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NielsenIQ BookData

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UK Standard

Library Categories

(UKSLC) v2.0

User Guidelines

**Table of Contents**

[Introduction and summary of changes for Version 2.0 2](#_Toc532912225)

[What type of information does the UKSLC scheme deliver? 3](#_Toc532912226)

[The benefits of adopting the UKSLC scheme 3](#_Toc532912227)

[Using this document 3](#_Toc532912227)

[Assigning and using the codes 4](#_Toc532912227)

Section [1. Adult Non-Fiction 5](#_Toc532912229)

Section [2. Adult Fiction 5](#_Toc532912229)

Section [3. Children’s & Teenage 6](#_Toc532912237)

Section 4. Interest (All Types) 7

References and further reading 7

**Introduction and summary of changes for Version 2.0**

BIC has undertaken a significant review of the UK Standard Library Categories (UKSLC) Scheme. Version 2.0 constitutes the first significant update of the scheme since Version 1.2 was released in September 2019 which aligned the scheme with *Thema*, which is established as the primary subject scheme in the global publishing industry.

The full specification for UKSLC v2.0 can be found here: <https://bic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/BIC-UKSLC-v2.0-Final-Draft-Aug-2025.xlsx>

While the overall structure and application of UKSLC remains – that is, the parallel handling of three distinct ‘Types’ of material (Adult Non-Fiction, Adult Fiction and Children’s & Teenage) – the key change for v2.0 is the introduction of Section 4 Interest. This allows for the allocation of Interest values from a single table to all material across all three Types. This single Interest table replaces the Interest values previously held in separate tables within each Type and greatly expands the range and detail of Interest values, especially with regard to ethnic groups.

This change maintains and increases compatibility with *Thema* – the UKSLC Interest values act very much like Thema qualifiers which can be assigned alongside all *Thema* subject categories.

Other changes in v2.0 are:

* The removal of Interest codes within each Type section
* The re-instatement of previously deprecated codes for Fantasy Romance in both adult and child/teen fiction
* The removal of all other previously deprecated codes
* The removal of Broad Subject Category Codes in Adult Non-Fiction; these represented a simplified list of ANF values – they were reportedly used very little if at all and were not included in the *Thema* to UKSLC mapping.

Lists of the removed codes are provided in annexes in the full specification for UKSLC v2.0.

The removal of codes, as outlined above, breaks 'backwards compatibility' (whereby any valid code in a previous version remains valid in the new version); hence the numbering of the new release as v2.0, rather than v1.3. It is not expected that all records classified with now-removed codes under previous versions will be comprehensively re-classified by users or data providers. Rather, v2.0 codes are likely to be introduced alongside values from previous versions; it is thus important to indicate the version number of UKSLC values, and it is best practice for data providers to include the text headings as well as the codes, for clarity and ease of use (although as stated, most codes and headings are unchanged, and no previous code is re-used with a different meaning).

**What type of information does the UKSLC scheme deliver?**

The UKSLC scheme provides a range of title-level descriptors reflecting subject (for non-fiction) and genre (for fiction). They also allow for the expression of:

* audience (e.g. books designed for early, reluctant or emergent readers);
* treatment (e.g. graphic novels, short story collections);
* book type and reading age for children’s books (e.g. picture books, early learning, teenage fiction etc); and
* interest (e.g. items of specific interest to LGBTQ+, Black or Asian groups)

All values can be assigned directly or derived variously and as appropriate from *Thema* subject categories (typically the primary code) and/or *Thema* qualifiers. Other bibliographic elements (e.g. Language of text) are referenced in the mapping as required.

Note then, that the UKSLC allocation for an individual book record may comprise a single value, or several values as applicable.

UKSLC values are included in the NielsenIQ BookData and BDS databases, supported in MARC 21 and QUOTES, endorsed by major library suppliers, and promoted by the National Acquisitions Group as a national standard.

