

Assigning Genre/Form Terms J 110

BACKGROUND: *This instruction sheet contains general practices followed by the Library of Congress for assigning genre/form terms to individual resources being cataloged. This instruction sheet begins after the initial steps of genre/form analysis have taken place, that is, after an examination of the resource to determine whether it exemplifies any genres or forms and after determination of how those genres and forms are expressed with **Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials**.*

*LC genre/form terms should be assigned in addition to LC subject headings. Genre/form terms sometimes duplicate information that is provided in the subject headings, and at other times provide information over and above what can be brought out with LCSH. Consult the **Subject Headings Manual (SHM)** for guidelines on assigning LC subject headings.*

LC genre/form terms should follow the subject headings, including those subdivided by form subdivisions. They should precede genre/form terms from other vocabularies.

Examples of the coding for genre/form terms assigned in bibliographic records and in authority records for works are provided in J 105.

1. General rule. Assign genre/form terms only as they come readily to mind after a superficial review of the resource being cataloged.

2. Cataloging treatment. Assign genre/form terms that correspond to the cataloging treatment of the resource. If cataloging a continuing resource such as a periodical, a monographic series, or a collected set, assign terms that characterize the resource as a whole. If cataloging a work as an analytic, assign terms that characterize the analytic.

If a resource contains both a text and commentary on the text, assign terms that represent the text, the commentary, or both, depending on the descriptive treatment of the resource and following the instructions below in sec. 3-12.

Assign terms based on analysis of the resource being cataloged. Genre/form terms do not need to be justified by descriptive cataloging elements.

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3. Specificity. Assign terms that are as specific as the genres and forms exemplified in a resource. Specificity is not a property of a given genre/form term; instead, it is a relative concept that reflects the relationship between a genre/form term and the resource to which it is applied. For example, a seemingly broad term like **Poetry** is specific when it is assigned to an anthology that consists of many poetic forms.

Follow the hierarchical reference structure built into LCGFT authority records (see J 186) to find as close a match as possible between the genre(s) and form(s) of the resource and the term(s) that exist to express them in LCGFT. In situations where a needed term is not established, see J 120 for general guidelines on establishing new genre/form terms.

Assign a term that is broader or more general than the genre or form than it is intended to cover when it is not possible to establish a precise term, when an array of terms is needed to express the genre or form (e.g., **Science fiction**, **Romance fiction**, and **Novels** assigned to a science fiction romance novel), or when the assignment of a more general term is required by special instructions in this manual.

If a compilation consists of a predominant genre or form but includes works that would be assigned another term in the hierarchy, it is permissible to assign both a broader and a narrower term. For example, **Limericks** is a narrower term of **Humorous poetry**. If a collection primarily contains limericks, but also contains a significant proportion of other types of humorous poetry, the terms **Limericks** and **Humorous poetry** may both be assigned.

Note: The use of the phrase “significant proportion” is deliberate. Catalogers should take the intent of the resource into account and display good judgment when assigning terms from multiple levels of the hierarchy in this manner.

4. Number of terms.

a. General rule. Assign to the resource being cataloged genre/form terms that describe the resource as a whole. The number of terms required varies with the resource being cataloged. Sometimes one term is sufficient, while at other times a complement of terms is necessary. Do not assign a genre/form term to works that do not have an identifiable genre or form.

Examples:

4. Number of terms.

a. General rule. (Continued)

Title: The world book encyclopedia.

Term: Encyclopedias.

Title: A butterfly in winter : a novel.

Terms: Romance fiction.
Novels.

Title: American crucible : race and nation in the twentieth century.

[A historical study that does not display an identifiable genre or form. Genre/form term(s) are not assigned.]

b. Resource containing separate parts. In the case of a resource containing separate parts, for example, a narrative text plus an extensive bibliography or a section of maps, or a book with accompanying materials such as a DVD, also assign separate terms for the individual parts or materials if they are judged to be significant. *Example:*

Title: Solkaṭṭu manual : an introduction to the rhythmic language of South Indian music.

