



University of Mosul
College of Art
Dept. of information and knowledge Techniques

Course Name: Processing Subjective
Data

Stage / Second

Lecturer Name: Prof. Rafal N. A.
School Study: 2025-2026

Arrangement of Subject Headings in the Catalog

The subject entries or headings resulting from the subject analysis process require precise arrangement in the alphabetical subject catalog, to enable the user to access them as quickly as possible.

There are several methods for arranging subject headings, the most important of which is alphabetical arrangement:

- Alphabetical Arrangement

That is, according to the letters of the alphabet, whether in English or Arabic. This is one of the most common and widely used forms of arrangement in catalogs. Subject headings are arranged alphabetically using one of two methods:

A - Letter by Letter: In this method, the unit is the letter, not the word. The letters of compound headings are arranged as if they were a single continuous string of letters. For example:

In Arabic In English

الهند Electron beams

الهندسة Electronic engineering

الهند والسند Electron optics

However, a drawback of this method is the scattering of materials relating to a single subject in multiple places, as unrelated subjects intervene between them.

B - Word by Word: This is often the preferred method, whether in the alphabetical arrangement of Arabic or foreign catalogs. The unit here is the word, not the letter. The words of a single subject heading are arranged, and one does not move to another heading until all entries beginning with that word are exhausted. The previous example would be arranged as follows:



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This arrangement helps keep related subjects together. It is the method followed in the alphabetical subject catalog, as it is easier to apply and review.

After applying the word-by-word arrangement, the words within a single heading must be arranged letter by letter. Thus, the shorter word is filed first, followed by the longer word that encompasses it. Similarly, the simple heading should be filed before its subdivisions, or before the same heading followed by one or more words—whether enclosed in parentheses or followed by any other form of subdivision.

The following important points must be considered in alphabetical arrangement:

1. (Disregard the definite article / ال) -al for filing purposes, though it remains in the written form.
 2. Arrange abbreviations in their alphabetical place according to their spelling.
 3. (The isolated hamzah ء) precedes the alif (أ) in order, e.g., قراءة, قرآن.
 4. The hamzah on an alif is treated as an alif, on a wāw as a wāw, and on a yā' as a yā' in filing, e.g., الموانئ, المؤسسات.
 5. (The elongated alif آ) is treated as two alifs.
 6. (The tā' marbūṭah ة) is treated as a tā', and the hā' marbūṭah ه is treated as a hā' in filing.
 7. (The conjunction "and" و) and prepositions are counted in filing as they are part of the subject heading.
- Whichever method is chosen for alphabetical arrangement, it must be applied consistently, as inconsistency leads to confusion.

Arrangement of Subdivisions



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It is preferable to arrange subdivisions according to the following order:

1. The subject heading without any subdivision.
2. Alphabetical extensions of the main subject heading (such as form subdivisions, facet subdivisions, geographical subdivisions, inverted subject headings, etc.)—all are filed word by word alphabetically alongside other headings beginning with the same word, regardless of punctuation marks.
3. Chronological subdivisions arranged chronologically, starting with the earliest date. Subdivisions beginning with the same year but spanning different periods should be arranged so that the longer period comes first.
4. Subdivisions of subdivisions are arranged in the same manner as above.

Arrangement of References

It is preferable to arrange "See" and "See also" references logically, based on the heading from which the reference is made. When multiple references exist, they should be arranged alphabetically among themselves, to maintain the overall filing order of the catalog and its search method. Among the most important methods for arranging references are:

1. They precede all entries under a given subject heading.
2. They come after the simple subject heading but before the subdivisions of that heading.

The ALA (American Library Association) filing rules recommend that "See also" references should be filed before the first entry under the same word or words. This is the preferred system, because the user will find their need in one of the referenced headings without having to browse all the general subject cards.

Review and Updating of Subject Headings



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Reviewing and updating subject headings is essential and unavoidable in order to keep pace with current terminology in developing and changing disciplines for the purpose of consistency. Failure to consistently undertake reviews and updates will certainly lead to problems in card catalogs—especially for libraries that lack sufficient time or expertise to create their own subject authority files—negatively affecting catalog users, who are not directed toward some of these changes.

To overcome this problem, it is necessary to employ one of the basic methods that can be used in card catalogs suffering from overlapping subject headings. These methods are:

1. The Retention Method: Old and new subject headings are filed together in a single alphabetical sequence, with explanatory notes added on cards.
2. The File Division Method: This method does not simply involve changing old subject headings to new ones and merging them. Rather, it changes inverted subject headings starting with various alphabetical letters, resulting in two separate files, along with explanatory references directing the user from one file to the other.
3. The Standard Method: This method replaces all old subject headings with new ones by cancelling the old heading and printing the new one in its place.

Preston recommends using all three methods within a single catalog, leaving the library free to choose based on the specific type of overlapping subject heading involved.

The pressing question is: how can a library discover new subject headings? And what procedures should it follow to establish links between old and new headings?

The answer to the first part of the question lies in the cataloger's continuous monitoring of the latest editions and ongoing revisions of standard subject heading lists—especially now that major global standard lists, along with their supplements and revision lists, are available on the Internet, even issuing weekly updates. A prime example is the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). The cataloger should also follow new editions of the lists they use for cataloging their library's holdings. They can also rely on the easiest available means to track new terms and headings, which are often scattered throughout the catalog, namely: periodicals and their specialised indexes, current subject bibliographies, and abstracts. In addition, reviewing specialised dictionaries and encyclopaedias—particularly recent ones—is essential.

Accessing websites, directories, library and information science periodicals online, general scientific encyclopaedias, and other online access points are among the fastest ways to reach the latest terminology in various scientific fields.



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The truth is that the updating and review process is not limited to adding new headings. What is more important is linking them to existing subject headings in the catalog and in the subject authority file, while taking the necessary references into account.

It is also essential to apply the established principles for formulating and constructing subject headings as followed in the catalog. Although adding new subject headings is not an easy task, it is less difficult and complex than changing existing headings. A required change may involve one or more of the following:

1. Eliminating a subdivision that has fallen out of use, or a subdivision of an existing heading that has proven unused.
2. Breaking down a broad, general subject heading into more specific or specialised headings, or adding a new specialised subject heading for one aspect of the general subject.
3. Changing the form of a subject heading.
4. Making additions or deletions to references and subdivisions.

From the foregoing discussion, we conclude that consistently reviewing and updating subject headings—although requiring considerable time and effort—is essential, since a heading needing change may have become inappropriate, incorrect, or obsolete. However, if this is not the case, there is no justification for changing it; instead, an appropriate reference from the new heading to the existing one should suffice.