

Houston Cole Library Call Number Tutorial

Introduction, Instructions, Interpretation of Call Numbers

Welcome to our Call Number tutorial!

This tutorial is intended to give you a broad overview of the different Call Numbering systems and how they work. You will learn how items are classified within each system, what the call numbers mean and how to find an item based on its call number.

Call numbers perform two basic functions in libraries:

1. classification - an attempt to systematically organize information, and
2. retrieval - a system whereby such information can then be easily found or recalled.

Introduction

Call numbers, simply put, are those numbers and letters placed on books and other items to indicate where they should be located in the library.

Of the call number systems available, there are four main systems at use here in the United States:

- Library of Congress Classification System (LC) - Used by most academic libraries and in other larger libraries
- Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC) - Used in most public and school libraries
- Superintendent of Documents (SuDocs) - Used by libraries with extensive collections of materials published by the United States Government
- United Nations (UN) - Used by libraries with extensive collections of materials published by the United Nations

Libraries may use one or all of these systems, based on the collections they own.

The Houston Cole Library uses two of the four systems:

- Library of Congress Classification System (LC)
- Superintendent of Documents (SuDocs)

Part 1: Library of Congress (LC)

The Library of Congress (LC) call number system is subject based. In other words, it classifies information based on the subject matter involved. The LC system is comprised of 21 primary classes, or basic subject breakdowns, represented by letters. Further subclasses or subdivisions of subject matter are designated in LC, by the addition of one to two letters followed by numbers.

(* For a look at the actual subjects represented by the classes in both LC, refer to the "Additional Information" area of the Table of Contents.)

Characteristics of Each System

- Library of Congress - begins with one or two letters, e.g. A, B, BH, PN, Z; these are then followed by numbers.

Examples would be B85, Z1001, PN798, etc.

To illustrate this distinguishing characteristic, here is an example of a book classified using the LC system. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* by Christopher Alexander would be classified as HT166 .A6147.

Library of Congress	
Classification Number	HT 166
Author and Book Number	.A6147

Reading Call Numbers

There are a few important points that need to be mentioned concerning the proper reading of the LC call numbers. This, in turn, will affect both the shelving of works so classified and the eventual retrieval of such items.

Consider the following call numbers:

B 82 .S374	B 82 .S4	B 765 .T54 B733
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- Begin by comparing the letters at the beginning, letter by letter.
- Any number that immediately follows is then treated as a whole number and is considered in its entirety and compared as such.
- Compare the next letter/number combination (the Cutter, or book number) beginning with the letter, then with the number. **Note:** Any number following this second set of letters will be treated as a decimal number and compared digit by digit, and not as a whole number. This will apply also to any successive letter/number combination that may occur, as is often the case with so-called "double Cutters". For this reason, .S374 will come before .S4.

Let's now look at a succession of LC numbers, some involving double-Cutters.

B 82 .S374	B 765 .T54 B733 1985	B 765 .T52 E5 1982	B 765 .T54 B7	B 765 .T52 E5 1988	B 765 .T54 B56 1992
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The proper order for the above call numbers then is as follows:

B 82 .S374	B 765 .T52 E5 1982	B 765 .T52 E5 1988	B 765 .T54 B56 1992	B 765 .T54 B7	B 765 .T54 B733 1985
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Remember: After the classification number, everything else will be compared digit by digit. When confronted with dates at the end of the call number, all else being equal, the books will be shelved in chronological order, determined by the edition date at the bottom of the call number.

Review of LC and DDC Call Numbers	
LC	DDC
- used predominantly by Academic libraries	- used mainly by Public and School libraries
- subject based classification system	- subject based classification system
- begins with one or more letters, followed by numbers	- begins with 3 numbers, sometimes followed by decimal and more numbers
- Class number is a whole number and is read as such.	- Class number is a whole number and is read as such.
- Author and book numbers (or Cutters) are considered decimals, and read accordingly.	- Author and book numbers (or Cutters) are considered decimals, and read accordingly.

Part 2: Superintendent of Documents Classification System

The Superintendent of Documents classification system (hereafter referred to as SuDocs), emanates from the United States Government Printing Office, which is responsible for issuing call numbers to all government documents. These documents are then sent to the various appointed depository libraries around the country where they will reside. The Houston Cole Library is one of approximately 1,250 selective depository libraries throughout the U.S. and its territories designated to receive government documents.

The SuDocs system, unlike the Library of Congress and the Dewey Decimal systems, is not subject based, but rather classes its materials according to the agency issuing the publication. The call number reflects this via an alpha-numeric scheme.

The Houston Cole Library does not classify all government documents by their SuDoc number. The only materials that use this number are our vertical file items, located on the 2nd floor, and some microfiche.

