Crash course in Library of Congress Classification

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Why classification?


- “We know what something is by contrast with what it is not” (p. 290).
- Classification are “historical and political artifacts” (p. 285).
- Classification schemes are “entities with consequences” (p. 231)
Library context for classification

• Provide access based on topic (subject analysis)
• Provide a specific location where works about the same topic can continually be found (consistency)
• Provide a logical arrangement of subjects (relationships between subjects, common usage)

Contrast with accession numbers and in-house numbering systems.
Collocation = bringing together similar works
Subject analysis

= Determining and describing the intellectual or artistic content of a work, with the aim of providing access to the work

Two ways to provide access based on “aboutness”:

• **Verbal approach** = word or phrase, commonly from a list of controlled vocabulary (subject headings system)

• **Notational approach** = classification
“There is no natural law that the best standard shall win.”

(Bowker & Starr, 1999, p. 14)
Library of Congress Classification

• For organizing the Library of Congress collection
• Literary warrant
• Topics arranged by discipline
• Enumerative rather than analytico-synthetic
• Cutter tables & auxiliary tables for (limited) extensiveness
General principles of LCC

1. Favour topic over form
2. Favour topic over place
3. Use the most specific number available
4. Multi-topic works
   - Follow instructions in the schedules
   - Otherwise, choose by the dominant subject
   - Otherwise, choose the first topic mentioned
   - Otherwise, choose the broader subject
5. Choosing among several class numbers
6. Influence of one subject on another

See CSM, F10:
https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/F010.pdf
Structure: 21 main classes

A General works
B Philosophy, psychology, religion
C Auxiliary sciences of history
D World history and history of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc.
E History of the Americas
F History of the Americas
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
Subclasses

Each class is divided into subclasses. Subclasses begin with a 2- or 3-letter prefix. Example:

- **N** Fine arts
- **NA** Architecture
- **NB** Sculpture
- **NC** Drawing
- **ND** Painting
- **NE** Print media
- **NK** Decorative arts
- **NX** Arts in general

Class N Text: [https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCC/N-text.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCC/N-text.pdf)
How to read an LC schedule

Features within each class:

• Preface
• Outline
  • Overview of how the discipline is arranged, based on subject experts’ knowledge
• Text (=the schedule)
  • Class letter in top margin of page
  • Numbers denoting divisions in left margin
  • Indentations loosely denote hierarchy
How to read an LC schedule

Common divisions:

• General form
• Philosophy
• History
• Biography
• General works
• Study and teaching
• Topics and subdivisions of topics (varies by topic)
• Geographic division
How to read an LC schedule

• Scope notes
• See references
• “For… see…” references
• “Including” notes
• Numbers in parentheses ( ) = not used
• … A–Z notes = for accommodating extension of existing schedule of topics
How to read an LC schedule


- Hierarchical relationships → denoted by indentations
- Topical Cutters … use the *Classification & Shelflisting Manual* (CSM), F 350:
  - Special, A–Z
  - By collector, A–Z
  - Individual authors, A–Z
- BUT: ‘By country, A–Z’ → use CSM, G 300
Exercise 1

Find the LC class number for the following topics, using the LC Classification schedule:

• A German scholarly journal about architecture
• History of Brutalism
• Women architects
Components of LCC call numbers

- Base number/notation from LC schedules
- 1st Cutter
- (Sometimes) 2nd Cutter
- Date

Each manifestation of a work/expression should have a unique LC call number.
Cutter notations

LC Cutter table
https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G063.pdf

Main entry Cutter
Denotes:
• Primary author  OR
• (If lacking primary author:) Title of the work

You can only have 1 main entry Cutter.
Cutter notations
(using the LC Cutter table)

**Example:** Determine the Cutter for SZE

- 1\textsuperscript{st} character = S
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} character = 9 (from row #2, range w-z)
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} character = 4 (from row #5, range e-h)

SZE = S94
Cutter notations
(using the LC Cutter table)

Exercise 2: Cutter table

Figure out the LC Cutter for your last name. Stop at the 3rd character, unless you need to add more characters to ensure uniqueness.

