

E4LIBRARIES CATEGORY HEADINGS - ADULT NON-FICTION AND ADULT FICTION

1. Introduction

The following draft proposal forms part of the BIC E4Libraries initiative – a partnership between BIC, MLA, CILIP, NAG, library suppliers and library management system suppliers designed to streamline workflows and realise the potential for efficiency gains in the library supply chain.

As part of this initiative BIC has undertaken to investigate the use of current industry-standard BIC codes to produce a set of E4Libraries Category Headings - library-oriented category headings applicable across the full range of Adult Non-Fiction, Adult Fiction and Children's / Young Adult stock.

BIC has also committed itself to ensuring that future revisions of the *BIC Standard Subject Categories and Qualifiers* take account of the needs of both the public library and trade communities.

Categories for Adult Fiction and Adult Non-Fiction are discussed below. Categories for Children's / Young Adult titles are discussed in an associated document – *E4Libraries Category Headings - Children's / Young Adult*.

It is intended that E4Libraries Category Headings will be provided in addition to existing Dewey classifications and subject / genre headings.

Many library authorities have adopted categorisation schemes for fiction and non-fiction over the past forty years. The majority of such authorities apply these categories solely at item level to determine shelf display. A minority also use them to provide a searchable option within the main title-level catalogue record.

However, most of these schemes are unique to the authority concerned and rely heavily for their operation on costly and time-consuming staff intervention.

A scheme of BIC-based standard subject / genre categories offers the opportunity to reduce cost and streamline workflows by automating the categorisation process, and to support further improvements in stock selection, management, discovery and display.

Standard subject / genre categories for UK public libraries can be used to facilitate:

- shelf display / browsing
- electronic display / browsing
- standardised servicing
- reduction in complexity and cost of processing and selection
- evidence-based assessment of stock demand, supply and performance
- comparative performance analysis
- selection specification
- personalised recommendations
- links with retail sites

The scheme outlined below proposes a comprehensive set of fixed title-level E4Libraries Category Headings capable of supporting all these functions.

At the same time it offers authorities a degree of flexibility in determining item-level shelfmarks - the categories used to organise and display stock in individual locations. This is designed to allow authorities to customise the scheme to meet their specific needs, and in particular to allow authorities which have already developed their own schemes to integrate them with this new standard.

This approach has received substantial approval from a Consultation Group representing a variety of English library authorities. However, an alternative approach based around a fixed shelfmark has also been suggested. Appendix 1 examines this alternative in more detail and compares its strengths and weaknesses with those of the main proposal outlined in Sections 1 to 8 below. Comments are invited on the merits of this alternative approach

Further comments regarding all areas of this proposal are welcomed from librarians and suppliers alike. Library suppliers are invited in particular to comment on the Category Headings chosen and on the feasibility and potential impact on their operations of the flexibility built into the main scheme; LMS suppliers on the implications of their systems for the production of performance data.

2. General

2.1 E4L Category Headings will be derived from codes assigned according to *BIC Standard Subject Categories and Qualifiers (Version 2, Revision 1)*. See <http://www.bic.org.uk/productinfo-subjectcat.html> for the full document and current *User Guidelines*.

2.2 BIC Subject Category and Qualifier codes will be assigned at source by the publisher and / or by bibliographic data agencies.

2.3 These codes are normally assigned in advance of publication and will not achieve 100% accuracy. However, it is expected that the return in enhanced efficiency will more than compensate for this.

2.4 BIC Subject Category and Qualifier codes will be held in the standard MARC record. It is understood that MARC fields are already available for this purpose.

2.5 All BIC codes assigned to a title will be held within the MARC record as a basis for any future development of this categorisation scheme.

2.6 Any E4L Category Heading assigned to a title will also be held within the MARC record. Any implementation work required here will be progressed as part of this project.

2.7 E4L Category Headings will be assigned by bibliographic data agencies on the basis of detailed mapping rules developed from the listing of BIC codes provided in the tables below.

2.8 Each Adult Fiction and Adult Non-Fiction title will normally be assigned one E4Libraries Category Heading. Where relevant additional Category Headings may be assigned as follows:

Adult Non-Fiction: Gay/lesbian interest

Adult Fiction: Gay/lesbian interest; Short stories; Fiction in translation

2.9 Where more than one BIC code is assigned to a title, the code first cited in the string denotes the primary subject, and E4L Category Headings will normally be mapped from this primary code. However, other mapping rules will also be implemented where required, e.g. in cases where additional Category Headings are supported.

