Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts

A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries

compiled by Steven Hensen

In this second edition (the first was published in 1983 by the Library of Congress), the descriptive elements covered in the rules correspond more closely to USMARC format equivalents. Several rules include USMARC-oriented explications and an appendix contains USMARC-coded versions of the examples used throughout the manual. Where possible, Library of Congress rule interpretations have been incorporated.

The biggest change has been the addition of an entirely new section, larger than the original rules, that contains guidelines for choosing and formulating headings. In this section the manual draws heavily on chapters 21-25 of AACR 2 dealing with choice of access points, personal and corporate names, geographic names, and uniform titles. It includes the rules most likely to be encountered by archivists and manuscript catalogers, incorporates relevant rule interpretations, and provides additional commentary and examples to reflect archival context. This manual, like the original, does not include rules or guidelines for subject indexing.

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Standards for Archival Description

Subject Access to Archival and Manuscript Material

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Abstract: The numerous vocabulary lists that are available for use in cataloging often present difficulties when applied in the cataloging of archival and manuscript material, sometimes because archivists have had little to do with the creation, maintenance, and revision of the lists, and at times due to the lack of sufficient application guidelines for otherwise appropriate vocabularies. The author discusses these problems and proposes possible solutions by examining subject access tools used for USMARC fields 072 (subject category code), 600-654 (subject added entries), 655/755 (index term—genre/form and added entry—physical characteristics), and 656 (index term—occupations).

About the author: Harriet Ostroff is the editor of the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections *and head of the Manuscripts Section, Special Materials Cataloging Division, Library of Congress. She prepared this paper for the June 1989 meeting of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description in response to issues raised at the group's December 1988 meeting.*

A NUMBER OF ISSUES pertaining to subject access to archival and manuscript material merit the attention of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description. These issues are associated with the use of particular fields in the USMARC format. What follows is a discussion of fields 072 (Subject category code), 600-654 (Subject added entries), 655/755 (Index term - genre/form, and Added entry - physical characteristics), and 656 (Index term - occupations). Although USMARC fields 043, 245$h and k, and 657 also have subject-access implications, they are not discussed here. The discussion of each field includes an analysis of existing issues, problems, and needs, together with recommendations for practical actions.

In the standards terminology outlined during the first meeting of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description, subject vocabulary lists are *data values* and the guidelines for using the terminology would be called *data content*. Numerous data values for subject access exist, but most are developed outside the archival profession, and archivists have little influence over additions and changes to most of them. The greatest lack, however, is in *data content* conventions and guidelines.

My overall recommendation is that one or more subgroups of this Working Group or of some other group should be formed to make specific recommendations and take practical actions in this area in order to create a focused, vocal representation for archivists. Groups such as the American Library Association's Subject Access Committee have done this for their special interests.

Subject Category Code (Field 072)

The subject category code field is rarely used by archival and manuscript repositories, in part because no adequate source list exists. The Library of Congress Manuscript Division uses this field to record its specialist codes (see Figure 1). The field is retrievable only by a special offline batch search and the Manuscript Division's application is considered purely an in-house convenience. Steve Hensen and the NUCMC staff worked on an expansion of these codes that would provide for broad subject categories and chronological divisions according to significant periods in American history and also accommodate the specialist codes (again, see Figure 1). This list was never implemented at LC and no attempt has been made to get it approved by anyone outside LC. Users of *NUCMC* have frequently requested access to broad subjects such as education, engineering, performing arts, music, architecture, and science to supplement the many different individual subject headings which do not facilitate retrieval of everything belonging to a particular broad topic. Access by field 072 would make such retrieval much easier. Publishing a printed guide could also be facilitated.

Problems

1. No suitable list or lists have been presented for adoption.
2. Field 072 is probably not searchable online in most systems.

Needs

1. Agreement on the need for retrieval by broad subject categories.
2. Agreement on what kind of list or lists should be developed.

Possible remedies

1. Encourage use of field 072.
2. Encourage development, review, and adoption of appropriate lists. The LC list of subject category codes shown in Figure 1 could be expanded and revised. Other possibilities include devising codes from the broadest level of Dewey Decimal, LC Classification, the *Art and Architecture*

Thesaurus (AAT), or other subject schemes.[1] **Limitations:** (a) If one or more lists did exist, some repositories might not find any of them satisfactory for their purposes. (b) Many repositories want custom-made codes but lack the resources to devise and maintain a list.

3. Encourage implementation of online retrieval of field 072. **Limitation:** Usual lack of resources.

Subject Added Entries (Fields 600-654)

Sources used for the subject added entries fields include the *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)* for place names, events, and topical subjects; *Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF)* for proper names; *AAT*; and others listed in the *USMARC Code List of Relators, Sources, Description Conventions*.[2] Of all these lists, *LCSH* is the most commonly used for topical subjects. My purpose here is to focus on what can be done to improve archival influence on, and use of, that list. Rather than discuss the advantages or disadvantages of this practice, I will suggest actions that can be taken to improve the status of subject indexing. (The section on field 656 discusses problems and remedies for *LCNAF*.)

