Kamil Pawlicki

GENRE THEORY APPLIED: GENRE AND FORM TERMS IN THE CATALOGUE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF POLAND[1]

Introduction

Genre/form access is an area of increasing interest to the library world, as shown by the creation of the IFLA Genre/Form Working Group in 2013[2] and the gradual addition of genre/form indexes or facets to library catalogues. In this paper, we consider some theoretical and practical aspects of the possible use of genre and form terms in a library catalogue on basis of the new solution introduced by the National Library of Poland in January 2017.

Genre and Form in Libraries

The possibilities of using form and genre terms in library catalogues have been growing gradually over time – as has awareness of the potential benefits of doing so. In the past, card catalogues rarely recorded form and genre terms, or did so on a basic level only.[3] With

---

1 This publication is an extended version of the paper presented at IFLA WLIC 2017: http://library.ifla.org/1644/ [2019.03.04]

2 IFLA Genre/Form Working Group: <https://www.ifla.org/node/8526> [2017.05.27]

3 Libraries Linking Idaho. <http://lili.org/forlibs/ce/sable/course4/sec3-subject-headings-9.htm> [2017.05.27]; Folgerpedia: Genre and form. <http://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Genre_and_form> [2017.05.27]

the arrival of computer catalogues and the MARC standard, librarians could expand their descriptions. The original MARC specification did not include a specific field for form or genre terms, but this was added to bibliographic description in the 1980s (655 – Index Term – Genre/Form)[4] and authority description in the 1990s (X55 – Genre/Form Terms).[5] Libraries using MARC formats gradually began using genre/form as another access point. Some of the libraries with OPAC search interfaces adopted genre/form as an additional search index, while others began using the subject index, albeit with special genre/form subdivisions (for example, the National Library of Poland, which we will describe later).

New access points such as genre/form are especially useful in faceted search interfaces. Nowadays, most libraries using such interfaces have some kind of form/format facet, usually called "Type" or "Format" rather than "Form".[6] Here, "type/format/form" sometimes means physical form (with categories such as "Book", "DVD", "Software", "Blu-Ray") and sometimes both physical and intellectual forms (with categories such as "Reviews", "Dissertations", "Conference Proceedings" alongside "Book", "DVD", and so on).

While form/format/type is frequent, genre (or genre/form) facet in library catalogues with faceted search interfaces appears to be rare. Where it is found, it is usually called "Genre", or sometimes "Form/Genre" or "Subject: Genre".[7]

---

4   Discussion Paper No. 82. <http://www.loc.gov/marc/marbi/dp/dp82.html> [2017.05.27]

5   Discussion Paper No. 83. <http://www.loc.gov/marc/marbi/dp/dp83.html> [2017.05.27]

6   "Type", "Format", "Type of Document", "Material Type" or "Resource Type" (or some equivalents in other languages) are employed e.g. in the British Library, University College London Library, Plymouth University Library, Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale, Southampton Solent University Library, Thrift Library, University of Southern Mississippi, Leiden University Library, University of Almeria Library, University of Guelph Library, University of Waterloo Library, WorldCat.

7   "Genre" is used by the University of Waterloo Library, University of Guelph Library, Laurier Library, Thrift Library and others. "Subject: Genre" is used by Princeton University Library, Yale University Library and others. "Form/Genre" is used by the British Library, Harvard Library and others.

Definitions

The basic and the most widespread definition of genre/form terms in the context of library catalogues is that they are words describing what a work *is* (what class or category it belongs to), rather than what it is *about.* In the FRSAD model, this is called "isness" versus "aboutness".[8] This definition emphasises how genre/form terms are of a different nature to subject terms, although it is often added that they may be closely related.[9]

It is difficult to draw a precise distinction between "form" and "genre". Roughly speaking, "genre" corresponds to a greater extent to the content, style, technique, purpose or intended audience of what is being described, while "form" corresponds to a greater extent to the physical characteristics of the object, the type of data it contains, and the arrangement of information within it. Genre and form terms often combine to create fixed phrases in natural language, such as *horror films,* where "horror" is the genre and "film" is the form.[10] For these reasons, libraries often treat form and genre jointly.

Significantly, the attitude of the USMARC community to genre, form and physical characteristics has changed several times in the past. Initially, they were treated together and the first proposal of a separate field for physical characteristics was rejected (in 1979). In 1983, however, the community was persuaded that physical characteristics involve an aspect that is sufficiently different from form and genre, which resulted in the addition of the 755 field (Added Entry – Physical Characteristics). In 1991, discussions at American Library Association (ALA) conferences led to a new definition of form being drawn up which included both intellectual content (of the 655 field

---

8   *Functional Requirements for Subject Authority Data (FRSAD): A Conceptual Model.* ed. by Marcia Lei Zeng, Maja Žumer, Athena Salaba (cop. 2011). Berlin; New York. p. 10.

9   H. Zinkham, Cloud, Patricia D., Mayo, Hope. "Providing Access by Form of Material, Genre, and Physical Characteristics: Benefits and Techniques." *American Archivist*, 1989, Vol. 52. pp. 303.