2.10 It is envisaged that E4L Category Headings will be generated through an automated mapping program to be developed as part of this scheme.

2.11 Guidance will be needed for those authorities wishing to undertake retrospective conversion of stock to the new E4L Category Headings. Procedures for retrospective conversion will be

investigated as part of this project.

3. Search

3.1 E4L Category Headings may be used to support discovery through inclusion in LMS subject or keyword search functions.

3.2 E4L Category Headings will also be capable of supporting any future development of structured category browse options on the Amazon model.

4. Shelf display

4.1 The E4L Category Heading held in the MARC record provides a title-level descriptor applicable to all copies of a single title.

4.2 The E4L Category Heading may also be used to generate a shelfmark for individual items, allowing titles to be grouped for categorised shelf display.

4.3 The shelfmark provides a item-level descriptor specific to an individual copy in a particular library location.

4.4 Two options are possible here:

Option 1

The item-level shelfmark will be taken directly from the title-level E4L Category Heading.

In this case the E4L Category Heading and shelfmark will be identical.

Option 2

The item-level shelfmark may be mapped from the title-level E4L Category Heading.

In this case the shelfmark may differ from the E4Library Category Heading. Shelfmarks may also differ between authorities and between different libraries within the same authority.

4.5 All shelfmarks will require an associated code which may be used to indicate the correct shelving position of each item.

4.6 All E4L Category Headings will therefore be accompanied by a standard three-character alphabetical code for this purpose.

4.7 To ensure shelving codes are kept as brief as possible, some codes have been used in more than one section. For example

CRI = Crime (Adult Fiction) / CRI = Crime (Adult Non-Fiction)

HIS = History (Adult NF / Children's NF) / HIS = Historical (Adult Fiction / Children's NF)

4.8 Shelving rules therefore derive from a combination of factors. For example,

HIS + Dewey spine label + adult title = shelve in Adult NF / History

HIS + no Dewey spine label + adult title = shelve in Adult Fiction / Historical

HIS + Dewey spine label + children's title = shelve in Children's NF / History

HIS + no Dewey spine label + children's title = shelve in Children's Fiction / Historical

(Note: if shelving codes specific to categories Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction, Children's and Young Adult Fiction, Children's and Young Adult Non-Fiction are preferred, codes may be prefixed

as follows: Adult Fiction – AF/; Adult Non-Fiction – AN/; Children's and Young Adult Fiction – YF/; Children's and Young Adult Non-Fiction – YN/)

4.9 These codes may be used on a spine label or they may be marked in a standard position on the flyleaf of the book. (Note: the role of category labels is open to question. Are they provided to help readers make their choice, or simply to ensure books are reshelfed correctly? In the latter case an indication of category on the flyleaf of the book or in small type on the spine label may be all that is required.)

4.10 All category labels should be produced and positioned in accordance with the [NAG Guidelines for Servicing, Revision 2](#).

4.11 Shelfmarks will be discussed in more detail below. See section 6 Adult Non-fiction and section 7 Adult Fiction.

5. Performance data

5.1 Performance data by category may be generated from E4Libraries Category Headings.

5.2 Library management systems may vary in the way they generate performance data – some drawing on information held in the title record, others on information held in the copy record. Further consultation with LMS system suppliers is recommended.

5.3. Where performance data is derived from title records it may be generated from information held within the BIC code(s) field or Category Heading field.

5.4 Where performance data is derived from copy records it may be generated from information held within the shelfmark field.

5.5 Comparative performance data may only be generated from standard data – BIC codes or E4Library Category Headings – and may therefore only be produced from information held within the title record.

6. E4Libraries ANF Category Headings

6.1 E4Libraries Adult Non-fiction Category Headings are proposed as follows:

E4LIBRARIES ADULT NON-FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS		
E4L Category Heading	Includes BIC Code / description	Shelving code
General	GB Encyclopaedias / reference GP Research / information GTG General studies GTN Institutions and learned societies	GEN
Libraries and Museums	GL Library and information science GM Museums and museum science	LIB
Basic Skills	VSL Adult literacy VSN Adult numeracy	BAS
ELT	EB ELT general and reference EL ELT learning ES English for specific purposes	ELT

