

# REPORT OF THE JOINT GNCRT/SAC/OLAC WORKING GROUP ON COMPOUND TERMS IN THE LCGFT VOCABULARY

## Introduction

At the PCC Operations Committee meeting on May 6, 2022, librarians from multiple institutions questioned the ban on compound terms in the LCGFT vocabulary, favoring the inclusion of such terms as “Paranormal romance fiction.” In response to this support for compound terms in the library community, the American Library Association’s Subject Analysis Committee (SAC) and On-line Audiovisual Catalogers, Inc. (OLAC) voted in September 2022 to form a joint working group with the Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table’s Metadata and Cataloging Committee (GNCRT). This working group is charged with approaching the Library of Congress to advocate for revisions to the LCGFT vocabulary to allow for the inclusion of compound terms.

## Background

Library of Congress Genre/Form Manual instruction [J 120](#) instructs librarians to create terms for “definable and identifiable genres and forms” based on “current American usage.”<sup>1</sup> This includes genres and forms even when a single instance is held by the library; so clearly a single example of literary warrant is considered sufficient for proposing a term. Instruction [J 110](#) further says to “assign terms that are as specific as the genres and forms exemplified in a resource.”<sup>2</sup> This guidance would on the face of it support creating and using specific and compound genre/form terms, if they can be readily identified.

Yet the philosophical underpinnings of the LCGFT run counter to this. The [introductory narrative](#) favors creating and using only broad genres and forms, due to a supposition that “most literary and artistic resources provide only a broad indication of their genres and forms;” these broad terms will supposedly “serve the users, who do not have to search several very narrow sub-genres or forms to find materials of interest to them.”<sup>3</sup> And instruction J 120 makes the ban on compound terms explicit: “Do not generally establish genre/form terms that combine two or more already-established terms. Instead, assign the already-established terms (e.g., assign Romance fiction and Novels instead of establishing ‘Romance novels’).”<sup>4</sup> This ban on compound terms has been quoted in Library of Congress rejections of proposed compound subgenres, like

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<sup>1</sup> “J 120 When to Establish a New Genre/Form Term,” in *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms Manual* (2021): 1. <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCGFT/J120.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> “J 110 Assigning Genre/Form Terms,” in *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2021), 2, <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCGFT/J110.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “Introduction to Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials,” in *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2021), 3, <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCGFT/2021%20LCGFT%20intro.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> “J 120”: 1.

“Paranormal romance fiction” in [October 2020](#): “Genre/Form Manual J 120 sec. 1 states that genre/form terms that *merely combine* two or more already-established terms should are not generally established. The terms Romance fiction and Paranormal fiction should be assigned. The proposal was not approved” [emphasis added].<sup>5</sup>

But are the assumptions of the LCGFT Introduction and instruction J 120 correct? Do resources actually only provide broad indications of their genres and forms? Do users only understand, and search using, broad genre categories? And do compound terms “merely combine” the two parts of already-established terms, forming Franken-genres that have no value to users that can’t be replicated by using two broader terms in concert?

As will be shown below, producers of works (creators, publishers, sellers, agents, etc.) create and market them using clearly defined subgenres, many of which are compound in nature. Producers and consumers (including library users) share an understanding about the meanings and usages of these terms. Patrons utilize them to find works of interest, and to share information about those works with other users. And compound terms have distinct identities as subgenres within understood genre hierarchies, often with meanings that differ from the mere sum of broader terms that make up their parts.

## Considerations

### Presence of subgenre markings in works

The notion that literary and artistic works “provide only a broad indication of their genres and forms” flies in the face of international classification schemas maintained by the publishing industry, publisher websites, crowdsourced library portals, and online reference sources. For example, [Thema v. 1.5](#), the open access classification scheme maintained by [EDItEUR](#) for ONIX integration, has many secondary and tertiary subdivisions under “Fiction.” These closely map to BISAC subject headings, Harlequin website facets, GoodReads and LibraryThing tags, and Wikipedia, illustrating the commonality and discovery utility of these subgenres. Thema’s global influence is particularly noteworthy: the ten-year-old classification scheme’s releases are translated into the major European languages, Arabic, Canadian French, Japanese, and Korean.

One fiction example that illustrates this agreement between producer and consumer sources in compound subgenre labeling is “Erotic romance”:

- It is a [BISAC](#) category (FIC027010)
- The [Romance Writers of America](#) list it as a romance subgenre
- It is also a [GoodReads](#) romance subgenre

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<sup>5</sup> “Summary of Decisions, Editorial Meeting Number 2010,” Library of Congress, SACO: Program for Cooperative Cataloging, October 19, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/cpsod/psd-201019.html>.

- It shows up in LibraryThing (the social cataloging web app used jointly by authors, publishers, and users) in both [tags](#) and [subjects](#)
- [Wikipedia](#) names it as a romance subgenre
- It appears as a romance subgenre in the [The ARRT Popular Fiction List](#) readers' advisory document for librarians
- *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre* also includes it as a romance subgenre

The presence of “Erotic romance” across these disparate sources indicates that not only do fiction works provide recognizable subgenre markings, but that these markings are essential to both producer and user understandings of fiction, for marketing and consumption. Commonly shared subgenre labels like these are also indicative of “current American usage,” which ought to qualify compound terms like “Erotic romance fiction” for inclusion in the LCGFT, per J 120.

It is worth noting that *ARRT*'s definition of “Erotic romance” contrasts it to “Erotica.”<sup>6</sup> GoodReads has a similar definition to *ARRT*, showing shared understanding between librarians and users of both meaning and hierarchical placement of “Erotic romance.” *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre* also shares a similar definition, stating “erotic romance is not erotica” and “erotic romance is about the romantic relationship; erotica is about the sex.”<sup>7</sup> These shared definitions demonstrate that “Erotic romance” is not merely “Romance fiction” + “Erotica” smushed together (a concept explored in more detail later in this document).

Looking beyond literature, the film industry also makes extensive use of (often compound) subgenre labeling, as seen in Daniel López's [Films by Genre](#). Subgenres appearing under “Musical” include “Animated Film Musicals,” “Children’s Fantasy Musicals,” “Comedy Musicals,” “Courtship-Romance Musicals,” “Musical Fantasy,” and “Musical Westerns.”<sup>8</sup> IMDb film and video keyword tagging also includes many compound subgenres, like “[Paranormal romance](#),” “[Supernatural romance](#),” and “[Tragic romance](#).”

For music, MusicBrainz lists 62,656 entities tagged with “[death metal](#).” Allmusic includes many compound genres: their entry for “[heavy metal](#),” for instance, includes subgenres like “Folk metal,” “Pop-metal” and “Death metal.” Discogs similarly lists “[Black metal](#),” “[Heavy metal](#),” and “[Death metal](#)” under “Rock,” considering each subgenre to be a style, and noting that each “style is basically the same as a sub-genre.”<sup>9</sup> Sonia Archer-Capuzzo's article “Mining for metal”

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<sup>6</sup> Adult Reading Round Table Steering Committee, *The AART Popular Fiction List: A Self-Evaluative Bibliography for Readers' Advisors*, 5th ed. (Chicago: AART, 2019), 38, <https://www.sckls.info/home/showpublisheddocument/928/637750006696470000>. “Erotic romance combines traditional romance novel tropes with explicit erotic encounters. The focus is on the development of a romantic relationship through sexual attraction and activity. The sex is front and center of the plot but the happily ever after (HEA) or happily for now (HFN) endings are expected. In contrast, erotica stories are about the sexual journey of the characters and not necessarily about their romantic and emotional relationship. HEA are not a required part of erotica, although they can be included.”

<sup>7</sup> Kristin Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 533.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel López, *Films by Genre: 775 Categories, Styles, Trends, and Movements Defined, with a Filmography for Each* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1993), xii-xiii.

<sup>9</sup> “Database Guidelines 9. Genres / Styles,” Discogs, May 25, 2018, <https://support.discogs.com/hc/en-us/articles/360005055213-Database-Guidelines-9-Genres-Styles>.

describes similar compound heavy metal subgenres, including “Rap metal.”<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A for examples of commonly used compound subgenre labels and producer/consumer sources for those terms.

Even the LCGFT itself contains subgenre terms, such as: “Cozy mysteries,” “Fiction radio programs,” “True crime stories,” “Singing cowboy films,” “Death metal (Music),” “Folk dance music,” and “Corpus Christi Festival music,” to name just a few. The presence of these subgenre headings in the vocabulary is an acknowledgement that resources can be identified and cataloged with more specific subgenres, and not only broad or generic genres (contrary to the assertions of the Introduction); and that subgenres have value for searching and collocating resources for users.