10   *Frequently Asked Questions about Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials (LCGFT).* <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/genre_form_faq.pdf> [2017.05.27]

type) and physical characteristics (755 field) information.[11] The new definition marked a preference for removing the distinction between intellectual and physical form from the USMARC bibliographic format, which in 1995 finally resulted in making the 755 field obsolete in favour of the 655 field.[12]

The modern MARC description still treats form and genre together but defines them separately. In the description for the 655 field, "genre" is defined primarily by "the style or technique of the intellectual content". "Form", on the other hand, is defined primarily by "physical character" and "order of information", as well as by the "subject of the intellectual content" (the last factor shows some confusion with genre). The third category, "physical characteristics", is defined in almost the same way as "form". Furthermore, there are only two sets of examples, one for "genre" and another for both "form" and "physical characteristics", essentially merging the last two categories completely. The 380 field is entitled "Form of Work" but defined as "a class or genre to which a work belongs", which confuses form and genre completely.

In some other descriptions, by contrast, these categories are divided more clearly. For example, the Moving Image Genre-Form Guide (MIGFG) clearly distinguishes the "form" of a film (e.g. feature, short, serial) from its "format" (e.g. video, videodisc).[13]

Why Do We Need Genres?

Genre theory, inspired by theoretical reflections in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetry*, is born of the human need to classify the world. Bundling works into groups with similar characteristics and labelling them helps us say something about them. Genres became convenient

---

11 Prepared for USMARC by the Subcommitee on the Nature and Use of Form Data of ALA's Subject Analysis Committee in 1991; see: Discussion Paper No. 82. <http://www.loc.gov/marc/marbi/dp/dp82.html> [2017.05.27]

12 Ibidem.

13 Moving Image Genre-Form Guide. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/migintro.html> [2017.05.27]

analytical terms for the scholars who developed genre theory.[14] Over time, genres also became useful categories for other groups. Thus audiences use genre labels to identify the sort of work they are looking for. Authors, thanks to their awareness of genres, can refer to them by following genre conventions and audience expectations, or break them by mixing them up creatively. The current popularity of a genre may influence a publisher or producer's decision about which book or film to support. Genre labels are used for marketing purposes as the fastest and easiest way to characterise a work. And critics refer to genre categories because audiences understand them and the labels allow the critics to refer to the work in a specific context.

Genres represent a type of tacit agreement between creators, reviewers and audiences.[15] They serve not only to organise and structure works, but also in a way to define relationships between the work and the audience. A genre is to some extent recognisable by a recipient, sometimes unconsciously. It can be seen as the "horizon of expectation", to use H.R. Jauss's terminology,[16] signalling to recipients what they may expect from a work and guiding their reception, understanding and interpretation[17]. Today, many genres are so deeply ingrained in the audience's consciousness that there are organised groups of admirers of a genre who create and read dedicated magazines and internet sites, organise get-togethers, and so on.

For all these parties, genres are therefore important access points in library catalogues. Genre access supplements subject access – indeed, it can be even more important than subject access as it covers aspects of works "that would be otherwise neglected, addressing the storytell-

---

14 The term "genre" is used here in the traditional sense, based on literary genres. This term is used in a different sense in M.M. Bakhtin's concept of speech genres; see: Simmons, Michelle H. "Librarians as Disciplinary Discourse Mediators: Using Genre Theory to Move Toward Critical Information Literacy." *Libraries and the Academy*, 2005, 5.3. p. 301.

15 D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*. New York 2008. p. 320.

16 Jauss, Hans Robert, Benzinger, Elizabeth. "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory." *New Literary History, Vol. 2, No. 1, A Symposium on Literary History*, 1970, pp. 7-37.

17 M. Głowiński, "O gatunkach literackich – po latach". *Tradycja i przyszłość genologii,* ed. Dariusz Kulesza, Białystok, 2013, pp. 19-21.

ing or narrative strategy and formula that is seldom accounted for in subject headings".[18]

Interestingly, many public and school libraries are currently moving from alphabetic shelving to genre shelving, or at least combining the two systems like in bookshops. Moreover, libraries are increasingly breaking with the tradition of shelving children's titles under a generic "children" or "young adult" section and shelving them in the same way as adult fiction, by genre.[19] It is claimed that shelving by genre helps students find "the right book" on their own, which saves them having to ask the librarian, who can then focus on more complex enquiries. Moreover, a system that helps students to find books on the basis of their own reading preferences can encourage them to read more voraciously and make them understand and articulate what they like to read and why. In a way, it develops their sense of themselves as readers.[20]

Genre/form Headings
in the National Library of Poland

Up until the end of 2016 the National Library of Poland used a subject headings system called National Library Subject Headings (Język Haseł Przedmiotowych Biblioteki Narodowej).[21] The system was precoordinated and built on the basis of MARC |x, |y and |z subdivisions, which were added to the main portion of a heading[22]. Subject terms

18 Moving Image Genre-Form Guide. <www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/migintro.html> [2017.05.27]

19 B. Eichholzer, (2016) *Taking the guesswork out of genre.* <http://www2.curriculum.edu. au/scis/connections/issue_91/articles/taking_the_guesswork_out_of_genre.html> [2017.05.27]

20 *Arranging library fiction by genre.* <https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/ libraries-supporting-readers/arranging-library-fiction-by-genre>; Neltner, Heidi, *Project Genre-fy the Fiction Section!* <http://learninprogress.blogspot.com/2014/07/proj- ect-genre-fy-fiction-section.html>; Whitehead, Tiffany. *Genre Shelving!*: <http://www. mightylittlelibrarian.com/?p=582> [2017.05.27]

21 B. Włodarczyk, J. Woźniak-Kasperek, (2017) *Język Haseł Przedmiotowych Biblioteki Narodo- wej: od analizy dokumentu do opisu przedmiotowego.* Warszawa.