As a whole group, work together to arrange yourselves in LC Cutter order across the room.
Cutter notations

If your call number has 2 Cutter notations:

• 1\textsuperscript{st} Cutter = \textbf{Topical Cutter}  
  \rightarrow \textbf{Follow the instructions in the schedule}

• 2\textsuperscript{nd} Cutter = \textbf{Main entry Cutter}\textsuperscript{*}

\textsuperscript{*}Exceptions: Biography (see CSM, G320), literary works, geographical subdivisions
Components of LCC call numbers

☑ Base number/notation from LC schedules
☑ 1st Cutter
☑ (Sometimes) 2nd Cutter
☐ Date

Each manifestation of a work/expression should have a unique LC call number.
Dates table G140

https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G140.pdf

Usually take the date of publication, e.g. from 264 $c

1980–2013 → 1980
[1980]–2013 → 1980
Dates table G140

MMI-MMII $\rightarrow$ 2001

[between 1900-1999] $\rightarrow$ 1900z

[between 1990 and 1999] $\rightarrow$ 1990z

[between 1950 and 2012] $\rightarrow$ 1950z
Dates table G140

Special situations

• More than one edition of the same work comes out in the same year: add ‘b’, ‘c’, etc.
  → 1982, 1982b, 1982c

• Printing dates: ignore; use publication date.

• If the date appearing in the title differs from the publication date, use the publication date

• Supplements & indexes: add designations Suppl. or Index after the publication date of the main volume, but don’t add further dates*

* Local exceptions
Components of LC call numbers

Find the LC class number that denotes “feminism in art”. 
Components of LC call numbers

Title: Addressing the other woman: textual correspondences in feminist art and writing

Author: Kimberly Lamm

Subject heading: Feminism and art

Published in: 2018

Finish the call number.
Components of LC call numbers

Title: Feminism-art-theory: an anthology 1968-2014
Edited by (not authored by): Hilary Robinson
Subject heading: Feminism and art
Published in: 2015

Finish the call number.
Internal tables

- Depending on the LC class, tables may exist for the purpose of keeping schedules compact
- Use them only when instructed, and use them in conjunction with the LC Cutter table
- Example: **NB1793 .A–Z**

How to decipher the tables:

- **.x** General works
- **.x2A–.x2Z** Special. By city, A–Z

**.x2 = Placeholder for 1st Cutter**

**A–Z = Placeholder for 2nd Cutter**
Internal tables

Example: **NB1793 .A–Z**

Internal table states:

- `.x` General works
- `.x2A–.x2Z` Special. By city, A–Z

Shrines in **Italy** = NB1793 .I8

but

Shrines in **Parma, Italy** = NB1793 .I82 P376
Auxiliary tables

Example: **Paintings by Frida Kahlo, Mexican painter**

Start at **ND201-1114**.

Add country number in table N5 to ND200.
For the first Cutter, use table N6.
Biographical works, including autobiographies, are considered special cases.

They are assigned their own Cutter – in place of the Cutter normally assigned to the main entry.

Regions and countries table G300

Use table G300 for “By region or country, A-Z”:

https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G300.pdf

Exercise 4: Find the country code for
- Canada
- United States
- Taiwan
- Hong Kong
- Puerto Rico
Shortcut: Cataloging Calculator

http://calculate.alptown.com/

Developed by Kyle Banerjee, Oregon Health & Science University. Use it to quickly generate:

• LC Cutter

• Geographic Cutter

• Fixed field codes for MARC (machine-readable cataloguing) records
Exercise 5

Determine the LC call number for each item:

- Notation from schedule
- Cutter(s)
- Date

Where more than one LCC notation is possible, explain your choice of notation.
Classifying Canadian topics

- Class FC “History” – [http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/lac-bac/class_fc_index-ef/e/n03/index.html](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/lac-bac/class_fc_index-ef/e/n03/index.html)


Classifying Indigenous knowledge

• Class KIA-KIX “Law of Indigenous peoples in North America” –

• LC class E75–99 “Indians of North America” –
  https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCC/E-F-text.pdf
Alternative classification systems

Brian Deer Classification System

- Subject based
- Covers topics relevant to First Nations/Inuit/Métis (e.g., self-government, rights and title, Elders’ stories, traditional pursuits)
- “Not intended to be a universal solution for Indigenous materials” (Swanson, 2015, p. 571)
- Desire to reflect Indigenous worldview, support traditional knowledge, enable innovative programming

Community-based adaptations:
UBC’s Xwi7xwa Library
Exercise 6

Please work in pairs.

