

How Are LC Call Numbers Shelved?

Library of Congress call numbers usually have *four* lines or elements:

PA
112
.G53
1982

First line:

The first line can be *either* a single or a double letter. If a book's call number begins with a *single* letter which is the same as the *first* letter of a call number which begins with a *double* letter, then the book with the single letter is shelved *first*, or to the left, on the shelf.

For example, in the section for the **Ps**, the correct sequence would be **P PA PB PC PD** to **PZ**, followed by **Q QA QB QC QD** and so on.

1st Number (after the letter(s)):

The next line of an LC call number is always a *whole* number from **1** to **9999**. If the letters on the first line of the call number are the same, the book with the *smaller* number on the second line is shelved to the left of the book with the *larger* number. (Note that in the Dewey Decimal system, the largest number is 999.)

Next line:

The third item of an LC call number is always a decimal point, followed by a letter and a number. Books are shelved alphabetically according to the letter to the right of the decimal point. For example, a book with **.G** on the third line of its call number would be shelved to the left of a book with **.H**. If two books have the *same* letter on the third line, then the book with the smaller *decimal* number is shelved to the left of the book with the larger number. For example, **.G53** is shelved to the left of **.G532** because **.53** is a *smaller* decimal number than **.532**. Even if the decimal point is not there, this line is treated as a decimal.

Fourth line:

The fourth line of an LC call number is always a year of publication or a volume number. An earlier edition of the same work is always shelved to the left of a later edition. A lower volume number is shelved to the left of a higher volume number.