

Genre terms – completing subject access in the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

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Abstract:

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek uses various instruments for subject cataloging thus creating a broad base for subject access in its online information system. Classifying publications with the Dewey Decimal Classification, and indexing with subject headings taken from an authority file were, in 2012, supplemented with a third pillar: genre access is now given to fiction and children's literature. This is done re-using data provided by the marketing agency of the German book publishing and selling trade. Based on a fixed list of genre terms for fiction and for children's literature, the library created a special type of authority record for genres. Title data provided by the marketing agency are regularly imported into the cataloging system of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. Genre terms contained in those data are matched against the authority records resulting in links between title data and genre authorities. Users now have additional subject access to a substantial part of the library's collection.

Keywords: Genre terms, subject access, national bibliography, subject cataloging, third party data

1 SUBJECT CATALOGING AT THE DEUTSCHE NATIONALBIBLIOTHEK

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library, in short DNB) is the central archive library for Germany. It has been granted by federal law the right to legal deposit for publications published in Germany thus establishing its function as national library. Its tasks not only encompass collecting the national imprint and foreign publications about Germany and in German, but also publishing the *Deutsche Nationalbibliografie (German National Bibliography)*, meaning that all the items collected have to be cataloged. Besides descriptive cataloging subject cataloging has always been an integral part of creating access to the collection.

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012, has used various instruments for subject cataloging in the course of its history. Indexing with subject headings has a long tradition in DNB. The subject headings are taken from an authority file cooperatively maintained by the German speaking library community. In 2007 DNB started using Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) to complement indexing by classificatory access.

The top 100 DDC classes are – in a slightly modified manner – used for arranging the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie. These so-called subject groups are registered with OCLC as a separate DDC edition. For fiction and children’s literature two extra subject groups were devised, namely, B for Belletristik = fiction, and K for Kinder- und Jugendliteratur = children’s literature, because these two kinds of publications have to be selected easily from the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie resp. the online catalog.

Subject cataloging in the DNB is done at various levels, i.e., not all publications are treated alike, meaning that some publications are both indexed and classified, whereas others only are assigned a subject group. Adult and children’s fiction books are not classified and only partially indexed, depending on the indexer’s decision, whether specific subjects can be identified in the book and expressed with subject headings. Children’s non fictional books are usually indexed. In 2012 this two pillar system for creating subject access was complemented with a third pillar: genre access is now given to fiction and children’s literature.

2 WHY INTRODUCING GENRE TERMS FOR FICTION AND CHILDREN’S LITERATURE?

There were various reasons that motivated the introduction of genre terms. DNB is serving as an important data provider for the German library community, both academic and public libraries. Especially on the part of the public libraries, the request for genre access has long been articulated.

In 2010 DNB took a major decision in terms of cataloging. Some years ago the right to legal deposit was expanded to digital publications. This meant that the number of items to be added to the collection increased greatly without corresponding increases in resources to process them at the same time. Typically, cutting back in descriptive and subject cataloging is an answer to such a situation, and DNB decided, for example, to stop indexing certain types of publications.

But this also forced the library to think about alternative strategies for cataloging and metadata creation. Broader reuse of existing metadata is one route to be taken, resulting in the decision to stop manual cataloging of online publications and completely rely on third party data. The second major route is to invest into the development of automated cataloging processes to produce descriptive and subject data. But reusing third party data for DNB’s own purposes also provides the possibility to enrich catalog data in general, and thus, offer more access.

The German publishing and book selling trade is organized in a national association called *Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels* (*German Publishers & Booksellers Association*)¹. It operates a marketing agency, called *MVB Marketing- und Verlagsservice des Buchhandels GmbH*² or in short *MVB*. MVB operates the *Verzeichnis Lieferbarer Bücher* (*German Books in Print, VLB*)³ where publishers can report advance announcements and newly-released titles. The VLB database is used by book stores as well as publishers. The data are also used for the online system *buchhandel.de*⁴, which offers an ordering service for books and other media for the general public.

¹ <http://www.boersenverein.de/de/portal/index.html>

² <http://www.mvb-online.de/>

³ <http://www.vlb.de/>

⁴ <http://www.buchhandel.de/>

DNB has a longstanding and close cooperation with MVB and regularly receives ONIX data for books and other media newly integrated into the VLB database. These data are converted into the format used in DNB's PICA cataloging database. DNB uses these records for acquisition and cataloging purposes. DNB's weekly *New Release Service* (*Neuerscheinungsdienst, ND*)⁵ is also based on the VLB data. The titles are structured as in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie and also grouped according to the DDC-Sachgruppen.