So what is the difference between subgenres currently allowed in the LCGFT, and those that have been rejected? Only the choice of words used in the construction of the subgenre name. Both cozy mystery fiction and paranormal romance fiction are accepted subgenres, with broadly shared community support. But because the romance community (authors, publishers, editors, and readers) happened to label the latter subgenre name with words also used in other LCGFT headings (paranormal and romance), the subgenre is currently banned from the vocabulary; if the subgenre had been called something like “Ghastly romance” or “Sexy shifter studs romance” instead, it would have been allowable. This arbitrary division between allowed and rejected subgenres runs counter to ANSI/NISO standards for the creation of faceted vocabularies (explored in detail later in this document), and renders library catalogs less useful than GoodReads for user searching.

### **Utility of subgenres for producers and users of genre works**

As has been demonstrated above, producers and consumers of genre works jointly recognize and label subgenres (often using compound terms) in their descriptions of those works. The reasons that they do this run counter to the assertion of the LCGFT Introduction—far from being a barrier to search precision and utility, subgenres are seen as necessary when marketing or searching for genre materials. Patricia Falk and David Lewis note, for instance, that LCGFT headings for musical subgenres “are useful and meaningful to performers and fans alike.”<sup>11</sup>

The publishing industry clearly believes that patrons value and seek out specific subgenres, as they provide very granular BISAC subgenre terms to help organize and market genre materials. *Genreflecting: A Guide to Popular Reading Interests* notes that “this increased laser-like focus on specific subgenres and set of readers is something that industry professionals have noticed as a trend by certain publishers.”<sup>12</sup> Sarah Younger, a Senior Literary Agent at Nancy Yost Literary Agency, describes how romance subgenres play a role in both the publishing and

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<sup>10</sup> Sonia Archer-Capuzzo, “Mining for Metal: Heavy Metal and the Music Library,” *Notes*, 78, no. 1 (Sep. 2021): 7-26, <https://doi.org/10.1353/not.2021.0056>.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia K. Falk, and David Lewis, “A New Take on Cataloging Popular Music Recordings,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 58, no. 8 (2020): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2020.1861151>.

<sup>12</sup> Diana Tixier Herald, and Samuel Stavole-Carter, *Genreflecting: A Guide to Popular Reading Interests*, 8th ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2019), 50.

marketing of romance fiction: “if a book is set in space and on ships, I’ll think SciFi romance (and I can go to different sets of editors and imprints because of this element) ... this is all done to add some more specific genre tags and help readers find books.”<sup>13</sup> Authors are also aware of the importance of genre in marketing. Seanan McGuire notes when discussing genres: “It’s the job of marketing and presentation to make it glaringly apparent what genre or subgenre a work falls into... be it ‘biohorror’ or ‘paranormal romance’ or, in one fun blender-party case, ‘Christian vampire horror Western.’”<sup>14</sup>

Since many subgenres are not present in the LCGFT vocabulary, producers and sellers of genre works must use alternate vocabularies, like BISAC or Thema, to accurately label their materials. Philip Hider found, for example, in “Fiction Genres in Bookstores and Libraries: A Comparison of Commercial and Professional Classifications,” that “all of the sources except for the library-oriented OCLC are more nonaligned than aligned with LCGFT, based on this study’s rating scale, indicating that the fiction genres used in library cataloging are in many cases different from the fiction genres used by booksellers, regardless of geography.”<sup>15</sup>

*Genreflecting* notes that “readers and publishers have developed a [shared] vocabulary of subgenres.”<sup>16</sup> Genre consumers draw on this shared vocabulary both when searching for materials of interest, and when sharing information about genre works with other users. Pauline Rafferty states that “consumers of books, music, films are schooled in, and school themselves in the fine-grained detail of genres.”<sup>17</sup> This assertion is echoed by Chi-Shiou Lin and Yu-Tzu Liang in the depiction of romance readers: “engaged genre readers are often avid readers who know the genre and subgenres well, understand the writing traditions and genre customs.”<sup>18</sup>

Genre consumers use their deep knowledge of subgenres when searching for new genres and works of potential interest. According to Lin and Liang, romance reader selection strategies, after author and series, involve “finding works of a particular romance subgenre,” particularly since most users “steadily [go] for particular types of stories they enjoy [within the same subgenre].”<sup>19</sup> Another study, by Catherine Hall, also demonstrates the importance of genre in search strategies for patrons, noting that “genre was rated as at least moderately important by all public and special library respondents and over 90% (N=20) of academic library

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<sup>13</sup> Ilona Andrews, “Assigning Genre: Industry Insiders’ Perspective,” *Ilona Andrews Blog*, July 23, 2021, <https://ilona-andrews.com/2021/assigning-genre-industry-insiders-perspective/>.

<sup>14</sup> Alvaro Zinos-Amaro, “Seanan McGuire Guest Post–‘Not a Prison,’” *Locus Online* (blog), May 13, 2019, <https://locusmag.com/2019/05/seanan-mcguire-guest-post-not-a-prison/>.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Hider, “Fiction Genres in Bookstores and Libraries: a Comparison of Commercial and Professional Classifications,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* vol. 58, no. 8 (2020): 664-82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2020.1850590>.

<sup>16</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Pauline Rafferty, “Genre as Knowledge Organization,” *Knowledge Organization* vol. 49, no. 2 (2020): 122, <https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2022-2-121>.

<sup>18</sup> Chi-Shiou Lin, and Yu-Tzu Liang, “A Model of Romance Fiction Search Behavior,” poster presented at iConference 2020, Borås, Sweden, March 2020: 1, <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/114090>.

<sup>19</sup> Lin and Liang, “A Model of Romance,” 4-5.

respondents.<sup>20</sup> *Genreflecting* also refers in several places to reader studies that rank genre second only to author/series in user search strategies.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast, broad genre categories are not necessarily useful for user searching: “An extremely violent Andrew Vacchs Burke mystery set in New York City is almost a polar opposite to a cozy Rhys Brown Molly Murphy mystery, also set in New York ... these differences are typically not addressed in catalogs. The cataloging of fiction is horribly inadequate in most libraries.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, users search for, and are interested in, subgenres and not just broad genres. One librarian commenter on the romance review site Smart Bitches, Trashy Books sums it up this way: “I order for three locations, and the preferences for subgenres are markedly different at each. Multicultural and paranormal rock at our western branch, historicals and romantic suspense circulate best at our eastern location, and inspirational and heroes in kilts have a dedicated fan-base at the central library.”<sup>23</sup>

User interest in subgenres is reflected not only in search behavior, but in social genre tagging sites like GoodReads and LibraryThing. Philip Hider and Gemma Steele note the presence of subgenres like “Romantic suspense” in LibraryThing, as opposed to their absence in the LCGFT.<sup>24</sup> Hider further finds that “fiction genres both represented and not represented in the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms were compared with respect to their usage in the social cataloguing site, LibraryThing. It was found that the non-LCGFT genres, mostly based on entries in Wikipedia, were markedly more used than were the LCGFT genres.” He takes this as evidence that “a well-used professional vocabulary can nevertheless be hugely at odds with ‘folk’ perspectives on particular works.”<sup>25</sup> Maria Antoniak, Melanie Walsh and David Mimno also point to subgenres on LibraryThing, as the “intersection of user communities and reader values and interest,” depicting through their usage a shared communal understanding of subgenres.<sup>26</sup>

Because of this perceived user interest in subgenres, library readers’ advisory texts gravitate toward subgenres to help patrons find genre works of interest. *Genreflecting* asserts that “one of

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<sup>20</sup> Catherine Elizabeth Hall, “Facets in Library Catalogs: The Beliefs, Behaviors, Policies and Practices That Guide Implementation” (PhD diss., Drexel University, 2016), 115, <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/facets-library-catalogs-beliefs-behaviors/docview/1845298966/se-2?accountid=351>.

