

Call Numbers – What They Are & How to Use Them

A call number is the address of an item on the library shelves. The Eliot D. Pratt Library uses the Library of Congress Classification System (LC) for its collections. LC is **subject**-based, arranging items by their primary subject.

While there are always some exceptions to the rules, this tutorial will cover what you're seeing **most** of the time. Remember, you can always ask the library staff for help understanding or finding items on the shelf.

Here is a brief video on call numbers:

[Reading a Call Number \(Library of Congress\)](#)

This video was not made by us, so the online catalog and specific locations are different than what you will see, but the basic idea is the same.

Here's how it works in more detail:

The First Line – General Subject by Letters

LC is broken into 21 general subjects represented by letters. This allows libraries to classify and arrange larger collections by the main subject matter of the text.

○ A – General Works	○ N – Fine Arts
○ B – Philosophy, Psychology, Religion	○ P – Language and Literature
○ C – Auxiliary sciences of history	○ Q – Science
○ D – World History	○ R – Medicine
○ E-F – History of the Americas	○ S – Agriculture
○ G – Geography, Anthropology, Recreation	○ T – Technology
○ H – Social Sciences	○ U – Military Science
○ J – Political Science	○ V – Naval Science
○ K – Law	○ Z – Bibliography. Library Science
○ L – Education	
○ M – Music and Books on Music	

LC then breaks into more specific subjects by the addition of 1-2 letters. For the most common LC subject breakdowns, see the list at the bottom of this page or the posters at the end of the stacks in the library.

These are read in **alphabetical** order, where L comes before LA, which comes before LC, which all comes before M.

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The Second Line – Specific Subject by Numbers

LC is **hierarchical**, using numbers up to four digits in length (1-9999), sometimes with several decimal places, to drill down to the most specific subject. For example:

- LC call numbers beginning with *L* deal with *Education*
- LC call numbers beginning with *LB* deal with *Theory & Practice of Education*
- LC call numbers in the *LB 51-885* range deal with *Systems of Individual Educators & Writers*
- LC call numbers in the *LB 880-885* range deal with the period *1951-present*
- LC call numbers in *LB 880* deal with *Educators Outside the US*
- The LC call number for *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paolo Freire is: *LB880.F73 P4313 2002*

These are read in **simple numerical** order, where 7 comes before 70, which comes before 700, which comes before 7000.

The Third Line – Author coded by Letters & Numbers

LC always includes a code representing the **author**. This part of the call number begins with a decimal and the first letter of the author's surname followed by numbers representing some of the subsequent letters, for example:

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paolo Freire is: LB880.F73 P4313 2002_

These are read first in **alphabetical** and then in **decimal** order, where .O9615 comes before .P9615 and where .P9615 comes before .P962

The Fourth Line – Title coded by Letters & Numbers

LC sometimes includes a code representing the **title**, especially in areas where there may be many titles by the same author. This part of the call number begins with the first letter of the title – excluding A, An, The, etc. – followed by numbers representing some of the subsequent letters, for example:

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paolo Freire is: LB880.F73 P4313 2002_

These are read first in **alphabetical** and then in **decimal** order (even though the decimal is usually not present), where O9615 comes before P9615 and where P9615 comes before P962

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The Fifth Line – Year of Publication

LC usually includes a year of publication. This is almost always present on newer titles, but sometimes absent on older materials.

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire is: LB880.F73 P4313 **2002**

These are read by **oldest to newest**, where LB880.F73 P4313 comes before LB880.F73 P4313 1993, which comes before LB880.F73 P4313 2002

Other Lines – Locations, copies, volumes, etc.

Information that precedes the LC Call Number is included by the library to help you find what you're looking for when items are not shelved in the main collection with the bulk of our print books. For instance, we'll add something like **DVD** before the call number if it's a video or **REF** if it's a Reference item.

Information that follows the LC Call Number can vary. It may be volume, issue, or copy number to let you find the exact item you're looking for without having to pull it off the shelf. It may also be location information, like **Special Collection**, to let you know it's not shelved with the main collection.

Reading Call Numbers – All Together Now!

Call numbers are read from left to right and from top to bottom. In the catalog, a call number is written out all on one line but on the item it is displayed in a column, as below. This is so it will fit on the item's spine whenever possible and be visible when shelved. This is called a **spine label**. Call numbers are read the same way whether they're all on one line or in a column. For example:

One line, as in the catalog: **LB880.F73 P4313 2002**

In a column, as on a spine label:

LB	REF	LB
880	LB	880
.F73	880	.F73
P4313	.F73	P4313
2002	P4313	2002
	2002	copy 5

Always remember to note the location and availability of an item **before** you go looking for it. If an item is checked out, missing, or on display, the catalog will tell you so under the item record.