MVB has devised a classificatory system, called *Warengruppen* (*Merchandise categories*), that are used by publishers to assign topical, genre and/or audience information to publications. These categories can be used to arrange books in bookstores, for example, to group all travel guides together.

Whereas the descriptive metadata provided by MVB are regularly reused in cataloging incoming publications, the subject metadata were left aside. Confronted with the challenge to look for alternative ways to provide subject access, DNB's Department of Subject Cataloging analyzed these data more closely. It was decided that the categories used for fiction and children's literature were good enough to provide additional subject access for DNB's collection. It was found that, for around two thirds of the fiction and children's books collected by DNB, there are MVB data that can be reused. For the remaining third, genre terms have to be assigned manually.

3 GENRE TERMS IN THE DNB CATALOG

The list of genre terms currently used by DNB consists of 63 entries, mostly applicable for fiction and children's literature, a few terms refer to publications, like post card books, or everlasting calendars, or gift books. This list is fixed; alterations would only be made if MVB would add or delete new terms.

The genre terms are simple one or more word terms, e.g., *Bilderbücher* (picture books) or *Historische Kriminalromane* (Historical detective stories). Related genres are grouped together into broad categories, resulting in a two-level hierarchy (see Figure 1).

Liste der in der DNB verwendeten Gattungsbegriffe	
Erzählende Literatur	
Erzählende Literatur: Hauptwerk vor 1945	
Erzählende Literatur: Gegenwartsliteratur ab 1945	
Historische Romane und Erzählungen	
Erzählende Literatur: Anthologien	
Romanhafte Biographien	
Spannung	Suspense
Krimis, Thriller, Spionage	Mysteries, thrillers, espionage
Historische Kriminalromane	Historical mysteries
Horror	Horror
...	...

Fig. 1: Clipping from the list of genre terms

⁵ http://www.dnb.de/DE/Service/DigitaleDienste/ND/nd_node.html

DNB decided to create local authority records for the genre terms which then are linked to the title data. This linking technique is broadly used in the PICA cataloging system, especially for linking authority records like subject headings and title records together, but also authority records with authority records (e.g., the records for hierarchically related topics) or title records with title records (e.g., parallel online and print editions of a work) (see Figures 2 and 3).

Creating authority records and using the linking technique has several advantages:

- The genres can be enriched with synonyms and other additional information thus providing broader and better access.
- Typos and other errors are avoided.
- Users of the online catalog can select a certain group of publications with one click.

