

FAST Subjects For AT and CONTENTdm Cataloging

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Background

FAST (Faceted Application of Subject Terminology) is a subject schema derived from Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and developed as a cooperative effort by OCLC and the Library of Congress. It consists of **8 different facets** – **Topical terms, Personal names, Corporate names, Geographic names, Event Names, Titles, Form terms, and Time Periods** – which can either be used in tandem or independently. Unlike LCSH, which combines subject elements into one term in anticipation of use (pre-coordinated), FAST headings work as facets to be combined at the time of search (post-coordinated). This makes FAST more flexible, easy to learn, and better suited for web environments that utilize faceted browsing.

FAST was adopted for subject cataloging in Special Collections for metadata created in Archivists' Toolkit (AT) and CONTENTdm in the spring of 2015 after an analysis of existing metadata and workflows revealed inconsistencies in applying LCSH subdivisions and the difficulty of training inexperienced catalogers. A conversion of existing subject headings to FAST was undertaken and completed for AT in October, 2015. Conversion of CONTENTdm terms is ongoing, though new collections should be cataloged using FAST.

Types of subjects

The facets of FAST that will be used in Special Collections cataloging include Topical, Geographic Names, Event Names, Titles, and Form.

NOTE: For assigning personal and corporate names as subjects, it is recommended to **continue to use the Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF)**, as its interface is more up-to-date and browseable. Options for access are the [Library of Congress Authorities](#) database or the [Library of Congress's linked data service](#). The Time Period facet will not be used because date information is recorded elsewhere in the metadata created both in AT and CONTENTdm.

Topical

This facet includes topical main headings and their corresponding subdivisions. These headings very closely

resemble LCSH topical headings. Unlike LCSH headings which can be further subdivided by the cataloger, however, all FAST headings are already established, meaning that all entries should exactly correspond with FAST terms without cataloger additions or modifications. Although most topical entries in FAST are single concept terms, some do include subdivisions for further specificity (e.g. Poor--Services for).

Examples:

- Buildings--Design and construction
- Sailing ships
- African Americans--Civil rights
- Forest reserves

Geographic Names

Unlike LCSH geographic terms, FAST geographic names are established in indirect order. Chicago (Ill.) becomes Illinois—Chicago. Qualifiers are used only to identify the type of geographic name (Kingdom, Satellite, etc.). Large natural features will typically stand on their own without indirect subdivision. Smaller features that span multiple states or countries are typically listed under the largest entity that contains the entire feature.

Examples:

- Illinois--Cook County
- Illinois--Calumet River
- Lake Michigan
- Arizona--Grand Canyon
- California--Muir Woods National Monument
- North America--Colorado River

Events

This facet covers important historical events, including military conflicts, meetings, exhibitions, natural disasters, and sporting events. Heading construction is not always intuitive, and finding the correct heading may take some practice and experimentation. It might be helpful to start with a known LCSH and use the [FAST converter](#) to identify the appropriate heading. If you are cataloging something that relates to an important historical event but also took place in a distinct location, be sure to include the geographic subjects as well.

Examples:

- Great Fire (Chicago, Illinois : 1871)
- Revolution (France : 1789-1799)
- Revolution (Russia : 1905-1907)
- World War (1939-1945)
- World War (1914-1918)
- American Revolution (1775-1783)

Form

This facet can be used to describe either the genre or the type of resource. Form frequently offers further qualification to the Topical headings, such as Early works. It also helps identify the kind of resource being described, such as Statistics, Indexes, Case studies, etc. **Form is meant to describe what the resource IS, not what it is ABOUT.

NOTE: Type of resource is often captured elsewhere in the metadata (e.g. Dublin Core Type) and may not be necessary to record as a FAST term.

Examples:

- Reviews
- By-laws
- Designs and plans
- Conference papers and proceedings

Title

This facet is used to trace uniform titles for works contained in or related to the resource being described. Uniform titles are created as a way to standardize references to works that may appear under multiple titles through translation, reissue, imprint changes, etc.

Examples:

- Great expectations (Dickens, Charles)
- Constitution (Illinois : 1970)
- Chicago Defender

Tools

There are a number of options for working with FAST.

searchFAST

The most comprehensive tool, with an all-in-one search box, brief view of results, and full view of records when selected. Search results are ranked by usage, though other sorting options are available.

assignFAST

Experimental interface that utilizes autosuggest technology in an attempt to better automate the process of assigning headings.

FAST converter

Interface for converting LCSH headings formatted in MARC to FAST headings. Useful for those already familiar with LCSH attempting retroactive conversion.

Assigning headings

1. Navigate to [searchFast](#).

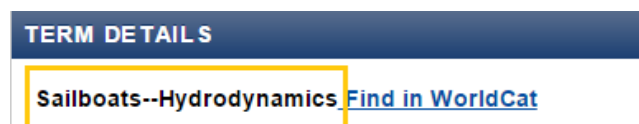
2. Enter desired term in search box and hit enter or click Search.

- Keyword searching is the default and is recommended.
- searchFAST utilizes a powerful autosuggest feature which is often helpful in guiding you to the correct term.
- It is possible to search the LCSH heading if known in order to find the FAST equivalent.

3. Navigate to the desired term and click the hyperlink for a fuller display of the authority record.

- Use the <<Previous and Next>> links to navigate to more results.
- Results are ranked by usage, with the most popular terms at the top. To sort results alphabetically or by type of facet, select the blue link at the top of the column for either Heading or Facet respectively.
- Results can be further limited by type of facet by using the "Limit results by" dropdown list. This is especially useful when you retrieve a large number of results.

4. Once you have located a desired term, copy the term as it is shown in the Term details view of the record in bold and paste it into your cataloging interface.



Tips

Think of assigning subject terms like tagging. Try to think of the most useful "tags" that would best summarize the material you're cataloging and be useful for discovery. Ask yourself what topics, locations, events, and titles are important for the collection or item you're describing, and whether the format of the material is unique enough to capture. Remember:

- All types of headings are repeatable.
- Use as many headings as needed to provide appropriate coverage for discovery, though catalogers should strive for a minimum of 2-3 per collection/item.
- When unsure as to where to start, search UIC's online catalog or [Worldcat](#) for related titles and examine subject headings for appropriate terms.
- Conferences and meetings are treated as events rather than corporate names and can be searched in FAST.
- Family names are treated as personal names and should be searched in LCNAF.
- When in doubt, feel free to ask a cataloger in RAM for help.

See this [more detailed page](#) for more guidance on assigning subject headings in Special Collections.

Advanced searching

Advanced searches can be used to more quickly locate the heading you're interested in.

- Known item searching - If you already know the heading you're searching for, you can enter it directly into the search box.

Example:

If searching for Chicago, can enter "Illinois--Chicago"

- Boolean searching - searchFAST allows for the use of Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT to expand or narrow results based on entered search terms.

Examples:

art AND education returns results for topics dealing with educational aspects of art

dog OR cat NOT diseases returns results for topics related to dogs or cats but excluding anything that mentions diseases

- Wildcards - use wildcard operators to allow the search to include characters not specifically typed. Use ? for single characters and * for multiple characters. The searchFAST indexes already allow for truncated searching and stemming, so these types of searches should be used sparingly.

Examples:

wom?n retrieves results for both "women" and "woman"

*African American** retrieves all results with headings that start with the string "African American"

Further information

- [How to search FAST](#): finding subject headings in FAST, from OCLC.
- [Cataloging Cultural Objects \(CCO\), Chapter 6](#): Helpful guidance on assigning subjects, especially for photographs.
- [List of all Form terms in FAST](#) (current as of November 2015).