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Library of Congress Classification System

This is a basic outline of the LC General Subjects. For a more specific list, check out the [Library of Congress Classification Outline](#). This may be helpful in cases where further breakdown of subjects, for instance by time period, is not obvious and you want to be able to browse more efficiently.

Primary Class:

[A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E-F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) |
[N](#) | [P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [Z](#) |

-A-	General Works
AC	Collections. Series. Collected Works
AE	Encyclopedias
AG	Dictionaries and other general reference works
AI	Indexes
AM	Museums. Collectors and collecting
AN	Newspapers
AP	Periodicals
AS	Academics and learned societies
AY	Yearbooks. Almanacs. Directories
AZ	History of scholarship and learning. The humanities
Top	
-B-	Philosophy, Psychology, Religion
B	Philosophy (General)
BC	Logic
BD	Speculative philosophy
BF	Psychology
BH	Aesthetics
BJ	Ethics
BL	Religions. Mythology. Rationalism
BM	Judaism
BP	Islam. Bahaim. Theosophy, etc.
BQ	Buddhism
BR	Christianity
BS	The Bible
BT	Doctrinal Theology
BV	Practical Theology
BX	Christian Denominations
Top	
-C-	Auxiliary sciences of History
C	Auxiliary sciences of history (General)
CB	History of Civilization
CC	Archaeology

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CD	Diplomatics. Archives. Seals
CE	Technical chronology. Calendar
CJ	Numismatics
CN	Inscriptions. Epigraphy
CR	Heraldry
CS	Genealogy
CT	Biography

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-D- World History

D	History
DA	Great Britain
DAW	Central Europe
DB	Austria – Liechtenstein – Hungary – Czechoslovakia
DC	France – Andorra – Monaco
DD	Germany
DE	Greco-Roman World
DF	Greece
DG	Italy – Malta
DH	Low Countries – Benelux Countries
DJ	Netherlands (Holland)
DJK	Eastern Europe (General)
DK	Russia. Soviet Union. Former Soviet Republics – Poland
DL	Northern Europe. Scandinavia
DP	Spain – Portugal
DQ	Switzerland
DR	Balkan Peninsula
DS	Asia
DT	Africa
DU	Oceania (South Seas)
DX	Gypsies

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-E-F- History of the Americas

E 11-143	America
E 151-889	United States
F 1-975	United States local history
F 1001-1145.2	British America (including Canada). Dutch America
F 1170	French America
F 1201-3799	Latin America. Spanish America

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-G- Geography, Anthropology, Recreation

G	Geography (General). Atlases. Maps
GA	Mathematical geography. Cartography
GB	Physical geography
GC	Oceanography
GF	Human ecology. Anthropogeography

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GN	Anthropology
GR	Folklore
GT	Manners and customs (General)
GV	Recreation. Leisure

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-H- Social Sciences

H	Social Sciences (General)
HA	Statistics
HB	Economic theory. Demography
HC-HD	Economic history and conditions
HE	Transportation and communications
HF	Commerce
HG	Finance
HJ	Public Finance
HM	Sociology (General and Theoretical)
HN	Social history. Social problems. Social reform
HQ	The family. Marriage. Women
HS	Societies: Secret, benevolent, etc.
HT	Communities. Classes. Races.
HV	Social Pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology
HX	Socialism. Communism. Anarchism

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-J- Political Science

J	General legislative and executive papers
JA	Political science (General)
JC	Political theory
JF	Political institutions and public administration
JJ	Political institutions and public administration (North America)
JK	Political institutions and public administration (United States)
JL	Political institutions and public administration (Canada, Latin America, etc.)
JN	Political institutions and public administration (Europe)
JQ	Political institutions and public administration (Asia, Africa, Australia, Pacific Area, etc.)
JS	Local government. Municipal government
JV	Colonies and colonization. Emigration and immigration. International migration
JX (obsolete)	International Law, see JZ and KZ
JZ	International relations

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-K- Law

K	Law in general. Comparative and uniform law. Jurisprudence
KB	Religious laws in general. Comparative religious law. Jurisprudence
KBM	Jewish law
KBP	Islamic law