22 Form subdivision (subfield |v) was not in use – as opposed to another subject descrip- tion system used in Polish libraries, called Academic Library Automated Catalogues Subject Headings (Język Haseł Przedmiotowych Katalogów Automatycznych Biblio- tek Akademickich - JHP KABA); see: G. Kwaśnik, M. Nasiłowska, A. Nowak-Drzymała,

were coded in bibliographic records as 650 MARC fields (150 field in the authority record), while genre/form terms were coded as 655 fields (155 field in the authority record). Thus, in a way, they were separated from each other already at the field tag level. However, this formal separation had no influence on the search interface as both subject and genre/form terms were searchable by the same subject index and there was no possibility of filtering the results by excluding results from either 650 or 655 field.
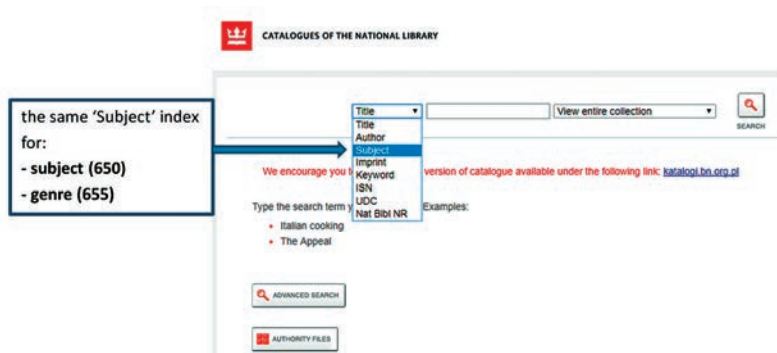

FIG. 1. 'Subject' index in the older version of the National Library of Poland catalogue

The genre/form term was always coded in a 655 field, regardless of whether it indicated that a work *belonged* to that genre/form or was *about* that genre/form. It was thus necessary to find an additional way to separate these two indications. This was achieved by using the MARC |x subject subdivision. Works that *belonged* to a genre/form were assigned no |x subdivision (although they might be assigned |y chronological subdivision) while works *about* that genre/form had to contain at least one |x subdivision, for example, "|xhistory", "|xtranslations", "|xreception", "|xstylistics", etc.[23]

(2018 – forthcoming) "Transformacja JHP KABA na Deskryptory Biblioteki Narodowej. Część I. Forma." *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej*, t. XLIX; Nasiłowska, Maria, "KABA Subject Headings - The Current Situation and Prospects for the Future." *Polish Libraries Today*, 2007, v. 7, pp. 55-59.

23 The National Library of Poland Subject Headings, like the National Library of Poland Descriptors, are in Polish only. They have been translated for the purposes of this paper.

245 10 |aDeath in Breslau /|cMarek Krajewski ; transl. by Danusia Stok.
655 _4 |aPowieść polska|y20 w.
(Polish novel|y20 w.)

245 14 |aPolish novel in the 20th century /|cAgnieszka Izdebska ;
Department of Theory of Literature. University of Łódź.
655 _4 |aPowieść polska|xhistoria|y20 w.
(Polish novel|xhistory|y20 cent.)

In the search results for "Polish novel", the first example was displayed on the list as "Polish novel -- 20th cent.", the second example as "Polish novel -- history -- 20th cent." This solution was logical at a time when library catalogues were presented in the form of indexes, but it required users to work out first what the principle was.

Moreover, as the examples above show, the National Library Subject Headings genre/form terms also indicated the cultural area (language, ethnic or national) to which the work belonged, such as "Polish" or "English", as well as audience indications (such as "children's" or "youth"). This information was coded in the main portion of the heading, not in a subdivision. Thus the genre/form headings expressed two or even three characteristics of a work at the same time within the main portion, not counting subdivisions (e.g. "Polish novel", "Polish children's novel").

Finally, there was another restriction. In one group of 155 terms, which we may call "form terms", the terms were used both as subject terms (with an |x subdivision) and as genre/form terms (with no |x subdivision). However, in another group of 155 terms, which we may call "genre terms", all of the terms could be used as subject terms but only a few as genre/form terms. For example, the 155 term "English poetry" could be used both as a subject or genre/form heading but the 155 term "English sonnet" could be used only as a subject term, describing a work *about* English sonnets. If the work *was* a sonnet (or consisted of sonnets, contained sonnets, etc.) it could only be described with the broader term "English poetry".

100 1_ |aLeishman, J. B.|d(1902-1963)

245 10 |aThemes and variations in Shakespeare's sonnets /|cJ. B. Leishman.

655 _4 |aSonet angielski|xhistoria|y16-17 w.

[English sonnet|xhistory|y16-17 cent.]

100 1_ |aShakespeare, William|d(1564-1616)

245 10 |aShakespeare's sonnets /|cwith pref., glossary etc. by Israel Gollancz

655 _4 |aPoezja angielska|y17 w.

[English poetry|y17 cent.]

