Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM) Subject Categories

The OCM subject codes from the Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM) are what make eHRAF Ethnography/Archaeology so unique and different from other full-text databases. The power of eHRAF is that the HRAF analysts read and index every paragraph in the eHRAF documents with OCM subject codes. The OCM subject codes (OCM for short) enable you to search the full-text documents more effectively because you are searching for concepts rather than words.

The complete OCM consists of 3 parts: 1) Hierarchical list of the OCM categories, 2) A-Z word index, and 3) OCM descriptions. It can be found in the following locations and formats:

1. eHRAF Online Databases: eHRAF Ethnography/Archaeology at http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/e/ehraf or http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/e/ehraf (Login authentication may be required). It is located in BROWSE SUBJECTS.

2. OCM Paper Manual: This 200-page manual is recommended for the frequent user of the OCMs. Copies can be ordered from Human Relations Area Files (HRAF); Tel: 203-764-9401, Email: HRAF@yale.edu.

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* indicates that the categories so marked are retired from usage as of May 1997.
Note that the eHRAF Collection of Ethnography/Archaeology (http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/e/ehrafe and http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/e/ehrafe contain descriptions of the various OCM subject codes.

A hard copy of the Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM) can be ordered from Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). Contact HRAF at hraf@yale.edu, 203-764-9401 or visit www.yale.edu/hraf.
Steps in finding and using an OCM subject code in eHRAF

**STEP 1**

Log on to the eHRAF Ethnography database at [http://ets.umd.edu/e/hrafe](http://ets.umd.edu/e/hrafe). If your institution is not a member you may be prompted for a password. Email HRAF at hraf@yale.edu or call 1-800-520-HRAF for a temporary password.

Click on the horizontal BROWSE tab (see A) then click on BROWSE SUBJECTS (left-hand margin, see B), and then again on BROWSE SUBJECT CATEGORIES (left-hand margin, see C). This opens the Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM) with over 700 categories on all aspects of cultural and social life.

Scroll down the list and select the OCM you wish to search for in the eHRAF database. For example, select "773" if you wish to search all aspects of mythology (see D). Click on the OCM name to read the description (see E).

**Step 2**

Click on the horizontal SEARCH tab (see F) to locate the “OCM subject codes” section. Type the 3- or 4-digit OCM subject code into the first box (see G). In the “Culture/OWC” section leave the default set at “All Cultures” (see H).

Click on the “Search” button to the right (see I) to execute your search. For example, using OCM subject code “773” will search all cultures in eHRAF for any paragraphs with ethnographic information on mythology, legends, folklore, creation stories, and ancestor, good and evil, hero, totemic, or culture myths.
Step 3

The database will search over 350,000 pages of indexed ethnographic text for the OCM subject code and retrieve all cultures that contain documents that contain paragraphs with that OCM.

A culture name with a high number of matches (see list to the left) simply means that the documents for that culture contain many paragraphs pertaining to that OCM.

Select the region of your interest (e.g., Africa, Asia, North America, etc.) and click on the culture name (e.g., Bemba) to retrieve the ethnographic documents (see J).

Step 4

Clicking on a culture name will link you to the documents with the OCM matches. All paragraphs with the searched OCM will be indicated with "matches: 1, 2, 3, etc."

Clicking on a number (see K) will only retrieve the paragraph with the OCM (no figure shown), but not necessarily the text for the entire section or chapter.

When a document contains a series of matches (see L) it is better to click on the section name right above the matches (see M) to retrieve the full-text of entire section or chapter (see N).

The paragraphs with the OCMs (see O) for the entire section are located in the right-hand side (see N) while the table of contents for the entire document is located in the left-hand margin (see P). Clicking on any hyperlinks will connect you to other parts of the document.

Visit www.yale.edu/ehraf/userguides.html for an online eHRAF Tutorial and search strategies.
It is important to understand that the documents in eHRAF are indexed with OCM subject codes at the paragraph level. Unlike other search engines that search the entire text as one unit, eHRAF searches millions of individual paragraph units across hundreds of thousands of documents. Each paragraph of these paragraph units is relatively small—usually no more than a few sentences as you can see circled on this page. Thus, searching for two words (using the Boolean operator “and”) is not very effective; though both may occur in the whole text, they will rarely occur in the same paragraph, meaning that there will be few or no matches. In library terms an eHRAF search might be compared to a “proximity” search within 100 characters.

CHAPTER III WHEN MEN AND ANIMALS WERE FRIENDLY

This man, White Eagle, had two wives and a son of about ten winters. When the dried food in his lodge was gone, he had them go out and gather berries; and when the few that they could find had been eaten, they began to starve.
Database Names and Access Info:
eHRAF Collection of Ethnography at http://ets.umd.umich.edu/e/ehrafe

eHRAF Collection of Archaeology at http://ets.umd.umich.edu/e/ehrafa

You can access the databases through IP authentication or password. If you are prompted for login authentication, contact HRAF for a temporary password.

