathematics — Study and teaching [to be added as needed]

Accreditation (Education)
Use:
Schools — Accreditation

Acculturation
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 303.48
Use For: Culture contact

Broader Term(s):
Anthropology
Civilization
Ethnology

Narrower Term(s):
Ethnic relations
Multicultural education
Race relations
Socialization

Related Term(s):
East and West

Achievement motivation
Dewey: 153.8
Use For: Performance motivation

Broader Term(s):
Educational psychology
Motivation (Psychology)
Performance

Achievement tests
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 371.26
Use For: Scholastic achievement tests; School achievement tests

Broader Term(s):
Academic achievement
Educational tests and measurements
citizens. Materials on Black Canadian citizens are entered under Black Canadians.

Use For: Canada — Black people
Related Term(s): Black Canadians

Black people — Children
Use: Black children

Black people — Civil rights
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 323.1196; 342
Broader Term(s): Black people — Political activity
Civirs rights
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Civil rights

Black people — Economic conditions
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 330.9
Broader Term(s): Economic conditions
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Economic conditions

Black people — Education
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 370.89; 371.829
Broader Term(s): Education
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Education

Black people — Employment
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 331.6
Broader Term(s): Employment
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Employment

Black people — Folklore
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 398
Use For: Black folklore
Broader Term(s): Folklore
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Folklore

Black people — France
Dewey: 305.896; 944
Use For: France — Black people

Black people — Housing
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 307.3; 363.5
Broader Term(s): Housing
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Housing

Black people — Intellectual life
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 305.896
Broader Term(s): Intellectual life
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Intellectual life

Black people — Music
Use: Black music

Black people — Political activity
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 322.4; 324
Broader Term(s): Political participation
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Political activity
Black nationalism
Black people — Civil rights
Black power

Black people — Race identity
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 270.089; 299.6
Use For: Negritude
Broader Term(s): Race awareness
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Race identity
Black nationalism

Black people — Religion
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 305.896
Broader Term(s): Religion
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Religion

Black people — Segregation
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 305.896
Broader Term(s): Segregation
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Segregation

Black people — Social conditions
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 305.896
Broader Term(s): Social conditions
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Social conditions

Black people — Social life and customs
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 305.896
Broader Term(s): Manners and customs
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Social life and customs

Black people — Songs and music
Use: Black music

Black people — Suffrage
Geographic Note: May subdivide geographically
Dewey: 324.6
Use For: Black suffrage
Broader Term(s): Suffrage
Narrower Term(s): African Americans — Suffrage

Black people — United States
Use: African Americans
subdivisions Economic conditions; Economic policy; or Industries.

**Use For:**
- Development, Economic; Economic growth

**Broader Term(s):**
- Economic policy
- Economics

**Narrower Term(s):**
- Infrastructure (Economics)
- Rural development
- Sustainable development

**Related Term(s):**
- Economic conditions

**Economic development — Environmental aspects**

**Geographic Note:**
- May subdivide geographically

**Dewey:**
- 338.9

**Scope Note:**
- Use for general materials on the environmental impact of economic development. Materials on economic development that satisfies the needs of the present generation without depleting natural resources for the future or having adverse environmental effects are entered under Sustainable development.

**Use For:**
- Eco-development; Ecodevelopment

**Economic indicators**

**Geographic Note:**
- May subdivide geographically

**Dewey:**
- 322.4

**Broader Term(s):**
- Economics

**Economic integration, International**

**Use:**
- International economic integration

**Economic mobilization**

**Use:**
- Industrial mobilization

**Economic planning**

**Use:**
- Economic policy

**Economic policy**

**Geographic Note:**
- May subdivide geographically

**Dewey:**
- 338.9

**Scope Note:**
- Use for materials on the policy of government in economic affairs.

**Use For:**
- Business — Government policy;
- Business and government; Central planning; Economic planning;
- Government and business;
- Government policy; National planning; State planning

**See Also:**
- subjects with the subdivision Government policy, e.g.
- Agriculture — Government policy: and types of activities, facilities, industries, services, and undertakings with the subdivision Planning, e.g. Transportation — Planning [to be added as needed]

**Broader Term(s):**
- Economics

**Planning**

**Narrower Term(s):**
- Commercial policy

Domestic economic assistance
- Economic development
- Fiscal policy
- Foreign aid
- Free enterprise
- Government lending
- Government ownership
- Industrial mobilization
- Industrial policy
- Industrialization
- International economic relations
- Labor policy
- Land reform
- Monetary policy
- Municipal ownership
- Privatization
- Sanctions (International law)
- Subsidies
- Tariff
- Transfer payments
- Urban policy
Helium
Natural gas
Nitrogen
Oxygen
Poisonous gases

Related Term(s):

Pneumatics

Gases, Asphyxiating and poisonous
Use:
Poisonous gases

Gasification of coal
Use:
Coal gasification

Gasoline
Dewey:
665.5

Broader Term(s):
Fuel
Petroleum

Gasoline engines
Use:
Internal combustion engines

Gastronomy
Dewey:
641.01

Use For:
Eating
Diet
Slow food movement
Cooking
Dining
Food

Gauchos
Use:
Cowhands

Gaul — Geography
Dewey:
914.4

Broader Term(s):
Ancient geography
Historical geography

Gay and lesbian rights
Use:
Gay rights

Gay authors
Geographic Note:
May subdivide geographically
Dewey:
809; 920

Use For:
Authors, Gay
Gay

Broader Term(s):
Authors
Gay men

Related Term(s):
Gay men’s writings

Gay liberation movement
Geographic Note:
May subdivide geographically
Dewey:
306.76

Broader Term(s):
Homosexuality
Gay rights

Related Term(s):
Gay rights

Gay marriage
Use:
Same-sex marriage

Gay men
Geographic Note:
May subdivide geographically

Dewey:
306.76

Use For:
Gays, Male; Homosexuals, Male

Broader Term(s):
Gays
LGBTQ people
Men

Narrower Term(s):
Gay authors
Gay parents

Related Term(s):
Gay men’s writings
Homosexuality

Gay men — Civil rights
Use:
Gay rights

Gay men — Ordination
Use:
Ordination of gays and lesbians

Gay men’s writings

Dewey:
808.8

Scope Note:
Use for collections of gay men’s writings by more than one author and for materials about such writings.

Use For:
Writings of gay men

Broader Term(s):
Literature

Related Term(s):
Gay authors
Gay men

Gay parents
Geographic Note:
May subdivide geographically
Dewey:
306.85; 649

Use For:
Homosexual parents
Gay men
Lesbians
Parents

Related Term(s):
Children of gay parents

Gay people
Use:
Gays

Gay rights
Geographic Note:
May subdivide geographically
Dewey:
323.3264

Use For:
Gay and lesbian rights; Gay men — Civil rights; Lesbian rights; Lesbians — Civil rights; Rights of gays; Rights of lesbians

Broader Term(s):
Civil rights

Related Term(s):
Gay liberation movement
Gays

Gay teenagers
Geographic Note:
May subdivide geographically
Dewey:
305.235; 306.76

Broader Term(s):
Gay youth
Teenagers

Gay women
Use:
Lesbians