Subject Headings with Reference to Sears List of Subject Headings

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Subject Heading
A subject heading (or subject descriptor or key word) is a word or phrase selected from a standard list of subject headings or thesaurus to express the main subject(s) of a book in the library catalogue (Manual i.e. card catalogue or electronic database)

Subject Headings List:
A subject heading list is a controlled vocabulary or standard printed list of synonym terms such as Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), Sears List of Subject Headings (SLSH), etc. or a locally developed authority list of subject headings that instructs users how to assign subject headings.

Subject Heading Assignment:
Subject heading assignment is an important task of a cataloger to assign appropriate subject heading(s) selecting from a standard printed subject heading list or a locally developed subject authority list or a thesaurus for reflecting the main subject(s) of a book. This work is called subject cataloging or subject indexing also. Subject heading(s) is (are) typed at the tracing area of a shelf list card and main card with numerical no.(s) such as 1, 2, 3. In case of computerized database, subject heading(s) or subject descriptors or keywords are typed in the subject descriptor field.

Subject Card
It is a card with the assigned subject heading typed above the heading of that card (Author's name or title) in capital letters.

Subject Catalogue
It is a series of subject cards arranged in an alphabetical order.

Objectives of Subject Headings:
The major objectives are to:

- List all materials or books on a given subject under one uniform word or phrase;
- Assist users to search and retrieve the required book(s) by subject as quickly as possible;
- Demonstrate the subject coverage of the library collection;
- Do justice with the major subjects of a particular book by expressing them in catalogue;
- Show users how many titles the library has in a particular subject;
- Inform users the development or emergence of new subjects useful to them; and
- Refer users to related subjects of their subject interest.

Need and Importance of Subject Headings:
Users cannot understand the meaning of the Call nos. by which books are shelved in the racks such as 000, 100, 200, 300…999.
Lack of provision for giving Call nos. for multiple subjects dealt in a book.
Users prefer to search books by subjects or to know how many books in a particular subject.

Some users may forget the exact name of the author or exact title but don't miss their subject interest.

Need of a Standard Subject Headings List:
It is necessary for maintaining uniformity and consistency in library catalogue and for providing easy subject access to information in libraries and databases.
For eg. A book on **forest** may be assigned with 3 different subject headings such as **Forest**, or **Forests** or **Forestry**

Popular Subject Headings Lists:
Sears List of Subject Headings (SLSH) is useful for small and medium sized libraries such as school, college and public libraries (Having up to 20,000 titles of books)
Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) is useful for large libraries such as university libraries

Sears List of Subject Headings (SLSH):
SLSH is a controlled vocabulary list that covers almost all subjects of universe of knowledge. So it is a general subject headings list. SLSH was first prepared by Minnie Earl Sears in response to demands for a list of subject headings suitable to the needs of the small libraries.

Its first edition was published in 1923 in the title "List of Subject Headings for Small Libraries", which was based on the subject headings used by nine small public libraries in United States . Its 20th ed. was published in 2010. It is still popular and used by many school, college and public libraries of many countries including Nepal.

Minnie Earl Sears followed the form of the LCSH with few exception in order to facilitate libraries to add LCSH also as needed when not provided by SLSH and to graduate to the full use of LCSH when collection grow too large for a limited SLSH.

From its 6th edition, the title was changed to Sears List of Subject Headings in order to recognize the pioneering and fundamental contributions made by Minnie Earl Sears.

Structure of the SLSH:
SLSH contains mainly two parts:
1. Introductory part contains: Preface, Acknowledgements, Principles of the Sears List, Headings to be Added by the Cataloger, Key Headings, List of Canceled and Replacement Headings, The Use of Subdivisions in the Sears List, List of Subdivisions Provided for in the Sears List, and Symbols Used (p. vii - liii).
2. Sears List of Subject Headings (p. 1 – 847)

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The cataloger should see the main list of subject headings which is arranged in alphabetical order in two columns on every page. Headings are of two types:
1.Preferred ones are given in bold type face print with various information
 e.g. **Agriculture** (May subdiv. geog.) **338.1; 630**
        UF   Agronomy
              Farming
              Planting

SA Types …
BT **Life sciences**
NT **Aeronautics in agriculture**
    …
    …
RT **Farms**

2. Non-preferred ones are given in light type face print with a lead USE below the word(s)
 e.g. Farming
        USE **Agriculture**

The SLSH has provided DDC numbers also for each subject heading as shown above to help for classifiers.

The cataloger should select and use only those subject headings which are printed in bold type face such as **Agriculture**, and never use those printed in light type face such as Farming.

Most of subject headings are equipped with various necessary information such as scope note, direction and instructions, references, broader, narrower and related terms, etc. to facilitate users to assign appropriate subject heading(s) for a work or book as shown in the above example of **Agriculture**.

