Subject Analysis Committee

Presentation: “By Who and For Whom: LC Demographic Group Terms”

Janis Young (LC PSD) introduced the newest vocabulary available from the Library of Congress: the LC Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT). In the ongoing effort towards full faceted access of attributed traditionally stored in “subject” headings, this vocabulary has been designed to describe the characteristics of the audience, creators and contributors of works. The newly defined MARC fields 385 (audience characteristics) and 386 (creator/contributor characteristics) have been created to store this data in bibliographic records and authority records for works and (perhaps) expressions. Field 374 (occupation) in the authority format can also be used to encode those subsets of the LCDGT vocabulary in authority records for persons, although LCSH remains the most salient vocabulary for that field.

LCDGT is purpose-built to serve the aforementioned purposes, in ways that existing vocabularies (mainly LCSH) cannot. Terms are in natural language (e.g., Children of divorced parents) and faceted (e.g., Women and Librarians are separate terms; there is no term Women librarians). The vocabulary is divided into 11 categories: age, educational level, ethnic/cultural, gender, language, medical/psychological/disability, national/regional, occupation/field of activity, religion, sexual orientation, and social. The last of these has been designed as the “other” category, for terms which do not neatly fall into the other categories. Holding to the precepts of vocabulary design, only terms which strictly fall into a category are placed there. A particularly vexing example of this is terms for religious orders (e.g., Benedictines). Not all members of such orders are religious, or are clerics by occupation. Some have multiple functions within the order and some cross denominational lines. Even more problematic are notions of gender and sexual orientation. For these reasons, members of religious orders were placed in the “social” category.

In application, LCDGT terms for creator and contributor characteristics are to be assigned based largely on how creators and contributors self-identify; “in case of doubt, leave it out.” Catalogers are discouraged from making value judgments based on inferences (e.g., gendered pronouns and photographs). Similarly, terms for audience characteristics should be assigned based on explicit statements on the resource being cataloged or on implicit facts that come readily to mind based on perusal of the resource. The same caveats apply to the latter as to creator/contributor characteristics: “when in doubt, leave it out.” As a particularly humorous cautionary example, the work The complete idiot’s guide to American history should not be assigned an audience term Idiots.
The biggest conundrum confounding LCDGT development is the treatment of demonyms, or terms for persons associated with geographic places. Early on in development, it was thought that demonyms should only exist at the level of first-order administrative subdivisions and above (countries, continents, etc.) and not “drill down” to more local places. After much debate and study by a task group within SAC, it was decided that, in principle, terms for local places should be included. However, this poses numerous problems. Conflict is rife at the local level (e.g. Californians, which could denote persons from the state or from any number of local places called California); should conflict even be broken at the local level, or at all? What syntax should be used for qualifiers, if they are used? Beyond this, many local places lack demonyms, even though a work may exist which calls for a term for people from that place. What to do? To help LC grapple with this question, a “thought experiment” was done on LC’s website, with comments solicited from the community through January 31, 2016. Results of that experiment will be reported on as soon as they are made available.

LCDGT has been developed in phases since early 2015. Approximately 800 terms were proposed during Pilot Phases 1 and 2. As of January 2016, the vocabulary is in Pilot Phase 3. Catalogers may use terms in current cataloging, and may propose new terms as needed for current cataloging (see below for details on how to do so).

A similar presentation also took place at the SACO-at-Large session, at which the topic of local demonyms was discussed in greater detail.

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**Report of the liaison from the Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division (Janis Young)**

**LCSH updates:**

- Fifteen Subject Headings Manual (SHM) instruction sheets have been updated since the Annual Conference in 2015, and two of them underwent substantial revision to codify long-standing—but undocumented—practices regarding the amount and type of research necessary for subject heading proposals, and the procedures for citing for that research.
- H 202, Authority Research for Subject Heading Proposals, was rearranged to emphasize research instead of the identification of patterns. The instructions on consulting reference sources were also lightly revised to clarify terminology and incorporate twenty-first century sources; and a new section including 17 examples of full authority records from various disciplines, accompanied by explanatory notes, was added.
- H203, Citation of Sources, was renumbered and some sections were rearranged, instructions on providing information found in the reference sources were revised, and examples were updated throughout.
• In October 2015, 28 LC subject headings representing geographic features in Taiwan were revised from Wade-Giles to pinyin romanization. A “former heading” reference from the Wade-Giles form is provided in each authority record.