Example of a SuDocs Call Number:

C 3.134/2 : C 83/2/994

The above call number can then be broken down as follows:

SuDocs Call Number		
Issuing Department	C	Commerce Department
Subagency	3	Bureau of the Census
Series	134/2 :	Statistical Abstract Supplement
Title and date	C 83/2/994	County and City Data Book, 1994

Note the COLON in the center of the call number. No other call number has a colon, so this is a quick and easy way to tell if the number is a SuDocs number.

See our Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) Classification Scheme (How to find Government Documents) for more complete information at <http://www.jsu.edu/library/pdfs/handouts/sudoc.pdf>.

The following pages should be consulted for more information:

- Library of Congress Classification
 - For a more detailed classification list see the Library of Congress Classification Outline page at the Library of Congress web site at <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsolcco/>
- Dewey Decimal Classification
 - For a more detailed classification list see the summaries tables from the Dewey Decimal Classification system web site at <http://www.oclc.org/dewey/about/thousands.htm> or <http://www.tnrplib.bc.ca/dewey.html>.
- Understanding Call Numbers (next page)

Understanding Call Numbers

Table of Contents

<i>General Call Number and Library Information</i>	<i>Why Do We Use Call Numbers?</i>	<i>How Do You Read Call Numbers?</i>	<i>How Do You Pub Call Numbers in Shelf Order?</i>	<i>How Do You Locate Items in Our Library?</i>
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General Call Number and Library Information

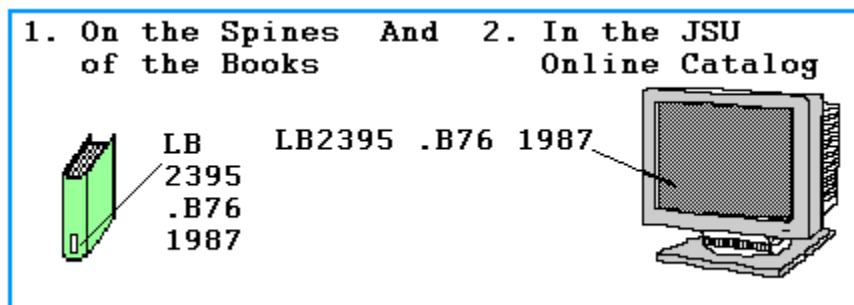
- Have you ever wondered how library books are assigned their places on the shelves? Did you know that the call number -- the number placed on the spine of the book -- is a code which provides valuable information about the book? This page will provide an introduction to understanding and using library call numbers.

Note: This page relies upon a series of graphics.

- The Houston Cole Library, like many academic libraries in the U.S., uses the Library of Congress Classification system for call numbers. This system uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials by subjects.

Why Do We Use Call Numbers?

- Each book in the library has a unique call number. A call number is like an address; it tells us where the book is located in the library.
- Call numbers appear in two places:



Note that the same call number can be written from top-to-bottom, or left-to-right.

How Do You Read Call Numbers?

Read call numbers line by line:

Read the first line in alphabetical order:
A, B, BF, C, D ... L, LA, LB, LC, M, ML ...

Read the second line as a whole number:
1, 2, 3, 45, 100, 101, 1000, 2000, 2430 ...

The third line is a combination of a letter and numbers.
Read the letter alphabetically.
Read the number as a decimal, e.g. .C65 = .65 .C724 = .724
(Some call numbers have more than one combination letter-number line.)

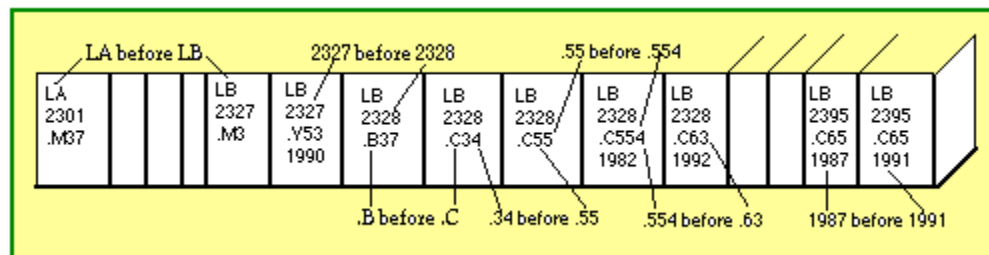
This is the year the book was published.
Chronological order: 1985, 1987, 1991, 1992 ...

How Do You Put Call Numbers in Shelf Order?

- *Understanding Order*
- *What Does the Call Number Mean?*
- *Why is This Important to Know?*

Understanding Order

- To understand how call numbers are put in order in Library of Congress Classification, again look at each section of the call number.