Problems

1. Almost nothing has been written about subject access to manuscript and archival material that offers practical advice and guidelines for those attempting to provide such access. Individual repositories appear to be searching in isolation for solutions to the problems they encounter regularly.

2. Almost all existing data value and data content standards, conventions, and guidelines are external to the general archival and manuscript community. For example, *LCSH* and its application guidelines (called the H-manual) were created and are being maintained with published books as the primary focus; applications to archival and manuscript collections are not always satisfactory.

3. No apparatus exists to help archivists select appropriate lists and guidelines, to teach indexers and researchers to take advantage of controlled vocabulary, and to update headings as lists change their vocabulary.

4. The recent approval of a faceted topical subject heading field (654) raises issues about subdivision facets in other subject fields, about combining terms and practices from different vocabulary lists, and about new choices in subject heading expression techniques.

5. The use of different vocubulary sources in a file to which many repositories contribute records, e.g., the RLIN AMC system, may result in conflicting terminology and potentially confusing retrieval.

Needs

1. Examination, analysis, and understanding of the techniques for subject indexing of manuscript and archival material.

2. Development of guidelines for archivists and manuscript curators, e.g., application manuals for *LCSH* and for *AAT*.

3. Establishment of forum(s) or guiding bodies to develop, support, influence, and teach subject indexing, including both data content and data value standards.

4. Development of criteria for selecting appropriate vocabulary lists.

5. Implementation of system mechanisms to handle multiple thesauri problems.

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[1]Toni Peterson, et al., eds., *Art and Architecture Thesaurus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[2]Library of Congress, Subject Cataloging Division, Processing Services, *Library of Congress Subject Headings, 13th ed.* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1990); Catalog Publication Division, *Library of Congress Name Authority File* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1977) updates available on microfiche or CD-ROM; Library of Congress, Network Developoment and MARC Standards Office, *USMARC Code List for Relators, Sources, Description Conventions* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1988), 18–19.

Possible remedies

1. Find a way to support studies on subject access and the development of guidelines. **Limitations:** (a) lack of resources; (b) lack of agreement; (c) difficult to determine who should be responsible or how it could be done.

2. Find ways to make the Library of Congress more aware of archival and manuscript needs regarding *LCSH*. The library community outside LC has begun to take a much more active role by proposing new subject headings and suggesting references. The American Library Association has a committee on subject headings that regularly sends suggestions and comments to LC. NUCMC staff have submitted about fifty new headings directly to *LCSH* in the past year and will continue to do so on a regular basis. SAA could take an active role by designating an existing group or forming a new one to act as liaison with LC regarding subject cataloging. Archival and manuscript repositories should be encouraged to be as active as libraries are in proposing new headings and making suggestions. LC has created an Office for Subject Cataloging Policy to formulate policies and communicate with and advise not only members of the LC Subject Cataloging Division and LC staff in other divisions who assign subject headings, but also those outside of LC who are users of *LCSH*. It is time for archival and manuscript users to become more vocal in unison.

3. Encourage the formation of an LCSH users group (like the AAT users group) of archivists who could communicate with each other and meet at SAA conferences in an effort to exchange information and solve problems more effectively.

Index Term—Genre/Form (Field 655) and Added Entry—Physical Characteristics (Field 755)

Sources used for the genre/form and physical characteristics field include *Form Terms for Archival and Manuscripts Control (FTAMC)*; *LCSH*; *AAT*; *Genre Terms: A Thesaurus for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloguing (RBGENR)*; and *Descriptive Terms for Graphic Materials: Genre and Physical Characteristic Headings (GMGPC)*.[3]

Issues. The use of form and genre index terms involves many complex issues, full discussion of which is beyond the scope of this background paper. However, anyone concerned with archival standards needs to be aware of the following points.

1. Researchers need access to genres, forms, and physical characteristics.

2. There must be a way to distinguish between information about a particular type of material and examples of the material itself, i.e., of distinguishing between subjects and the object itself.

3. There is a great deal of confusion and variation among repositories in understanding and applying the differences between field 650, form subdivisions in fields 600-651, and 655 and 755. The distinctions between 655 and 755 are especially ambiguous.

4. Many thesauri and lists are available for use as sources for terminology in these fields, most written to satisfy a particular community. However, there is considerable overlapping and conflicting terminology among those lists and substantial gaps still remain.

