What is a Call Number?

A call number is like an address: it tells us where the book is located in the library. Each book in the library has its own unique call number. Note that the same call number can be written from top-to-bottom, or left-to-right.

Reading Call Numbers

Rio Hondo College Library uses Library of Congress Classification for call numbers. This system uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials by subject. An abbreviated guide to the letters on the first line of LC call numbers can be found on the reverse side of this handout.

Finding Call Numbers on the Shelf

To understand how call numbers are put in order in Library of Congress Classification, look at each section of the call number:

Understanding Call Numbers

The first 2 sections of the call number represent the subject of the book. The next section, beginning with a letter, usually represents the author’s last name. The last line gives the year the book was published.

Adapted from “Understanding Call Numbers” by Honolulu Community College.  11/04