The genre of a work could thus only be described generally, even if it was quite obvious, as in the example above. The terms admitted were often, in fact, form terms (e.g. "Literature", "Film", "Photography") or, in the case of literature, major forms/genres ("Poetry", "Novel", "Short story").
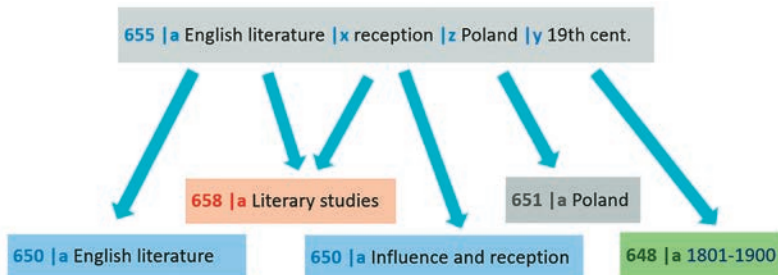
FIG. 2. Transition from the National Library of Poland Subject Headings to National Library of Poland Descriptors by cessation of use of |x, |y and |z subdivisions

In January 2017 the National Library of Poland introduced a new subject description system called National Library Descriptors (Deskryptory Biblioteki Narodowej), the goal of which was to improve the use of the faceted search interface[24]. The system is post-coordinat-

---

24 M. Cichoń, *National Library of Poland Descriptors model as an attempt of opening library data for reuse,* http://library.ifla.org/1617/1/114-cichon-en.pdf, 2017 [3.03.2019]; J. Cieloch-Niewiadomska, (2019 – forthcoming) "Introducing the National Library of Poland Descriptors to the Polish National Bibliography." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly,* vol. 57, nr 1;

ed and no longer uses MARC |x, |y and |z subdivisions. The change of system allowed major changes to be made to the structure of genre/ form headings.

New Genre Facet

Firstly, in the new faceted catalogue of the National Library of Poland (katalogi.bn.org.pl) most of the genre terms – coded in 655 field – formed a new 'Genre' facet, while subject terms – coded in 650 field – formed the 'Subject' facet. Thus, they are clearly separated at the presentation level.
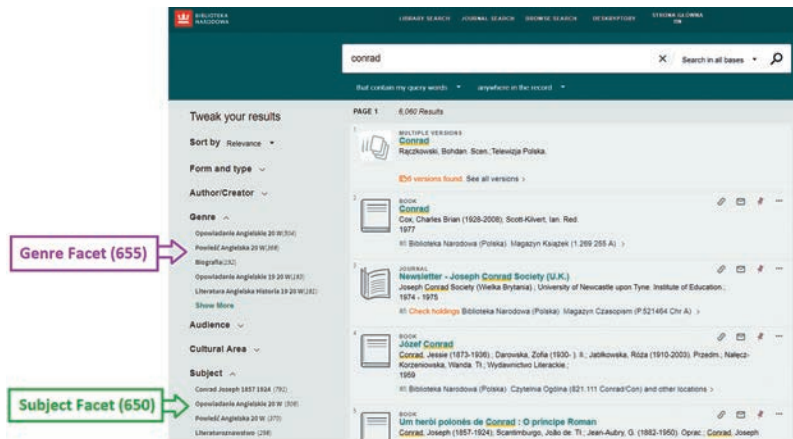

FIG. 3. Separation of genre and subject terms in the new catalogue of the National Library of Poland (katalogi.bn.org.pl)

Extending the Scope of Genre Terms

The application of genre terms was expanded to publications belonging to that genre. Users were provided with many new genre headings. Access to "living" or contemporary genres – genres that are being created today, especially popular and widely recognised genres – are very useful for users as they allow them to choose works accord-

---

K. Mituś, "Deskryptory Biblioteki Narodowej – geneza, tło teoretyczne i krótkie omówienie nowego sposobu opisu rzeczowego." *Fides. Biuletyn Bibliotek Kościelnych*, 23 nr 1 (44), 2017, pp. 121-144.

ing to their preferences. Access to "dead" or historical genres – those that are no longer (or to a large degree no longer) being created, such as idyll, epyllion or epistolary novel, are of great importance for academic research.

This expansion of genre terms also had practical consequences for cataloguers. Previously, in their daily work, cataloguers had been limited to a narrow set of very general genre headings such as "Polish novel", and could not use their knowledge of subject matter and understanding of specific fields of literature, for instance. Now, they began specifying genres more fully. This requires more time and effort but allows them to use their existing skills, as well as increasing their familiarity with contemporary genres.