5. All these variations present online

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[3]H. Thomas Hickerson and Elaine D. Engst, comps., *Form Terms for Archives and Manuscript Control* (Stanford, CA: Research Libraries Group, 1985); Standards Committee, Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, *Genre Terms: A Thesaurus for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloguing* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1983); and Helena Zinkham and Elisabeth Betz Parker, comps., *Descriptive Terms for Graphic Materials: Genre and Physical Characteristic Headings* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1986). Additional sources are listed in the *USMARC Code List for Relators, Sources, Description Conventions*, 19–20.

searchers with many problems and do not enhance retrieval. The prevalence of collection-level cataloging for archives and manuscripts leads to many false drops.

Needs

1. Examination of archival indexing needs and existing lists, guidelines, and fields to determine which lists and fields best serve which archivists and manuscript catalogers under what circumstances.
2. Guidance for selecting appropriate fields, lists, and subdivision practice.
3. An adequate, convenient, and practical source for 655/755 vocabulary for archival and manuscript repositories with *general* collections. For example, the NUCMC staff must find or create a single list from which to choose the terminology for fields 655 and 755. In order to achieve consistency and predictability, LC has decided that only one source may be cited for each of these fields and that only authorized subdivisions be used. Because of this decision and the need to pre-coordinate headings in a printed volume, a special Form/Genre Index for the 1986-1987 volume of *NUCMC* was prepared, using a personal computer rather than entering data in fields 655 and 755 of the RLIN records. The index included headings from a variety of sources and employed subdivision practices permitted by the USMARC format but not specified in any existing guidelines.

Possible remedies

1. Run a formal experiment using various lists and guidelines to index the same body of material and report on the results.
2. Develop application guidelines for *LCSH* and *AAT* that take into account various users' needs for vocabulary, subdivisions, and the like. **Limitation:** difficult to establish agreement and responsibility for such an undertaking.
3. Participate in resolution of field definitions or application practice for 655 and

755; consider using only 655 by declaring all archival terminology to be object types rather than media.
4. Cooperatively build a single list for *general* archival and manuscript collections, using sources such as *AAT, LCSH,* and *NUCMC's* form/genre index.

Index term—Occupation (Field 656)

The Index term—occupation field is used to index occupations or activities covered in the content of the collection. Sources are *LCSH, AAT,* and the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT).*[4]

Problems

1. Neither *LCSH* nor *DOT* includes all needed terms and the two lists are not compatible. A repository should choose one or the other. Most manuscript repositories are probably using *LCSH.* New terms can be added to *LCSH,* as NUCMC staff has been doing for more than a year. However, some *LCSH* policies are in conflict with archival and manuscript needs for this field, and changes to *LCSH* might not be practical. The *AAT* list is not yet completed, but use of *AAT* may solve some of the problems if terms could be added whenever needed, if the list becomes as readily available as *LCSH* is, and if application guidelines are written.
2. No application guidelines exist for practices such as subdivision by place or date.
3. Access to occupational information not covered in the collection is not permitted in 656, but such access is often desired.
4. There is other information about the creator for which it may be desirable to provide access, such as ethnic background, gender, and age group (e.g., children).
5. Much of this additional information may appear in either fields 545 or 520, but most

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[4]U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, *Dictionary of Occupational Titles,* 4th ed. supp. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986).

systems do not provide access to those fields, and certainly not in a controlled way. This could also be considered authority information and it may occasionally appear on the name authority record; currently there is no way to provide any access to that information, even when it is present.

Needs

1. Agreement that improved access to information about the creator is necessary.
2. Agreement that linking subject access and authority information would aid researchers.
3. A way to have a generally accepted list of terms suitable for archival and manuscript use that can be added to easily and that has application guidelines.

Possible remedies

1. Encourage the addition of relevant information to name authority records and lobby for expansion of access to such information. Archivists should try to have more influence on the LC Name Authority File. **Limitations:** (a) lack of resources to provide for new necessary programming and other additional work required; (b) lack of agreement in the archival community regarding what belongs in an authority file; (c) many, but not all, librarians do not advocate providing biographical information in name authority records unless absolutely necessary to distinguish one person from another; (d) lack of resources even to provide readily available information that is not necessary to resolve conflicts.
2. Increase and improve local and regional authority files and link them to national files.
3. Increase archival participation in LCNAF by submitting headings.
4. Expand the definition of field 656 to include occupation information not reflected in the collection. **Limitation:** probable lack of agreement.
5. Propose archival and manuscript standards regarding subdivisions for field 656 that could be used even if they do not conform to LCSH practice. **Limitation:** difficult to obtain agreement and provide maintenance.
6. Provide another USMARC field in the bibliographic record for additional information not covered by field 656, which would be indexed. **Limitation:** since this is actually authority information, it would probably be difficult to get agreement on this.
7. Expand use of fields 655/755 to include such terms as *Children's writings*; expand use of existing vocabulary by subdividing 655/755 by nationality (e.g., *Engravings—French*) and assign appropriate subdivisions (*Diaries—Juvenile*). **Limitations:** lack of agreement is probable; not easy to put into practice; might not bring all desired approaches together; would only serve some of the need for access.