

# Reports and Communications

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## The Sixteenth Edition (1987) of the Sears' List of Subject Headings: Some Salient Features in Historical Perspective of its Plantinum Jubilee Year (1998)

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A standard and popular subject cataloguing tool for full quarter of a century, the Sears List was first designed in 1923 by Minnie Earl Sears (1873-1933) in deference to demands of small libraries for simple and broader subject headings for use in their dictionary catalogues. It was based on a survey of subject heading practices of nine small, but well catalogued libraries. Published from the very beginning by the H.W. Wilson Company and was meant for small libraries, which found Library of Congress Subject Headings too detailed. It was indicated so in the title of the first through sixth edition (1950): List of Subject Headings for Small Libraries: and compiled from Lists Used in Nine Representative Small Libraries. The first edition culled 3203 preferred headings from catalogues of these libraries. The technical model was and still is the Library of Congress Subject Headings, 1909. It was the policy of Miss Sears to use the LC forms of subject headings with some modifications, chiefly the simplification of phrases. The policy has been followed unwaveringly to date. The list soon became widely popular in libraries, having dictionary catalogues in USA and abroad. Its acceptability lies its responsiveness to users needs and technical advances in information science.

The 2nd (1926) and 3rd (1933) editions were brought again by Sears herself, who died prematurely at the age of sixty. The 4th (1939) and 5th (1944) editions brought out by Isabel Stevenson Monro varied little from the previous editions. The 6th (1950), edited by Bertha M. Frick, incorporated Sears' name in the title and dropped the qualifier for small libraries to acquire its present title: Sears List of Subject Headings, as by this time it had also made its forays into medium size libraries. It became a reigning and standard tool for small as well as medium type libraries and acquired a stable format of internal and codified instructions for vocabulary control, syndetic relations, and cross references in the list and for public catalogues. This format lasted until the 14th edition (1991). The abridged DDC numbers which were given for the first

time to the headings in the 4th edition (1939) were dropped in the 9th edition (1965) with the plea that they were not being used for the purpose they were given; these were taken not as guide but substitute for the DDC schedules.

The DDC numbers appeared again in the 11th edition following wide criticism from the body of users. Now the DDC numbers seem to remain constant. The orientation to the online environment commenced with the 13th edition (1986), edited jointly by Carmen Rovira and Caroline Reyes. It was the first edition to be created as an online database for editorial use. Moreover, initiated some changes to suit online database searches and OPACs by transcribing headings in natural form: most of the preferred headings were de-inverted i.e. straightened to go with the changed approach of users in search of electronic information. It also eased congestion of entries under a single entry word. For example all entries pertaining to libraries got scattered by the initial word instead of all converging under the word "library" i.e. public libraries will file under P, and school libraries under "S". Since this edition, ALA Filing Rules (1980) are being followed for arrangement of entries in the List. New headings were mainly included from the area such as health and environment, computer science, space technology, changing family relations, minorities, consumerism, business and management. More than this on the suggestions of the Cataloging of Children's Material Committee of ALA the headings from the LC Subject Headings for Children's Literature are incorporated since the 13th edition. Therefore, Sears since then is also useful for children material.

With the creation of electronic database the revisions became frequent and short spaced in time to keep it up-to-date with new knowledge, terminology and subject heading techniques. In the 15th edition (1994) by Dr. Joseph Miller, the de-inversion of headings was completed except for "State, The", and names of battles. For example, the previous heading "Art, Islamic" became Islamic art, and so with all such headings. It was believed that majority of the users search a subject in an electronic database under its natural form of the name. It is a major variation from the LC practice. In the 15th edition about 500 headings were modified or newly added. About 120 new headings

were added to provide subject and genre access to individual works of fiction, drama, poetry and other imaginative works of films and television, e.g., diadic drama, horror films, medical novels, and science fiction television programs. The milestone change since the Sears-15 is the thesaurus format display of headings and their relations using standard thesaurus abbreviations NT, BT, RT, UF, USE and SA instead of x, xx and 'see also' for codified instructions. The thesaurus format conforms to the NISO standards for thesaurus (1993). Nevertheless, Sears remains a list instead of a true thesaurus. Only the relations among headings are now more explicitly visible, though the display of headings and cross references in the public catalogue remains the same. For example:

Forensic sciences 363.25

Use of materials on science as applied in  
courts of law or in criminal investigations

UF      Criminalistics  
            Forensic science  
BT      Science  
NT      Medical jurisprudence  
RT      Criminal investigation

In the above entry the headings against UF i.e. 'used for' are non-preferred headings for which cross references from these headings will be prepared leading to Forensic science for the public catalogue, i.e.