While genre terms are still coded in 655 field, when they indicate a work that *belongs* to a genre/form, they are now coded in 650 field – without any subdivisions – when they indicate a work that is *about* a genre form. Consequently, a genre term can appear in two different facets, so a user can clearly distinguish between the two different usages of that term.
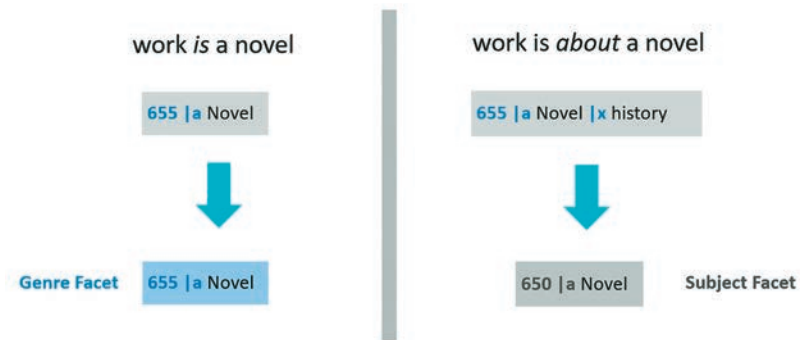

FIG. 4. Placing of genre terms in two different fields and facets

Separation of Cultural Area and Intended Audience

Second, the new system involves removing the designations of cultural areas and intended audiences from genre/form terms. The former are now coded in the 386 field (Creator/Contributor Charac-
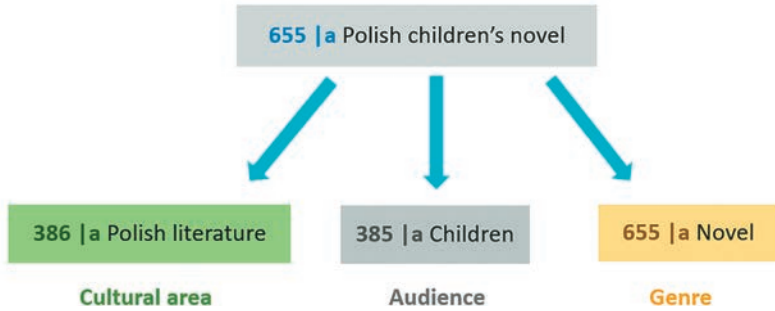
FIG. 5. Separation of Cultural Area and Intended Audience

teristics), where they are combined with general form items (e.g. "Polish literature", "English film", "German photography"). The latter are coded in the 385 field (Audience Characteristics) of bibliographic records (e.g. "Children", "Youth"). Designations of cultural areas and intended audiences are no longer coded in the authority record, so the total number of 155 headings has fallen greatly. Each genre/form, except for general form items such as "Polish literature", is now assigned to a single authority record.

FIG. 6. New facets in the new catalogue of the National Library of Poland (katalogi.bn.org.pl)

This division had a direct impact on the faceted search interface. Terms from each of the abstracted designations formed two new facets: "Cultural area" and "Audience", which created two more access points.

Two Genre/Form Facets

Finally, parts of the headings that had previously been displayed in the 655 field in bibliographic records were moved to the 380 field (Form of Work) and formed a new 'Form and type' facet.

In the new system, genre/form descriptors intended to be used in the 380 field form a finite list, which is not meant to be expanded. We can group them into two main categories:

1. Form/physical characteristics:
   a. Form/physical characteristics of writing: "Articles", "Audiobooks", "Journals", "Leaflets", "E-books", "Books", "Braille publications", "Manuscripts", "Antique prints"
   b. Form/physical characteristics of non-writing: "Films and serials", "Photographs", "Graphics", "Games and toys", "Computer games", "Maps", "Music", "Musical notation", "Audio and video recordings", "Three-dimensional objects", "Files and databases", "Computer programmes", "Radio and television programmes", "Drawings"
2. Major forms of writing:
   a. Major forms of literary writing: "Prose", "Poetry", "Drama", "Non-fiction, essays, journalism", "Comics"
   b. Major forms of non-literary writing: "Albums and art. books", "Guides", "Didactic publications", "Professional publications", "Information publications", "Scholarly publications", "Popular science publications", "Promotional publications", "Religious publications", "Official publications and legal acts"

Each bibliographic record must be assigned at least one descriptor of form/physical characteristics (point 1). If a bibliographic record is assigned a descriptor of the form/physical characteristics of writing (point 1a), it must also be assigned at least one descriptor of a major form of writing (point 2).

Genre/form descriptors intended to be used in the 655 field do not form a finite list and are being constantly expanded. We may group these descriptors into five categories:

1. Writing genres/forms:
   a. Literary writing genres (e.g. "Novel", "Historical novel", "Sonnet")
   b. Non-literary writing genres/forms (e.g. "Monograph", "Research report", "Review", "Dictionary", "Encyclopaedia", "Scholarly journal", "Film magazine")
2. Film genres (e.g. "Western", "Musical", "Film noir")
3. Music genres/forms (e.g. "Bourrée", "Flamenco", "Blues")
4. Art genres/forms (e.g. "Photography", "Etching", "Woodcut")
5. Radio/television genres/forms (e.g. "Radio programme", "Reality show", "Sitcom")

Major Forms

The division into 380 and 655 merits closer attention. The distinction between form/physical characteristics (here, field 380 point 1) and genre/form (field 655) is typical for libraries with faceted search interfaces. If they have a "genre/form" facet, it is normally separated from the "form/physical characteristics" facet[25].

However, the National Library of Poland has come up with an original idea. It divides writing genres into two groups – "major forms" (field 380 point 2), and ordinary "genres" or "minor forms" (field 655). Libraries with a "genre/form" facet include all the terms on a single level, in one facet. For example, the Genre facet of the University of Waterloo Library catalogue covers both major forms – "Poetry", "Fiction", "Drama" - and genres – "Dystopian fiction", "Psychological fiction", "Domestic novels", and so on.