<sup>21</sup> For example, page 30 says that reader studies have shown “if [readers] can’t choose by author, they try genre.” Herald, *Genreflecting*, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> SB Sarah, “Romance Readers and Librarians,” *Smart Bitches Trashy Books* (blog), April 29, 2011, user comments, <https://smartbitchestrashybooks.com/2011/04/romance-readers-and-librarians/>.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Hider, and Gemma Steele, “LibraryThing and Literary Works Revisited: Are Social and Library Cataloging Just as Complementary as They Were a Decade Ago?” *Library Resources & Technical Services* vol. 65, no. 3 (2021): 113, <https://doi.org/10.5860/lrts.65n3.113>.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Hider, “Fiction Genres in Library Catalogues and Social Cataloguing Sites,” in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International ISKO Conference, 2020 Aalborg, Denmark*, ed. Marianne Lyke, Tanja Svarre, Mette Skov, and Daniel Martinez-Avila (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon-Verlag, 2020), 190-199, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783956507762>.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Antoniak, Melanie Walsh, and David Mimno, “Tags, Borders, and Catalogs: Social Re-Working of Genre on LibraryThing,” *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 5, no. CSCW1 (2021): 1-29, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3449103>.

the most important things we can do is to narrow readers' choices so that they are not overwhelmed by shelf after shelf of books" in specific genres, by providing subgenre guidance. Further, contrary to statements in the LCGFT Introduction, *Genreflecting* posits that only providing broad genre tracings and "grouping [books in genre categories] all together will lead to poor service"—because "even though each genre by definition has similarities, each has subgenres that set them apart quite distinctly. [Librarians] need to understand these differences" to help readers.<sup>27</sup> *The ARRT Popular Fiction List* similarly delineates popular subgenres (many compound) for readers' advisory purposes, demonstrating that the vocabulary of subgenres is shared not only by producers and consumers of genre works, but also by libraries.

### Compound subgenre terms

In an effort to improve library catalogs and advisory services, multiple librarians and library researchers have advocated for the inclusion of more subgenre terms within the LCGFT vocabulary. Patricia Falk and David Lewis, when describing music genres, direct catalogers to scholar- and user-created content "like popular music reference works, websites like AllMusic and Discogs, fan sites, and recording reviews ... [to] give the cataloger insight as to whether the genre term occurs widely and deserves consideration for inclusion in LCGFT."<sup>28</sup> Catherine Oliver's article on mystery subgenres, "Cozies, capers, and other criminal endeavors: utilizing taxonomies of mystery fiction to improve genre access," similarly suggests "consulting typologies of the mystery constructed by scholars and aficionados of the genre" to "get a sense of how readers imagine the various types of the mystery and what subgenre terms might be useful in helping them find the type of book they desire."<sup>29</sup>

Specific examples include the subgenre of "Detective and mystery fiction" known as "Police procedural," which "retains the basic conventional elements of the detective genre" but "twists these elements and turns them into a new convention" with the introduction of "new types of crime, settings, and props."<sup>30</sup> Examples discussed in "Core collections in genre studies: fantasy fiction 101" include "Epic high fantasy," which often features "elegant prose, large casts of characters, arduous quests, and lots of magic;" it is distinct from "Contemporary fantasy," which features "paranormal characters (werewolves, vampires, wizards, fairies, etc.) in a contemporary setting." These both differ from "Historical fantasy," where "carefully researched historical details are embellished with and altered by the addition of dragons, magic, or the otherworldly."<sup>31</sup> Aimed toward selectors, the article offers specific recommendations for each subgenre of fantasy and echoes the sentiments brought up in *Genreflecting*, that those involved

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<sup>27</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 36, 79.

<sup>28</sup> Falk, "A New Take," 25.

<sup>29</sup> Catherine Oliver, "Cozies, Capers, and Other Criminal Endeavors: Utilizing Taxonomies of Mystery Fiction to Improve Genre Access," *Library Resources & Technical Services* vol. 64, no. 4 (Oct. 2020): 152-64, <https://doi.org/10.5860/lrts.64n4.152-164>.

<sup>30</sup> Fitria Akhmerti Primasita, and Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra, "An Introduction to the Police Procedural: A Subgenre of Detective Genre," *Humaniora* vol. 31, no. 1 (2019): 33-40, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.v31i1.15309>.

<sup>31</sup> Neal Wyatt, Charlotte Burcher, Neil Hollands, Andrew Smith, Barry Trott, and Jessica Zellers, "Core Collections in Genre Studies: Fantasy Fiction 101," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2009): 226-31, <https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.48n3.226>.

in readers advisory “should understand genres and subgenres so we have a concept of the lay of the land of literature.”<sup>32</sup>

The sources for genre and subgenre research pointed to in these documents (those made by scholars and aficionados) neatly represent the two main reasons for proposing genre and form terms—literary warrant and user warrant. In the case of compound subgenre terms, both literary and user warrant lead to similar labels and definitions of these subgenres, as seen above. User warrant features particularly heavily in justifications for the inclusion of compound subgenre terms in the LCGFT vocabulary. The *ANSI/NISO Z39.19-2005 Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Controlled Vocabularies* describes user warrant as “use of terms in requests for information on the concept” or in searches<sup>33</sup>; both have been amply demonstrated above, in descriptions of user search techniques, and in producer/user genre tagging sites.

Given that compound subgenre terms have sufficient user warrant for proposal, and seem to reflect other criteria of the LCGFT (they’re definable, and have shared American usage), why aren’t compound terms allowed in the LCGFT? One misconception may be that because compound terms use words from other genre terms, they merely recreate the meanings of those other terms, and provide no further benefit for searching patrons; this misconception underlies the Library of Congress rejection of “Paranormal romance fiction” seen earlier in this document.

While compound subgenres might use words from two or more terms that are already established, their meanings are not always synonymous with those established terms. For example, the LCGFT term “[Western fiction](#)” has this definition: “Fiction that features the American West during the period of westward expansion.” But “Western romance fiction” the romance subgenre has a completely different interpretation and incorporation of Western elements into the love story; per [Goodreads](#), the scope is “any genre romance set in the American West. Plots generally center around traditionally Western activities such as ranching and rodeo. A western romance can be either contemporary or historical[ly] set.” Clearly “Western romance fiction” is not synonymous with “Western fiction,” and would likely not be of cross-interest to readers of Western fiction; *Genreflecting* spells this out specifically: “The stereotypical Western reader wouldn’t touch [Western] romance with a 10-foot pole.”<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, the *ARRT Popular Fiction List* and *Genreflecting* both situate “Romantic suspense fiction” as a romance subgenre, pointing to the greater importance of romance fiction elements (like the central love story and emotionally satisfying/optimistic ending) in romantic suspense plots: “Romantic suspense stories have elements of thrillers, mysteries, and suspense novels but the romance takes center stage and the plot is propelled both by the threat of danger and

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<sup>32</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 58.

<sup>33</sup> *Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Controlled Vocabularies*, [ANSI/NISO Z39.19-2005] (Baltimore: National Information Standards Organization, 2010), <https://groups.niso.org/higherlogic/ws/public/download/12591/z39-19-2005r2010.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 281.

the promise of romance.”<sup>35</sup> And in a review in *The Romantic Times*, romance author Jayne Ann Krentz describes the popularity of paranormal romances like her *Sweet Starfire* this way: “I think the appeal of these [paranormal romance] books is that they are, at heart, classic historical romances that just happen to be set on other worlds.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, all compound romance subgenres fall reliably into the romance fiction hierarchy, with definitions that reflect their identities as romance-specific subgenres (and not Franken-genres or clones of romance + other broad genres).

Compound subgenre terms meet the general criteria for proposal and acceptance into the LCGFT vocabulary: they’re based on user (and often literary) warrant, with definable, shared common understandings. They also meet ANSI/NISO guidelines for the construction of controlled vocabularies. The guidelines state that: “To be acceptable as a term, a compound term should express a single concept or unit of thought, capable of being arranged in a genus-species relationship within a hierarchy or tree structure.”<sup>37</sup> As seen above, compound terms are subgenres of specific genres, so fit well in the hierarchical structure of the LCGFT vocabulary. For example, “Paranormal romance fiction,” since it is bound by romance fiction conventions, is a subgenre of romance fiction only, and not a subgenre of paranormal fiction or of both broader genres.<sup>38</sup>

Further, the guidelines state that compound terms should be retained in vocabularies if “a compound term might be employed so frequently within the literature of the domain covered by the controlled vocabulary that splitting the term into its components would be unacceptable to users who consider it a lexeme.”<sup>39</sup> This can be seen with “[Epic fantasy](#),” which is present in over 370,000 shelves on GoodReads, or “[Historical mystery](#),” which appears more than 35,000 times on LibraryThing. The literary warrant of compound subgenre terms has been clearly demonstrated above, given their presence across disparate sources—publishers, users, library-producer readers’ advisory texts, and so on.

The criteria for establishing compound terms states that compound terms should be retained if “splitting the parts would lead to ambiguity or a loss of meaning,” and if “the meaning of the compound term as a whole is not the sum of the meaning of its parts.” This section also references user warrant: “The compound term has become so familiar in common use, or in the

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<sup>35</sup> Adult Reading Round Table Steering Committee, *The AART*, 40; See also the description of “Romantic suspense fiction” in Herald, *Genrereflecting*, 276.