1. Assign the best possible LC class number. (Omit Cutter and date.)

2. Identify possible challenges that could be mounted against your choice of LC class number.

3. Identify
   (a) an alternative classification system that accommodates knowledge related to the topic, and
   (b) a possible class number within that system for the topic
About this workshop
Library of Congress Classification (LCC) is a system for organizing and arranging the book collection of
the Library of Congress. Created in 1898 as a local classification scheme, many academic and research
libraries across the United States and Canada have since adopted the system for arranging their own
research collections.

This workshop introduces participants to the basic structure and principles of LCC. Throughout the
workshop, participants will have opportunities to classify topics using the LCC schedules
(https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCC/freeLCC.html).

Why classification?
As Bowker and Starr state in Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences (1999), “We know what
something is by contrast with what it is not” (p. 290). Libraries have been practicing classification for
multiple centuries. Classification allows libraries to arrange the items in their collection by subject, rather
than by acquisition or accession order. Since it allows libraries to bring together similar works (i.e.,
collation) by topic, it also privileges browsability by topic.

What is Library of Congress Classification (LCC)?
LCC was created for organizing the Library of Congress collection. It was structured around the concept
of literary warrant. Topics are broadly arranged by discipline. The system is largely enumerative, in that
topics tend to be listed, and require little to no synthesis on the cataloguer’s part. Cutter tables, auxiliary
tables, and special tables allow for some extensiveness.

Accessing the resource
Libraries with the budget to support subscription resources can pay an annual fee to access the online
searchable and browseable LCC schedules through Classification Web (classificationweb.net). For libraries
that do not have a subscription to Classification Web, Library of Congress now makes their schedules and
manual available as free PDF downloads.

LCC schedules, free PDF: https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCC/freeLCC.html

Classification & Shelflisting Manual (CSM):
https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/freeCSM.html

General principles of LCC
General instructions on how to classify with LCC are not set out in the schedules themselves. For those,
you need to refer to the CSM.

Before you begin, review the general principles of LCC (CSM, F10):
https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/F010.pdf

- Classify a work based on its subject
- Favour topic over form
• Favour topic over place
• Use the most specific number available
• For multi-topic works
  o Follow the instructions found in the schedules
  o If the schedules do not provide instructions, choose your number based on the dominant subject
  o Otherwise, choose the first topic mentioned
  o If it is unclear which topic is mentioned first, choose the broader subject that encompasses all the topics
• Choosing among several class numbers
  o Choose according to the author’s intent
  o If that is uncertain, select the number based on what you consider to be the most helpful to the user
• Influence of one subject on another
  o Choose the number that represents the subject being influenced

Structure: 21 main classes
Disciplines are arranged into 21 main classes. Each class is updated by their own subject experts, and on their own timeframe. Each class is further divided into subclasses. The division of subclasses is not consistent across each class, given that each discipline has its own documentary practices and publication trends.

  A  General works
  B  Philosophy, psychology, religion
  C  Auxiliary sciences of history
  D  World history and history of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc.
  E  History of the Americas
  F  History of the Americas
  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

Subclasses
Each class is divided into subclasses. Subclasses begin with a 2- or 3-letter prefix.

How to read an LC schedule
Preface – Does not provide instructions.
Outline

- Overview of how the discipline is arranged
- Based on subject experts’ knowledge of the LC collection and the literature of the discipline

Text (=the schedule)

- Class letter appears in the top margin of the page
- Numbers denoting divisions appear in the left margin
- Indentations loosely denote hierarchy
- Common divisions:
  - General form
  - Philosophy
  - History
  - Biography
  - General works
  - Study and teaching
  - Topics and subdivisions of topics (vary by topic)
  - Geographic division
- Read everything!
  - Scope notes
  - See references
  - “For… see…” references
  - “Including” notes
  - Numbers in parentheses ( ) = not used
  - …A-Z notes = for accommodating extension of existing schedule of topics
- For more in-depth instructions, you must refer to the CSM.