Criminalistics  
See Forensic sciences  
Forensic science  
See Forensic sciences

For BT, RT, NT we may prepare *see also* downward references from BT to NT, viz.,

Science  
See also Forensic sciences  
Forensic science  
See also Medical jurisprudence

while for RT which links related headings or headings of equal specificity making of See also references though optional, is permissible both ways

Criminal investigation  
See also Forensic sciences  
Forensic sciences  
See also Criminal investigation

In the 16th edition (1997), the second one edited by Joseph Miller, the process of reformulating the headings in tune with the literary warrant and users' approach to the subject indexes has taken a step further. The latest edition lists 7196 established headings of subjects including 55 personal, 68 corporate names, and 38 uniform titles. There are total of 7043 topical headings including a few geographic names including as key (model) headings. It includes all changes made in the annual electronic updates since the Sears-15 (1994) and contains 28 pages more of the core list over the previous edition. The revision of headings, as usual, is based on suggestions from Sears' users, commercial bibliographic services vendors, and mostly from the staff of the H. W. Wilson Company engaged in cataloguing and indexing for their various products and services.

The updated *Library of Congress Subject Headings* is always consulted. In the Sears-16 some headings are new for newly added subjects while some old subject have acquired new terminology; and some of the terms have acquired new structure or grammar. Some of the newly added headings are in the field of computer science and engineering, such as computer simulation, hypertext, HTML, multimedia systems, and the World Wide Web. Other important new additions include Big Bang theory, physical fitness centers, and forest conservation. There are 316 such new subject headings. Some headings have been changed or modified terminologically to reflect current usage. Long list of such headings has been provided (on pages xvii-li) to highlight the differences between the immediate previous and present editions. Inside the List such changes between these two editions are indicated by a *formerly* note :

Police brutality (May subdiv. geog.)  
363.2

UF Police – complaints against [Former heading]  
Police cruelty  
Police repression  
Police violence  
BT Police

These include new wordings, e.g. Xerography has at last been replaced by photocopying, space ships has been replaced by space vehicles. Changes may be in punctuation marks: X-rays replaces X rays. A singular noun may be changed to a plural or vice versa: CD-ROM has been replaced by CD-ROMs; but Upper classes by Upper class. Some of the compound headings have been structured as subdivided headings: Religion-Biography replaces Religious biography. As another change: Birds-Eggs and nests has been reduced to two headings: Birds-Eggs; Birds-Nests. There are nu-

merous such assorted changes. A commendable and epoch-making feature is the reduction of Christian bias. For example, doctoral theology which connoted Christian doctrine in the previous edition now connotes fundamental theology in general as evident from the suggested DDC numbers 230; 291.2, whereas in the previous edition only 230 was suggested. This has been done mostly by revising the scope and relations of the headings than by changing the headings themselves. For example:

Sears-16	Sears-15
Doctorinal theology 230; 291.2	Doctorinal theology 23
UF Dogmatic theology Dogmatics Fundamental theology Systematic theology Theology, doctrinal [Former heading]	UF Christian doctrine Dogmatic theology Dogmatics Theology, Doctrinal [Former heading]
SA names of religion or Denominations with the subdivision <i>Doctorines</i> , e.g. Christianity - <i>Doctorine</i> To be added as needed	BT Theology
BT Theology	NT Liberation theology Love (Theology) Regeneration (Theology) Salvation Trinity
NT Christianity-Doctorines Creeds Grace (Theology) Judaism- Doctrines Man (Theology) Salvation	

Some new commonly used subdivisions have also been added. For every such subdivision there is now an entry point in the core list and a note with instructions on the application of that subdivision. There are 204 such general references records. For example, Genetic aspects appears in the list of 'Commonly used subdivisions' (page xlvi) and also on page 314 of Sears-16:

Genetic aspects

USE types of diseases with the subdivision

Genetic aspects, e.g. cancer-Genetic aspects; to be added as needed.