E4LIBRARIES ADULT NON-FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS		
Computers and IT	UB General UD Digital lifestyle UF Business applications UG Graphical, digital media UK Hardware UL Operating systems UM Programming, software UN Databases UQ Certification UR Security UT Networking / communications UY Computer science	COM
Philosophy	HP Philosophy	PHI
Religion	HR Religion / belief VXA Mind, body, spirit – general VXM Meditation VXW Mysticism, ritual	REL
Customs and Folklore	JFHF Folklore, myths JHBT Customs / traditions	CUS
Paranormal	JFH (not JFHF) Popular beliefs / hoaxes VXF Fortune telling VXN Dreams VXP Psychic phenomena VXQ Paranormal VXV Feng shui	PAR
Media Studies	GTC Communication studies GTE Semiotics JFD Media studies KNT Media, information, communication industries	MED
Society	JFC (not JFCK) Cultural studies JFF Social issues JFM Ethical issues JFS Social groups JH (not JHBT) Sociology / anthropology JK (not JKSW1, JKV) Social services / welfare	SOC
Politics and Government	GTJ Peace studies JP Politics / government KNV Civil service and public sector	POL
Law	LA Jurisprudence LB International LN Specific jurisdictions LR Study / revision guides	LAW
Crime	JKSW1 Police JKV Crime KNSS Security industries BTC True crime	CRI
Education	JN (not JNP) Education	EDU
Economics	GTF Development studies	ECO

E4LIBRARIES ADULT NON-FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS		
	KC Economics	
Careers	JNP, VSC Careers	CAR
Finance and Accounting	KF Finance / accounting KNST Financial services industry	FIN
Business and Management	KJ Business / management	BUS
Languages	CB Reference / general CF Linguistics CJ Teaching / learning WTK Phrasebooks	LAN
Literature	DC Poetry DD Drama DN Non-fiction prose DQ Anthologies DS History / criticism	LIT
Humour	WH Humour	HUM
Mathematics	PB Mathematics	MAT
Science	PD (not PDZ) Science: general PG Astronomy, space, PH Physics PN Chemistry PS Biology / life sciences RB Earth sciences, meteorology, palaeontology	SCI
Popular Science	PDZ Popular science WNA Dinosaurs, prehistory WNC Wildlife WNH Zoos WNP Trees, plants WNR Rocks, minerals WNW Earth sciences, weather WNX Popular astronomy, space	SCP
Environment and Ecology	RN Environment THX Alternative energy TQ Environmental science	ENV
Technology	TB Technology – general TC Biochemical TD (not TDPB1, TDPH) Manufacturing TG Mechanical engineering TH (not THX) Energy TJ Electronic engineering TN (not TNK, TNT) Civil engineering, surveying TT (not TTD, TTM, TTVC, TTVH, TTVR, TTX) Other technologies	TEC
Industry	KN (not KNAC, KNDR, KNDS, KNDV, KNG, KNSG, KNSH, KNSP, KNSS, KNST, KNSX, KNT) Industry KNX Industrial relations and safety	IND
Transport	KNDR Road vehicle manufacturing KNDS Shipbuilding KNDV Aircraft manufacturing	TRA

E4LIBRARIES ADULT NON-FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS		
	KNG Transport industries TR Transport technology TTD Space exploration VSF Driving skills WG Transport - general	
Farming and Country Life	KNAC agricultural industries MZ Veterinary science TTVR Rural crafts TV (not TVS) Agriculture, farming VSZ Self sufficiency WND Country life WNF Farm / working animals	COU
Psychology	JM (not JMC) Psychology VSP Popular psychology	PSY
Health and Fitness	MB General MF Pre-clinical, anatomy, physiology, reproduction etc. MJ Clinical MM Other branches MN Surgical MQ Nursing MR Study / revision MX Complementary medicine VFB Home safety VFD Popular medicine, health VFG Home nursing VFJ (not VFJX) Personal problems VFL Smoking VFM Fitness, diet VXH Complementary medicine healing	HEA
Beauty and Fashion	AFY Body art, tattooing AKT Fashion / textiles - design, history KNSX Fashion / beauty industries JFCK Fashion and society TDPH Clothing manufacture TTVH Hairdressing skills WJH Hair, beauty WJF Fashion, style guides	BEA
House and Home	TNK Building construction TNT Building trades /skills WJK Interior design WK House maintenance	HOU
Food and Drink	WB Food and drink	FOO
Gardening	TVS Horticulture WM Gardening	GAR
Pets	WNG Domestic animals	PET
Child Care	JMC Child psychology VFX Parenting, pregnancy, childcare	CHI
Family and Relationships	VFJX Death, bereavement	FAM

