

# Local Headings in Wisconsin Public Library Catalogs

## Introduction

As with authorized vocabularies, locally-created vocabularies aid in the description and discovery of resources. When they describe what something is or is about in a way that cannot be captured in other MARC fields, local headings improve access to materials.

As part of the 2024-25 LSTA Grant for Statewide Cooperative Cataloging work, library systems in Wisconsin contributed data about their use of locally used and controlled subject, genre and form headings in bibliographic records. The desired results were both to document local headings currently in use by Wisconsin's public libraries and create a recommendation to streamline and standardize these headings statewide.

## Findings















As of 2025, about half of Wisconsin Public Library systems use local headings to help collocate and aid discovery of resources in their collections. These vary from hyper-local subject descriptors - such as Eau Claire's L.E. Phillips Library using "Pablo Center Performer, [year]" for resources featuring performers at a local venue for live theater and music - to general format descriptors such as "Book with cassette."





Across Wisconsin there is no one approach to the use of local headings. Whether or not a library system employs centralized cataloging is not a strong indicator of their use of, or success with, systematically applied local headings. While a couple of systems have extensive and thoroughly documented local headings in use, several have just a few local headings in use and may lack documentation to standardize or assess them, while others do not use local headings at all for a variety of reasons.

## Recommended Statewide Headings for Wisconsin's Public Libraries

The Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee recommends adoption of a set of standard subject and genre headings for optional use by all Wisconsin Public Libraries, creation of downloadable MARC authority records for this vocabulary, and a practice of adding to and reviewing the terms and records regularly.

## Recommended Statewide Headings (May 2025)

Heading	Type/Usage 	Authorized term from Library of Congress, if applicable	Use Recommendation
Wisconsin authors	Genre/Form 		
Wisconsin performers	Genre/Form 		
Wisconsin artists	Genre/Form 		
Local authors ([city, town, county in parentheses])	Genre/Form 		
Local performers ([city, town, county in parentheses])	Genre/Form 		
Local artists ([city, town, county in parentheses])	Genre/Form 		
[...] language films	Genre/Form 		
[...] language television programs	Genre/Form 		
[...] language materials	Genre/Form 		Use authorized LCSH when exists; Consider use of LC Children’s headings; Possibly a “pattern heading” from LC, with some authorized and a note that any others can follow the pattern. Remove from list if so.
LGBTQIA+ people	Subject 	Sexual minorities	Consider use of Homosaurus authorized vocabulary
Beginning readers	Genre/Form 		
Easy chapter books	Genre/Form 		
Nordic crime fiction	Genre/Form 		Use alongside Detective

Recommended Statewide Headings (May 2025)			
Heading	Type/Usage 	Authorized term from Library of Congress, if applicable	Use Recommendation
			and mystery fiction
Romantic suspense fiction	Genre/Form 	Romance fiction, Thrillers (fiction)	Use alongside Romance fiction + Thrillers (fiction)
Book discussion kits	Genre/Form 		
Library of things	Genre/Form 		

### Additional Standardized Local Headings

Libraries/systems may decide to implement additional local headings as well, depending on the needs of their ILS, discovery layer/OPAC, and communities. To further encourage standardization within Wisconsin, libraries/systems are encouraged to choose local headings from the shared list available [here](#) and add their own locally-used headings to grow the list.

### Further Work

The Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee will create MARC authority records for the finalized list of recommended statewide subject headings and make them available for download and use.

In the future, a statewide group will continue to generate consensus around use of a statewide vocabulary, help guide libraries on use of locally created and controlled headings and continue to create MARC records for distribution as needed.