Materials' Classification and Shelving Systems

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A. Library of Congress Classification System

The majority of the collections in the MSU Libraries are arranged using the Library of Congress Classification System, a scheme which brings together materials on the same or related subjects. All knowledge is divided into twenty classes with multiple subclasses and subtopics.

The first line of the LC call number indicates the general subject by showing a letter or combination of letters. The second line, containing numbers, indicates a more specific subject, while the third line, containing a combination of letters and numbers referred to as an author number or Cutter number. Often there may be additional lines to the call number which helps to further identify a particular item by listing a volume number, date, edition, multiple copies, etc.

Each item in the Library has its own unique call number and bar code for identification and check-out purposes. All
Parts of the call number must be copied in order to locate the desired material. If the call number is incomplete or incorrectly recorded, the material cannot be located.

1. **LCEasy 2.0**

This is a computer tutorial for learning the Library of Congress classification system. It gives a wonderful explanation as to how these numbers are created. Every student employee must complete the tutorial in order to properly shelve or file Library materials. Ask your supervisor for instructions on completing this tutorial.

Another good LC classification tutorial is located at [http://www.pitt.edu/~ford29/SatchLCall/COMPLETE/](http://www.pitt.edu/~ford29/SatchLCall/COMPLETE/).

2. **LC Outline**

Click here to view a detailed breakdown of how subjects are classified in the Library of Congress Classification System. You do not need to commit this to memory, but you do need to be aware of the groupings and where you can locate this chart should the need arise.

3. **How to Read Library Congress Call Numbers**

Below are instructions on how to properly read LC Call Numbers. You should definitely commit to memory how to properly shelve by these numbers and should know the difference in LC Call Numbers and SuDoc Call Numbers.

Library of Congress call numbers can be confusing since they frequently contain a letter or letters followed by whole numbers, and then a letter followed by decimal numbers. In reading a call number, begin at the top line and read from left to right; then proceed to the next line reading again from left to right as if reading a book.

Starting with the letter(s) at the top left of the call number, materials are **ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY**:

```
A   AC   AG   AZ   B   BC   BT
```

Materials having the same letter(s) on the top line are all shelved together by the number group that follows the letter(s). These numbers are **ARRANGED NUMERICALLY, not decimally**:

```
F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F
1   21  75  101 175 200 2113
```

When both the letter(s) and the number group that follows are the same, then the materials are shelved **ALPHABETICALLY** by the next letter:

```
QM  QM  QM  QM  QM  QM  QM  QM
23  23  23  23  23  23  23  23
```

Materials which are identical in first letter(s), in the number group that follows, and in the second letter, are then shelved by the next number group. These numbers are **ARRANGED DECIMALLY, not numerically**:

```
QM  QM  QM  QM  QM  QM  QM  QM
```
Oftentimes a call number will have a fourth line which contains a letter and number(s). The letter in this line is ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY, while the number(s) is ARRANGED DECIMALLY.

NOTE: The date of an edition frequently can be determined by its inclusion in the call number. However, the most accurate way of determining the edition date is to consult the information given in the preliminary pages of a particular volume.

B. Superintendent of Documents Classification System

The Superintendent of Documents (SuDocs) classification system is designed to group together publications by the same government author. Within an agency or department, publications are grouped according to the subordinate organization. The purpose of this system is to uniquely identify, logically relate, and physically arrange each publication so that all publications of a single agency or department may be found together.

1. SuDoc Tutorials

The following are excellent tutorials for teaching how the SuDoc system operates:

http://www.aallnet.org/sis/gd/tutorial/mod3a.html or http://www.library.miami.edu/gov/sudoc/sudoc1.html

2. SuDoc Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendent of Documents Classification System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **How to Read SuDoc Call Numbers**

Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) call numbers are sometimes confused with Library of Congress call numbers since the majority of materials are shelved using the LC system. The biggest difference in the two systems is that SuDoc numbers are ALL treated as whole numbers where portions of the LC call number are treated decimally. In reading a call number, read from left to right.

........................

Starting with the letter(s) at the top left of the call number, materials are **ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY**:

A  C  CC  CR  E  ED  EP

Materials having the same letter(s) on the top line are all shelved together by the number group that follows the letter(s). These numbers are **ARRANGED NUMERICALLY, not decimally**:

E  E  E  E  E  E  E  E

1  21  75  101  175  200  2113

Materials having the same number group are divided into one or more additional number groups separated by points (.), slashes (/), or dashes (-). The call number from beginning to the colon is called the Class Stem. These numbers are **ARRANGED NUMERICALLY, not decimally**:

HE  HE  HE  HE  HE  HE  HE  HE


What follows the colon depends on the specific series. A number or combination of numbers could indicate
volumes and issue numbers, dates, or sequence.