E4LIBRARIES ADULT NON-FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS		
	VFV Family / relationships	
Advice and Rights	VSB Personal finance VSD Law guides VSK Education advice VSG Consumer advice VSH Property purchase / sale VSR Retirement VSW Living / working abroad WJS Shopping guides WJW Wedding plans WJX Parties, etiquette	ADV
Sport	JWXZ Combat / self-defence skills KNSP Sport and leisure industries WS Sports / games	SPO
Hobbies and Games	WD Hobbies, quizzes, games	HOB
Crafts	TDPB1 Clock / watch making TTX Taxidermy WF Handicrafts, decorative arts	CRA
Antiques and Collecting	WC Antiques, collecting	ANT
Art and Design	AB Arts – general AC History of art AF(not AFY) Art forms – painting, sculpture, carving etc. AG Art treatment, subject AK (not AKT) Commercial art / design	ART
Architecture and Planning	AM Architecture RP Planning	ARC
Photography	AJ Photography	PHO
Music	AV Music	MUS
Performing Arts	AN Theatre AP Film, TV, radio AS Dance and other performing arts	PER
Geography	GTB Regional studies RG Geography	GEO
Travel and Tourism	KNSG Tourism industry KNSH Hospitality industry TTVC Hotel and catering trades WT (not WTH, WTK) Travel	TRV
Travel Guides	WTH Travel guides	TRG
History	HB (not HBW) History HD Archaeology WQ Local / family history	HIS
Warfare and Defence	HBW Military history JW (not JWZ) Warfare / defence TTM Military engineering	WAR
Biography	BG Biography	BIO

E4LIBRARIES ADULT NON-FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS		
	BJ Diaries, letters BM Memoirs BT (not BTC) True stories	
Gay/Lesbian Interest*	5S	GAY

Note : Category Headings marked () will normally be used in conjunction with another Category Heading.*

6.2 The E4L Adult Non-fiction Category Headings provide a comprehensive scheme designed to provide the minimum number of categories needed to support meaningful electronic display / browsing, comparative performance analysis, evidence-based assessment of stock demand, supply and performance, selection specification and categorised shelf display within large collections.

6.3 However, the number of E4L Category Headings provided is likely to be too great to provide a practical basis for shelf display for smaller authorities and smaller libraries.

6.4 A simpler scheme offering a smaller number of broader categories may be better suited to providing a workable number of shelfmarks for some authorities or service points.

6.5 An additional set of Broad Category Shelfmarks with associated three-character alphabetic codes is therefore provided as part of the E4L scheme for use as required by library authorities.

Broad Category Shelfmark	E4L Category Headings	Shelving code
General	Generalities; Libraries and Museums	GEN
Basic Skills	Basic Skills; ELT	BAS
Computers and IT	Computers and IT	COM
Religion and Belief	Religion; Philosophy; Customs and Folklore; Paranormal	REL
Society	Media Studies; Social Studies; Politics and Government; Law; Crime; Education	SOC
Business and Money	Economics; Careers; Finance and Accounting; Business and Management	BUS
Language and Literature	Languages; Literature; Humour	LAN
Science	Science; Popular science; Environment and Ecology	SCI
Technology and Industry	Technology; Industry; Transport; Farming and Country Life	TEC
Body and Mind	Psychology; Health and Fitness; Beauty and Fashion	BOD
Home and Family	House and Home; Food and Drink; Gardening; Pets; Child Care; Family and Relationships; Advice and Rights	HOM
Sport and Leisure	Sport; Hobbies and Games; Antiques and Collecting; Crafts	SPO
Arts	Art and Design; Architecture and Planning; Music; Photography; Performing Arts	ART
Geography and Travel	Geography; Travel and Tourism; Travel Guides	TRV
History and Warfare	History; Warfare and Defence	HIS

Broad Category Shelfmark	E4L Category Headings	Shelving code
Biography	Biography	BIO

6.6 Library authorities can map to these E4L Broad Category Shelfmarks from E4L Category Headings using mapping rules derived from the table above.

6.7 Authorities may also choose to map E4L Category Headings to existing local schemes of shelfmarks using locally derived mapping rules.

6.8 A number of options are therefore open to library authorities wishing to use E4L ANF Category Headings to generate shelfmarks to support categorised display.