LCGFT Updates:

Genre/Form Terms Manual. In early January 2016, PSD published a draft Genre/Form Terms Manual that provides guidelines and instructions for making proposals and applying genre/form terms in bibliographic records and in authority records for works. The manual replaces the informal and occasionally ad-hoc guidelines that had been in place since the project to develop LCGFT began in 2007. The draft instruction sheets may be found in PDF form at http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCGFT/freeLCGFT.html and will appear in Cataloger’s Desktop in late 2016. Comments on the drafts may be directed to Janis L. Young at jayo@loc.gov through May 31, 2016.

Currently, there is a placeholder instruction sheet for Music (J 250). PSD will base the content of this forthcoming sheet on MLA’s best practices (http://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/resource/resmgr/BCC_Genre_Form_Task_Force/BestPractices150608.pdf). For now, MLA’s guidelines are recommended to be followed in current cataloging of music resources. PSD has also stated that a separate Medium of Performance Terms Manual will be developed, also to be based largely on MLA’s best practices.

Definition of Genre/Form. PSD has revised LCGFT’s definition of genre/form in response to a recommendation from the ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee’s Working Group on the Definition and Scope of Genre/Form for LCGFT. Among other changes, the revision does not make a distinction between genre and form, but instead treats them as a single unified concept. PSD believes that the new definition balances the desire of the library community to include a broad range of terms in the vocabulary with the need to provide clear guidance to those using and maintaining it.

The previous definition was:

“Genre relates to content and may be defined as a category of artistic or literary composition that has a distinctive style and consistent themes, plot formulas, and character types. Genre is distinct from subject, although they can be closely related. Form refers to the format or purpose of a category of works and is independent of the content. A work may be a suspense film (the genre) that is three-dimensional (the form) and depicts a heist (the subject).”

The revised definition is as follows:

“Genres and forms may be broadly defined as categories of resources that share known conventions. More specifically, genre/form terms may describe the purpose, structure, content, and/or themes of resources. Genre/form terms describing content and themes
most frequently refer to creative works and denote common rhetorical devices that usually combine elements such as plot, settings, character types, etc. Such terms may be closely related to the subjects of the creative works, but are distinct from them."

The revised definition is included in the draft Genre/Form Terms Manual and will appear in the introduction to the new edition of LCGFT, which will be published in early 2016.

Scope Notes. In November 2015, PSD determined that the style of scope notes in LCGFT should be simplified. Instead of beginning with “This heading is used as a genre/form heading for...,” scope notes no longer have an introductory phrase. The project to revise the existing scope notes was completed in December 2015.

Literature Project. The literature genre/form project is a collaboration undertaken by PSD and the ALA/ALCTS Subject Analysis Committee’s Subcommittee on Genre/Form Implementation, which formed the Working Group on LCGFT Literature Terms. In September 2015, PSD approved 150 literature genre/form terms that were proposed by the Working Group, thus completing the literature genre/form project. The first group of approximately 230 proposals had been approved in May 2015, but review of the remaining proposals was postponed due to staffing and workload levels in PSD.

Religion Project. The religion genre/form project was a collaboration between PSD and the American Theological Library Association. In September 2015, PSD approved 45 proposals for religion genre/form terms.

General Terms. PSD is continuing to work to adjust the term hierarchies in this area of LCGFT, in order to render it compatible with new and emerging domain hierarchies in LCGFT.

Proposals for new and revised genre/form terms: PSD is not currently accepting proposals for new and revised terms in the areas of music, literature, religion, or the “general” terms (e.g., handbooks, dictionaries), but continues to accept proposals in the areas of moving images, non-musical recorded sound, cartography, and law.

LC Implementation. The Library of Congress’ Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate, which catalogs most of the textual works acquired for the Library’s general collections, has not yet decided when it will implement the “general,” religion, and literature genre/form terms.

Status of Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT):

Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT) is intended to describe the creators of, and contributors to, resources, and also the intended audiences of resources. Terms may be assigned in bibliographic records and in authority records for works.
Pilot Phase 2. Phase 2 of the pilot was completed in December 2015, with the approval of over 400 proposals for new terms and also some revisions to previously approved terms. There are now approximately 800 terms in the vocabulary. The approved terms are based on guiding principles that specialists in LC’s Policy and Standards Division (PSD) have developed, and are available on LC’s website at http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/lcdgt-principles.pdf.

Demonyms for Local Places. PSD has decided in principle that demonyms for the residents of local places (e.g., counties, cities, city sections) may be included in LCDGT, but the appropriate level of disambiguation among demonyms that are, or that may be, used to refer to people from unrelated places must be determined. The form of qualifier must also be decided. In November 2015 PSD published a paper entitled “Demonyms for Local Places” (http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/lcdgt-demonyms.pdf), in which several options for disambiguation are discussed. Feedback and suggestions on the issues presented in the paper may be directed to Janis L. Young at jayo@loc.gov by January 30, 2016.