It simply means that the subject headings and their commonly used subdivisions are integrated in a cumulative way; the notes in the core list specify the area of applications of the subdivisions which are not univer-

sally applicable. In fact such an integration makes the separated list of commonly used subdivisions (pp.xlii) somewhat redundant or simply of theoretical value. Their inclusion in the core list provides specific guidance on their application. It is more profitable to take these common subdivisions from the main list than from its separate list. Another noteworthy change lies in the Key headings for places. In the Sears-15 and before, in some cases, the place names (of countries, states, cities) were the subject headings subdivided by the topic or subject. For example, Chicago (Ill.)-Industries. In the Sears-16 it has been replaced by Industries - Chicago (Ill). Seven headings pertaining to a city have been so reversed. There is reversal of eight headings under Ohio, e.g. Ohio-Constitution has been replaced by Constitutions - Ohio. Constitutions - Ohio Constitutions - Ohio. Fourteen headings for the U.S. have been affected so, e.g., United States - Civil defense has been replaced by Civil defense - United States; United States - Diplomatic and consular service has been replaced by American diplomatic American diplomatic and consular services. Another change in case of geographic and consular services and consular services subdivision is the eradication of the adjectival form for a geographic subdivision of a topic. Now all geographic subdivisions are shown by a dash whereas in previous to Sears-15 some geographic subdivision of a topic were indicated by a comma. For example Folk art, American (Sears - 14 (1991) is now American Folk Art. Changes in the commonly used subdivisions are numerous.

The following is the list of newly added subdivisions in the Sears-16.

Air conditioning	Life skill guides
Comic books	Literary collections
Computer simulation	Manuscripts
Conduct of life	Medical examinations
Criticism	Mental health
Death	Monuments
Dental care	Names
Diaries	Nursing
Drug testing	Obituaries
Drying	Parodies, imitations, etc.
Dwellings	Pensions
Ecology	Personal finance
Editing	Personal narratives
Employees	Physiological aspects
Ethical aspects	Physiology
Ethics	Planning
Evaluation	Political aspects
Evolution	Posters
Explorations	Prayers
Food	Rates
Forecasting	Rites and ceremonies
Foreign influence	Scholarships

Genealogy	Specifications
Influence	Treatment
Information Services	War use
Library resources	Waste disposal
Life cycles	Wounds and injuries

The following subdivisions have been deleted:

Contracts & specifications	
Desertions	Pattern
Entrance	Photography from space
Fire and Fire prevention	Practice
Heating and ventilations	Professional ethics
Home care	Recruiting
Inservice training	Segregation
Integration	Thermodynamics
Inspection	Tournaments
Medals, badges...	Toxicology
Music	Transplantation

Some of the commonly used subdivisions have been modified: kings, queens, rulers, etc. has been replaced by Kings and rulers; Moral and religious aspects has been replaced by two new subdivisions: Ethical aspects, and Religious aspects. This makes it possible to have a heading like Ethnic relations – Religious aspects. Safety appliances replaces safety devices; and, Travel replaces Voyages and travels.

The number of headings having scope notes has increased. Clear and copious scope notes, resulting in improved presentation of information in the List, are another commendable feature of the new edition. Scope notes have also been added to identify any heading that may be assigned to individual works of drama, fiction, poetry, etc. For example, Easter-Drama; Lincoln, Abraham-Fiction.

DDC numbers from the Abridged 13th edition (1997) have been given as suggested numbers. Numbers only exceptionally exceed four or five digits unless it extended by Area table 2, e.g. United States – Rural conditions 307.720973. Only occasionally a number may exceed the average limit, e.g. Popular music – Texts 782.42164; Intellectual Cooperation 327.1; 370.116. Some headings such as Charters, Exhibitions, Gifts, National characteristics have not been given DDC numbers on the plea that these "cannot be classified unless a specific application is identified". These headings could have been given an interdisciplinary number as has been done in the case of Directories 910.25.