<sup>36</sup> Tara Gelsomino, “Travel Back to the Future as Warner Reissues Two Extraordinary Novels by Jayne Ann Krentz,” *Romantic Times*, 2002, [https://web.archive.org/web/20071004201147/http://www.romantictimes.com/books\\_review.php?cameo=1&book=14972](https://web.archive.org/web/20071004201147/http://www.romantictimes.com/books_review.php?cameo=1&book=14972).

<sup>37</sup> *Guidelines*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> “Paranormal romance” as a romance subgenre has expected conventions (like the central romance and “happily ever after”) that must be a part of the narrative. If a paranormal fiction book has romantic elements but not the tropes of romance, it wouldn’t be considered paranormal romance by most publishers, authors, or aficionados. Also, the level of paranormal content varies in paranormal romance, and can be so minimal as to be unacceptable to paranormal fiction fans looking for world building, etc. See also p. 12 of this report, which details an example of romance reader disappointment with paranormal fiction lacking expected romance elements.

<sup>39</sup> *Guidelines*, 38.

field covered by the controlled vocabulary, that it is considered for practical purposes to represent a single concept.”<sup>40</sup> As seen above, the meaning of compound terms in context is not synonymous with the meanings of each disparate word in the heading. “Western fiction” + “Romance fiction” does not equal “Western romance fiction,” and the contemporary contexts of many western romance plots are lost in the current LCGFT lack of this subgenre term.

Finally, the guidelines assert that “a compound term **should not** be split when the focus term refers to a whole and the modifier is a term for its part or property” [original emphasis retained].<sup>41</sup> This is applicable to compound term subgenres. For example, in “Paranormal romance fiction,” romance is the focus term (the second part of the compound) for the broad genre, and paranormal is the modifier (the first part of the compound) that represents the subgenre.

Even the LCGFT vocabulary appears to intermittently accept the validity of compound subgenre terms, despite the stated ban on their creation in J 120. Multiple compound music, film, and television subgenres exist in the LCGFT, for example: “[Country rock](#)” (BTs “Country music” and “Rock music”), “[Country gospel](#),” “[Folk punk](#)” (BTs “Folk music” and “Punk rock music”), “[Folk rock](#),” “[Blues rock](#),” “[Romantic comedy films](#),” “[Fantasy comedies \(Motion pictures\)](#)” (BTs “Comedy films” and “Fantasy films”), “[Romantic comedy television programs](#)” (BTs “Romance television programs” and “Television comedies”), “[Domestic comedy television programs](#),” and “[Fantasy comedies \(Television programs\)](#).”

### Utility of including both BT and NT LCGFT terms

The Library of Congress may have been more willing to accept compound subgenres into the LCGFT for motion pictures due to the best practice, reflected in OLAC documentation and in the Subject Headings Manual instruction H 1913, which explicitly allows for terms to be assigned “from different levels of the same hierarchy if desired” for motion picture bibliographic records.<sup>42</sup> The OLAC guide explains: “OPACs, generally, neither do a good job of guiding the user through the syndetic structure nor make it easy to search both the larger category (e.g., Comedy films) and all of its subcategories (e.g., Screwball comedy films, Parody films) at one time. Assigning terms at different levels would make it easier for users to do comprehensive searches.”<sup>43</sup>

Assigning genre terms at multiple levels within hierarchies has benefits beyond ease of searching for patrons. The OLAC guide points also to “more consistent retrieval” when multiple levels of hierarchy are assigned. As the guide states:

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<sup>40</sup> *Guidelines*, 39.

<sup>41</sup> *Guidelines*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> “H 1913 Moving Image Genre/Form Terms,” in *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2013), 1.  
<https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeSHM/H1913.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Scott Dutkiewicz, Bill Anderson, Karen Benko, Greta de Groat, Jeannette Ho, and Susan Wynne, *Library of Congress Genre-Form Thesaurus (LCGFT) for Moving Images: Best Practices* (n.p.: Online Audiovisual Catalogers Inc., 2011): 5, <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/olac-publications/10/>.

With topical headings, some specificity is lost by using broader headings in addition to headings that are specific to the item because it becomes impossible to retrieve items solely on the general, broader topic ... Genre terms are not specific in this same way. Specialized types of comedies are not lesser members of the general category of comedy. It is not clear that there is a need to support a search for 'all comedies not part of a narrower comedic genre' in the way that there is a need to look for general works on psychology not focused on specific topics.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, there are use cases both for the ability to find all the romance fiction within a library's collection (for broad collection displays, audits, circulation reports, weeding, etc.), and also a subset of the romance fiction within the collection (for reading interests, targeted displays, and so on). And providing for both of those use cases, assigning terms at multiple levels of genre hierarchies, benefits users with varied genre needs. The Folgerpedia reflects this viewpoint, writing in its section on the 655 field: "be wary of being too specific, and include broader terms when this may support user access (e.g., use both 'Presentation inscriptions' and 'Authors' presentation inscriptions')."<sup>45</sup> This is also brought up Patricia Dragon's study on genre/form in digital collections, where it is noted that an "institution assigned both a general term such as 'photographs' and a specific term such as 'black-and-white photographs' to address the needs of users with different levels of specificity in their requests."<sup>46</sup>

Expanding this policy of assigning multiple levels within genre hierarchies from just a motion picture exception into a general LCGFT principle would benefit those searching for all media and genres. This approach was adopted by the [Best Practices for Cataloging Comics and Graphic Novels Using RDA and MARC21](#) which recommends using both a generic LCGFT term ("Graphic novels" and/or "Comics (Graphic works)") and more specific genres for improving access to comics.<sup>47</sup> There is implied LCGFT acceptance of using both broader and narrower comics genre terms within the same hierarchy in the revised [Subject Headings Manual instruction H 1430](#), where many examples on pages 4-5 and 8-9 include both "Comics (Graphic works)" and narrower comics genre terms such as "Superhero comics," "Science fiction comics," etc.<sup>48</sup> There is also substantial precedent for the assignment of multiple levels of genres in fiction cataloging—many bibliographic records use both "Fiction" and "Novels," even though novels are a subcategory of fiction.

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<sup>44</sup> Dutkiewicz, Anderson, Benko, de Groat, Ho, and Wynne, *Library of Congress Genre-Form*, 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> "MARC 655 Index Term - Genre/Form - Folgerpedia," in *Folgerpedia* (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2014-), last modified August 15, 2019, [https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/MARC\\_655\\_Index\\_Term\\_-\\_Genre/Form](https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/MARC_655_Index_Term_-_Genre/Form).

<sup>46</sup> Patricia M. Dragon, "Form and Genre Access to Academic Library Digital Collections," *Journal of Library Metadata* 20, no. 1 (2020): 29-49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19386389.2020.1723203>.

<sup>47</sup> GNCRT Metadata and Cataloging Committee, *Best Practices for Cataloging Comics and Graphic Novels Using RDA and MARC21* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2022), 66, <https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/18623>.

<sup>48</sup> "H 1430 Comics and Comics Characters," in *Library of Congress Subject Headings Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2022), 4-5, 8-9, <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeSHM/H1430-clean.pdf>.

The ability to assign multiple levels within a genre hierarchy in a single bibliographic record unfortunately runs counter to the current rules in the Genre/Form Terms manual, specifically [J 110](#) on specificity: “Assign terms that are as specific as the genres and forms exemplified in a resource,” and “Follow the hierarchical reference structure built into LCGFT authority records (see J 186) to find as close a match as possible between the genre(s) and form(s) of the resource and the term(s) that exist to express them in LCGFT.”<sup>49</sup> However, as shown above, allowing catalogers to assign both broader and narrower genres within the same hierarchy benefits users, who might search for “Comics (Graphic works)” and then narrow by “Asexual comics,” or search “Aromantic fiction” and then expand into “Novels” or “Fiction” more broadly. Since it is not possible to predict every patron’s genre needs in advance, assigning both broad and narrow terms allows for a balance of precision and recall for both broad and narrow searches, both for those users who search “Romantic suspense fiction” and for those who prefer “Romance fiction.” This is supported by studies that show “that good searching strategies involve both broadening and narrowing a query, appropriate selection of terminology, and the ability to modify the query.”<sup>50</sup>

## Concerns

The importance of subgenres is hard to overstate. *Genreflecting* sums it up this way: “Forgetting this phenomenon [of subgenres] and pigeonholing the books or grouping them all together will lead to poor service.”<sup>51</sup> This is evident in the frustrations of authors whose works have been misrepresented by the lack of correct subgenre tracing. One example is Seanan McGuire, who writes primarily urban fantasy and states quite clearly: “I do NOT guarantee a HEA [happily ever after]. You can get a HFN [happily for now], but HEA is not my box of kittens.”<sup>52</sup> McGuire’s books have been mistakenly categorized as paranormal romance, instead of urban fantasy, leading to disappointment in readers when romance conventions are not met in McGuire’s series: “This is why I get angry when bookstores shelve my urban fantasy in paranormal romance. Paranormal romance is wonderful. But judged by those standards, Toby [October Daye series] is BAD paranormal romance.”<sup>53</sup> This criticism of bookstore mislabeling can be equally leveled at library catalogs, where the lack of compound terms adequately describing subgenres can lead to works being lumped into (sometimes erroneous) broad genre groupings lacking nuance.