The idea of distinguishing between major and minor forms in the National Library of Poland catalogue was partly motivated by the Polish tradition of literary theory. Stefania Skwarczyńska, a leading Polish researcher in the field of genre theory, points out that research

---

25 E.g. British Library, University of Guelph Library, Laurier Library, Thrift Library, University of Waterloo Library.

into the theory of literature is so deeply rooted in the cultural area in which it flourishes that its statements tend not to become universal as often as in other humanities. This is especially true of genre studies, where it results in a certain terminological incompatibility.

All Western traditions have at least two-tiered classifications of literature, but individual traditions differ to a large degree with regard to how they see these two levels. In the Anglo-American cultural area, literature is normally divided into "major forms" (or "major genres"), which are further divided into "genres" (or "minor genres") and "subgenres". However, there is no fixed, commonly accepted list of "major forms": they include "prose", "poetry" and "drama" but may also include "novel", "short story", "novella" (sometimes considered genres of prose), "comedy", "tragedy" (sometimes considered genres of drama) and others. The relationship between "major genres" and the division of literature into "fiction" and "non-fiction" is also problematic, as they can be either super-categories or forms of prose. While the word "forms" is applied to the first layer of the division, the word "genre" is used for both layers. In the Anglo-American tradition, genres tend to relate more to specific forms than to universals.[26]

In the Polish, German and Russian traditions, the first layer of division is fixed and contains three categories: "epic", "lyric" and "drama". This derives from the approach of Hellenistic critics, who misread the Socratic triad in Plato's *Republic* and transformed the three modes of presentation of speech (authorial, figural and mixed) into three genres, adding the "lyric" genre to Aristotle's "epic" and "dramatic" genres. This form of the triad was particularly popularised by Goethe, who wrote about the three "natural forms", the *Naturformen der Dichtung*.[27] In the Anglo-American and French traditions the "natural forms" are barely used or treated more narrowly as genres of poetry, but in the German and Slavic traditions they are still the basic mode used to classify literary writing.

---

26 D. Chandler, *An Introduction to Genre Theory* 1997, <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf> [2017.05.27]

27 J. W. von Goethe, *West-östlichen Divan: mit allen Noten und Abhandlungen,* 2nd edition, Berlin, 2016, p. 192.

Significantly, in the Anglo-American and French traditions the separation between the first and the second layer is often blurred. This is accompanied by a tendency to describe literary genres in terms of formal technical categories. By contrast, in the Central and Eastern European traditions, literary genres are described in terms of the typology of attitudes towards the world,[28] and the separation is more explicit. The "natural forms" are treated as essential, universal and everlasting in opposition to historically variable "genres".[29]

In the Polish tradition, the separation appears to be even stronger than in other Central and Eastern European traditions. The Polish term *rodzaj* "kind, type" is used for the first layer only, and the term *gatunek* "genre" for the second layer only. In German, both terms – *attung* and *Dichtart* – can refer to the first or second layer. In Russian, the term род "kind, type" is used only for the first layer, while the term жанр "genre" may refer to both layers.[30]

The new system used in the National Library of Poland follows the Polish tradition of firmly separating the two layers of genre by putting the "major forms" in a separate facet. However, traditional major forms – "lyric", "epic", "drama" – appear to be somewhat inadequate for today's works of literary fiction, where almost all epic is prose and almost all lyric is poetry. For example, modern bookshops tend to prefer the term "poetry" over the term "lyric" and the term "prose" over "epic". For this reason, the National Library of Poland catalogue changed the triad to "prose", "poetry" and "drama" as a sort of compromise between literary tradition and the modern literary situation.

The National Library of Poland catalogue adds two more major forms. The first is "Non-fiction literature, essays, journalism", where "non-fiction" is understood narrowly as literary non-fiction only. The second is "comics", whose specific character – somewhere between literature and visual arts – puts them in a distinct category. The Polish system thus changes the triad into a pentad, while retaining the basic

---

28   S. Skwarczyńska, *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze. Tom III.* Warszawa. pp. 69-71.

29   J. Frow, *Genre*. New York. p. 58-62.

30   S. Skwarczyńska, op. cit., p. 69-71.

concept of "universals". Moreover, it extends the distinction of major forms to non-literary writing works (field 380 point 2b). It groups these into nine categories based on the purpose for which they were written. The categories are therefore sometimes known as "functional" terms.

The decision by the National Library of Poland to distinguish major forms of writing was both significant and original. It allows users to filter search results not only by genre but in fact by two different degrees of genre, creating an additional access point. It was natural enough for Polish users, who are accustomed to two levels of genre division, to have these two levels separated and presented in two different facets. It was only a question of where to include these major forms. One possibility was to create another "Major Forms" facet. This would be logically and theoretically more accurate since it would not require in the insertion of terms from two different areas into the same facet. However, adding one more facet to an already large set would create a risk of information noise, which might confuse users. The model of two genre/form facets chosen is in fact potentially perceived by users as quite simple as it reflects the first layer and the second layer without going into details about those layers (note that the above-mentioned division of the 380 facet into groups and subgroups is not directly visible to users). Putting major forms together with form and physical characteristics is thus less perfect in theory, but potentially more functional in practice.