**The benefits of adopting the UKSLC scheme**

Adopting UKSLC offers many benefits. UKSLC codes can be used to facilitate the evidence-based assessment and benchmarking of stock supply, demand and performance. They support standardised servicing and supply specification, reducing the complexity and cost of processing and selection. On the library shelf, they provide the basis for a logical and user-friendly display of stock, scaleable for different sizes and type of library. Most significantly, they underpin improvements in access to library stock, facilitating on-line browsing by subject and genre using the 'search, discover, refine' methodology familiar from on-line retailers and supporting personalised reader recommendations, regional and national catalogue initiatives, and links to retail sites.

**Using this document**

It is recommended that this document be read in conjunction with full specification for UKSLC v2.0: <https://bic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/BIC-UKSLC-v2.0-Final-Draft-Aug-2025.xlsx>

**Assigning and using the codes**

Whether mapped from *Thema*, or allocated manually, USKLC values are assigned in the following order of precedence for various types of stock (elements in italics are mandatory for the Type of material specified, other elements are assigned only as applicable):

* Adult Non-Fiction: *Subject*; Audience; Interest
* Adult Fiction: *Genre*; Audience; Treatment; Interest
* Children’s Early Years: *Book type*; Interest
* Children's & Teenage Non-Fiction: *Age*; *Subject*; Audience; Interest
* Children's & Teenage Fiction: *Age*; *Genre*; Audience; Treatment; Interest

Note that Interest values (all from the new Section 4) may be assigned to all Types of material, and always after all other values (more than one Interest value may of course be assigned).

In practice, however, most records will be assigned only a single value; and the total number of categories will seldom exceed three.

Each UKSLC value has a unique three-character identifying code. This code can be used to identify the UKSLC within a product record (eg in MARC or ONIX) or to indicate a shelf location particular to an individual item of stock. When used as a shelf mark, the codes may be printed on a spine label or marked in a standard position on the flyleaf of the book. All spine labels should be produced and positioned in accordance with the NAG’s Guidelines for Servicing:

[www.nag.org.uk/publications/servicing-guidelines-best-practice-for-libraries](http://www.nag.org.uk/publications/servicing-guidelines-best-practice-for-libraries)

Multiple UKSLCs are designed to facilitate search and retrieval. Where a title carries more than one UKSLC, user-defined mapping rules will govern which category (or categories) is used to produce the shelf mark, subject to the three-line limitation of the spine label itself. Items may also be mapped as required to a local shelf mark.

Where a simpler shelving scheme is required, internal mapping can be used to allow the organisation and display of stock to be tailored according to category, and by size and type of library. Related subjects or genres could be shelved together for example.

The paragraph numbers below reference the relevant table in UKSLC v2.0.

**1. UKSLC Adult Non-Fiction**

**1.1 Adult Non-Fiction – Subject**

A single Subject category is *mandatory* for each Adult Non-Fiction item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book. Shelf locations may be derived directly from the Subject codes.

**1.2 Adult Non-Fiction – Audience**

A single Audience code *may* also be applicable to any Adult Non-Fiction item. Assign only if specific criteria are met.

Adult Non-Fiction items *may* also be assigned one or more Interest codes – see 4 below.

**2. UKSLC Adult Fiction**

**2.1 Adult Fiction – Genre**

A single Genre category is *mandatory* for each Adult Fiction item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book. Shelf locations may be derived directly from the Genre codes. Note that for certain Graphic Novel items, where no explicit genre is known, the Treatment code GRA may be used as the Genre code.

**2.2 Adult Fiction – Audience**

A single Audience code *may* also be applicable to any Adult Fiction item. Assign only if specific criteria are met.

**2.3 Adult Fiction –Treatment**

Up to 4 Treatment codes *may* be applicable to any Adult Fiction item, though this is highly unlikely. Typically, only one or two Treatment values will be assigned, it at all. Assign only if specific criteria are met.

Adult Fiction items *may* also be assigned one or more Interest codes – see 4 below.

**3. UKSLC Children’s & Teenage**

The particular demands of Children's & Teenage stock require a modified category structure. Children's & Teenage stock is subdivided initially into Early Years, Non-Fiction and Fiction sections. Aside from Early Years, several distinct tables are needed to reflect key facets of Children’s & Teenage material. Note that in v2.0, *all* Children’s & Teenage items – including Early Years material – may also be assigned one or more Interest codes.