Demographic Group Terms Manual. In January 2016, PSD published the draft Demographic Group Terms Manual, which is based chiefly on the guiding principles for LCDGT (see above). The manual provides guidelines and instructions for making proposals and applying demographic group terms in bibliographic records and in authority records for works. The draft instruction sheets may be accessed in PDF form at http://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCDGT/freelcdgt.html and will appear in Cataloger’s Desktop in late 2016. Comments on the drafts may be directed to Janis L. Young at jayo@loc.gov through May 31, 2016.

Pilot Phase 3. Policy specialists in PSD created all of the proposals that were approved in phases 1 and 2 of LCDGT development. The proposals that they included were chiefly intended test theories on policies, and the approved terms highlight specific areas of concern (e.g., conflict situations; hierarchies), provide useful examples, and serve as the basis for future development. PSD believes that the vocabulary is now robust enough to support limited use, and that it is time to test the policies in a production environment. PSD will therefore accept proposals for terms that are needed in new cataloging only. Due to PSD staffing and workload considerations, proposals that appear to be made as part of retrospective projects, or projects to establish terms that are not needed for current cataloging, will not be considered.

All proposals should follow the guidelines on form of authorized term, references, scope notes, research, etc., presented in the draft Demographic Group Terms Manual. SACO members should use the Proposal System when making proposals and send an email to saco@loc.gov to inform Coop staff that the proposals are ready, according to the normal procedure. To encourage broad implementation of LCDGT, PSD has also created a survey to enable catalogers who do not work at LC or in a SACO institution to contribute proposals, and it is available at http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LCDGTproposals. The survey
requests the same information that the Proposal System does, but in a simplified format. PSD staff will make the formal proposals, which will be vetted during the standard editorial process. The survey will be available for the duration of Phase 3 of the pilot, which is scheduled to end on May 31, 2016.

LC Implementation. The Library of Congress' Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate, which catalogs most of the textual works acquired for the Library's general collections, has not yet decided when it will implement the demographic group terms.

SAC Subcommittee on Genre/Form Implementation

Future of Subcommittee

With the conclusion or winding down of several LCGFT projects, and with the project to assist LC in its development of the new Genre/Form Terms Manual completed, the SGFI discussed whether it should continue to meet, and what its future work should be. In Boston, the Literature Terms Working Group held their meeting (see below) and SGFI held one of its usual two meetings.

SGFI will continue its work at least through the 2016 Annual Conference in Orlando. Its remaining task will be to focus on issues of retrospective generation and derivation of LCGFT terms from existing LCSH headings. MLA has already begun some preliminary work in the area of music, namely generating LCMPT terms (in 382 fields) and genre/form terms (in 655 fields). The law library community has undertaken an incremental project (referred to as the “term of the month”), involving identifying candidate bibliographic records to which to manually assign specific law genre/form terms. Aside from these projects, similar projects in other domains are in their very early discussion stages.

SGFI decided to focus first on the “low hanging fruit”: LCSH form subdivisions (encoded in $v$ of 6xx fields). Shortly after Midwinter, a task group was appointed to compile a mapping of these subdivisions, as well as certain fixed field data elements, to LCGFT terms. Mullin will liaise with this group, conveying MLA’s mapping of music-specific form subdivisions. The combined mapping document will then be submitted to LC PSD for vetting (and possibly also PCC), and it is hoped that OCLC will use this work as the basis for large scale machine enhancement of records in WorldCat.

Literature Terms Working Group

LC PSD has approved two lists of literature genre/form terms, in May and September of 2015, totaling approximately 380 terms. Approximately 100 terms remain that were not approved by PSD during the literature project, and the Working Group met to discuss the future of these proposed terms. The revised definition of genre/form may allow some of
these terms to be reconsidered. Additionally, several terms that overlap with the music project are being submitted through the MLA Genre/Form Task Force in its final months of existence. Among the sticking points among the Literature Terms Working Group are: hybrid terms, which have been inconsistently allowed but generally eschewed by PSD; the status of terms identifying styles and movements, which are out of scope per the revised definition but not unequivocally so; and, adaptations, for which the general term Adaptations and a handful of domain-specific terms (e.g., Film adaptation) exist in LCGFT, but terms for literary adaptations have been rejected.

Submitted by Casey Mullin, MLA-CMC Vocabularies Subcommittee Chair