Before doing a subject search in the Grace Library Online Catalog, check the *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)* to determine if your topic is a correct subject heading. *LCSH* are the red books located near the reference desk and near the “orange” PC on the second floor and near the library’s reference PC on the third floor. The call number for the *LSCH* is: Ref. Z695 ZB L524 2007 v.1 – v.5

Finding a correct subject heading is relatively easy, and doing so may save you a lot of time and frustration. If you use an incorrect subject heading you may retrieve nothing. The examples below will walk you through the process of locating a valid subject heading. They will also explain the layout and the important abbreviations used in *LCSH*.

**Step One**

Look up your topic alphabetically in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LSCH)* books. If the listing for the word or phrase you searched for is in bold, then you have chosen a correct subject heading.

But if the listing is NOT in bold (such as “health insurance” below), then the word or phrase you have chosen is NOT a correct subject heading. In that case, you would want to search for the word or phrase given by *LCSH* on the line below it (after the word “USE”). In the example below, for instance, the correct subject heading for the topic health insurance is “Insurance, Health.”

Incorrect Heading

- Health institutions
- Health insurance
- Health insurance agents *(May Subd Geog)*
  - UF Insurance, Health-agents
  - [Former heading]
- BT Insurance agents

Correct Heading

- USE Health facilities
- USE Insurance, Health
Step Two

Once you find the correct subject heading, it’s a good idea to look that term up in the LCSH books because LCSH will often give you narrower subject headings which can help you do a more focused and efficient search. LCSH will also give you related, or broader terms. Related terms are useful because searching with them will retrieve information on similar topics. Broader terms are useful when you do not find any information using the narrower subject headings. The example below is the LCSH listing for the correct term, “Insurance, Health.”

If you have any difficulty locating a correct subject heading, or if you have questions about using LCSH, please see a librarian for more help.

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Questions? Contact Grace Library
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