[A textbook for students of Solkaṭṭu that includes two DVDs containing performances of all of the lessons, and full performances of the outlined small-ensemble pieces.]

Terms: Textbooks.
Carnatic music.
Filmed performances.
Educational films.

[The first term reflects the textual portion of the resource, while the second, third, and fourth reflect the accompanying DVD]

See J 105 sec. 1.b for the MARC 21 coding used to indicate to which part a particular term applies.

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5. Depth of indexing. Depending on its place in a hierarchy, a given term may subsume several narrower genres and forms that are also represented by terms in LCGFT. Assign to a resource only those terms that mostly closely correspond to the overall content of the resource. Generally do not assign terms that represent subgenres that are normally considered to be included in an assigned term's coverage. *Example:*

Title: Made in England : British pop anthology.

Term: Popular music.

[Performers: Ian Dury & The Blockheads, Joy Division, The Charlatans, T. Rex, The Beatles, Small Faces, The Specials, Pet Shop Boys, Leo Sayer, Badfinger, The Zombies, The Move, Tears for Fears, Elton John, Procol Harum, Fleetwood Mac, Rod Stewart.

*Do not assign separate terms for rock, electronica, glam rock, etc., instead of, or in addition to, **Popular music.**]*

6. Two or three related terms. If a term exists, or can be established (see J 120), that (1) represents the two or three genres or forms displayed by a resource, *and* (2) includes no other genres or forms within its scope, assign one term instead of two or three narrower terms. *Example:*

Title: A collection of accumulative rhymes, alphabet rhymes, and counting-out rhymes.

Term: Nursery rhymes.

[Alphabet rhymes, Counting-out rhymes, and Cumulative rhymes are all narrower terms of Nursery rhymes.]

7. Rule of three. If a genre/form term includes in its scope more than three sub-genres or forms, but the resource being cataloged consists of only two or three of those sub-genres or forms, assign the appropriate two or three terms instead of the broader term. *Example:*

Title: Time machine: the history of Canadian 60's garage, punk, and surf, 1985-95.

Terms: Garage rock music.

Punk rock music.

Surf music.

*[Do not assign **Rock music**, the broader term, because it has more than three NTs.]*

If a resource displays more than three of the narrower terms of a single broader term, assign the broader term unless the rule of four, described below, applies.

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8. Rule of four. In certain circumstances it may be preferable to assign terms for four sub-genres or forms of a broad term. If a term covers a broad range and each sub-genre or form comprises only a small portion of that whole range, assign the four sub-genres or forms. For example, a poetry anthology that consists of haiku, senryu, tanka, and kyōka may be assigned terms for those four genres instead of the broad term **Poetry**.

LC practice:

Do not exceed four sub-genres or forms under any circumstances.

9. Concepts in titles. Titles and subtitles sometimes state the genre and/or form of a resource in the words of the author or publisher. Bring out or account for each genre or form in the title and subtitle if they accurately represent the genre(s) and/or form(s) of the resource and if they are useful for retrieval. Use judgment and consider the following points when applying this principle:

- If the title is general but the work is actually of a more specific genre and/or form, assign terms for the specific genre or form.
- If many genres and/or forms are listed on the title page in the manner of a table of contents, treat them as a table of contents.

10. Additional terms. Because of the complex nature of certain resources, or special practices that have been developed for genres and forms in particular disciplines, additional terms may be required. Consult the appropriate instruction sheets in this manual and scope notes in LCGFT for guidance on handling those situations. For example, special provisions exist for literature (J 235).

11. Objectivity. Avoid assigning terms that express personal value judgments about resources being cataloged. Individual cataloger knowledge and judgment inevitably play a role in assessing the significance of a resource, but terms that reflect a cataloger's opinion about a resource should not be assigned. Consider the intent of the author or publisher, and if possible assign terms for this orientation without being judgmental.

12. Subdivision of genre/form terms. Genre/form terms may not be subdivided, neither topically, geographically, chronologically, nor by form.