Database Provider:
Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) at Yale University
755 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511
www.yale.edu/hraf
Phone: 203-764-9401 or toll-free: 1-800-520-HRAF
Fax: 203-764-9466
Email: hraf@yale.edu

eHRAF Search Strategies
written by
Christiane Cunnar, HRAF Member Services, christiane.cunnar@yale.edu

- **Less is more** in eHRAF! The fewer OCM subject codes and/or words you use in your search, the better the results will be!

- Searching for a **specific culture, society, nation or region**: Log on to the database and click on “BROWSE” (blue horizontal) tab then click on “BROWSE CULTURES BY REGION” (left-hand margin). Scroll down the list of regions and countries to make sure that the culture, you are looking for, is available in eHRAF.

- Searching for a **specific topic or subject**: Log on to the database and click on “BROWSE” (blue horizontal) then click on “BROWSE SUBJECTS” (left-hand margin) and then on “BROWSE SUBJECT CATEGORIES” (left-hand margin). This will show you all the OCM subjects that are available for searching in eHRAF effectively. Make sure you read the descriptions for the OCMs for a better understanding of what you are about to search. Click on the “SEARCH” (blue horizontal) tab; then type in the 3 or 4-digit OCM in the “OCM Subject Codes” box. Click on the gray “Search” box to execute your search.

- The **word choice** may be the most important aspect of searching (successfully) in eHRAF. The search engine uses "exact" word searching--this means that one too many letters, words or phrases, spaces between words, hyphens and typos will influence the search results. For example, searching for “after-birth” will return different results than searching for “afterbirth.”

- Use the "Chapter-Title" search for words describing "broad" concepts (e.g., botany, music, illness) as the titles of the chapters and subchapters are searched. Use the "Paragraphs" search for words describing "specific" actions or objects (e.g., sagebrush, flute, influenza) as paragraphs usually contain more specific wording.

- **Try word variations and different words** (e.g., flu, influenza, Grippe (German for flu). Once you have performed a few searches and have reviewed the text for the results, you may find that the author's choice of words in text will give you further clues.
- **Truncate** a word at the word stem using an "*" asterisk (e.g., child* for children, child's, childhood, etc.) to expand your search. By the way, you can also truncate an OCM to two digits. For example, truncating OCM 75* (for Sickness) will retrieve all subcategories for sickness (e.g., 751 Preventive Medicine, 752 Bodily Injuries, etc.).

- **Avoid using phrases in one box**, but instead use one word per box. Exceptions are phrases that are always used together (e.g., "evil eye," "projectile point," etc.). The more boxes (whether OCM or word boxes) the fewer the search results.

- The **Boolean operators** (and, or, not) occur in the OCM Subject Code and Exact Word or Phrase section. Using the appropriate Boolean operator greatly enhances your search results!
  
  o **And** (both terms must be present in the same paragraph) >>> narrows a search
  o **Or** (either term must be present in the same paragraph) >>> expands a search
  o **Not** (excludes the second term in paragraph) >>> narrows a search

- Some of the documents in eHRAF were written many years ago and some of the expressions were not used then. For example, "domestic violence," is a fairly recent expression (although the concept is old), and thus words used then seem more ordinary--like "fighting," "beating," "hitting." This is where OCM subject codes can help in finding appropriate information.

- You may search for graphics in eHRAF by using an OCM or word and by typing in "<graphic" (without quotes) in the 'Exact Word or Phrase' box. For example, OCM 532 and <graphic searches for pictures in representative arts.

- If you are performing many searches in eHRAF, a printed copy of the culture results page helps you to keep track of your searches and can be used to evaluate your results.

- The ethnographic nature of the documents makes eHRAF a valuable tool in searching for contemporary as well as traditional and past cultural practices. So, please pay attention to the fieldwork and publication dates that are listed on the pages, and keep in mind that foreign (primarily Western) influence may have changed the customs of cultures in the last few decades.

- Use the **eHRAF Collection of Ethnography** in combination with the **eHRAF Collection of Archaeology** as the two databases compliment each other in the study of time and place.

- A hard copy of the **Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM)** manual with a list the all the OCM subject codes and descriptions and an alphabetic index is best for the frequent user of eHRAF. You can contact HRAF to order a copy.

- For online help visit the “eHRAF Tutorial” and/or the “Search Methods, Tips, and Example” section at [www.yale.edu/hraf/userguides.html](http://www.yale.edu/hraf/userguides.html).

- Visit [www.yale.edu/hraf/teachingehraf.html](http://www.yale.edu/hraf/teachingehraf.html) for an online student workbook.

- HRAF, as academic research organization, provides extensive database support services to the users of its member institutions. Contact us for any questions on how to use eHRAF. We always like to help users in optimizing the eHRAF Collections for their research and teaching.