The inability to correctly identify compound subgenres in catalogs, which can result in mislabeling genre works (as seen above), also causes issues for patron search and retrieval of materials of interest. It has been seen that users search for genres second only to author/series when trying to find new works. However, as pointed out in *Genreflecting*, broad genre terms often do not help in those searches:

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<sup>49</sup> “J 110,” 2.

<sup>50</sup> Hall, “Facets in Library Catalogs,” 25.

<sup>51</sup> Hall, “Facets in Library Catalogs,” 79.

<sup>52</sup> Seanan McGuire (@seananmcguire), “And more than that,” Twitter, June 17, 2021, <https://twitter.com/seananmcguire/status/1405595852257726466>.

<sup>53</sup> Seanan McGuire (@seananmcguire), “And this is why I get angry,” Twitter, June 17, 2021, <https://twitter.com/seananmcguire/status/1405591131149115393>.

It's important to remember that all romance fiction is not the same. Some romance readers seek out contemporary stories set in world capitals, art galleries, small towns, or wide-open ranches. Other romance readers prefer fantastical worlds of faeries or vampires or speculative future settings filled with technological wonders or decayed futures where the lovers fight for survival. Recent popular historical settings include the Old West, the Regency era, and the times between the two world wars.<sup>54</sup>

Catherine Oliver concurs with this opinion, stating that “how the question of access to fiction by genre and subgenre has been handled must be examined” and resolved before genre works “can be truly accessible to patrons.”<sup>55</sup>

So how do users search for subgenres of interest, in the absence of compound subgenre terms in the LCGFT? Chi-Shiou Lin and Yu-Tzu Liang describe the romance user search technique called “story type filtering”—or faceting, if you will—which includes “finding works of a particular romance subgenre ... usually done by browsing the bookstore catalogs, browsing the story classification in the Internet fiction sites, and by reading promotional texts.”<sup>56</sup> Notice that this method does *not* include romance readers using subgenre terms in their library catalogs—because they can't, due to the ban on compound terms. But the fact that patrons know subgenres, and seek them out deliberately when searching, should give catalogers pause. Because that means that instead of broad terms better serving users of library catalogs, the reverse is true. Overly broad terms impede access to materials, prolonging searches with more clicks and frustrating those who want more specific genres.

This frustration is compounded by the patchwork nature of subgenre terms currently in the LCGFT vocabulary. Allowing access by some but not all subgenres creates unevenness and causes confusion in library searching. Why, for example, do some genres such as “Detective and mystery fiction” have subgenres present (like “Cozy mysteries” and “Noir fiction”), while other genres like “Romance fiction” do not? Patrons generally do not understand why only some subgenres are allowed within individual genres. Why does the LCGFT genre “Comedy plays” include the subgenre “Sentimental comedies,” for example, but not “Dark comedy plays?”<sup>57</sup>

The ban on compound subgenres also has EDI impacts, disadvantaging non-Western and traditionally marginalized subgenres. The reliance on broad genre terms to provide the totality of searching and faceting may end up circling around and never leading exactly to desired genres and search results for patrons; and in some cases, it may make them impossible to find. As Patricia Falk and David Lewis note, “Even though many genre headings outside of Western art music have been added to LCGFT in recent years, popular musics, particularly non-Western popular musics, as well as emerging Western popular music genres are often missing.”<sup>58</sup> This

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<sup>54</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 273.

<sup>55</sup> Oliver, “Cozies, Capers, and Other,” 153.

<sup>56</sup> Lin and Liang, “A Model of Romance,” 5.

<sup>57</sup> “Dark comedy plays” was rejected in February 2020, citing the ban on compound LCGFT terms in J 120. See the full rejection at “Summary of Decisions” <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/cpsod/psd-200217.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Falk, “A New Take,” 25.

also affects developing subgenres like LGBTQ romance, noted by *Genreflecting* as a burgeoning romance subgenre.<sup>59</sup> Often listed as “Queer romance,” it is a specific subgenre on sites like [Goodreads](#), and marketed by publishers such as [Penguin Random House](#). Popular Avon queer romance titles, for example, can be found by using the BISAC category “Romance–LGBTQ+” on [Avon's search site](#), but currently are not grouped as easily (or at all) in the library catalog. This is made evident by a study focused on how patrons search for LGBTQI fiction in Sweden. Researchers noted that multiple users were dissatisfied with searching in the library catalog, with one user stating “it is hard to search for LGBTQI works systematically,” and others complaining that “library catalogs or bookstore webpages rarely provide information that a book has an LGBTQI theme, unless that’s the whole point of the plot.”<sup>60</sup>

The prominence of specific types of stories, highlighted on the cover or jacket, is also brought up by Catherine Oliver, who asserts that:

Catalogers should also be proactive about assigning genre headings to works to improve access and be proactive about submitting new genre headings to the LCGFT. ‘Locked-room mysteries,’ which is a popular mystery subgenre that is easy to identify (frequently highlighted on jacket or back-of-book copy) and has been the subject of critical exploration (Adey’s bibliography of locked-room mysteries is a good resource for finding those already published for retroactive catalog enhancement), is a good candidate.<sup>61</sup>

The issue is perhaps best summed up in *Genreflecting*, “ironically, readers and publishers have developed a vocabulary of subgenres, but we as librarians have often not applied this vocabulary to our own catalogs.”<sup>62</sup>

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the wiggle room afforded in the LCGFT instructions (in J 120, which says “do not *generally* establish genre/form terms that combine two or more already established terms” [emphasis added]<sup>63</sup> has led to inconsistencies in the vocabulary, with some compound terms accepted and some rejected—and the exceptions tend to favor academic/special library terms over terms that would help public/school libraries. Case in point: the example given for exceptions is “Coutumes” (compilations of French medieval customary law), of which there are undoubtedly far fewer extant examples than there are paranormal romance novels. The ban on compound terms therefore has an outsized effect on public libraries, whose collections feature far richer genre materials that are described in a much scantier manner than academic or special collections. Elizabeth Brookbank, Anne-Marie Davis and Lydia Harlan note, for example, that repeated academic surveys from 2001-2017 show only

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<sup>59</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 49. There’s also a section dedicated to this romance subgenre, beginning on page 291.

<sup>60</sup> Koraljka Golub, Jenny Bergenmar, and Siska Humelsjö, “Searching for Swedish LGBTQI Fiction: Challenges and Solutions,” *Journal of Documentation* 78, no. 7 (2022): 474, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-06-2022-0138>.

<sup>61</sup> Oliver, “Cozies, Capers, and Other,” 162.

<sup>62</sup> Herald, *Genreflecting*, 45.

<sup>63</sup> “J 120,” 1.

60-70 percent of academic libraries include popular reading collections at all; and even within these, genre choices are limited, due to “biases against certain genres at academic institutions.”<sup>64</sup> They report that “the genres that were purchased tended to be literary fiction, historical fiction, and science fiction, while few [academic] libraries purchased romance,” even though “the 2017 Library Journal Materials Survey found that romance was the third most popular genre in public libraries.”<sup>65</sup>

## Recommendations

The Library of Congress defines the “fully faceted [LCGFT] vocabulary” as one “in which each term represents a single concept.”<sup>66</sup> However, “single concept” does not necessarily equal broad, nor does it preclude complexity or specificity (so-called compound terms are still describing single/discrete entities, generally understood by patrons, publishers, etc.). “Paranormal romance fiction” is not a mashup of romance and paranormal fictions, it is a single subgenre of romance fiction specifically, with clearly defined and accepted boundaries and characteristics; it is not any less distinct than “Screwball comedy films,” nor less deserving of entry into the LCGFT.

