

Call Numbers

How They Work and Why We Need Them

Libraries assign “**call numbers**” to items, such as books or videos, so they can be found later.

Unlike stores (which usually arrange items either to **get your attention** or to encourage you to **browse their aisles indefinitely**) libraries are all about **efficiency** and **speed**: we want you (as well as our library staff members) to be able to find information *as fast as possible!*

This is why libraries like Thrall like to use precise “**classification systems**” to arrange (“classify”) information in areas we can easily refer to later.

Libraries stock not only new books but many *old* ones as well, as well as newspapers, magazines, journals, CDs, DVDs, and more. In any given library there can be *tens* to *hundreds of thousands* of items, so being able to find things quickly and easily is important!

Thrall uses a few different “classification systems” for its collections. We mainly use the “**Dewey Decimal System**” for **non-fiction** items, which occupy many of the library’s shelves.

“**Dewey Numbers**” arrange *all knowledge* into **digits** between **000** and **999**. That’s quite impressive when you think about it! Designed by **Melvil Dewey** (a librarian from the 1800s), this system of numbers grows yearly to accommodate new topics and ideas.

Each number in Dewey represents a **range of subjects**. Here is a list of the “hundreds”:

000 - Generalities

100 - Philosophy & Psychology

200 - Religion

300 - Social Science

400 - Language

500 - Natural Science & Mathematics

600 - Technology & Applied Sciences

700 - Arts

800 - Literature

900 - Geography & History

Call numbers based on these can contain “tens,” single digits, and decimals (as in 123.4567) to indicate precisely **what a book is about** and **where it can be found** in the library.

At Thrall, **Fiction** items are arranged according to an author’s **last name**. If you don’t know an author’s name (or even the title), we can help you at Reference!

Biographies are arranged by the **last (or only) name of the person the book is about**.

New books, large print works, audiobooks, reference books, and even **movies** are arranged similarly in their respective areas: nonfiction, fiction, biographies.

Periodicals (magazines, journals) are arranged alphabetically by title.

Thrall also has **special collections** (which have their own special numbers), such as our **jazz and classical music CDs** and our **Government Documents** area.

Best of all, **you never have to remember any of this**: our **library catalog** lists call numbers. If you cannot find something, our librarians are ready to help. Our **online guides** (www.thrall.org/guides) also let you explore the library system simply by *clicking on topics*.

If you’re not looking for anything *specific*, we can point you in a *general* direction – and you are always welcome to *browse* our shelves and monthly book displays to discover new things!