The Sears-16 strengthens and continues the policies and consolidates the reforms set in by Sears-15; and still is a living manifestation of the principles of subject cataloguing put forth by C A Cutter (1837-1903) a century ago in his famous Rules for a Dictionary Catalog. The Sears- 16 is quite practical keeping in view the current needs and users' behavior in consulting the subject catalogues in OPACs. Its terminology is up-to-date and international. However, some decisions regarding whether a place name be made a heading or a subdivision in some cases can be debated.

Printing and production standards are high, though margins on each side of the page are inadequate to record decisions and incorporate locally coined headings. There seems no use of repeating on every page the full forms of standard thesaurus legends BT, RT, NT, SA, and UF when once these have been explained on page lii-facing page 1. The editors may also consider restoring the one page highly concise operational manual discontinued since the 10th.

The new edition brings in many changes in a short span of time. It is a manifestation of its commitment and eagerness to keep itself up-to-date on the knowledge front, terminologically and technically. Within a span of 75 years and fifteen revisions it has added 4000 new headings over the initial beginning of 3202 headings in 1923. It means the growth rate of 52 headings a year, or 266 headings per edition. Its skill lies in judiciously controlling the growth of the list in face of turbulently growing knowledge. Consistently the latest know how from information science has been deployed to modernize internal structure and grammar of the List. This policy and urge accounts for its acceptability and popularity.

Sears is an A-class product from a world class organization, and it has no rival. It sets its own challenges and meets them. Thus, it has an assured stature and usefulness for the foreseeable future.

**Appendix A****A Chronology of the Sears List of SHs**

Edition	Year	Editor	Salient features / Main changes
1.	1923	Minni Earl Sears	List of subject headings for small libraries: compiled from lists used in nine representatives small libraries. Contains only "See" and corresponding "refer" from headings. Has only 3203 headings.
2.	1926	"	Quite enlarged. "See also" references added.
3.	1933	"	A chapter on "Practical suggestions for the beginners in the subject heading work" added. List of commonly used subdivisions added separately.
4.	1939	Isabel Stevenson Monroe	DDC numbers added to the headings based on the usage in the H.W. Wilson standard catalogues. Subtitle dropped. Subdivisions of general Applications were printed in italics. Number of headings 3870.
5.	1944	"	
6.	1950	Bertha M. Frick	Incorporated Sears name and the qualifier "for small libraries" to assume the present title. The "see" and "refer from" instructions replaced by x and xx symbols to conform to the LCSH 5th ed (1948).
7.	1954	"	--
8.	1959	"	Number of headings 4614
9.	1965	Barbara M. Westby	DDC numbers omitted. New headings added chiefly from science and technology
10.	1972	"	Number of headings 5326. New headings added from social and environmental problem.
11.	1977	"	DDC numbers restored. Chapter on practical suggestions revised to be renamed as "Principles of the Sears List of Subject Headings". Terms neutralized by removing gender and racial bias. Section on non-book materials added in the Principle.
12.	1982	"	Subject headings for childrens' literature from LC merged with Sears. On the recommendation of the Subject Analysis Committee of the ALA, dates were put before the name of the event in case of chronological subdivisions.
13.	1986	Carmen Rovira & Caroline Reyes	Filing order based on ALA filing rules 1980 with some modifications. Deinversion of headings started. Both the changes were necessary to facilitate computerised searches. Class numbers from DDC-11 and 12 added. To make way for the non-book material many of the subjects and subdivisions that included the word "book" were changed suitably to make them applicable to all materials. Obvious exceptions are handbooks and yearbooks.
14.	1991	Martha T Mooney	Revision reforms continued in line with the use of computers. Many compound headings reduced to simple ones.
15.	1994	Joseph Miller	"Principles of Sears list of subject headings" revised. Thesaurus format introduced and deinversion of headings almost completed. List of cancelled and replaced headings added.
16.	1997	"	Consolidation of the changes in Sears 15. Christian bias reduced. Also released in CD-ROM format simultaneously.

### Reference

Sears List of Subject Headings (16th ed.) Joseph Miller (Ed.). (1997). New York: The H. W. Wilson Company. 786 p. ISBN 0-8242-0920-6.

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