It has been shown above that compound subgenres exist as identifiable categories, with widely shared definitions, exhibiting common American usage. It has also been shown that producers and consumers of genre works recognize, understand, and use these subgenres specifically to promote or search for new works of interest; and that relying on only broad genre terms frustrates and sometimes impedes user access to desired materials. It has been further shown that compound subgenre terms meet ANSI/NISO criteria for inclusion in controlled vocabularies: they have user and literary warrant; have been used frequently enough that they are considered lexemes; have meanings distinct from the sum of the terms used in their labels, that can’t be split without a loss of meaning; fit within hierarchical vocabulary structures; and have their focus term describing the broad genre and modifier pointing to the part or subgenre. Finally, it has been demonstrated that allowing assignment of these compound subgenre terms, as well as broader terms from within genre hierarchies, facilitates patron access across a wide range of genre needs.

Given these factors, there is no reason to continue banning compound terms from the LCGFT. Instead of giving primacy to a philosophical concept of vocabulary building, the Library of Congress should focus on creating a vocabulary that is truly useful to patrons, and congruent with patron understandings of genres. As a contrasting example, consider the RBMS vocabulary update. Their “[Approach](#)” to building their faceted vocabulary specifically states that within each facet “terms are further subdivided for ease of browsing and discoverability,” and that “while each term represents an intellectually distinct concept, there will be numerous terms that will be

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Brookbank, Anne-Marie Davis, and Lydia Harlan, “Don’t Call It a Comeback: Popular Reading Collections in Academic Libraries,” *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2018): 31, 36, <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/rusq/article/view/6838/9203>.

<sup>65</sup> Brookbank, Davis, and Harlan, “Don’t Call It,” 36.

<sup>66</sup> “Introduction,” 2.

contained within more than one facet.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, they recognize that discoverability is key, and that describing and providing access to concepts as understood by users is paramount. We hope that those tasked with maintaining the LCGFT would do no less, by allowing compound subgenre terms to be proposed, and accepted, into the vocabulary; and by allowing their assignment, along with terms from other levels in genre hierarchies, if deemed important for facilitating genre access for our patrons. See Appendix B for suggested revisions to Library of Congress Subject Headings Manual and Genre/Form Terms Manual instructions to explicitly allow for our two recommendations.

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<sup>67</sup> Controlled Vocabularies Editorial Group (CVEG), “RBMS Controlled Vocabulary Reorganization Update,” Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, January 9, 2019, <https://rbms.info/cv-comments/2019/01/09/rbms-controlled-vocabulary-reorganization-update/>.

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## Selected Additional Compound Subgenre Sources

Name	Link	Directions
Amazon	<a href="https://www.amazon.com/">https://www.amazon.com/</a>	
BISAC	<a href="https://www.bisg.org/complete-bisac-subject-headings-list">https://www.bisg.org/complete-bisac-subject-headings-list</a>	
Discogs	<a href="https://www.discogs.com/">https://www.discogs.com/</a>	Search via the "Explore" tab. Select genre for details.
Filmsite	<a href="https://www.filmsite.org/">https://www.filmsite.org/</a>	Explore via the "Genres" tab.
GoodReads	<a href="https://www.goodreads.com/genres">https://www.goodreads.com/genres</a>	
Harlequin	<a href="https://www.harlequin.com/genres-list.html">https://www.harlequin.com/genres-list.html</a> <a href="https://www.harlequin.com/genres-search.html">https://www.harlequin.com/genres-search.html</a>	
HarperCollins	<a href="https://www.harpercollins.com/">https://www.harpercollins.com/</a>	Explore via the "Books" tab. Select categories using "Browse by Subject."
IMDb	<a href="https://www.imdb.com/feature/genre">https://www.imdb.com/feature/genre</a> <a href="https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/">https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/</a>	
Kirkus	<a href="https://www.kirkusreviews.com/discover-books/">https://www.kirkusreviews.com/discover-books/</a>	Select a genre from the dropdown. Filter results by subgenre.
Last.fm	<a href="https://www.last.fm/music">https://www.last.fm/music</a>	Select genre under "Tags to explore."
LibraryThing	<a href="https://www.librarything.com/search.php?search=">https://www.librarything.com/search.php?search=</a>	Examine "Tags" and "Classification—Subjects" in

		facets for search results.
MusicBrainz	<a href="https://musicbrainz.org/">https://musicbrainz.org/</a>	Search by “Tag.” In search results, look for the “Genre” column.
Penguin Random House	<a href="https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/fiction/">https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/fiction/</a>	Select genres via the “Browse Subgenres” tab. Genre pages contain subgenres.
Simon & Schuster	<a href="https://www.simonandschuster.com/">https://www.simonandschuster.com/</a>	Select genres via the “Categories” tab.
Thema	<a href="https://ns.editeur.org/thema/en">https://ns.editeur.org/thema/en</a>	Click on “F” to see fiction genres and subgenres.
Tor	<a href="https://www.tor.com/category/all-fiction/">https://www.tor.com/category/all-fiction/</a>	Select genres using “Browse by Genre” dropdown.
TVTropes	<a href="https://tvtropes.org/">https://tvtropes.org/</a>	Search using the “Indexes” tab.
Wikipedia	<a href="https://www.wikipedia.org/">https://www.wikipedia.org/</a>	

## Appendix A. Selected Compound Subgenre Terms and Sources

Snippet: Selected fiction terms

Selected Terms	BISAC	Thema	GoodReads	ARRT Popular Fiction List	LibraryThing	Harlequin website	Wikipedia
Christian romance fiction	Fiction / Christian / Romance   General   Historical   Suspense	Fiction / Religious and spiritual fiction	Christian romance	Christian fiction / romance	Christian romance fiction	Christian fiction	Inspirational romance
Dark fantasy fiction	Fiction / Fantasy / Dark Fantasy	Fiction / Fantasy / Dark fantasy	Dark fantasy		Dark fantasy fiction	Dark fantasy	Dark fantasy
Epic fantasy fiction	Fiction / Fantasy / Epic	Fiction / Fantasy / Epic fantasy / Heroic fantasy	Epic fantasy	Fantasy / Epic fantasy	Epic fantasy fiction	Epic fantasy	High fantasy
Gay erotic fiction	Fiction / Erotica / LGBTQ+ / Gay		Gay erotic		Gay erotic fiction		Gay pornography (Gay erotica redirect)
Historical detective and mystery fiction	Fiction / Mystery & Detective / Historical	Fiction / Crime and mystery fiction / Historical crime and mysteries	Historical detective	Crime fiction / mystery / historical	Historical detective and mystery fiction	Historical mystery & detective fiction	Historical mystery
Historical fantasy fiction	Fiction / Fantasy / Historical	Fiction / Fantasy / Historical fantasy	Historical fantasy		Historical fantasy fiction	Historical fantasy	Historical fantasy

Snippet: Selected music and film terms

Selected terms	Discogs	MusicBrainz	Last.fm	Wikipedia	TVTropes	IMDb
<b>MUSIC TERMS</b>						
Folk metal music	Folk metal	Folk metal	Folk metal	Folk metal	Folk metal	Folk metal
Pop rock music	Pop rock	Pop rock	Pop rock	Pop rock		Pop rock music
Country punk music			Cow punk / Punk goes country	Cow punk / country punk	Cattle punk	
<b>FILM TERMS</b>						
Zombie comedy films				Zom com / Zombie comedy / Zomcom		Zombie comedy
Space western films				Space western	Space western	Space western
Horror comedy films				Horror comedy	Horror comedy	Horror comedy

Full view of sources available at this URL:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hzXolaqVor88V96NwLcGu0cni6NOJ2P7cj56oJSUexA/edit?usp=sharing>

## Appendix B. Proposed Revisions to LCGFT and SHM Instructions

LCGFT [Introduction](#) original text, pages 3-4:

### COMPONENTS OF ENTRIES

#### Authorized terms

Each term in LCGFT consists of a single genre or form, and may consist of a single word, as in **Cookbooks**, **Encyclopedias**, **Globes**, and **Novels**, or a phrase, as is the case with **Handbooks and manuals**, **Papal documents**, **Steampunk music**, and **Tongue twisters**. Terms may include a parenthetical qualifier when it is necessary to distinguish between homonyms (e.g., **Thrillers (Motion pictures)**; **Thrillers (Radio programs)**).

The preference is for broader, rather than narrower, terms. Most literary and artistic resources provide only a broad indication of their genres and forms. Broader terms can therefore expedite cataloging and also serve the users, who do not have to search several very narrow sub-genres or forms to find materials of interest to them. There are times in which a narrow term is warranted and may be proposed however, such as in the case of **Coutumes**, compilations of French medieval customary law.

