



University of Sydney Library: Finding a book on the shelf

Authors

Charlotte Jarabak
Julie Price
Matthew Davis

Learning outcomes

After completing this *learning tool*, you should be able to:

- Explain the concept of Dewey Classification System
- Explain call numbers, and
- Locate books on the Library shelves using call numbers.

Copyright

The material that forms this web site is copyright. Other than for the purposes of and subject to the conditions prescribed under the Copyright Act, no part of it may in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, microcopying, photocopying, recording or otherwise) be altered, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted without prior written permission from the University of Sydney Library and/or the appropriate author.

Disclaimer

The University of Sydney disclaims liability for the accuracy or completeness of the information provided by this service. The University accepts no responsibility for loss occasioned as a direct or indirect result of the use of the information obtained.

Finding a book on the shelf

Every book has its number

Each book in the library has a call number. A call number relates to an item's subject area, and directs you to its location on the shelf.

This means that if you have the first few numbers of the call number you can go to any library, even your local library, and find books on the same subject.

Call number subject ranges are based on the Dewey Decimal System:

000 – Computer science
100 – Philosophy and psychology
200 – Religion
300 – Social sciences and education
400 – Language
500 – Science
600 – Technology and business
700 – Arts and recreation
800 – Literature and biographies
900 – History and geography

So books on management will always be at call number 658, biochemistry at 572 and Joan of Arc at 944.026

Break it down

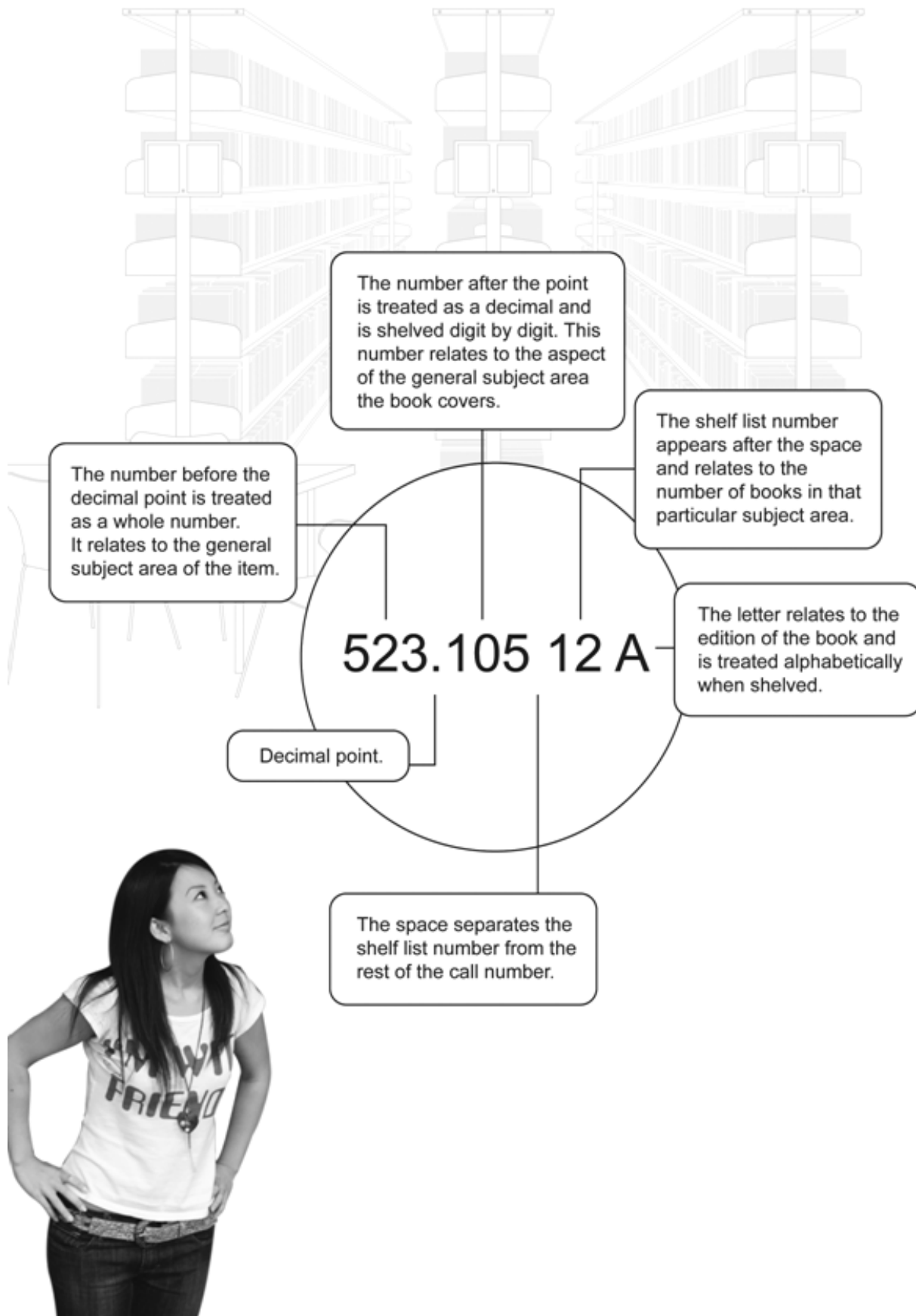
- The number before the decimal point is always treated as a whole number. So 544 is shelved before 545
- After the decimal point, books are shelved digit by digit, not by whole number. This means that 595.905 is shelved before 595.91
- After the decimal number there is a space followed by the shelf list number. The shelf list number distinguishes items that share the same subject. So a book with the number 567.905 14 is the 14th item at the subject area 567.905
- A letter after the shelf list number relates to the edition of the book and is treated alphabetically when shelved.

Street savvy

Try this analogy – think of the call number like a street address for the item. The numbers before the decimal point are the suburb, the numbers immediately after the decimal point are the street, and the numbers after the space are the house number.

If you ignore the space or the decimal point, you will end up on the wrong street, or even in the wrong suburb!

The meaningful bits



Example of call numbers sorted correctly

332 16	332 16 A	332.14 1	332.16 2	332.69003 3	332.9 27	332.904 2	333.1 26



333.1023 23	333.11 9	333.33 89	333.33014 25	333.331 6	333.7 6	333.73 645	333.73012 1