FRBR

The terms used in the 380 field in the FRBR model also require further attention. Among the above-mentioned groups of terms, major forms of writing (point 2), such as prose, poetry and scholarly publications, are clearly attributes of a work. They determine the intellectual content, which is constant, and thus refer to all expressions, manifestations and parts of a work. In the case of form/physical characteristics (point 1), some terms can also be treated as invariable attributes of the work (e.g. articles, journals, music) while others, which perhaps should be called "format" rather than "form" (e.g. audiobooks,

e-books, manuscripts), should be treated as attributes of the manifestation (or expression/manifestation). Differentiating between the last two entities is often difficult. For example, "Audiobooks" can be understood as an attribute of the realisation of a work in sound (*expression*) or an attribute of the physical embodiment of that realisation (*manifestation*).[31] In any case, they are clearly not attributes of the work, which is a broadening of the 380 MARC field definition "Form of work".

A fundamental incompatibility appears to exist between the MARC genre/form terms and the FRBR model. The FRBR model puts "form of *work*" on the list of attributes of a *work* and defines it as a "class to which the work belongs (e.g. novel, play, poem, essay, biography, symphony, concerto, sonata, map, drawing, painting, photograph)".[32] The Library of Congress states that its Genre/Form terms "describe the expression, not the manifestation or item. In other words, the terms refer to the intellectual or artistic expression of a work, not to the physical carrier". The first inconsistency perhaps results from the problematic category *expression.* The descriptions in both FRBR and LCGFT are in fact similar, emphasising that genre/forms are attributes of an intellectual rather than physical nature. In a way, genre/form is thus attributed to work/expression rather than manifestation/item. However, a second inconsistency also exists. The Library of Congress allows some exceptions: the terms "Video recordings for the hearing impaired" and "Video recordings for people with visual disabilities" – terms principally referring to manifestation – were added to LCGFT

---

31 For this description, the BIBFRAME model would be more suitable than the FRBR model as the former distinguishes only three, not four, core elements of abstraction: *Work, Instance* and *Item.* Problematic cases mentioned here could be neatly treated as formats of *Instance*; see: *Bibliographic Framework Initiative.* <http://www.loc.gov/bibframe/> [2017.05.27]

32 *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records: Final Report.* IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (1998). Munich. In the FRBR-LRM, "form of *work*" is renamed "category" and defined as "A type to which the work belongs" – see Riva, Pat, Le Bœuf, Patrick, Žumer, Maja (2016) *Transition Mappings: User Tasks, Entities, Attributes, and Relationships in FRBR, FRAD, and FRSAD mapped to their equivalents in the FRBR-Library Reference Model.* <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/frbr-lrm/transitionmapping_20160225.pdf> [2017.05.27]

because "it is useful to collocate all such works under one term"[33]. In the new National Library of Poland system, the situation is similar. Most of the genre/form headings are attributed to work/expression, albeit with some exceptions for the practical purpose of grouping all form/physical characteristic terms in one facet.

Universal Genres

The new National Library of Poland system drops not only the cultural area and intended audience indications form some genre headings but also form information, making them "universal genres". In the previous system, many genre/form terms consisted of a form substantive and a genre adjective, such as "Adventure film", as such phrases also exist in the Polish language. However, some genres consisted of a genre substantive with form information in brackets, such as "Horror (film)" or "Horror (lit.)", as phrases such as "Horror film" and "Horror literature" do not exist in Polish. In the new system, these genre descriptors were made independent: they now consist of the genre on its own, such as "Horror", and can be combined in searches either with one or more of 380 terms such as "Books", "Films and serials" and "Comics", or with one of more of 655 other terms such as "Novel", "Short story" or "Musical". In this way the new system makes greater use of Polish language habits to increase the number of access points and provide more search options.
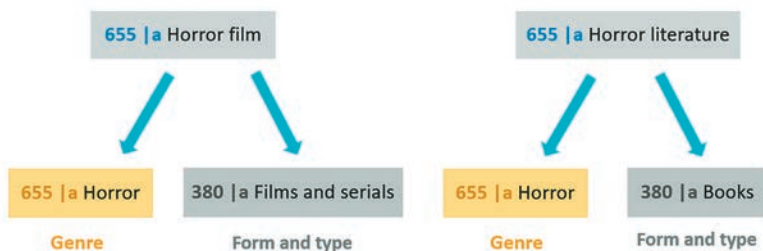

FIG. 7. Separation of some genre/form terms and creation of universal genres

---

33   *Frequently Asked Questions about Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials (LCGFT).* <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/genre_form_faq.pdf> [2017.05.27]. p. 4.

New Genres

Genres are usually more difficult to distinguish and define than forms as they refer to content and style rather than physical characteristics. Differences between forms are often immediately visible (e.g. the difference between a book and a film), whereas differences between genres are often much more subtle and open to interpretation (e.g. the difference between a short story and a novella). It is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between one genre and another, as genres overlap and there can be "mixed genres" and works that belong to more than one genre[34]. Genres are also much more inconstant, historically and culturally conditioned, and subject to evolution[35]. Thus the way the audience perceives a genre varies over space and time: "the same text can belong to different genres in different countries or times"[36]. Genres usually have cycles of growth and decline of interest[37]; they are constantly emerging, transforming and mixing.

For the reasons outlined above, it is usually difficult to name and classify genres, especially new ones. In a way, genres are not so much a tacit agreement between scholars and audiences as a compromise between them. Both scholars and audiences forge genre categories: audiences try to describe and categorise as many existing and emerging works as possible, while scholars try to describe and categorise them in the most consistent way possible. Each party also uses categories forged by the other, but a certain amount of time is required for scholars to accept the categories forged by the audience.