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KBR	History of canon law
KBS	Canon law of Eastern churches
KBU	Law of the Roman Catholic Church. The Holy See
KD-KDK	United Kingdom and Ireland
KDZ	America. North America
KE	Canada
KF	United States
KG	Latin America – Mexico and Central America – West Indies. Caribbean area
KH	South America
KJ-KKZ	Europe
KL-KWX	Asia and Eurasia, Africa, Pacific Area, and Antarctica
KZ	Law of nations

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-L- Education

L	Education (General)
LA	History of education
LB	Theory and practice of education
LC	Special aspects of education
LD	Individual institutions – United States
LE	Individual institutions – America (except United States)
LF	Individual institutions – Europe
LG	Individual institutions – Asia, Africa, Indian Ocean islands, Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands
LH	College and school magazines and papers
LJ	Student fraternities and societies, United States
LT	Textbooks

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-M- Music and Books on Music

M	Music
ML	Literature of music
MT	Musical instruction and study

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-N- Fine Arts

N	Visual Arts
NA	Architecture
NB	Sculpture
NC	Drawing. Design. Illustration
ND	Painting
NE	Print media
NK	Decorative arts
NX	Arts in general

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-P- Language and Literature

P	Philology. Linguistics
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PA	Greek language and literature. Latin language and literature
PB	Modern languages. Celtic languages
PC	Romantic languages
PD	Germanic languages. Scandinavian languages
PE	English language
PF	West Germanic languages
PG	Slavic languages. Baltic languages. Albanian language
PH	Uralic languages. Basque language
PJ	Oriental languages and literatures
PK	Indo-Iranian languages and literatures
PL	Languages and literatures of Eastern Asia, Africa, Oceania
PM	Hyperborean, Indian, and artificial languages
PN	Literature (General)
PQ	French literature – Italian literature – Spanish literature – Portuguese literature
PR	English literature
PS	American literature
PT	German literature – Dutch literature – Flemish literature since 1830 Afrikaans literature – Scandinavian literature – Old Norse literature: Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian – Modern Icelandic literature – Faroese literature – Danish literature – Norwegian literature – Swedish literature
PZ	Fiction and juvenile belles lettres

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-Q- Science

Q	Science (General)
QA	Mathematics
QB	Astronomy
QC	Physics
QD	Chemistry
QE	Geology
QH	Natural history – Biology
QK	Botany
QL	Zoology
QM	Human anatomy
QP	Physiology
QR	Microbiology

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-R- Medicine

R	Medicine (General)
RA	Public aspects of medicine
RB	Pathology
RC	Internal medicine
RD	Surgery
RE	Ophthalmology
RF	Otorhinolaryngology

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RG	Gynecology and obstetrics
RJ	Pediatrics
RK	Dentistry
RL	Dermatology
RM	Therapeutics. Pharmacology
RS	Pharmacy and materia medica
RT	Nursing
RV	Botanic, Thomsonian, and eclectic medicine
RX	Homeopathy
RZ	Other systems of medicine

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-S- Agriculture

S	Agriculture (General)
SB	Plant culture
SD	Forestry
SF	Animal culture
SH	Aquaculture. Fisheries. Angling
SK	Hunting sports

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-T- Technology

T	Technology (General)
TA	Engineering (General). Civil engineering
TC	Hydraulic engineering. Ocean engineering
TD	Environmental technology. Sanitary engineering
TE	Highway engineering. Roads and pavements
TF	Railroad engineering and operation
TG	Bridge engineering
TH	Building construction
TJ	Mechanical engineering and machinery
TK	Electrical engineering. Electronics. Nuclear engineering
TL	Motor vehicles. Aeronautics. Astronautics
TN	Mining engineering. Metallurgy
TP	Chemical technology
TR	Photography
TS	Manufactures
TT	Handicrafts. Arts and crafts
TX	Home economics. Cookbooks

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-U- Military Science

U	Military science (General)
UA	Armies: Organization, description, military situation
UB	Military administration
UC	Maintenance and transportation
UD	Infantry
UE	Cavalry. Armor

Call Numbers – What They Are & How to Use Them

UF Artillery
UG Military Engineering. Air forces
UH Other services

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-V- Naval Science

V Naval science (General)
VA Navies: Organization, description, naval situation
VB Naval administration
VC Naval maintenance
VD Naval seamen
VE Marines
VF Naval ordinance
VG Minor services of the navies
VK Navigation. Merchant marine
VM Naval architecture. Shipbuilding. Marine engineering

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-Z- Bibliography. Library Science. Information Resources (General)

Z Books (General). Writing. Paleography. Book industries and trade. Libraries. Bibliography
ZA Information resources (General)

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