

Reading Call Numbers and Finding Books in the Library

Aubie Asks @ the Libraries

This video will provide an overview on how to read call numbers and use those call numbers to locate books in the library.

This will involve four steps. Learning about how the library organizes the books, understanding how to read a call number, knowing how to find a call number in the library catalog, and figuring out which shelf the book is on in the library.

Auburn University Libraries uses the Library of Congress Classification to organize its books. This system uses letters to categorize subjects. For instance, books about Fine Arts are placed under the letter N. Within each broad subject, two letters are used to provide more narrow subjects.

So where does the call number come in? It may help to think of the call number as the book's address within the library. Call numbers are created by using the Library of Congress system. Each book is given a unique call number that determines where it will be placed in the library.

The call number will begin with the letters that describe this subject. For instance, QL are books about Zoology. The Library of Congress system also uses whole numbers to help narrow book topics. The number 762 is assigned to books about Animal Behavior (within the broader topic of Zoology). The next part of the call number is related to either the title or author of the book, and is read as a decimal. The year of publication is included last.

It may be helpful to look at some books placed in the correct order. They are organized alphabetically according to the letters in the call number. Then, the whole numbers are placed in numerical order, smallest to largest. The letters in the decimal are alphabetical. Pay special attention to the numbers in the decimal. In this example .79 would be shelved before .8.

Now that you understand call numbers, how can you look one up and find it in the library? When you go to the library website and search for a book, the call number will be provided, along with the floor number, and a link to a map of the floor.

Once you get to the correct floor, you will use the labels on the shelves to find the book. The labels tell you the range of books available in a particular row. If you can't find a book, come to the 2nd floor Reference desk for help.

Remember our email address- askalibrarian@auburn.edu