

## 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 in 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**  
**Culture**  
**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  
Civil 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:* 305.896

*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:* 270.089; 299.6

*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 equilibrium  
*Use:* **Equilibrium (Economics)**

**Economic forecasting**

*Geographic Note:* May subdivide geographically  
*Dewey:* 338.5  
*Broader Term(s):* **Business cycles**  
**Economics**  
**Forecasting**  
*Narrower Term(s):* **Business forecasting**  
**Employment forecasting**

Economic geography  
*Use:* **Commercial geography**

**Economic geology**

*Dewey:* 553  
*Use For:* Geology, Economic  
*See Also:* types of geological products, e.g. **Asbestos; Gypsum**; etc. [to be added as needed]  
*Broader Term(s):* **Geology**  
*Narrower Term(s):* **Mines and mineral resources**  
**Petroleum geology**  
**Quarries and quarrying**  
**Soils**  
**Stone**

Economic growth  
*Use:* **Economic development**

Economic history  
*Use:* **Economic conditions**

**Economic indicators**

*Geographic Note:* May subdivide geographically  
*Dewey:* 332.4  
*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  
*Broader Term(s):* **Diet**  
*Narrower Term(s):* **Slow food movement**  
*Related Term(s):* **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  
*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**  
*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  
*Broader Term(s):* **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**