The National Library of Poland's approach to genre terms is essentially academic. Genres are treated as established, universally recognisable and quite stable categories. This means that great care must be taken when adding new genre terms to the catalogue; they are primarily added on basis of information from genre dictionaries. Some

---

34   D. Chandler (1997) *An Introduction to Genre Theory.* <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf> [2017.05.27]

35   M. Głowiński, op. cit., p. 18.

36   O'Sullivan, Tim, Hartley, John, Saunders, Danny, Montgomery, Martin, Fiske, John. *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies.* London 1994, p. 129.

37   D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, op. cit., p. 325.

online catalogues of bookshops (e.g. Amazon) include new terms such as "Paranormal Romance". In the National Library of Poland catalogue, such works would be assigned the "Romance" genre term and a "Paranormal activities" subject term – at least until such time as the term "Paranormal Romance" establishes itself in the academic world and literary tradition. Amazon treats both genre and subject terms as somewhat flexible tags, while the National Library of Poland treats genre terms more strictly and subject terms more flexibly.

Genres and Subjects

With the introduction of subject access to literary works in the National Library of Poland in January 2017, it was also necessary to establish the relationship between genre terms and subject terms. As mentioned above, genre can cover many aspects of a work, including its subject. Some genres are strictly connected to particular subjects: romance novels are always about love and very often about passion or betrayal; science fiction movies are always about the future and science; crime stories are almost always about murder, detectives and investigations, and so on. The question therefore arose of whether such genre terms should be accompanied by their "inherent" subject terms in the catalogue. On the one hand, such a solution would add new access points: the user could start a search either by selecting the "Romance" or the "Love" filter, and the "Love" subject term would allow the system to display all works about love, not just romance novels but also psychological and sociological publications, say. On the other hand, this would necessitate re-recording features that had already been recorded by a descriptor of genre, and the subject terms would not add any new content to the work's description.

Moreover, genre terms are generally more established, fixed and rooted in people's consciousness than subject terms. Each genre is perceived as a number of specific features, including subjects. Therefore users are more likely to use genre terms as the first access point rather than subject terms, at least in the case of general genre terms such as "Love". In the most probable search scenario, the user first filters by genre (e.g. "Romance") and then, if necessary, by certain sub-

jects – subjects that do not so much confirm that a work belongs to the genre (e.g. "Love") but rather distinguish it from other works belonging to the same genre (e.g. "Millionaires", "Emigration", "Cooking"). For these reasons the decision was made not to provide subject terms that are inherently covered by genre terms. Nevertheless, further research is necessary to identify actual user strategies.

Conclusion

The new system introduced in the National Library of Poland indicates some potential responses to the need for genre/form access in library catalogues, as well as some potential dilemmas regarding the introduction of genre.

First, a library which decides to add genre access to its catalogue has to take into account terminological problems and the overlapping nature of "form", "genre" and "physical characteristics". It must decide if and how these three categories should be divided and presented to users. The National Library of Poland decided to create two layers of genre/form access, the first covering form/physical characteristics and major forms of writing and the second covering "minor" forms/genres. This division may appear difficult in theory, but is functional in practice.

Second, a compromise must be found between providing the maximum number of access points and avoiding redundancy. Such redundancy is of no benefit to users, and may actually hinder them in their searches. In the system described in this paper, genre access consists of four facets: "Genre" (655), "Form and type" (380), "Audience" (385) and "Cultural area" (386). This multiplies the possible search strategies. However, adding even more facets could potentially be both redundant and confusing.

Finally, a library that wants to add genre access to its catalogue must choose between, on the one hand, a strict attitude based on systematic classification and the tradition of academic genre theory, and, on the other, a flexible attitude based on tags and gathering all terms that appear on the internet or in bookshops, not necessarily in a systematic way. The National Library of Poland genre access takes

the first approach, or at least tries to, albeit with some exceptions. It is worth noting that academic tradition does not necessarily diverge from popular perception; the latter may be shaped by the former, as in case of two layers of genre. Therefore the stricter academic approach, which would in any case appear to be appropriate for a national bibliographic agency, may also be favourable for users.

SUMMARY

This paper considers the possible uses of genre and form terms in a library catalogue on the basis of a new solution introduced by the National Library of Poland in January 2017. It begins with a brief look at the modern use of genre and form terms in catalogues, some definitional problems and some reasons behind the need for genre access in libraries. Against this background, the author presents the previous model of genre/form access in place in the National Library of Poland, where genre/form terms were only used to a limited extent. The author then introduces the new model, which has a number of distinct features: genre terms are applied not only to publications about genres but also to publications belonging to specific genres; designations of cultural area and of intended audience are separated from genre terms; and some of the genre terms ("major forms") are separated from others and combined with form/physical characteristic terms. Certain elements of the new "Form and type" facet are then compared to the FRBR model. Finally, the author considers practical aspects of the new system: "universal" genres which can be combined with more than one genre/form, problems with creating new genre terms, and the relationship between genres and subjects in literary fiction.

KEYWORDS: genre, form, physical characteristics, major forms, faceted search, bibliographic record, subject heading, descriptors