

## Vaunted, Variable, Vexatious, Verified : Subfield \$v — Religious aspects

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The proposal for a new subfield \$v for form subdivisions has been endorsed. The intention was to improve subject access for opac users by a separate subfield so that form subdivisions could be distinguished from topical, geographic and chronological subdivisions. Until then all form subdivisions were put into subfield \$x.

Form data are those terms and phrases that designate specific kinds or genres of materials. Materials designated with these terms or phrases may be determined by an examination of:

- their physical character (e.g., videocassettes, photographs, maps, broadsides)
- the particular type of data that they contain (e.g., bibliographies, questionnaires, statistics)
- the arrangement of information within them (e.g. diaries, outlines, indexes)
- the style, technique, purpose, or intended audience (e.g., drama, romances, cartoons, commercials, popular works)
- or a combination of the above (e.g. scores)

A single term may be modified by other terms, in which case the whole phrase is considered to be form data (e.g., aerial photographs, French dictionaries, conversation and phrase books, wind ensemble suites, telephone directories, vellum bound books, science fiction). (This is a 'generic' definition, not just one for LC Subject Headings)<sup>1</sup>

Other leads on identifying form subdivision and how to distinguish it from any other are found in the Manual. In the language now used any subfield \$x not a subfield \$v is called a general or topical subdivision, neutral words to say the least and likely to contain further differences if the need arises.

Assign form headings and subdivisions to represent what the item itself is, that is, its format or the particular type or arrangement of data that it contains, in situations where headings or subdivisions for these types of materials exist, and it is Library of Congress practice to designate them.<sup>2</sup>

Another definition, the very picture of simplicity, is: "Form subdivisions indicate what the item is rather than what it is about."<sup>3</sup> Later the Manual is a little more expansive:

Until 1999, form subdivisions were coded as \$x subfields, the same subfield code used for topical subdivisions. In February 1999, the Library of Congress began to apply the new subfield code approved in MARC 21 to distinguish form subdivisions, the \$v subfield, to newly catalogued materials. After that date, code a form subdivision for the function that the subdivision performs in the subject heading string. Code a form subdivision as a \$v subfield when it represents what the item being catalogued is ... Code a form

subdivision as an \$x subfield when it represents a form that the item is about. This often occurs when a subdivision that is normally a form subdivision is immediately followed by another form subdivision, or by a topical subdivision.<sup>4</sup>

The real question is, how does it effect us? When people involved in this whole debate write articles entitled "Is this all worth it?" we know division exists over the practical wisdom of introducing subfield \$v. Have we opened the genie's bottle, a can of worms or Pandora's box?

In day-to-day cataloguing we now have to distinguish form subdivisions as defined, from all other types of subdivision. Not only that, we have to distinguish when a particular subdivision is form and when it is not. Often a none too easy task. The most common form subdivisions encountered by theological cataloguers are: Apologetic works, Bibliography, Biography, Catechisms, Commentaries, Comparative studies, Concordances, Dictionaries, Handbooks, manuals, etc., Indexes, Periodicals, Prayer-books and devotions, Sermons, Study guides, Translations from [ ], Translations into [ ]. The most common subdivisions likely to be confused for form subdivisions but which remain subfield \$x are: Canon, Chronology, Criticism, interpretation, etc., Doctrines, Liturgy, Manuscripts, Missions, Rituals, Sacred books, Sources, Versions.

Difficulties immediately arise when we must distinguish a subdivision term as form or other. In the literature these are called 'dual functioning subdivisions'. For example, 'Folklore' can be used either to denote collections of folklore (650 \$aIndians of North America \$vFolklore) or to denote discussions about the folklore (650 \$a Indians of North America \$x Folklore). The neat point has been made that a theology journal takes '650 \$aTheology \$vPeriodicals', but if you write a book about theology journals you will still have to use '650 \$aTheology \$xPeriodicals'. A few examples of dual functioning subdivisions are Creeds, Harmonies, Hymns, Paraphrases and Sermons. A fuller list is in the Subject Cataloguing manual under Pattern headings. (Copies can be made available, just email your request to Philip.Harvey@ormond.unimelb.edu.au)

In the automated catalogue, if you do not have subfield \$v already programmed into your system you run the risk of missing a broad and inestimably valuable set of access points. Indeed, you have little choice other than to upgrade your system so it can read both subfields \$x, as at present, and subfield \$v. If subfield \$v is already on the system you can simply choose to ignore it, though there is going to be an awful lot of pre-existing x's that contain the same information as the v's. There will come a point where the sets of duplicate \$x and \$v headings become a nuisance to the cataloguer. On some systems (e.g. on Dynix in Recall) a routine can be run that identifies subjects headings with identical text but different tagging and these can be tidied up through merging. However, not all systems might be able to do this.

There are those who wish the MARC Committee had never thought of subfield \$v. The lists are full of querulous messages. For many it is a harbinger of things to come. Much of the professional discussion has surrounded whether form ought not simply to have its own Tag 655, which LC uses in-house already. There are those who believe that precoordinate headings are on the way out, to be replaced by separate tags for person, work, topic, place, chronology, document form, and physical form and file type. The National Library of Medicine

has already taken its own system (MeSH) in that direction.

Any cataloguer in touch in any way with MARC must now familiarise themselves with subfield \$v, judge where and where not to use it, and know how to distinguish the many dual functioning subfields. These last two skills will be developed into a subtle art that could take years properly to master.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> SAC Subcommittee on Form Headings / Subdivisions Implementation. (199-). Educational forum: LCSH and subfield v. [Online] Available : <http://www.pitt.edu/~agtaylor/ala/edforum.html> [1999, June 18].

<sup>2</sup> Assigning and constructing subject headings. In *Subject cataloguing manual : subject headings*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, D.C. : Library of Congress, Cataloguing Distribution Service, 1996. H180 p.6, August 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. H1075, p.2, February 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. H1075, p.3, February 1999.



### **Gleanings from ABTAPL Bulletin**

#### ***Theological Librarianship Program***

The library of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong, in cooperation with some theological seminaries and the Christian Mission to Buddhists, has recently been developing its computerized systems to provide greatly improved resource sharing facilities. Through this program LTS wishes to share these new facilities with others in order to promote the further development of theological libraries in Asia and hopes to build up Asian contextual librarianship training. Further information is available from : Theological Librarianship Program, PO Box 20, Shatin, Hong Kong; see website : [www.lts.edu](http://www.lts.edu)

ANZTLA members may be interested in a **new publication** of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries : *Guide to theological & religious studies collections in Great Britain & Ireland*, compiled and edited by David A. Kerry and Evelyn Cornell. ABTAPL Publishing, 1999. ISBN 094894501X. Price : GBP17.50 / US\$30.00. Available from : Dr A. Lacey, Hon. Secretary ABTAPL, Trinity Hall, Trinity Lane, Cambridge, CB2 1TJ, UK (Cheques payable to ABTAPL)

#### ***Some Websites which may be of interest***

- The Association of Theological Schools, USA : [www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu)
  - Institute of Jewish Studies, University College, London : [www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish/bajs.htm](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish/bajs.htm)
  - British Association of Jewish Studies : [www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish/htm](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish/htm)
  - Jewish Culture and History, a new inter-disciplinary journal : [www.frankcass.com/jnls/jch.htm](http://www.frankcass.com/jnls/jch.htm)
- RE and Theology on the Internet, a link provider offering detailed lists of resources for the study and teaching of theology : <http://info.ox.ac.uk/etitext/theology>