



2015

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Repository Citation

Nuckolls, Karen A., "LC Subject Headings, FAST Headings, and Apps: Diversity Can Be Problematic In the 21st Century" (2015).
Law Faculty Scholarly Articles. 555.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/law_facpub/555

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Chapter Eight

LC Subject Headings, FAST Headings, and Apps

*Diversity Can Be Problematic in the
Twenty-First Century*

Karen A. Nuckolls

Taking a look back at a 1993 article about Library of Congress (LC) subject headings and diversity, one can assess the changes that time and new developments in subject headings and searching have made. Problems with search terms are still present, even in today's more accepting world. It is far too easy to find offensive terms popping up in a search on many tech devices. In this app-crazy society, definitions and search terms are pulled from unreliable sources, only to be discovered (usually by pure accident) later. Below the surface, there are some underlying changes to be made. Are Faceted Application of Subject Terminology (FAST) headings (developed by OCLC and the Library of Congress) useful to today's libraries? If so, why are some libraries not including them in their records? Genre/forms are increasingly being developed and are present in bibliographic records. Most recently, law genre/forms have been developed to increase legal search points for legal titles. Are there more choices on the horizon?

Twenty years ago, I concluded in an article that the Library of Congress should make a concerted effort to continually study and update relevant ethnic, racial, and other diverse subject headings (Nuckolls, 1994). So, has it done so? Well, up to a point. In 1993, the headings *Handicapped*, *Developmentally disabled*, and *Physically handicapped* were in use. The heading *Mental retardation*, which has in part become a derogatory term ("retard") is still used. Would *Intellectually disabled*, which is currently a UF (used for) heading, be an improvement? This term is used in many recent publications.

There is a related term (RT), *People with mental disabilities*. Then why not *Mental disabilities*? It should be much easier to make changes within today's library systems.

But it's not just the Library of Congress that has problems within this area. Software vendors need to be reminded to change their terminology in apps and browsers. Apple's Siri defined "retard" as a noun thusly: *a person of subnormal intelligence*. Pretty offensive. Since this was brought to Apple's attention a year ago, it has no doubt been corrected. Both Microsoft and Google defined it as "an offensive insult." Phoebe Holmes (Holmes, 2013) pointed out in her blog that this was particularly offensive since so many special needs children use an iPad. The Library of Congress has now completely removed *handicapped* from any subject headings and replaced it with *People with disabilities*. People with mental disabilities? People with intellectual disabilities? *Physically handicapped* has been replaced with *People with disabilities*. *Socially handicapped* has become *People with social disabilities*. Then there are the groups denoted by adjectival forms used as nouns. Twenty years ago there was a different world. Today, some might object to the use of "older people." While much improved over the term "aged," "senior citizens" might be preferred. And "older people" does not necessarily mean seniors. After all, someone who is twenty-one is older than someone who is nineteen. The term that comes closest to a compromise is "Seniors (Older people)," which is a UF term that differentiates more clearly than the correct heading today. *Blind* and *Deaf* are still valid today—no "people" added on for clarity.

Perhaps no subject has undergone so many changes in LC's subject listings as *African Americans*: from "Negroes" to "Afro-Americans" and finally to "African Americans." The term *Blacks* remains as the descriptive heading for people of African origin who are citizens of other countries. LC did change *Race question* to *Race relations*, but *Race discrimination* still remains (one of the late Sanford Berman's pet peeves). The use of *Discrimination in* — has increased, however, and the former heading is used more infrequently, as in *Race discrimination—Law and legislation* and *Religious aspects*. There is a problem with several narrow subject terms that LC uses—not just for *African Americans* but also for any heading that begins with *Poor*, *Middle class*, *Older*, *Urban*, *Suburban*, *Upper class*, and *Working class*. Is there a better way to deal with ethnic, race, class, age, gender, and so forth, than to begin a subject heading with them?

Indians of North America was particularly on the list in 1993. One heading that was considered objectionable has been changed to one less so. *Indians of North America—Captivities* is now *Indian captivities*. Although the popular term currently is "Indigenous peoples," it is a UF term in LC headings. Instead, *Indians of North*, *South*, and *Central America* continue to be used. But at least *Indian Americans* (from India) has become *East Indian*

Americans. The original article argued for changing *Japanese Americans—Concentration camps* to *Japanese Americans—Evacuation and relocation, 1942–1945*, and this has been done. Back in 1993, “adding *Americans* to ethnic people who reside in the United States as citizens helped somewhat, but many of these same peoples/citizens call themselves by other names, which in most cases have become LC UF (Used for) references” (Nuckolls, 1994, p. 242) *Chicanos* still refers one to *Mexican Americans*.