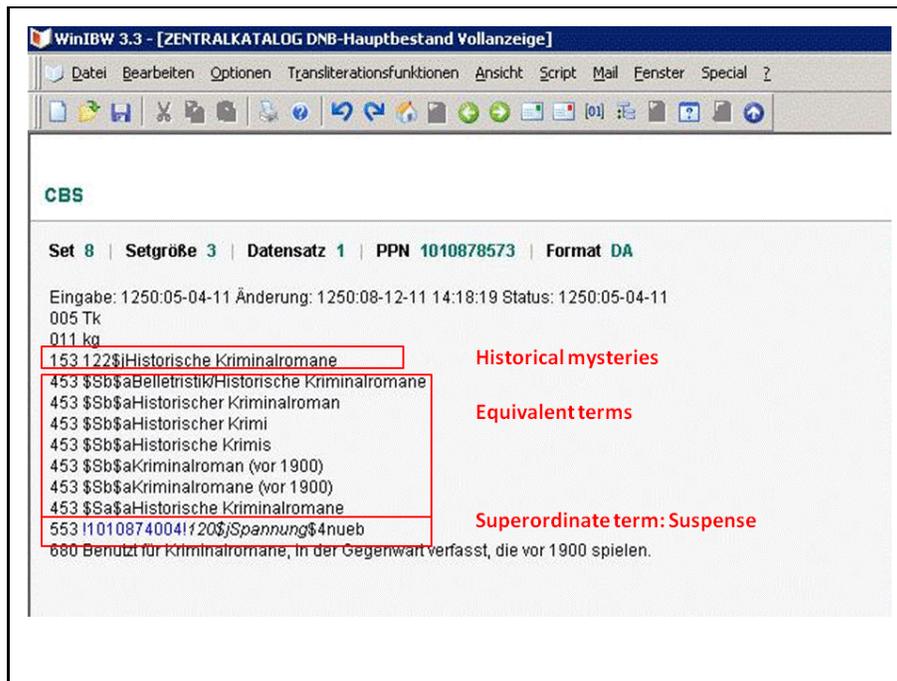


Fig. 2: Display of a genre term record in the PICA cataloging system

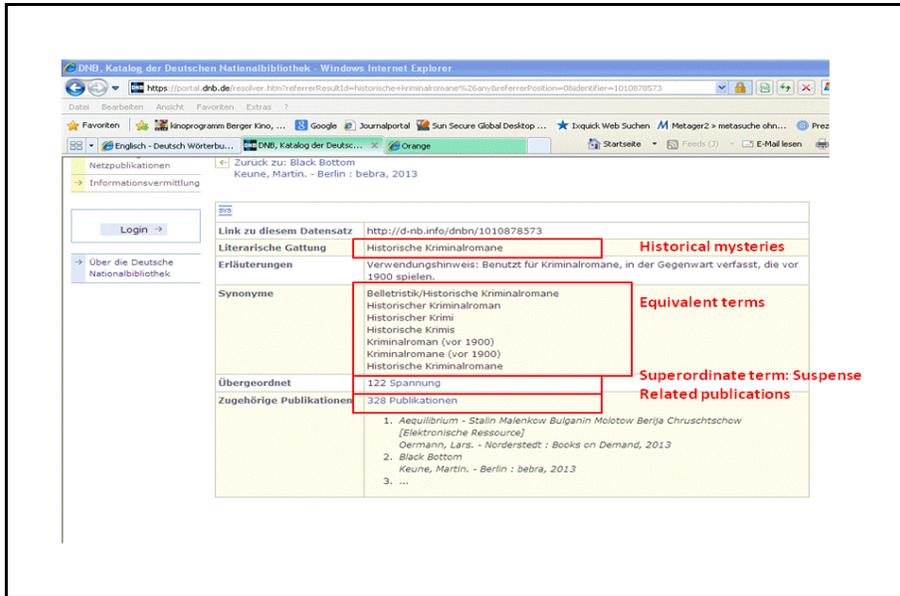


Fig. 3: Display of a genre term record in the OPAC

To integrate the genre terms provided by MVB into the DNB cataloging system there is a software procedure as part of the conversion and importing of the MVB ONIX data into DNB's cataloging format and system. It consists of the following steps. The ONIX data for new titles are converted into the PICA format and imported into DNB's cataloging system, including genre and other subject information as recorded by MVB. The genre terms in the relevant fields are identified by matching them letter by letter against the fixed list of genre terms. If a genre term is identified then the corresponding authority record is pulled out and linked to the title record (see Figure 4).