**3.1 Children's & Teenage – Early Years – Booktype**

A single Booktype category is *mandatory* for each Early Years item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book. Shelf locations may be derived directly from the Booktype codes.

Early Years items *may* also be assigned one or more Interest codes – see 4 below.

**3.2 Children's & Teenage – Non-Fiction**

* 3.2.1 Children's & Teenage – Non-Fiction – Age

A single Age category is *mandatory* for each Children’s & Teenage Non-Fiction item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book. See Subject below for a note on shelf location.

* 3.2.2 Children's & Teenage – Non-Fiction – Subject

A single Subject category is *mandatory* for each Children’s & Teenage Non-Fiction item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book.

When used to determine shelf location, the Subject code will normally appear in conjunction with an Age code. Two shelf marks will therefore normally be assigned: for example, N7/YAM, NT/YPR.

* 3.2.3 Children's & Teenage – Non-Fiction – Audience

A single Audience code *may* also be applicable to any Children’s & Teenage Non-Fiction item. Assign only if specific criteria are met.

Children’s & Teenage Non-Fiction items *may* also be assigned one or more Interest codes – see 4 below.

**3.3 Children's & Teenage – Fiction**

* 3.3.1 Children's & Teenage Fiction – Age

A single Age category is *mandatory* for each Children’s & Teenage Fiction item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book. See Genre below for a note on shelf location.

* 3.3.2 Children's & Teenage – Fiction – Genre

A single Genre category is *mandatory* for each Children’s & Teenage Fiction item. Assign the single most relevant code for the book.

When used to determine shelf location, these Genre codes will normally appear in conjunction with an Age code. Two shelf marks will therefore normally be assigned: for example, F9/YCL, F11/YTR.

* 3.3.3 Children's & Teenage – Fiction – Audience

A single Audience code *may* also be applicable to any Children’s & Teenage Fiction item. Note: the 4 Audience categories are mutually exclusive and only one code from this group may be added to any record. Assign the first value for which the specific criteria are met only.

* 3.3.4 Children's & Teenage Fiction – Treatment

Up to 4 Treatment codes may be applicable to any Children’s & Teenage Fiction item, though this is highly unlikely. Typically, only one or two Treatment values will be assigned, it at all. Assign only if specific criteria are met.

Note: The Treatment codes YGR and YPO are mutually exclusive and only one of them may be assigned; either may be used in conjunction any of the other Treatment codes.

Children’s & Teenage Fiction items *may* also be assigned one or more Interest codes – see 4 below.

**4. UKSLC Interest**

**4.1 Interest**

As stated above, this table is new to v2.0 and differs from other UKSLC tables in that values from the table may be assigned to any Type of item.

Up to 8 Interest codes *may* be applicable to any Adult Fiction item, though this is highly unlikely. Typically, only one or two Interest values will be assigned, it at all. Assign only if specific criteria are met.

Note that the General Asian Interest code 4FA should not be assigned if any of the more specific regional Asian codes (4FB, 4FC or 4FD) have been assigned.

**References and further reading**

* Worked Examples of UKSLC allocation can be found here: <https://bic.org.uk/resources/uk-standard-library-categories/>
* See the BIC Bite on UKSLC for further information: <https://bic.org.uk/resources/bic-bites/>
* Users may find the following information useful with regards to *Thema* v.1.6:
  + EDItEUR’s *Thema* v.1.6 Basic User Instructions

[22041101\_Using Thema 2 Basic User Instructions for version 1.6.pdf](https://www.editeur.org/files/Thema/1.6/Using%20Thema/22041101_Using%20Thema%202%20Basic%20User%20Instructions%20for%20version%201.6.pdf)

* + EDItEUR’s *Thema* v.1.6 Interactive Browser

<https://ns.editeur.org/thema/en>

* + General information about *Thema*

[www.editeur.org/151/Thema/](http://www.editeur.org/151/Thema/)

* Details of BIC’s Intellectual Property Policy and License pertaining to this scheme can be found here: <https://bic.org.uk/resources/license-to-use-bic-standards/>