A 1.77: 43 E 3.36: 2/996 HE 20.3037/2: 133/1  L 2.6-4: 90-91
A 1.77: 44 E 3.36: 2/997 HE 20.3037/2: 133/2  L 2.6-4: 990-93
A 1.77: 45 E 3.36: 2/998 HE 20.3037/2: 133/3  L 2.6-4: 990-95

What follows the colon could be a letter-number combination called a cutter which very basically symbolizes the key word in the title -or- the author's last name.

A 1.2: B 3 E 1.2: B 3 L 1.2: R 11 TD 1.2: Su 4

Note how each part of a SuDoc number has its own meaning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>61.</th>
<th>34:</th>
<th>987</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce Dept. (Issuing agency)</td>
<td>International Trade Administration (subordinate bureau)</td>
<td>Number designating the title</td>
<td>Year of Publication (1987)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. **Alphabetical**

The following collections within the MSU Library are not shelved by either of the classification systems previously mentioned. Instead they are shelved or filed alphabetically by title or by main entry, which may be the name of the organization, institution, or society sponsoring the publication.

Current Journals          Microform Journals
Bound Journals             Vertical Files
Newspapers (by city where published) Annual Reports

These alphabetizing guidelines are to serve as the general rule of thumb. Be sure to check with your supervisor for any deviations in your area to these rules.

1. **Basic alphabetizing rule**
   a. **Alphabet.** Arrange all entries, both English and foreign, alphabetically according to the order of the English alphabet.
b. **Word by word.** Arrange word by word, alphabetizing letter by letter within the word. Begin with the first word on the first line, then go to the next word, etc. Apply the principle of ‘nothing before something,’ considering the space between words as ‘nothing.’

2. **Modified letters** Disregard the modification of all letters. This includes umlauts and all kinds of accents and diacritical marks in foreign languages.

   L’Esprit Createur -- shelved as: Lesprit Createur

3. **Punctuation marks.** All punctuation including parentheses are generally ignored.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shelved as...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal (American Water Works Association)</td>
<td>Journal American...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R. Computational Mathematics</td>
<td>USSR Computa.....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Articles.**

   a. **Initial articles.** Disregard the words "A", "AN" or "THE" when they are at the beginning of a title. These are initial articles to be ignored as well as all other initial articles in all languages. Start alphabetizing by the word following it.

   b. **Articles within the entry.** Every word in the entry, including articles and prepositions, is generally regarded.

   - The man of his time
   - Man of La Mancha
   - A man of the age
   - Les miserables
   - The Journal of Law and Education

   LIFE
   Life--a bowl of rice
   "Life after death"
   Life! physical and spiritual
   Journal of the American Chemical Society

5. **Initials.**

   a. Arrange initials standing for names of organizations as initials, not as abbreviations, i.e. not as if spelled in full.

   b. Arrange acronyms as words, unless written in all capitals with a space or period between the letters.

   - Aabel, Marie
   - AAPG Bulletin
   - AAUN News
   - The ABC about collecting
   - A apple pie

   U.N.E.S.C.O
   Unesco
   Unesco Fellowship
   UNESCO handbooks

6. **Abbreviations.** (Stack Maintenance does not use this rule.)

   a. Arrange abbreviation as if spelled in full in the language of the entry, except 'Mrs.', which is filed as written.
b. Arrange initials and other abbreviations for geographical names as if written in full.

- Concord (Mass.) The great Brink's holdup
- The Concord saunterer Gt. Brit. on trial
- CONCORD (VT.) Great Britain or little England
- Concord (Va.)
- Dr. Cristian's office Mr. Adam
- Doctor come quickly Mistress.
- Doktor Brents Wandlung Mr. Entries beginning...
- Dr. Mabuse der Spieler Mrs. Miniver
- Dr. Dobb's Journal Stack Maintenance shelves this as: Dr Dobbs Journal

7. Elisions, possessives, etc. Arrange elisions, contractions, and possessives as written.

- Bibliotheque d'art East o' the sun
- Bibliotheque de la Fond East of Eden
- Bibliotheque de l'Usine East of the sun
- Bibliotheque d'historie
- Boys and girls at school Whoa, Grandma!
- The boys' book of art Who'd be a doctor?
- Boys will be boys Whodunit?
- L'Academie D'Agriculture de France Shelved as: Lacademie Dagriculture de France

8. Signs and symbols.

a. Disregard signs, such as "..." or "-" at the beginning of or within titles.

b. Arrange the ampersand (&) as 'and,' 'et,' 'und,' etc., according to the language in which it is used.

c. Arrange signs and symbols that are ordinarily spoken as words as if they were written out.