Symbols used in SLSH are:
UF = Used for
SA = See also
BT = Broader term
NT = Narrower term
RT = Related term
(May subdiv. Geog) = Heading that may be subdivided by name of place

Methods of Determining Major Subject(s) of a Book and Assigning the Subject Heading(s):
Don't depend upon the title of a book only unless it is a simple book or textbook such as **Theory of economics, An introduction to culture**, **A textbook of botany,** etc., whose subjects are very simple such as **Economics, Culture, Botany**, etc. Thus the very title discloses here the main subject of the book. But titles of some books are "illusive" or "fanciful" which do not express the exact subjects. In such situation, the cataloguer should consult and check the following parts of a book and other sources step by step:
1. Title: main title, sub-title, etc.
2. Table of contents
3. Preface, foreword, introduction, author's note, etc.
4. Book jacket: publisher's note about the book and author(s) also
5. Index
6. Footnotes, bibliography, references, etc. given in the book
7. Text itself to determine the exact subject
8. Reference sources like bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, book reviews, etc.
9. Subject expert(s) to decide the subject of a difficult/particular book
10. Author(s) also if possible to know the exact subject(s) of a difficult book

For eg.
The tigers of Sri Lanka (It is a book about Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka not about the wild animals i.e. tigers. So its main subjects are **Politics** and problem of **Tamil Tigers** in **Sri Lanka)**

320 million judges (It is an analysis of 1977 Lok Sabha and State elections in India and is not about the

judges. So its subject is **Elections in India in 1977**)

The living history (It is not about the history of any country but about Hilary Rodam Clinton. So its subject is the **Biography of Hilary Rodam Clinton**)

Voice of truth: the challenges and struggle of a Nepalese woman (It is not about voice or truth or an ordinary Nepalese woman. It is an autobiography of Mrs. Shanti Mishra, a famous Nepalese librarian. So its subjects are **Autobiography of Shanti Mishra** and **Library development in Nepal**)

Thus after determining the proper subject(s) of a book, the cataloger should assign the appropriate subject heading(s) for denoting the major subject(s) by selecting from the SLSH by following various principles, rules and instructions, directions, examples , etc. given there. Such principles, rules, etc. are necessary for catalogers to add new terms or develop a larger vocabulary of terms when needed. Any standard subject headings list including SLSH can't be complete or comprehensive due to various reasons such as ever emerging newer and newer subjects in one hand and importance of a particular or specific subject to a particular country or group of users on the other hand.

Principles of the SLSH:
Specific and direct: e.g. **Penguins** for a book about penguins not Birds or Water birds.
Common usage: e. g. Community forestry; Labor, Color, Catalog etc. for using American spelling and **Labour, Catalogue** etc for following British spelling.
Uniformity and consistency: e.g. **Porcelain** for Chinaware and Porcelain, **Rhyme** not Rime,

Types of Subject Headings:
SLSH has provided four types of subject headings: Topical headings, Form headings, Geographical headings and Proper names.
Topical headings:
Topical subject headings are the simple words or phrases used for reflecting the major subject content of works or books. e.g. **Philosophy, Culture, Science, Art, History, Animals**, etc.

Form Headings:
Form headings are those words that describe not the subject content of works or books but their forms. Here form means the intellectual form not the physical form. e.g. **Yearbooks, Periodicals**, etc.
Some form headings represent the physical forms of the works also specially for some of non-book materials. e.g. **Puzzles, Sound recordings, Comedy films**, etc.
Some form headings describe the general arrangement of the works and their purposes. e.g. **Almanacs, Atlases, Directories, Gazetteers**, etc.
Similarly, form headings are used for describing the names of literary forms and genres. e.g. **Essays, Poetry, Short stories, Science fiction,** etc. and **American essays; English poetry; Nepali drama,** etc. for specific language.

Geographic Headings:
Geographic headings are given for those works or books that deal with the established names of individual or particular places ranging from large continent like **Africa** to small city or local place like **Lalitpur** and its local places as **Pulchowk, Jawalakhel, Lagankhel**, etc.. Such headings signify not only physical places but also political jurisdictions.
It is not possible to cover all geographic names available in the world for any subject headings list in a single

volume. So the catalogers must establish geographic headings as needed with the help of standard reference sources suitable to their need such as **The Colombia Gazetteer of the World, National Geographic Atlas of the World, Times Atlas of the World**, etc. and other local reference sources

Names:
Name headings are given for those books which deal with individual gods and goddesses, persons, families, corporate bodies, literary works, motion pictures, mountains, rivers, lakes, etc. SLSH has provided facilities for assigning three major types of name headings: Personal names, Corporate names and Uniform titles.

Personal names should be given in the inverted form with dates of birth and death also if necessary and possible such as **Shakespeare, William, 1564 – 1616, Devkota, Laxmi Prasad, 1966 – 2016 B.S**.