The term *homosexual* has been dealt with. *Gays* is now the term used, in general. *Lesbian* is used for gay women, and *Gay men* is used for gay males. Facebook now offers gender identification with fifty difference choices, if one wishes (Ball, 2014). An interesting search concerns the term *LGBT*, the norm at present: *LGBT bias—Use Homophobia; LGBT people—Use Sexual minorities*. While the term *Sexual minorities* is vague, at present there is not another suggested term that might be useful. It is presumed that LC has focus group discussions before new subject headings are assigned. Again, a year ago publications were discussing how the word *Gay* did not exist in some Apple dictionaries, and other search engines contained additional offensive or insulting terms. They apparently have been changed in current software. Users of cell phones, PCs, and other technological devices do need to be vigilant.

Today the world is a politically correct one, where great lengths are taken to not offend anyone if at all possible. Sometimes these new terms are needed; sometimes they are not. Dr. Gad Saad has opined, “I am not obese: I am differently weighted!” On a radio talk show that he was listening to, the term *childfree* was used in place of *childless* (Saad, 2013). The point is that subject headings need to be continually developed to keep up with current and local terminology, and it should be infinitely easier and quicker to change them than it was twenty years ago.

ARE THEY FASTER? FACETED APPLICATION OF SUBJECT TERMINOLOGY

The Library of Congress partnered with OCLC to create a more user-friendly or “lightweight derivative” of LC subject headings that would be easy for the staff to learn and work with the modern systems that were multiplying in the library technology world. A recent ALCTS e-forum looked at these headings and asked libraries whether they were implementing them—or ignoring them (Miller, 2013). OCLC began loading them into WorldCat in September 2013, so the e-forum asked if libraries were using them or not. Many participants had questions about FAST, and some key points were made:

FAST is a set of vocabularies based on the Library of Congress subject headings (LCSH) that may be applied in several separate headings and may

apply to most areas of current LCSH—that is, persons, events, topics, and so forth. Each of these facets is assigned its own tag, instead of being assembled in a string, as are “normal” headings. Facets may still be combined if necessary, however, such as *Women—Education* and *Kentucky—Lexington*. They are easier to apply because they have fewer rules than LCSH. Most of the tags remain the same, except for two instances: historical periods appear in a 648 field, and the 611 field contains events. So, who is using them? Many libraries are finding them useful in describing their digital collections, but most libraries are not using them for their print holdings. Smaller libraries, such as those in museums, for example, that tend to use volunteers, do find them easier to assign. Large academic libraries are, for the most part, not currently assigning FAST headings. In my own library system, as in many others, a decision was made to delete them from bib records. They are not useful if one’s library system cannot accommodate them.

In the first study issued by OCLC regarding FAST users (Mixer and Childress, 2013), several libraries around the world were asked about their feelings concerning FAST adoption. The full development of FAST has taken several years and was developed through a joint effort between LC and OCLC using LCSH terminology. It was perceived that there was a need for the library staff (and others) to have subjects that were easy to apply to materials. They are “faceted-navigation friendly” and modern in design. One does not have to remember *United States—Civil War, 1861–1865*, for example. This string of words can be broken down into facets such as *United States*, *Civil War*, and *1861–1865*—so much easier to remember. FAST headings are being assigned to journal articles, book chapters, digital materials, rare books, and government documents, as well as regular library materials. Since the explosion of digital technology, materials that were formerly hidden in dark rooms or backlogs have been able to see the light of day, and many materials of interest to the public have been given their due. The most frequent usage occurs in Topics, Geographic Name, and Form/Genre. These are the eight areas in popularity that can appear as FAST headings: Topics, Geographic Names, Form/Genre, Personal Names, Corporate Names, Chronological, Events, and Titles. Understandably, some libraries have not adopted FAST headings due to doubts about OCLC’s continuing support. OCLC identifies several areas of improvement voiced by libraries: better customer service; proposals for new FAST headings from libraries; implementation tips and documentation; commitment; enrichments—add more details in some areas, such as Geographic, and fix Form/Genre—some want to be able to choose between FAST and LC Form/Genre headings; and add FAST to WorldCat. As of August 2013, some libraries using FAST headings within various formats included the Bodleian Libraries and the University of Oxford, the University of Amsterdam, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of North Dakota.

A presentation on FAST and its history was given at the American Library Association's (ALA) 2014 Midwinter Meeting as a Subject Analysis Committee program by Ed O'Neill from OCLC (O'Neill, 2014). The original FAST development team included the OCLC staff, Lois Mai Chan (University of Kentucky), and Lynn El-Hoshy (LC). Although the two organizations have "unrestricted nonexclusive rights" to FAST, neither can "sell" FAST. Below is a simple explanation without all of the "big words" in O'Neill's program:

Precoordination versus Faceted

LCSH is precoordination: Cataloging—United States

FAST is faceted (postcoordination): Cataloging
United States

Here is another addition to a FAST heading: the form of the heading includes the authority record number *650 7 Jury. †2 fast †0 (OCoLC)fst00985072*; *650 7 Trial practice. †2 fast †0 (OCoLC)fst01156264*. OCLC began to add FAST headings in September 2013 (if there are LCSH headings assigned), and this will continue for at least a year. To be included, records must be six months from date of entry.

