Understanding Library of Congress Call Numbers

The Doherty Library uses **Library of Congress Classification** for all non-fiction call numbers. This system uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials by subjects.

**What are call numbers for?**
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...

How are they placed on the shelf?

How to read the Call Numbers:

- **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.**

How are they placed on the shelf?
**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 probably recall, the last section of a call number is often the date of publication.

For example:

| Title: What You Need to Know About Developing Study Skills, Taking Notes & Tests, Using Dictionaries & Libraries | The first two lines describe the subject of the book. LB2395 = Methods of Study, in Higher Education |
| Author: Coman, Marcia J. | This line often represents the author's last name. C65 = Coman |
| Call number LB2395 .C65 1991 | The year the book was published. |

**Why is this important to know?**

Because books are classified by subject, you can often find several helpful books on the same shelf, or nearby. For example, within the same call number LB 2395, there will be other guides for college study.

Knowing the Library of Congress Classification letter(s) for your subject area gives you a place to start browsing the shelves.

**Shelf ranges and locations in Doherty Library**

The “book stacks” (books that can be checked-out, or, as we say “circulate”) in Doherty begin with the As on the first floor of the library. They continue upstairs on the second floor, ending with the Zs section in the east wing. The Ellis Texas History collection (can be checked out) and most Graduate Philosophy collection books (cannot be checked out) are in the library’s basement. All of our reference books can be found in the Silent Reading Room. Reference books cannot be checked out.

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