How To Read Call Numbers

The collections at Herrick, like at many college and university libraries, are organized by Library of Congress classification. Each item in the library is assigned a unique number that you can use to locate it in the library.

We will use the book *How Not To Say What You Mean: A Dictionary of Euphemisms* by R. W. Holder as an example.

Call numbers appear in two ways. On the online catalog they will look like this:

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PE1449 .H548 2002 / Reference
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On the spines of books and other items, they will look like this:

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Ref.
PE
1449
.H548
2002
```

*How to read Library of Congress call numbers:*

- Before (or, in the case of the online catalog, after) the actual call number is the prefix, in this case, "Ref." This tells you the collection to which the item belongs—in this case, the reference collection. If there is no prefix then the item belongs to the general collection.
- The first line of the call number describes the subject of the item. For instance, "PE" equals "English language." This line is read alphabetically. A call number of P would come before one of PE, because in the Library of Congress system, "nothing always comes before something."
- The second line of the call number further narrows the subject description. For instance, "1449" falls under "Modern English." This line is read numerically. Therefore, a call number of 250 would come before one of 1449, but a call number of 2500 would come after. Be aware that the second line sometimes includes decimals. However, only on the third line does a letter follow a decimal point.
- The third line of the call number represents an author (or editor, compiler, etc.). For instance, ".H548" represents "R. W. Holder." This line is read decimally. Therefore, a call number of .H4444 would come before .H548, but a call number of .H6 would come after.
- Following the call number is the year of publication, the volume number if the item is part of a multivolume work, and the copy number if the library owns multiple copies.
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION OUTLINE

- A -- GENERAL WORKS
- B -- PHILOSOPHY. PSYCHOLOGY. RELIGION
- C -- AUXILIARY SCIENCES OF HISTORY
- D -- HISTORY (GENERAL) AND HISTORY OF EUROPE
- E -- HISTORY: AMERICA
- F -- HISTORY: AMERICA
- G -- GEOGRAPHY. ANTHROPOLOGY. RECREATION
- H -- SOCIAL SCIENCES
- J -- POLITICAL SCIENCE
- K -- LAW
- L -- EDUCATION
- M -- MUSIC AND BOOKS ON MUSIC
- N -- FINE ARTS
- P -- LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
- Q -- SCIENCE
- R -- MEDICINE
- S -- AGRICULTURE
- T -- TECHNOLOGY
- U -- MILITARY SCIENCE
- V -- NAVAL SCIENCE
- Z -- BIBLIOGRAPHY. LIBRARY SCIENCE. INFORMATION RESOURCES (GENERAL)