For the title *Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin, LC assigned these subject headings:

- 600 Lincoln, Abraham, \$d 1809–1865
- 650 Political leadership \$z United States \$v Case studies
- 650 Genius \$v Case studies
- 600 Lincoln, Abraham, \$d 1809–1865 \$x Friends and associates
- 650 Presidents \$z United States \$v Biography
- 651 United States \$x Politics and government \$y 1861–1865

For the same title, these are the equivalent FAST headings:

- 600 Lincoln, Abraham, \$d 1809–1865
- 648 1861–1865
- 650 Political leadership
- 650 Genius
- 650 Friendship
- 650 Presidents
- 650 Political science
- 651 United States
- 655 Case studies
- 655 Biography

In the following diagram for searching FAST headings in Connexion, however, the terminology could be improved. It would be less confusing to

differentiate a bit better among the relevant index labels: *ho:fast* and *ho:academic* libraries. The relevant index labels are *ho:* for the keyword index; *ho=* for the phrase index; and *how=* for the whole phrase index.

What is extremely fascinating about the FAST project are further developments that do, indeed, take FAST into the future. The prototype mapFAST uses an authority file as a subject heading source rather than from bibliographical records. Other FAST applications in development are searchFAST, FAST Converter, FAST Linked Data, mapFAST Web Service, assignFAST, and mapFAST Mobile. This would indicate that there is a future for FAST, or that it may morph into something else eventually.

DEVELOPMENT OF LAW GENRE TERMS

Back in 2006, LC announced the development of its form/genre project (Library of Congress Genre Form Terms [LCGFT]) at the annual ALA meeting. While the initial headings occurred under motion pictures, TV programs, and videos, genre forms gradually spread into other subject areas. Most recently, they were developed for legal materials.

Representatives from the American Association of Law Libraries' Technical Services Interest Group formed the Subject Cataloging Policy Advisory Working Group to advise its representative to ALA's Subject Analysis Committee. In July 2008, LC officially included law genre forms in its development timeline for 2008–2012, with implementation scheduled for 2010 (Mandelstam and Rendall, 2011). The group worked in various phases, with scope notes and syndetic structure for such search terms as *Legislative histories*:

Legislative histories

Scope note: This heading is used as a genre/form heading for compilations of texts (committee hearings, reports, debates, etc.) that document the process of enacting a particular law or a group of laws.

Example: Seidman's legislative history of federal income tax laws

BT Law materials

RT Legislative materials

NT Legislative bills

Policies were discussed and determined at a meeting in Washington, D.C., and several principles were developed. Unlike LCSH, LCGFT is a "true thesaurus," built from the top down and containing syndetic structure, and it is hierarchical with broad terms. Similar to the above, "Law materials" would contain all sorts of narrow terms for a more specific breakdown, but this heading would be used for collections of law materials composed of multiple genres and forms. Terms should be specific but not too narrow, for

example, Black's law dictionary would use *Dictionaries*—not *Law dictionaries*. Among several law publication series, “Hornbooks” was chosen; but as a genre form, “Nutshells (Law)” was not unlike some LC subject headings. Current usage is important to genre/form terms, and various reference sources in print and online were used to come up with the final terms used. These terms have to “work across legal systems,” and U.S.-centric usage was not used if at all possible. When considering codes and compiled statutes and the civil law system and the common law system, “Statutes and codes” was decided upon.

In 2010, LC officially announced the incorporation of the law genre/form terms into LCGFT. Further work is ongoing, as some conflicts remain. LCSH cannot be subdivided geographically and LCGFT cannot be subdivided. So, both reside happily together on current records. In many cases, one can think of genre/form terms as *facets*, similar to FAST headings. Further proposals are now being solicited.

CONCLUSION

From the sage writing of Moya K. Mason (n.d.):

Subject headings can bring out what a book is really about, and does more than the title or table of contents can. It is a very powerful tool for information retrieval, even with its inherent problems associated with having to accept pre-coordinate phrases that are sometimes difficult to remember. Additional complications of terminology dilemmas, uniformity of headings, need for qualifiers, and inverted headings, exist, but it is still an exceedingly practical tool for serious researchers, especially when compared to the time-consuming and cumbersome activity of keyword searching. An effort should be made by librarians everywhere to advocate its use.

Subject headings are still relevant in today's world and should continue to be developed, used, and *changed* to reflect current terms used in today's society.

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