

## UKAT's partners

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# Contacting UKAT

# UKAT

UK Archival Thesaurus



ADLIB | Information Systems

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The UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT) is being developed as a standard for subject indexing in archives. This leaflet explains how UKAT will help people who use archives, and how archive users can contribute to the project.

[www.ukat.org.uk](http://www.ukat.org.uk)



### Your Feedback

We would also like your feedback on the Thesaurus. Does it meet your needs? Are there areas which we need to improve? You can provide feedback via the feedback page on the website. You may also want to become involved in the User Group which we have set up. For more details, send an email to [support@ukat.org.uk](mailto:support@ukat.org.uk)

### Why do we need subject indexing?

Archives produce catalogues which are designed to reflect the context behind the records which they hold. While this is important, it can make it difficult to trace records by subject, unless the archive repository has produced a searchable subject index of its holdings.

For example, a record office might assign subject terms to the catalogue entries for individual documents and groups of documents in its catalogue database. A researcher visiting the archive would then query the database by subject to trace records relating to his or her subject of interest. For instance, a title map held at a local record office might have the subjects 'tithes', 'landholdings' and 'taxes' assigned to it. Anybody visiting the record office with an interest in discovering more about tithes, local landholdings or taxes would be able to retrieve the title map by searching on these subject terms in the database.

### Why do we need UKAT?

Until recently various thesauri, subject indexes and classification schemes have been used in archives. Each time you visited a different archive, it was necessary to structure your query according to which subject index or thesaurus was being used. However, with the expansion of the internet and the need to make archive catalogues available online, the importance of a standardized terminology for subject indexing has become paramount. If a common subject index was in use, it would allow you to search across many different datasets from a variety of archives with just one query.

In recent years, the move to link on-line archive resources into a National Archives Network has highlighted the need for a standardized terminology to be used, in indexing, to promote interoperability and better access. UKAT will promote consistency in the subject indexing which is being undertaken in UK archives. This in turn will make it easier for researchers to find relevant information in more than one archive or project linked to the Network.

### How is UKAT being created?

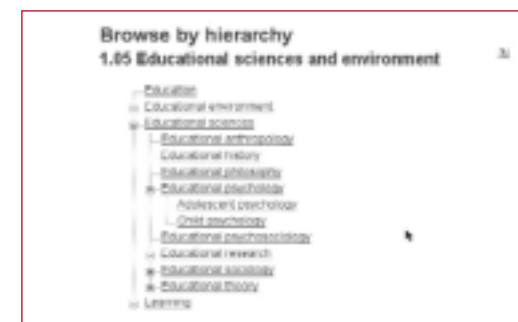
The subjects or "terms" contained in UKAT are mainly derived from the UNESCO Thesaurus, which is already used in a number of archives and archive projects. In addition, terms which are directly relevant to the holdings of the UK's archives are being added to broaden the scope of the Thesaurus. The UKAT project team is working in partnership with archive repositories and archive projects to extend UKAT's coverage by incorporating terms from various sources. These include terms created or used by the Access to Archives project (A2A), the Archives Hub, Archives in London and the M25 Area (AIM25), the CASBAH project (Caribbean studies, Black and Asian History), the University of Warwick's Modern Records Centre, the Mundus project (missionary collections), the National Digital Archive of Datasets, and the National Archives.

UKAT's approach is to include more specific terms for those areas of the UNESCO Thesaurus where the terminology is not deemed to be specific enough for the needs of archivists. Extending the coverage of UKAT will also make it easier for researchers to find what they are looking for. A particular emphasis is being given to including terms which relate to the histories and experiences of groups which have traditionally been under-represented among archive users. We believe that including these terms in a national subject standard will help these groups to identify archives relating to their heritage.

Before they are incorporated into UKAT, terms are edited according to an editing methodology which is based on national and international standards of thesaurus construction. This ensures that terms will be placed in an appropriate position in the Thesaurus. Most terms which are submitted to the project are likely to be included in UKAT, if they are not in the Thesaurus already. However, certain types of terms have been judged to be outside UKAT's scope. UKAT does not include the names of persons, families, places and corporate bodies, and does not normally include terms which appear to be relevant to only a single archive repository.

### Using UKAT

Although UKAT is primarily being developed as a resource for use by archivists when indexing collections, it is also available to researchers and archive users via the project's website. The website allows you to browse the Thesaurus alphabetically using the A-Z listing, and hierarchically by microthesaurus. You can also carry out quick and advanced searches for specific terms, as well as submitting new terms and relationships.



### Getting involved in UKAT

UKAT is a collaborative effort: the Thesaurus is being built from terms submitted by archivists and users of archives. We believe that it's particularly important that UKAT should reflect the terms which users of archives use when searching for resources. This will help to ensure that indexes based on UKAT will meet users' needs.

If you use archives in your research, and you feel that the subject terms which you use when searching would be useful to others, then please submit them to us and we'll consider them for inclusion in UKAT. Remember: we can only include these terms in the Thesaurus if you tell us about them! Submitting terms can be done either by using the submission forms on the website, or by email or post.