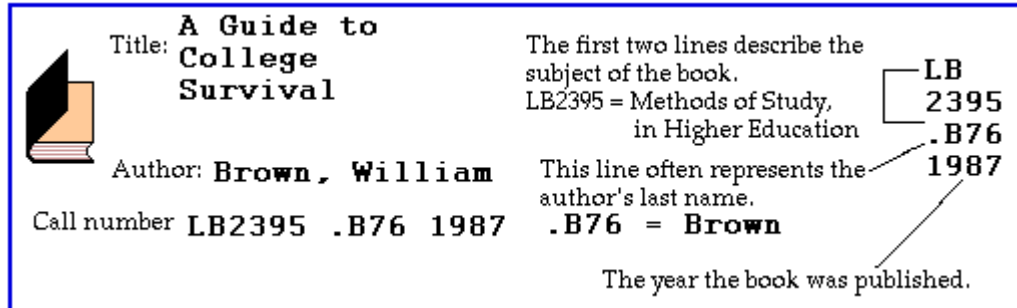


What Does the Call Number Mean?

- Remember that Library of Congress Classification arranges materials by subjects. The first sections of the call number represent the subject of the book. The letter-and-decimal section of the call number often represents

the author's last name. And, as you recall, the last section of a call number is often the date of publication.

- *Example:*



Title: **A Guide to College Survival**
Author: **Brown, William**
Call number: **LB2395 .B76 1987**

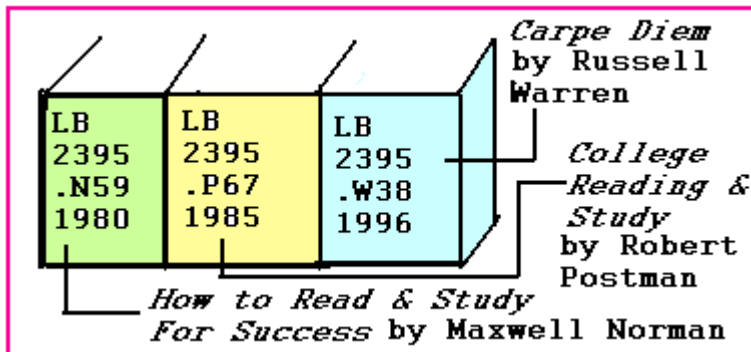
The first two lines describe the subject of the book.
LB2395 = Methods of Study, in Higher Education
LB
2395
.B76
1987

This line often represents the author's last name.
.B76 = **Brown**

The year the book was published.
1987

Why is This Important to Know?

- Because books are classified by subject, you can often find several helpful books on the same shelf, or shelved nearby. For example, there are other guides for college study within the same call number LB2395.
- *Example:*



LB 2395 .N59 1980
How to Read & Study For Success by Maxwell Norman

LB 2395 .P67 1985
College Reading & Study by Robert Postman

LB 2395 .W38 1996
Carpe Diem by Russell Warren

- Since the Library of Congress Classification system arranges materials by subject, knowing the letter(s) that represent your subject area gives you a place to start browsing the shelves. To see which letters represent your subject, view the [Library of Congress Classification Table](#).

How Do You Locate Items in Our Library?

- *General Information*
- *Locations*

General Information

- After finding an item's call number in the JSU online catalog, note the first letter(s) of the call number. Check the [library directory](#) to see which floor of the library corresponds to those letters.
- Since the Library of Congress Classification system arranges materials by subject, knowing the letter(s) that represent your subject area gives you a place to start browsing the shelves. To see which letters represent your subject, view the [Library of Congress Classification Table](#).

Example: A Guide to College Survival (LB 2395 .B76 1987) is found on the **fifth floor** because all items beginning with the letter "L" are found on that floor.

- For more detailed information concerning locating journal articles, use our [How to Find a Journal Article](#) page.

Locations

- Sometimes the online catalog will give you additional information about the location of an item. For more information on accessing our Online Catalog. Also, for more detailed information concerning locating journal articles, use our [How to Find a Journal Article](#) page.
- Some items in the library are shelved in a special place, and there may be restrictions on checking these items out from the library.
- You may see the following location notes in the JSU online catalog:

LOCATION	COLLECTION	LOAN PERIOD
<i>See Floor Directory</i>	Circulating (regular stacks)	standard
<i>Reference</i>	Reference	library use only
<i>Periodicals</i>	Periodicals	library use only
<i>Microfilm or Microfiche</i>	Microforms	library use only
<i>Alabama Collections</i> (10th floor)	Alabama Collections	library use only
<i>Juvenile (K-12)</i> (5th floor)	Juvenile Collection	standard
<i>Textbooks (K-12)</i> (5th floor)	Textbook Collection	standard

- For more information about call numbers and finding materials in the library, ask one of our [Librarians](#).

(NOTE: Adapted and used with permission from "Understanding Call Numbers" by the University of Hawaii. Page no longer available from University of Hawaii - 4/3/08.)

Send questions and comments to [John-Bauer Graham](#), Dean of Library Services.