LCGFT Introduction revised text:

### COMPONENTS OF ENTRIES

#### Authorized terms

Each term in LCGFT consists of a single genre or form, and may consist of a single word, as in **Cookbooks**, **Encyclopedias**, **Globes**, and **Novels**, or a phrase, as is the case with **Handbooks and manuals**, **Papal documents**, **Steampunk music**, **Paranormal romance fiction**, and **Tongue twisters**. Terms may include a parenthetical qualifier when it is necessary to distinguish between homonyms (e.g., **Thrillers (Motion pictures)**; **Thrillers (Radio programs)**), when a qualifier is needed to distinguish a genre/form from a different topical concept (e.g., **Legal fiction (Literature)**; **Medical films (Motion pictures)**), or when a qualifier is needed to clarify the nature of the genre/form (e.g., **City symphonies (Motion pictures)**).

~~The preference is for broader, rather than narrower, terms. Most literary and artistic resources provide only a broad indication of their genres and forms. Broader terms can therefore expedite cataloging and also serve the users, who do not have to search several very narrow sub-genres or forms to find materials of interest to them. There are times in which a narrow term is warranted and may be proposed however, such as in the case of **Coutumes**, compilations of French medieval customary law.~~

## J 120 original text, page 1:

**1. General rule.** Establish a new term for definable and identifiable genres and forms for resources being cataloged, even if the library has only a single instance of the genre or form. All new terms must be supported by research in addition to the resource being cataloged. See J 160 for guidelines on the research requirements.

Do not generally establish genre/form terms that combine two or more already-established terms. Instead, assign the already-established terms (e.g., assign **Romance fiction** and **Novels** instead of establishing “Romance novels”).

## J 120 revised text:

**1. General rule.** Establish a new term for definable and identifiable genres (including subgenres) and forms for resources being cataloged, even if the library has only a single instance of the genre or form. All new terms must be supported by research in addition to the resource being cataloged. See J 160 for guidelines on the research requirements.

Establish compound genre and form terms that combine two or more already-established terms if they represent concepts (like subgenres) that fit within the hierarchical vocabulary structure, have their focus term describing the broad genre/form and modifier pointing to the part or subgenre, have broad literary and/or user warrant, and have words that can't be split without leading to a loss of meaning or nuance.

Do not generally establish genre/form terms that combine ~~two or more already-established terms~~ a genre or subgenre with a term that indicates the length or duration of a resource. Instead, assign the already-established terms (e.g., assign **Romance fiction** and **Novels** instead of establishing “Romance novels”; assign **Science fiction** and **Short stories** instead of establishing “Science fiction short stories”; assign **Rock music** and **Sound recordings** instead of establishing “Rock albums”).

## **J 110 original text, page 1:**

**BACKGROUND:** *This instruction sheet contains general practices followed by the Library of Congress for assigning genre/form terms to individual resources being cataloged. This instruction sheet begins after the initial steps of genre/form analysis have taken place, that is, after an examination of the resource to determine whether it exemplifies any genres or forms and after determination of how those genres and forms are expressed with **Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials**.*

*LC genre/form terms should be assigned in addition to LC subject headings. Genre/form terms sometimes duplicate information that is provided in the subject headings, and at other times provide information over and above what can be brought out with LCSH. Consult the **Subject Headings Manual** (SHM) for guidelines on assigning LC subject headings.*

## **J 110 revised text:**

**BACKGROUND:** *This instruction sheet contains general practices followed by the Library of Congress for assigning genre/form terms to individual resources being cataloged. This instruction sheet begins after the initial steps of genre/form analysis have taken place, that is, after an examination of the resource to determine whether it exemplifies any genres or forms and after determination of how those genres and forms are expressed with **Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials**.*

*LC genre/form terms should be assigned in addition to LC subject headings. Genre/form terms sometimes duplicate information that is provided in the subject headings, and at other times provide information over and above what can be brought out with LCSH. **The latter is especially the case where subgenres like Romantic comedy films have been widely adopted by the publishing industry and user communities.** Consult the **Subject Headings Manual** (SHM) for guidelines on assigning LC subject headings.*

## [J 110](#) original text, page 2:

**3. Specificity.** Assign terms that are as specific as the genres and forms exemplified in a resource. Specificity is not a property of a given genre/form term; instead, it is a relative concept that reflects the relationship between a genre/form term and the resource to which it is applied. For example, a seemingly broad term like **Poetry** is specific when it is assigned to an anthology that consists of many poetic forms.

Follow the hierarchical reference structure built into LCGFT authority records (see J 186) to find as close a match as possible between the genre(s) and form(s) of the resource and the term(s) that exist to express them in LCGFT. In situations where a needed term is not established, see J 120 for general guidelines on establishing new genre/form terms.

Assign a term that is broader or more general than the genre or form than it is intended to cover when it is not possible to establish a precise term, when an array of terms is needed to express the genre or form (e.g., **Science fiction**, **Romance fiction**, and **Novels** assigned to a science fiction romance novel), or when the assignment of a more general term is required by special instructions in this manual.

If a compilation consists of a predominant genre or form but includes works that would be assigned another term in the hierarchy, it is permissible to assign both a broader and a narrower term. For example, **Limericks** is a narrower term of **Humorous poetry**. If a collection primarily contains limericks, but also contains a significant proportion of other types of humorous poetry, the terms **Limericks** and **Humorous poetry** may both be assigned.

*Note:* The use of the phrase “significant proportion” is deliberate. Catalogers should take the intent of the resource into account and display good judgment when assigning terms from multiple levels of the hierarchy in this manner.

## **J 110 revised text:**

**3. Specificity.** Assign terms that are as specific as the genres and forms exemplified in a resource. Specificity is not a property of a given genre/form term; instead, it is a relative concept that reflects the relationship between a genre/form term and the resource to which it is applied. For example, a seemingly broad term like **Poetry** is specific when it is assigned to an anthology that consists of many poetic forms. **It may also be desirable to assign both broader terms and more specific terms to a resource, in order to address the needs of users with different levels of specificity in their search requests.**

Follow the hierarchical reference structure built into LCGFT authority records (see J 186) to find as close a match as possible between the genre(s) and form(s) of the resource and the term(s)

that exist to express them in LCGFT. In situations where a needed term is not established, see J 120 for general guidelines on establishing new genre/form terms.

Assign an additional term that is broader or more general than the genre or form represented in the work, if deemed desirable to support user access to both a larger category and its subcategories. Also assign a term that is broader or more general than the genre or form than it is intended to cover when it is not possible to establish a precise term, or when an array of terms is needed to express the genre or form (e.g., **Paranormal romance fiction** and **Novels** assigned to a paranormal romance novel e.g., **Science fiction**, **Romance fiction**, and **Novels** assigned to a science fiction romance novel), or when the assignment of a more general term is required by special instructions in this manual.

If a compilation consists of a predominant genre or form but includes works that would be assigned another term in the hierarchy, it is permissible desirable to assign both a broader and a narrower term. For example, **Limericks** is a narrower term of **Humorous poetry**. If a collection primarily contains limericks, but also contains a significant proportion of other types of humorous poetry, the terms **Limericks** and **Humorous poetry** may both be assigned.

**Note:** The use of the phrase “significant proportion” is deliberate. Catalogers should take the intent of the resource into account and display good judgment when assigning terms from multiple levels of the hierarchy in this manner.

## **J 110 original text, pages 4-5:**

5. **Depth of indexing.** Depending on its place in a hierarchy, a given term may subsume several narrower genres and forms that also are represented by terms in LCGFT. Assign to a resource only those terms that mostly closely correspond to the overall content of the resource. Generally do not assign terms that represent subgenres that are normally considered to be included in an assigned term's coverage. *Example:*

*Title:* Made in England : British pop anthology.

*Term:* Popular music.

*[Performers: Ian Dury & The Blockheads, Joy Division, The Charlatans, T. Rex, The Beatles, Small Faces, The Specials, Pet Shop Boys, Leo Sayer, Badfinger, The Zombies, The Move, Tears for Fears, Elton John, Procol Harum, Fleetwood Mac, Rod Stewart.*

*Do not assign separate terms for rock, electronica, glam rock, etc., instead of, or in addition to, **Popular music.**]*

6. **Two or three related terms.** If a term exists, or can be established (see J 120), that (1) represents the two or three genres or forms displayed by a resource, and (2) includes no other genres or forms within its scope, assign one term instead of two or three narrower terms.

*Example:*

*Title:* Music for Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur.

*Term:* High Holiday music.