6.8.1 To take the shelfmark directly from the E4L Category Heading, e.g.

- E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Law'

6.8.2 To use the Broad Category Shelfmarks provided as part of the E4L scheme, mapping from the E4L Category Heading using the rules derived from the table at 6.5 above, e.g.

- E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Society'

6.8.3 To use a mixture of 6.7.1 and 6.7.2 above, e.g.

- E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Law'
- E4L Category Heading 'Education' = shelfmark 'Society'

6.8.4 To use an existing local shelfmark scheme, mapping from the E4L Category Headings using locally derived mapping rules, e.g.

- Authority A: E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Law and Finance'
- Authority B: E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Law, Advice and Rights'

6.8.5 To map to different shelfmark schemes according to size and type of library, e.g.

- Central Library: E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Law'
- Branch libraries: E4L Category Heading 'Law' = shelfmark 'Society'

6.8.6 Whatever the option(s) chosen extra mapping rules must also be provided where a title is assigned more than one Category Heading, e.g.

- E4L Category Headings 'Crime'+ 'Gay/Lesbian interest'
- Central Library shelfmark = 'Gay/Lesbian'

Branch Library shelfmark = 'Crime'

7. E4Libraries Adult Fiction Categories

7.1 E4Libraries Category Headings are proposed as follows:

E4LIBRARIES ADULT FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS			
Category Heading	BIC Code	Notes	Shelving code

E4LIBRARIES ADULT FICTION CATEGORY HEADINGS			
Crime**	FF		CRI
Thriller**	FH	Includes Suspense	THR
Adventure**	FJ (not FJW)		ADV
Western**	FJW		WES
Horror**	FK	Includes Ghosts / Supernatural	HOR
Fantasy**	FM		FAN
Science Fiction**	FL		SCI
Romance**	FR		ROM
Saga**	FT	Saga (includes family saga)	SAG
Historical**	FV	Contemporary novels – setting pre 1900. Not crime, adventure, romance	HIS
General**	FA FP FQ FW	Non-genre first published c.1945 - Erotic Myth and legend told as fiction Religious and spiritual	GEN
Classics	FC	Non-genre first published pre-1945	CLA
Graphic Novels	FX		GRA
Fiction in Translation*	FYT		TRA
Short Stories*	FYB		SST
Gay / Lesbian Interest*	5S		GAY

Notes:-

Category Headings marked () will normally be used in conjunction with another Category Heading.*

*Category Headings marked (**) represent the set of genre headings recently agreed by the Central Buying Consortium (CBC). All CBC headings are represented here.*

7.2 BIC 2.1 does not currently support the identification of other genres of potential interest to the public library community – e.g. Chick Lit or BME (Black, Minority, Ethnic) Writing. Their inclusion will be tabled for consideration in the next revision of the BIC scheme.

7.3 The E4L Category Headings proposed here have many similarities with the existing BL fiction genre codes. The differences between the two schemes are minimal and lay mainly in the definition of terms of such as classic, historical, modern and contemporary. Further investigation of the future relationship between the two schemes is recommended.

7.4 The E4L Adult Fiction Category Headings provide a comprehensive scheme designed to provide the minimum number of categories needed to support meaningful electronic display / browsing, comparative performance analysis, evidence-based assessment of stock demand, supply and performance, selection specification and categorised shelf display within large collections.

7.5 However, the number of E4L Adult Fiction Category Headings provided may be too great to provide a practical basis for shelf display for smaller authorities and smaller libraries.

7.6 A simpler scheme of shelfmarks with a smaller number of broader categories may be better suited to some authorities or service points.

7.7 A number of options are open to library authorities wishing to use E4L Adult Fiction Category Headings to generate shelfmarks to support categorised display.

7.7.1 To take the shelfmark directly from the E4L Adult Fiction Category Heading, e.g.

- E4L Category Heading 'Crime' = shelfmark 'Crime'

7.7.2 To map to a smaller number of shelfmarks drawn from the E4L Adult Fiction Category Headings, e.g.

- Shelfmark 'Crime' = E4L Category Heading 'Crime'
- Shelfmark 'Thriller' = E4L Category Headings 'Thriller' + 'Adventure'
- Shelfmark 'Western' = E4L Category Heading 'Western'
- Shelfmark 'Science Fiction' = E4L Category Headings 'Science Fiction' + 'Fantasy'
- Shelfmark 'General' = E4L Category Headings 'Horror' + 'Saga' + 'General' + 'Classics' + 'Historical'
- Shelfmark 'Romance' = E4L Category Heading 'Romance'
- Shelfmark 'Graphic Novels' = E4L Category Heading 'Graphic Novels'

7.7.3 To use a mixture of 7.7.1 and 7.7.2 above, e.g.

- E4L Category Heading 'Crime' = shelfmark 'Crime'
- E4L Category Headings 'Thriller' and 'Adventure' = shelfmark 'Thriller'

7.7.4 To use an existing local shelfmark scheme, mapping from the E4L Category Headings using locally derived mapping rules, e.g.