Corporate names are the established names of corporate bodies. Such name headings are given directly such as **Kathmandu University (KU), Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), Nepali Congress, Nepal Chamber of Commerce, UNESCO**, etc.

Uniform titles are the established names of sacred scriptures, anonymous literary works, periodicals, motion pictures, radio and television programs, etc. Such names also are directly entered such as **Mahabharat; Ramayan; Shakespeare, William, 1564 – 1616. Hamlet; Devekota, Laxmi Prasad, 1966-2016 B.S. Muna Madan; Titanic (Motion picture); Gone with the wind (Motion picture); Comedy nights with Kapil (Television program), etc.**

It is not possible to include all name headings of all places and of all times in any subject headings list how big it is. So the catalogers themselves must establish necessary name headings with the help of standard and authentic reference sources like Who's Who; Who's Who in America, Who's Who in Nepal, The Dictionary of National Biography; General encyclopedias, etc.

Grammar of Subject Headings:
(1)   **Single Nouns:** e.g. **Art; Agriculture; Education; Religion,** (Singular form for concept and abstract nouns) **Women, Chairs; Animals; Trees** etc. (Plural form for concrete nouns)
(2)   **Compound Headings:** e.g. **Banks and banking; Boats and boating; Cities and towns** etc. (For not separable) and **Belief and doubt, Good and evil; Religion and science** etc. (For opposite subjects but discussed together)
(3)   **Adjective with Noun:** e.g. **Higher education; Electrical engineering; Tropical fish; etc.**
(4)   **Phrase Headings:** e.g. **Freedom of information; Freedom of religion;** etc.

Subdivision:
e.g.   **Birds**
        Birds - Eggs
        Birds - Migration
        Birds – Protection

   (1) **Subdivision by Physical Form:**
       Economics - Bibliography
       Geology - Maps
       Bible - Pictorial works
       Chemists - Directories
       Psychology - Dictionaries

(2)   **Subdivision that Show Non-comprehensive Treatment:**
        Engineering - Periodicals

Commerce - Periodicals

(3)   **Subdivision that Show Special Aspects:**
        Education - History;
        Religion - Philosophy;
        Radio - Law and legislation .

(4)   **Subdivision that Show Chronology:**
        United States - **History - 1775 - 1783, Revolution**
        Nepal - History -1951 - 1980.

Geographical Name:
   (1) **Subject Subdivided by Place:** For e.g. **Agriculture** (May subdiv. geog.)
            Agriculture - Nepal
            Theatre – Paris
            Agriculture - Terai

   (2) **Names of Places Subdivided by Subjects:**
            Nepal – History
            Bihar - Population.

Biography:
Two different categories:
   (i) Biography as a form of writing **Biography**
   (ii) Lives of persons:
   (1) **Individual Biography:**
            Devkota, Laxmi Prasad, 1966-2016 B.S. – Biography
            Nepalese poetry - History and criticism.

(2)   **Collective Biography:**
        (a)   **General Biography: Biography**
        (b)   **Local Biography: Asia - Biography** for Who's who in Asia;
                            Nepal - Biography for Who's who in Nepal;
                            Jews - Biography for Prominent Jews etc.
        (c)   **Classes of Persons: Artists - Biography**
                            Scientists – Biography
                            Women – Biography

Language and Literature:
   (1) **Language and languages** for general
       English language; Nepalese language etc. for specific
       English language - Dictionaries; French language - Grammar etc.
   (2)   **Literature:**
        (a)   Works about Literature: Drama; Essay; Fiction; Poetry etc.
                            English   drama;   Russian   poetry;   Nepalese   essays
                            English drama - Dictionaries;

Russian poetry - History and criticism

(b)   **Examples of Literature:** The examples of literature are separated into two categories:
     (i)   **Individual Authors: English drama, Nepali poetry**
     (ii)   **Collection of Several Authors:**
                Essays ; Nepali essays ; Short stories;
                Drama - Collections; Poetry - Collections

Non-book Materials:
 e.g.   Agriculture – Audiovisual aids
       Library education – Audiovisual aids

Terminology:
 e.g. **Alcoholism** for medical works and works on drunkenness;
    Liquor problem for works of an administrative and local character
    Liquor industry for works on industrial aspect.
References:
   (1) **Specific "See" or " USE" References:** e.g. Farming
                                See or USE **Agriculture**
   (2) Specific "See also" References: e.g. **Science**. See also **Mathematics**
                           Mathematics See also **Arithmetic**.
   (3) **General References:** e.g. **Labor unions**
                     See also **Arbitration**, **Industrial** ..... also
                     names of individual labor unions
                     e.g. **United Steel Workers of America**.

New Terminology:
Such as **Child welfare** for the former **Children - Charities, protection etc.; Interior decoration** for **House decoration** etc.

New Subject Headings:

Readers Guide to Periodical Literature; Applied Science and Technology Index; Cumulative Book Index etc.

Recording Headings and References:

Thank You!