Components of LCC call numbers

- Base number/notation from LC schedules
- 1st Cutter
- (Sometimes) a 2nd Cutter
- Date

Each manifestation of a work/expression should have a unique LC call number.

LC Cutter table

The LC Cutter table (https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G063.pdf) is used to generate a unique shelf number for each work in a collection, where multiple works about the same topic may be found.

Cutters may be generated to denote:

- Main entry – Usually the primary author of a work, or (if the work lacks a primary author) the title of the work. You can only have 1 main entry per work.
- For assigning a notation to a specific topic listed next to the instruction “…A to Z”. After assigning the topical Cutter, you still need to add a second Cutter – usually for the main entry. Some exceptions apply. (See further in this handout.)
All call numbers have, at minimum, 1 Cutter, and at maximum, 2 Cutters.

**Date**

Date table: [https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G140.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G140.pdf)

Each work receives a unique call number. Since the addition of 1-2 Cutters may not be enough to provide uniqueness, you must also add the date of publication (or probable date of publication) to the end of an LC call number.

Generally, this date will correspond with the first date that appears in the 264 $c$ field of the MARC (MAchine Readable Cataloging) record that describes the work.

Special situations:

- If more than one edition of the same work come out in the same year, add lowercase letters “b”, “c”, “d”, etc. to the end of the date in order to ensure uniqueness
- Printing dates: ignore, and use the publication date
- If the date appearing on the title differs from the publication date, use the publication date
- Supplements and indexes: add the designation *Suppl.* or *Index* after the publication date of the main volume, but don’t add further dates*

Of course, to all of these instructions set out by Library of Congress, individual libraries may implement local exceptions.

**Internal tables**

Depending on the LC class, internal tables and/or auxiliary tables may exist for the purpose of keeping the schedule compact. Use the tables only when instructed, and use them in conjunction with the LC Cutter table as appropriate. Sometimes, this may mean that your call number has two Cutters, but neither Cutter reflects the main entry.

Example of an internal table:

```
.x   General works
.x2A-.x2Z  Special. By city, A-Z
```

.x2 is a placeholder for the first Cutter.

A-…Z is the placeholder for the second Cutter

**Auxiliary tables**

Some LC classes have auxiliary tables appended to them. Use the auxiliary tables as instructed in the schedule. Again, this may result in two Cutters, with neither Cutter reflecting the main entry.

Example: Paintings by Frida Kahlo (Mexican painter)

- Start at ND201-1114.
- Add country number in table N5 to the base number ND200. Table N5 notation: 59.A-Z.
- Table N5 provides further instruction to “subarrange individual artists by Table N6.”
- Table N6 tells you to use .xA8-.xZ for “Biography and criticism.” Kahlo = K34
- ND200 + 59.K34 = ND259.K34
Other tables

Biographical works, including autobiographies

- These are assigned their own Cutter – in place of the Cutter normally assigned to the main entry.
- [https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G320.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G320.pdf)

Regions and countries ([https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G300.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G300.pdf))

- Specific geographical notations
- Use this table whenever notes in the schedule instruct you to subdivide a topic by region or country.

Cataloging Calculator

*Cataloging Calculator* is a useful tool for cataloguers who want to quickly generate LC Cutters, geographic Cutters, and fixed field codes for MARC records, without having to go back to the tables every time. *Cataloging Calculator* is not an LC product. It is developed and maintained by Kyle Banerjee, a librarian at the Oregon Health & Science University.

[http://calculate.alptown.com](http://calculate.alptown.com)
Classification resources

**LC, or in conjunction with LC**
Library of Congress Classification Schedules (Free PDF):
https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCC/freeLCC.html

Classification and Shelflisting Manual (CSM): https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/freeCSM.html

- Regions and country table (CSM, G300): www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/G300.pdf

Class FC “Canadian History”: http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/lac-bac/class_fc_index-en/e/n03/index.html

Class KIA-KIX “Law of Indigenous peoples in North America”:


**Others**

*Brian Deer Classification* (as adapted for the XWI7XWA Library at UBC):

*Cataloging Calculator* by Kyle Banerjee: http://calculate.alptown.com

**Recommended books**