*[**Rosh ha-Shanah music and Yom Kippur music** are narrower terms of **High Holiday music.**]*

7. **Rule of three.** If a genre/form term includes in its scope more than three sub-genres or forms, but the resource being cataloged consists of only two or three of those sub-genres or forms, assign the appropriate two or three terms instead of the broader term. *Example:*

*Title:* Time machine: the history of Canadian 60's garage, psychedelic, and surf, 1985-95.

*Terms:* Garage rock music.

Psychedelic rock music.

Surf music.

*[Do not assign **Rock music**, the broader term, because it has more than three NTs.]*

If a resource displays more than three of the narrower terms of a single broader term, assign the broader term unless the rule of four, described below, applies.

8. **Rule of four.** In certain circumstances it may be preferable to assign terms for four sub-genres or forms of a broad term. If a term covers a broad range and each sub-genre or form comprises only a small portion of that whole range, assign the four sub-genres or forms.

For example, a poetry anthology that consists of haiku, senryu, tanka, and kyōka may be assigned terms for those four genres instead of the broad term **Poetry**.

*LC practice:*

Do not exceed four sub-genres or forms under any circumstances.

## J 110 revised text:

5. **Depth of indexing.** Depending on its place in a hierarchy, a given term may subsume several narrower genres and forms that also are represented by terms in LCGFT. Assign to a resource **only** those terms that mostly closely correspond to the overall content of the resource. **Include, if desired, additional terms that represent the sub-genres or forms included in an assigned term's coverage, if deemed important for facilitating user access to different levels of search specificity. Generally do not assign terms that represent subgenres that are normally considered to be included in an assigned term's coverage.** *Example:*

**Title:** Préparez vos mouchoirs = \$b Get out your handkerchiefs.

**Terms:** Feature films.

Fiction films.

Comedy films.

Romance films.

Sex comedy films.

Romantic comedy films.

[*Summary: A worried husband finds a lover for his depressed wife, but she falls in love with a bullied thirteen-year-old math prodigy and wants to have the boy's baby.*

**Assign if desired *Sex comedy films* and *Romantic comedy films*, sub-genre terms for *Romance films* and *Comedy films*.]**

6. **Two or three related terms.** If a term exists, or can be established (see J 120), that (1) represents the two or three genres or forms displayed by a resource, and (2) includes no other genres or forms within its scope, assign **it. Additionally assign the one term instead of** two or three narrower terms, **if desired.** *Example:*

**Title:** Music for Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur.

**Terms:** High Holiday music.

Rosh ha-Shanah music.

Yom Kippur music.

**[Assign if desired *Rosh ha-Shanah music* and *Yom Kippur music*, the are narrower terms of *High Holiday music*.]**

7. **Rule of three.** If a genre/form term includes in its scope more than three sub-genres or forms, but the resource being cataloged consists of only two or three of those sub-genres or

forms, assign the appropriate two or three terms ~~instead of the broader term~~. Assign additionally the broader term, if desired. Example:

*Title:* Time machine: the history of Canadian 60's garage, psychedelic, and surf, 1985-95.

*Terms:* Garage rock music.  
Psychedelic rock music.  
Surf music.  
Rock music.

[Assign if desired **Rock music**, the broader term. ~~Do not assign Rock music, the broader term, because it has more than three NTs.~~]

If a resource displays more than three of the narrower terms of a single broader term, use cataloger's judgment to assign as many terms as needed to adequately describe the resource and promote discovery, including both broader and narrower terms if desired. ~~assign the broader term unless the rule of four, described below, applies.~~

~~8. **Rule of four.** In certain circumstances it may be preferable to assign terms for four sub-genres or forms of a broad term. If a term covers a broad range and each sub-genre or form comprises only a small portion of that whole range, assign the four sub-genres or forms. For example, a poetry anthology that consists of haiku, senryu, tanka, and kyōka may be assigned terms for those four genres instead of the broad term **Poetry**.~~

*LC practice:*

Do not exceed four sub-genres or forms under any circumstances.

**[H 1430](#) original text, page 1:**

**1. General rule.** Assign terms from LCGFT (e.g., **Comics (Graphic works); Graphic novels**) according to the guidelines in J 110 of the LCGFT manual. In case of doubt, assign the LCGFT term **Comics (Graphic works)**.

**H 1430 revised text:**

**1. General rule.** Assign terms from LCGFT (e.g., **Comics (Graphic works); Graphic novels**) according to the guidelines in J 110 of the LCGFT manual. **Terms may be assigned from different levels of the same hierarchy if desired.** In case of doubt, assign the LCGFT term **Comics (Graphic works)**.

## [H 1790](#) original text, page 6:

*LC practice:*

### **SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED SUBJECT ACCESS TO FICTION**

#### **3. Form and genre headings.**

**a. Source of headings.** Select an appropriate term or terms from *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT), for example, **Biographical fiction; Spy fiction**. Assign terms from LCGFT in accordance with the instructions in J 235 of the LCGFT manual. Headings from the second edition of the *Guidelines on Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama, Etc.* (GSAFD) may be assigned instead, for example, **Love stories; Science fiction**.

## H 1790 revised text:

*LC practice:*

### **SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED SUBJECT ACCESS TO FICTION**

#### **3. Form and genre headings.**

**a. Source of headings.** Select an appropriate term or terms from *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT), for example, **Biographical fiction; Spy fiction**. Terms may be assigned from different levels of the same hierarchy if desired. Assign terms from LCGFT also in accordance with the instructions in J 235 of the LCGFT manual. Headings from the second edition of the *Guidelines on Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama, Etc.* (GSAFD) may be assigned instead, for example, **Love stories; Science fiction**.

## **J 235 original text:**

**2. Poetry.** The general guideline to assign genre/form terms only as they come readily to mind after a superficial review of the resource being cataloged (see J 110) is particularly important for poetry. For both individual poems and collections of poetry, rely chiefly on the title, introduction, cover information, etc., to determine whether the poetry is of a specific genre or form. If after a superficial review a specific genre or form cannot be determined, assign the term **Poetry**.

*Examples:*

*Title:* Sonnets / William Shakespeare.

*Terms:* Sonnets.

*Title:* For you with love / compiled by Kay Anne Carson.

*Terms:* Love poetry.

*Title:* Half of the world in light : new and selected poems / Juan Felipe Herrera.

*Terms:* Poetry.

*Title:* The hunting of the Snark / Lewis Carroll

*Data:* "The Hunting of the Snark tells the story of how the Bellman and his eccentric crew, who include a butcher, a baker, a beaver, and a tailor, set off in quest of that most mysterious and elusive of creatures, the Snark."—Page 4 of cover.

*Terms:* Narrative poetry.

If the genre or form of a poem or collection of poetry is known to the cataloger due to the cataloger's academic or cultural background, etc., one or more genre/form terms may be assigned to represent the genre or form. *Examples:*

*Title:* The Odyssey / Homer.

*Terms:* Epic poetry.

*Title:* The rape of the lock / Alexander Pope.

*Terms:* Mock-heroic poetry.

## **J 235 revised text:**

**2. Poetry.** The general guideline to assign genre/form terms only as they come readily to mind after a superficial review of the resource being cataloged (see J 110) is particularly important for poetry. For both individual poems and collections of poetry, rely chiefly on the title, introduction, cover information, etc., to determine whether the poetry is of a specific genre or form. If after a superficial review a specific genre or form cannot be determined, assign the term **Poetry**. **Also**

assign **Poetry** in addition to more specific subgenres, if desired, to address the needs of users with different levels of specificity in their search requests. *Examples:*

*Title:* Sonnets / William Shakespeare.

*Terms:* Sonnets.

**Poetry.**

[Assign if desired **Poetry**, the broader term.]

*Title:* For you with love / compiled by Kay Anne Carson.

*Terms:* Love poetry.

*Title:* Half of the world in light : new and selected poems / Juan Felipe Herrera.

*Terms:* Poetry.

*Title:* The hunting of the Snark / Lewis Carroll

*Data:* "The Hunting of the Snark tells the story of how the Bellman and his eccentric crew, who include a butcher, a baker, a beaver, and a tailor, set off in quest of that most mysterious and elusive of creatures, the Snark."—Page 4 of cover.

*Terms:* Narrative poetry.

If the genre or form of a poem or collection of poetry is known to the cataloger due to the cataloger's academic or cultural background, etc., one or more genre/form terms may be assigned to represent the genre or form. *Examples:*

*Title:* The Odyssey / Homer.

*Terms:* Epic poetry.

*Title:* The rape of the lock / Alexander Pope.

*Terms:* Mock-heroic poetry.