

# Reading Library of Congress Call Numbers

Research Guide #63

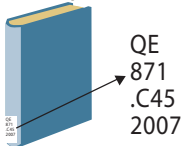
## University Libraries

20070810/RS

Once you've searched Addison, the library's catalog, how do you locate your items in the libraries? Addison will list the library and floor for each item. Addison will also list a call number so you can zero in on the correct shelf in the library. Virginia Tech's libraries, like many academic libraries in the U. S., use the *Library of Congress Classification System* to assign call numbers to most library materials, including books and journals.

**What is the purpose of call numbers?** Each book or journal has a unique call number, which provides an address or location for the item, and also provides valuable information about it, such as the subject, first letter of the author's last name, and date of publication.

Call numbers appear: on the spine of books... and ...in Addison, the catalog



QE871 .C45 2007

Note that the same call number can be written from top-to-bottom, or left-to-right.

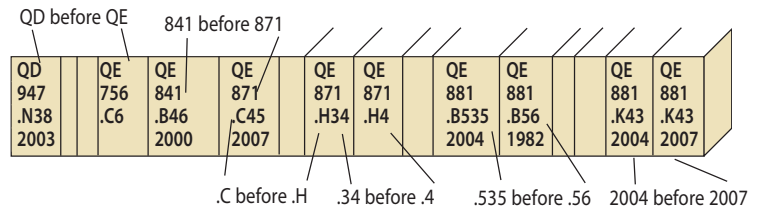
**How do you read call numbers?** The Library of Congress Classification System uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials on library shelves by subject:

Read call numbers line by line

QE  
871  
.C45  
2007

- Read the first line in alphabetical order. A, B, BF, CD...Q, QA, QB...QE, R, S...
- Read the second line as a whole number. 1, 2, 45, 101, 500, 500.1, 500.5, 871, 1000, 2468...
- The third line is a combination of a letter and numbers: Read the letter alphabetically. Read the number as a decimal: .B535 comes before .B56 (Some call numbers have more than one combination letter-number line.)
- The last line is the publication date, read in chronological order: 2005, 2006, 2007

**In what order do call numbers appear on the shelf?** Call numbers are arranged line by line, just as they are read, starting with the letter or letters in alphabetical order:



**What information does the call number tell you?** The Library of Congress Classification System 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. The last section of a call number is often the date of publication:



Title: *Glorified Dinosaurs: the origins and early evolution of birds*  
Author: Chiappe, Luis M.  
Call Number: QE 871 .C45 2007

The first two lines describe the subject of the book:  
QE871 = paleozoology - birds  
This line often represents the author's last name:  
.C45 = Chiappe  
The year the book was published

QE  
871  
.C45  
2007

**Why is this important to know?** Although the most efficient way to locate materials on a particular topic is usually to perform a subject search in Addison and then note the call number for each retrieved item, browsing the shelves can also help you locate material appropriate for your topic. Since books are classified by subject, you can often find several helpful books on the same shelf, or nearby. For example, within the subject classification QE 871, there may be several guides about the evolution of birds.



QE 871 .C45 2007  
Glorified dinosaurs  
Chiappe, Luis



QE 871 .M47 2002  
Mesozoic birds: above the head of dinosaurs  
Witmer, Lawrence



QE 871 .P38 2002  
Dinosaurs of the air  
Paul, Gregory

### How do I use the call number to locate items in the library?

Newman Library does not offer a service where we will pull items that are on the shelves and hold them for you to pick up. You will need to find these items yourself and take them to the Circulation Desk to check them out. You'll use a combination of the call number and the location indicated in Addison to find the item. Items in Newman Library will show a floor or special location label (see below). Note these locations are linked in Addison to floor maps. Maps are also conveniently displayed in stairwells and near the elevators on every floor.

Items in branch libraries will also be indicated in Addison. You can go to these branch libraries to check out these items, or have them delivered to Newman. You will also find items in the Remote Storage location. These items are not directly accessible to you; you will need to have them delivered to Newman or a branch library before you can check them out. Use the Request button at the top of the screen in Addison to initiate this delivery.

**On what floor of Newman Library will I find items?** Books and bound journals are shelved in the Stacks (the regular shelved on each floor in the library) according to their call numbers:

Call #	Floor
Folio (call number A-Z)	1
DOCS A-Y (Government document call #)	1
A, B, C, D, E	2
F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N*, P	3
Q, R, S	4
T, U, V, Z	5

\* Most N call numbers will be found in the Art + Architecture branch library.

Current issues of journals (loose, individual issues not yet bound together as a set) and newspapers are all shelved by call number on the 4th floor.

Other formats, such as maps or videos, are often placed into special sections:

Format	Floor
ECS (data CDs and DVDs)	4 (Torgersen)
Juvenile (children's books)	3
Maps and atlases	1
Microforms	1
Music CDs	2 (Circulation)
REF ROOM A-Z (Reference books)	2, 4
Reserve	2 (Circulation)
Scripts (plays)	3
Slides	2 (Circulation)
Special Collections	1
Videos and DVDs	2 (Circulation)

**How do I find articles in journals and magazines?** First, determine if the University Libraries owns the journal or magazine in question, then determine the location of the particular issue you need. Locating journals is a bit different than locating books, since different

issues will be in different locations based on the date of publication.

Addison will show what, if any, issues of the journal are available online, with a link to that source. If you are off campus, be sure to use the Off Campus Sign In button in Addison to ensure you can access the online journal from home.

Search Addison by the name of the journal (not the title or author of the article). If we own the journal, Addison will display the call number, along with a list of volume and dates and corresponding locations. Use the publication date, or the volume and issue number from your article citation to determine where the issue you need is located.

If the issue is considered **current** (usually those published in the last six months or year), the issue will be located in the **Current Periodicals** section on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. If the issue has been **bound** (together with other issues of that journal), it is shelved in the **Stacks** (regular shelves with books) according to its call number. If Addison indicated older issues of the journal are in **Storage**, those must be delivered to Newman using the Request button on the Addison screen for that journal. Older issues might only be available in **microform** format. Microforms are found on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor along with machines for viewing and printing them.

**How does the Library of Congress Classification System compare to the familiar Dewey Decimal System?** Both group materials according to the topics covered in them; the Library of Congress System divides items into finer categories:

#### Library of Congress Classification System

Class	Subject
A	General works
B	Philosophy, Psychology, Ethics and Religion
C	History-related disciplines
D	History (except the Americas)
E-F	History (the Americas)
G	Geography, Anthropology and Recreation
H	Social Sciences
J	Political Science
L	Education
M	Music
N	Fine Arts and Architecture
P	Language and Literature
Q	Sciences
R	Medicine
S	Agriculture
T	Technology and Engineering
U	Military Science
V	Naval Science
Z	Bibliography and Book Trade

#### Dewey Decimal System

Class	Subject
000	Computer Science, Information and General Works
100	Philosophy and Psychology
200	Religion
300	Social Sciences
400	Language
500	Sciences
600	Technology
700	Arts and Recreation
800	Literature
900	History and Geography