- And another thing Art and beauty
- -and beat him Art & common sense
- And so....accounting Art and Industry
- $$$ and sense [Dollars and sense]
- % of gain [Percent of gain]
- 3 x 3: Stairway to the sea [Three by three...]
- $20 a week [Twenty dollars a week]
9. **Numerals.**

   a. Arrange numerals as if spelled out in the language of the entry. Spell numerals and dates as they are spoken, placing 'and' before the last element in compound numbers in English, except in decimal fraction.

   b. Arrange a numeral following a given name in a titles as if spelled out in the language of the rest of the title, as spoken. In English the numeral is read as an ordinal preceded by 'the.'

   c. Arrange the names of classes of aircraft, boats, etc. in which a numeral is an integral part of the heading alphabetically as spoken.

   B. F. V. Europe since 1815 [eighteen fifteen]
   B-58 Bomber [fifty-eight] Europe since 1500 [fifteen hundred]
   B-17 Bomber [seventeen] Europe since Napoleon
   Baab, Augus
   1918, the last act [nineteen eighteen]
   Nineteen eighty-four
   One Hundred.
   112 Elm Street [one twelve]

10. **Words written in different ways.**

    a. Arrange hyphened words as separate words when the parts are complete words. The hyphen is treated as a space for filing purposes.

    b. In the case of compound words written both as two separate words (or hyphened) and as a single word, interfile all entries under the one-word form.

    c. Arrange as one word, words beginning with a prefix or combining form such as anti-, bi-, co-, electro-, ex-, extra-, inter-, trans-, etc.

        An epoch in life Panama
        Epoch-making papers Pan American
        The epoch of reform Pan-American
        Pan-Pacific Entomologist Shelved as: Pan Pacific Entomologist
        Luso-Brazilian Review Shelved as: Luso Brazilian Review

11. **Proper names with a prefix.** Spell as written, but file as one word. Arrange names beginning with the prefixes 'M' and 'Mc' as if written 'Mac.'

    Hall & Patterson Mach
    Hall Co., Tex. McHenry
    Hall-Edwards, Craig Machinery
Materials' Classification and Shelving Systems

Hall of Fame  MacHugh
Hall Williams, Lionel  M'Laren
MacLaren

***Stack Maintenance does not use this rule. Bound Periodicals are filed exactly as spelled.***

MacLean's.  Shelved as: Macleans
McCall's Magazine.  Shelved as: Mccalls (not as Maccalls...)

D. **Numerical**

Some collections in the MSU Library are filed by their own numerical sequence such as the ASI, CIS, and ERIC microfiche collections. The main thing to remember is that if the numbering system uses decimals, dashes or slashes; note how the numbers are handled before and after the decimals, etc. Note if they are treated as a separate unique number or a continuation of the preceding number(s) or decimally as in mathematics.

If there are collections in your area of employment that are filed by a numerical sequence, please check with your supervisor for specific instructions on filing or shelving those materials.

E. **Reference**

Reference is a collection of dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, handbooks, manuals, directories, and statistical sources. These books are classified using the LC Classification System with the call numbers preceded by REF. Reference materials do not circulate. Exceptions to this policy can only be made by the Reference librarians.

![From A Mischievous Meander Through the Stacks and Beyond, @1990 Gary Handman by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, Jefferson NC 28640.](image)

F. **Microforms**

Microforms are materials which require special machines in order to read the contents. Microforms are widely collected by libraries as space-saving and preservation alternatives to paper materials. Some portions of the Microforms Collection are filed numerically, some alphabetically and others by the LC Classification System with the call numbers preceded by NFX for microfilm and NHX for microfiche. See also section XIV.A.(6)(c).
G. **Juvenile**

A collection of children's and young adult books is housed on the fourth floor of the Library at the west end of the room near the picture window. This collection is primarily for the use of students enrolled in courses in children's literature, child development, and early childhood education but may be used by any library patron. These books are classified using the LC system with the call numbers preceded by **JUV**. Check out privileges for these materials are the same as any other circulating item.

H. **Oversized**

Books and/or other materials that will not physically fit on normally spaced shelving are designated oversized. The **Circulating Oversized Collection** is housed in the northeast room on the third floor of the Library and are arranged according to the LC classification system. The **Reference Oversized Collection** is housed on the shelving at the end of the low Reference Collection and are arranged using the LC system preceded by **REF**.

I. **Theses and Dissertations**

Theses and dissertations written at Mississippi State University are designated by a capital **T** or **TD** preceding the call number. This designation is to be ignored when shelving or retrieving these materials. They are interfiled with all other Library of Congress materials and not in their own separate collection.