

Appendix E: History of *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms*

In 2013 the Library of Congress (LC) began to explore the possibility of developing a controlled vocabulary specific to demographic groups. Terms in the vocabulary would be used to describe the characteristics of two types of entities: the intended audiences of resources and the creators and contributors to resources. The initial 387 terms were approved in 2015, and *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms* included 1,177 approved terms as of March 2021. Below is a brief history of the development of demographic group terms at the Library of Congress and a description of the characteristics and structure of LCDGT.

A demographic group may be defined as a subset of the general population, and refers to the group's age, gender, occupation, nationality, ethnic background, sexual orientation, etc. Individuals may belong to several demographic groups (e.g., an American who is a librarian; a computer engineer who is also a knitter).

Members of specific demographic groups are frequently the intended audiences of resources. For example, television programs are marketed to particular age groups, textbooks are marketed to students at particular educational levels and/or studying particular disciplines, and self-help books are marketed to a wide variety of groups.

Creators of, and contributors to, resources are also members of demographic groups. Publishers often compile anthologies defined by a particular demographic group, such as a collection of poetry by Canadians or cancer survivors. The creators of individually published resources may also choose to self-identify with one or more demographic groups, such as a musician who refers to himself as an Italian.

Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) has always included headings that describe the audiences of resources and the creators and contributors of resources. Headings often include demographic groups (e.g., **Children's films**; **Landscape painting, Australian**; **Nurses' writings**), but subdivisions are also frequently employed to bring out the characteristics of the audience or the creators and contributors, as in the heading strings **English language—Conversation and phase books (for businesspeople)** and **Emotions—Juvenile literature**, which denote audience, and **English fiction—Welsh authors**, which denotes the characteristics of the creators. While headings of this type contain valuable information, their syntax and format are not always intuitive to users. In addition, most of these types of headings may be used both for resources that are *for* particular audiences, or *by* members of particular demographic groups, and for resources that are *about* those resources. This ambiguity leads to many false hits for users.

The development of *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT) provided an opportunity to consider other ways of providing access to audience and creator/contributor characteristics. As LCGFT is fully implemented, LCSH form headings –

including those that include both form and audience, or form and creator/contributor characteristics – will no longer be assigned to resources that are *for* particular audiences, or *by* members of a particular demographic group. Those headings will be reserved for topical resources *about* those resources. Since the demographic characteristics of audiences, creators, and contributors are out of scope for LCGFT, another method had to be devised for describing those aspects of resources, or vital information would be lost.

A similar situation existed when music terms were being developed for LCGFT. LCSH includes headings that refer to the mediums of performance of musical works (e.g., **Piano music; Concertos (Baritone with string orchestra)**), but just as with the headings that include the demographic groups of the audiences and creators/contributors, headings that include medium of performance will no longer be assigned to resources that *are* music. Since medium of performance is vital information, a new way to describe and search that information had to be found. In 2009, the Library of Congress and the Music Library Association agreed to develop a new vocabulary specific to musical mediums of performance. The first 800 terms were authorized for the *Library of Congress Medium of Performance Thesaurus for Music* (LCMPT) in 2014.

With that precedent in mind, the Library of Congress consulted with the ALA/CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee to determine whether it would be desirable to develop a separate vocabulary for demographic group terms. The Committee responded in the affirmative, and also provided some initial advice on the scope and structure of *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms* (LCDGT).

Specialists within LC's Policy and Standards Division (PSD) undertook the initial development of LCDGT as a pilot, the intent of which was to test the principles guiding the development of the vocabulary, to provide consistent patterns for future development, and to generate discussion within the library community. There was no attempt at comprehensiveness within the pilot vocabulary. Terms that highlight specific areas of concern (e.g., conflict situations; hierarchies) were included in order to provide examples and to form the basis for future development.

The initial development of the principles on the scope and structure of LCDGT occurred during Phase 1. Those draft principles were published for constituent comment in May 2015 under the title *Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms: Introduction and Guiding Principles of the Pilot*. In the same month, approximately 380 proposals for terms were also published for comment. Phase 1 was completed in June 2015, when 387 terms were approved.

Phase 2 occurred from June 2015 through January 2016. During this phase, specialists in PSD enhanced the breadth and depth of LCDGT by continuing to add terminology based on two sources: LC subject headings, and comments that members of the library community made during the feedback period for Phase 1. Specialists also explored relationships, further tested the guiding principles laid out in the first phase of the pilot, and revised the *Guiding Principles* document (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/lcdgt-principles.pdf>). Four hundred forty additional terms were approved and added to LCDGT in January 2016, and approximately 60 terms that had been approved

in the first phase of the pilot were revised at the same time. PSD also published a draft *Demographic Group Terms Manual* in January 2016 and requested constituent comment on it.

Phase 3 of the pilot, which began in January 2016 and ended in January 2018, was intended to test LCDGT principles and policies in a production environment. Proposals were accepted for terms that were needed for new cataloging through 2017. As of January 2018, proposals for new and revised terms were not being accepted, in order to allow specialists in the Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division (the successor to PSD) to thoroughly evaluate LCDGT's structure and principles.

In 2021 LC decided to transfer the management of the LCDGT vocabulary to an advisory group. This group is composed of an LC member and subject matter experts from other institutions. The LC member serves as the project leader and is supported behind the scenes by experienced catalogers from LC.