

How To Read Library of Congress Call Numbers



- Most items in Ekstrom Library are arranged according to the Library of Congress Classification Scheme and have a call number on or near the spine of the work
- This classification scheme arranges works by subject; thus, the call number of an item gives an indication of the subject matter of the work in addition to telling where specifically the item can be found on the shelf
- The call number is made up of a combination of numbers and letters that are read left-to-right, top-to-bottom

Reading Call Numbers/Finding Items On the Shelf

- Remember to read a call number by sections, left to right, line by line, top to bottom.
- A call number will begin with one, two, or three letters and they are read alphabetically (all examples are in correct order, left to right):

H45	HA155	HB21	HC13
.E37	.A5	.A33	.S47
1984	1944	1982	1990

- The number(s) following the initial letter(s) can be on the same line or immediately below. This number should be read numerically, as a whole number:

B53	B785	B1201	B1246
.D476	.L44	B44	.R66
1990	M67	W64	1986
	1991	1997	

- Letters following the first set of numbers are preceded by a decimal point and are read alphabetically:

KF240	KF240	KF240	KF240
.B265	.C538	.S795	.T38
1981	1989	1995	1989

- Numbers following the decimal and letter(s) are read in decimal order; thus, though it may look odd, this order would be correct (imagine an “invisible” decimal after the letter):

L901	L901	L901	L901
.C33	C75	.C813 before	.C9 because 813 is a smaller decimal number than 9
1971	1971	1976	1996

- There may even be another letter(s) and set of numbers following this; however, these will also be read in alphabetical and decimal number order. Also, last number appearing may be the date of publication:

L901	L901	L901	L901
.C33	.C75	.C813	.C9
F3	G819	L4	Z101
1989	2001	1950	1919

A Call Number Also Indicates Subject Matter of Item

•The Library of Congress Classification organizes items by subject; thus, knowing the classes will give you an indication of what the book is about. Here is an outline of the main classes:

A: General Works (encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc.)	M: Music and books on Music
B: Philosophy	N: Fine Arts
BF: Psychology	P: Language & Literature
BL-BX: Religion	PA-PD: Classical, Romance, Germanic Languages
C: Genealogy, Biography	PE: English Language
D: History-General & Eastern Hemispheres	PR: English Literature
E-F: History--Americas	PS: American Literature
G: Geography, Anthropology, Recreation	Q-QD: Math, Physics, Chemistry
HB-HJ: Business & Economics	QE: Geology
HM-HQ: Sociology, Family, Women's Studies	QH-QK: Biology, Botany
J: Political Sciences	QL-QR: Zoology, Physiology, Microbiology
JK: Political Science, United States	R: Medicine
K: Law	S: Agriculture
L: Education	TA-TK: Engineering, Computing
	U: Military Science
	V: Navel Science
	Z: History of Books & Printing, Library Science, Bibliography

•Here is a call number for the novel *Cat's Eye* by Canadian author, Margaret Atwood:
PR 9199.93 .A8 C38 1990

- The first letter here, "P", represents one of the main categories above, Language & Literature
- The "R" following this actually has nothing to do with medicine; rather, it is further subdivision, English Literature (except U.S.), of our main category, Language and Literature.
- The number 9199.3 stands for Canada and this is a continued breakdown of the "R" (English Literature) section.
- The letter and numbers following this, .A8 C38, is known as the Cutter Number and usually indicates the author of the work but can represent other information as well. The last number is, of course, the date of publication.

Remember, If You Have Any Questions Please Contact the Reference Desk at 852-6747