- E4L Category Headings 'Crime', 'Thriller' and 'Adventure' = shelfmark 'Crime and Thriller'

7.7.5 To map to different schemes according to size and type of library, e.g.

- Central Library: E4L Category Heading 'Classics' = shelfmark 'Classics'
- Branch libraries: E4L Category Heading 'Classics' = shelfmark 'General'

7.7.6 Whatever the option(s) chosen extra mapping rules must also be provided where a title is assigned more than one Category Heading, e.g.

- E4L Category Headings 'Crime'+ 'Gay/Lesbian interest'
- Central Library shelfmark = 'Gay/Lesbian'
- Branch Library shelfmark = 'Crime'

7.8 It is recommended that this opportunity is taken to agree a standard set of fiction genre spine labels based on the E4Libraries Category Headings. The Central Buying Consortium and the Yorkshire Book Consortium have both agreed sets of genre labels for use by their members which may form a basis for further agreement.

7.9 In the area of Adult Fiction any variance between shelfmarks derived from E4L Category Headings and those derived from existing local schemes will be slight. It is recommended that authorities which adopt local shelfmarks should also subscribe to this proposed standard set of fiction genre spine labels, e.g.

- Local shelfmark 'Crime and Thriller' = spine label 'Crime' or 'Thriller'

Appendix 1

The scheme proposed above combines fixed title-level E4L Category Headings with a flexible item-level shelfmarks, allowing each library authority considerable discretion in organising and displaying its stock.

This level of flexibility is provided to allow the E4L scheme to fulfil a number of different functions, to work successfully in libraries of varying size and type, and to facilitate the integration of E4L

Category Headings with existing local categorisation schemes. In an environment where library services are under no compulsion to adopt E4L Category Headings this may be critical in encouraging take-up.

However, it does have potential implications for the supply chain, involving greater cost and complexity in programming systems to take account of individual customer requirements.

It has been suggested that these costs could be eliminated by adopting an approach where both title-level E4L Category Headings and item-level shelfmarks are fixed. All shelfmarks would be drawn directly from the primary E4L Category Heading with no mapping allowed.

Every copy of a given title would therefore carry identical Category Headings and shelfmarks, eliminating customisation and minimising supply chain costs.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it would make it impossible to map to existing categorisation schemes and limit the amount of flexibility available to the individual authority in determining its shelving arrangements. Using fixed item-level shelfmarks means that broader categories for shelving, for use in smaller service points or smaller authorities, can be achieved only through the medium of library guiding. To provide a broader category, two or more Category Headings must be combined on a shelf / bay header.

Some Category Headings can be combined in this way without difficulty, e.g.

- E4L Category Headings 'Law' and 'Finance and Accounting' = header 'Law, Finance and Accounting'
- E4L Category Headings 'Crime' and 'Thriller' = header 'Crime/Thriller'

Where more than two Category Headings are to be combined, this approach works less well. Combining E4L Adult Non-Fiction Category Headings 'House and Home', 'Food and Drink', 'Gardening', 'Pets', 'Child Care', 'Family and Relationships' and 'Advice and Rights' would produce shelf guiding of impractical length and complexity. Under the main proposal all seven headings may be mapped to a single Broad Category Shelfmark 'Home and Family'.

Fixed item-level shelfmarks also make it impossible to use any E4L Category Heading normally assigned only in combination with another Heading – Gay/Lesbian Interest, Short Stories, Fiction in Translation – as a shelfmark.

If this alternative is accepted it is recommended that Adult Non-Fiction Category Headings are abbreviated to support the combination of Headings into broader categories by providing shelf guiding of more practical length, e.g.

- E4L Category Headings 'Business and Management' to 'Business'
- 'Finance and Accounting' to 'Finance'

Any authority which did not wish to use E4L Category Headings to organise and display its stock – for example, to maintain a classified order for non-fiction – could simply block the E4L shelfmark from their records.