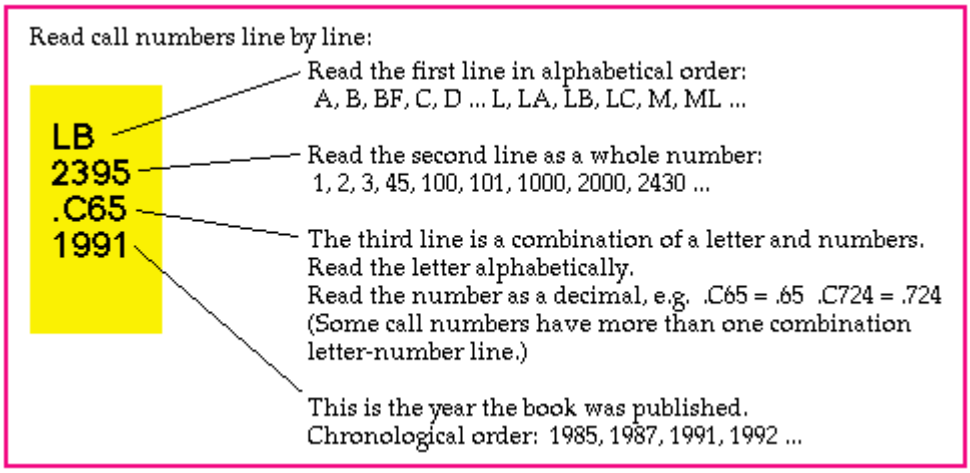
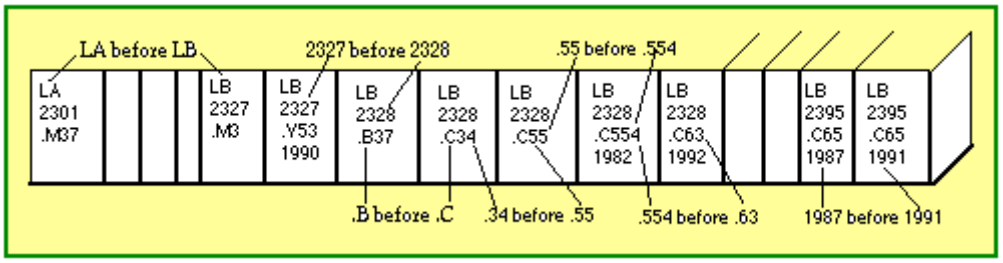
Understanding Library of Congress Call Numbers

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.

UD Libraries, like many academic libraries in the U.S., use Library of Congress Classification for call numbers. This system uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials by subjects.



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



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 the last section of a call number is often the date of publication.

Because books are classified by subject, you can often find several helpful books on the same shelf, or nearby. Knowing the letter(s) for your subject area gives you a place to start browsing the shelves.