How to Read Call Numbers

Libraries use classification systems to organize the books on the shelves. A classification system uses letters and/or numbers (call numbers) to arrange the books so that books on the same topic are together. This arrangement results in “serendipitous browsing” you can find one book in the catalog, go to the shelf, and an even better book is sitting right next to it. All books in the John B. Cade Library at Southern University are arranged according to the Library of Congress Classification (LC Classification) System.

What does the call number mean?

A call number is like an address; it tells you where the book is located on the shelf. Each book, and journal, etc. has its own unique call number which is attached to the book’s spine or upper left hand corner of the cover (or envelope). A book’s call number also appears in the catalog entry in the library’s online catalog. The 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. For a complete breakdown of call numbers visit the Library of Congress website at: http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/lcco

Using Call Numbers

1. First, look at Line 1:

Books are arranged in alphabetical order, by the letters on the first line of the call number.
Example: first come all the D call numbers, then all the DA call numbers, then DB, etc.

2. Next, look at Line 2:

Within the DA call numbers, books are arranged in number order.

The numbers are arranged in numerical order, from low to high.

Example:

3. Then look at Line 3:

Line 3 of the call number has a letter and a number. The letters are in alphabetical order.

Then read the numbers—but BEWARE!
The numbers are not **WHOLE** numbers, they are **DECIMAL** numbers!

Example: **A55** is read as **A .55** - this is why **A55** comes *before* **A6** (**A .55, A .6, A .65, etc.**)

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**Where can I find books in the library once I have the call number?**

**Main Level**

The main level of the John B. Cade Library is comprised of the reference collection. Please note that these materials circulate only within the library.

**Upper Level**

The upper level of the library is comprised exclusively of the circulating collection; all books located here may be checked out. Please ask for assistance if you are having difficulty locating material. Books are checked out at the Circulation Desk located on the 1st Floor of the library.
Book Location Guide

2nd Floor Books A-H

A- General Works
B- Philosophy, Psychology, Religion
C- Auxiliary Sciences of History
D- World History and History of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc.
E- History of the Americas
F- History of the Americas
G- Geography, Anthropology, Recreation
H- Social Sciences

3rd Floor Books J-P

J- Political Science
K- Law
L- Education
M- Music and Books on Music
N- Fine Arts

4th Floor Books Q-Z

Q- Science
R- Medicine
S- Agriculture
T- Technology
U- Military Science
V- Naval Science
Z- Bibliography, Library Science, Information Resources (General)