

Library of Congress Call Number Arrangement

Library of Congress call numbers follow three principles of organization: alphabetical order, numerical order, and decimal order. All numbers preceding the first decimal in an LC call number are read in counting order. Numbers that follow the first and any subsequent decimals are read according to decimal value.

Rules of Arrangement:

1. Initial letters of a call number are followed alphabetically: A, B, C, D, etc.
2. Two letter classifications follow single letters alphabetically in combinations: P, PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, etc.
3. Numbers before the first decimal in a call number are read in counting order: Q1, Q2,... Q10, Q11,..., Q100, Q101, etc.
4. If a call number has a decimal qualification attached to it, the attached number is read in decimal order: QA75.1, QA75.13, QA75.2, QA75.275, etc.
5. Any letters that follow a decimal are read alphabetically: QA75.A54, QA75.B23, QA75.C34, etc. This same rule applies to call letters with two decimals: QA75.13.A54, QA75.13.B23, QA75.13.C34, etc
6. Numbers that follow a decimal and a letter are also read in decimal order, in spite of the presence of a letter: PS1.A2, PS1.A23, PS1.A3, PS1.A35, PS1.A4 and similarly: QA75.13.A1, QA75.13.A135, QA75.13.A2, QA75.13.A254, QA75.13.A3

Decimal Numbers

Comparing call numbers that begins with **PS 74.13** and **PS 74.2**, a person might think: "The number 13 is of greater value than the number 2, so the call number PS 74.2 should come first in a call number arrangement." This is not the case, because the numbers following the decimal are read as decimals.

Think of the numbers in terms of money if this concept gives you any difficulty. A quarter (.25) has less value than a half dollar (.50). If you were counting money, .25 would precede .50. Alternatively, add balancing zeroes to the single and double-digit decimals to make them appear equivalent to their three digit counterparts (QA75.100, QA75.130, QA75.200, QA75.275).