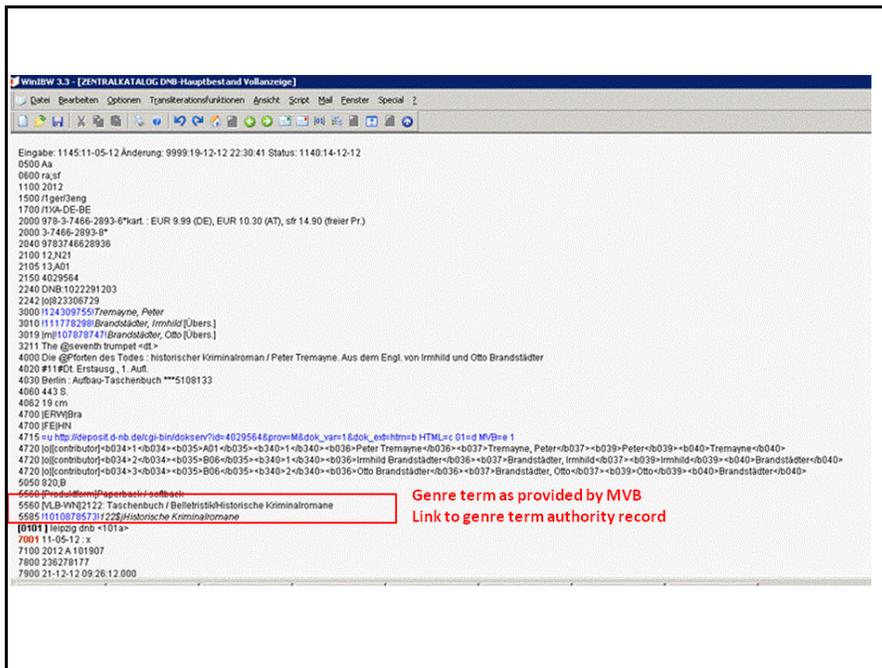


Fig. 4: Title record from DNB cataloging database with genre term

All physical publications collected by DNB pass through the Department of Subject Cataloging. For fictional and children's books without genre term indexers will select the appropriate genre term authority record and link it to the title record. The automatically assigned genre terms are inspected, but the rule is to take the data as they are in order to guarantee an efficient workflow and to benefit as much as possible from using third party data. Corrections are only made in the rare cases of obvious serious mistakes, for example, the genre term *Bilderbücher* (*picture books*) is assigned to a novel.

DNB is a major data provider especially to the German-speaking library community and offers a variety of data services based on MARC21. It now also exports the genre terms, using MARC21 field 655.

Currently DNB has no plans to enlarge the assignment of genre terms to non-fictional literature. A reason for this is that, in the year 2015, DNB will switch to RDA as its future set of cataloging rules. It is not yet completely clear what changes this will imply for certain practices in subject cataloging in DNB.

In retrieval the genre term authority records provide a combined classificatory-verbal access to fiction and children's literature. DNB started using them in spring 2012. By the end of 2012 already around 18,000 publications had links to genre terms records. The presentation of the genre term records in DNB's OPAC has yet to be optimized: it is intended to integrate them as a facet into the drill down menu users are offered for the refinement of hit lists. Currently users can directly search for a genre term, and they can click on the genre term in a title record thus retrieving all other titles with the same genre term (see Figure 5).

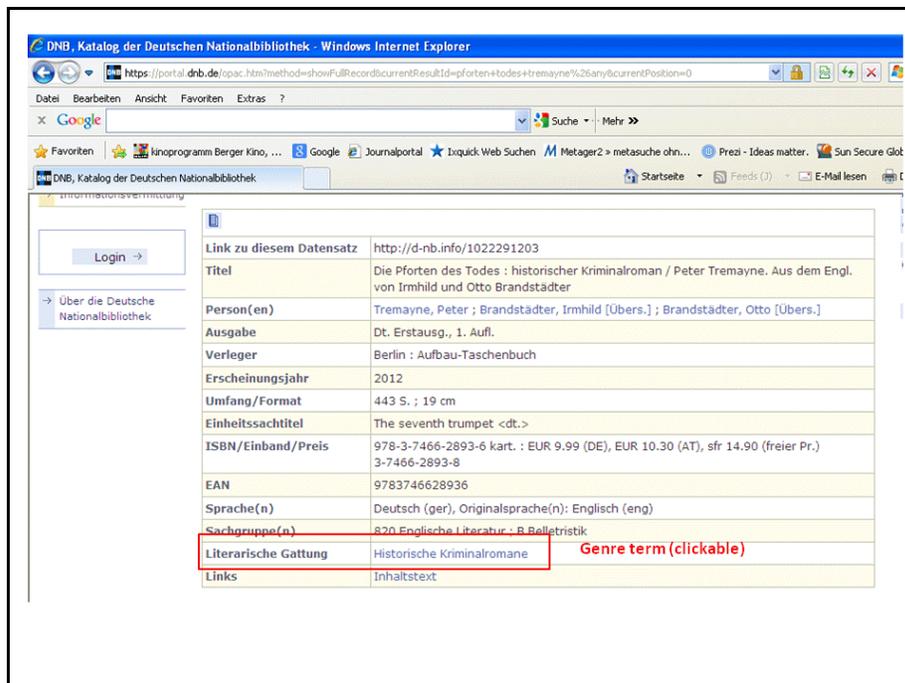


Fig. 5: Display of a title record in the OPAC

In conclusion, through the reuse of third party genre term information DNB could improve subject access with manageable effort – a way the library will continue in the future.