

A guide to the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme

This library uses the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme (DDC) to arrange books and other library materials on the shelves so they may be easily retrieved. It is used in many libraries and allows items about the same subject to be shelved together.

How does the Dewey Decimal system work?

DDC is an hierarchical number system that organizes all human knowledge into ten main categories. These are:

000	Computer Science, information and general works
100	Philosophy and psychology
200	Religion
300	Social sciences
400	Language
500	Science
600	Technology
700	Arts and recreation
800	Literature
900	History and geography

Each main category is then divided into ten sub-categories. For example:

500	Science
510	Mathematics
520	Astronomy
530	Physics
540	Chemistry
550	Earth sciences and geology
560	Fossils and prehistoric life
570	Biology
580	Plants (Botany)
590	Animals (Zoology)

Each sub-category is then also divided into ten specific topics. For example:

530	Physics
531	Classical mechanics
532	Fluid mechanics
533	Gas mechanics
534	Sound and related vibrations
535	Light and related radiation
536	Heat
537	Electricity and electronics
538	Magnetism
539	Modern physics

Each of these topics may be further divided into more specific subject areas. A decimal point is used after the first three digits to separate the specific subjects - it also makes the numbers easier to read. You will see that as the subject becomes more specific, so does the numbering. For example:

Sound and related vibrations

534.1	Generation of sound
534.2	Transmission of sound
534.22	Transmission in solids
534.23	Transmission in liquids

DDC at Oxford Brookes

When an item arrives in the library it is assigned a DDC number, often called the “classmark” or “shelfmark”. Each of the numbers in this shelfmark has a meaning and is not assigned randomly.

For example, the book “The Royal doctors 1485-1714” by Elizabeth Furdell has been assigned the shelfmark 610.6952094205 FUR. These numerals indicate:

610	= Medical sciences
610.6	= Professions
610.69	= Medical personnel
610.695	= Specific kinds of medical personnel
610.6952	= Physicians
610.69520942	= Physicians in England and Wales
610.6952094205	= Physicians in England and Wales 1485-1603

Most items will also be assigned some letters at the end of the numerals, “FUR” in the above example. These are taken from the author’s surname or the first word of the title.

Finding items on the shelves

The shelfmark will always have at least three numbers, followed by some letters. It is usually displayed on the spine of the item, but is sometimes placed on the front cover. Here are some examples:

361.	382.	576	599.	647.	823.
3	63	JON	935	944	914
HIG	COC		PHI	21	BAI
				LON	/B

The DDC system places items about the same subject at the same number. This means that once you have identified the DDC number for the subject you are interested in, you can browse the shelves at that number.

On each shelf the items are arranged in a numerical sequence from left to right by their DDC number. Where several items have an identical DDC number, the letters are used to further arrange them. For example,

361.	361.	361.	363.	363.	363.
3	32	32	35	377	377
HIG	BOR	STO	CIV	PRE	PRO

Beware of separate sequences

If you are looking for a specific item you should check the library catalogue and make a note of the full shelfmark (numbers and letters) and any words that appear before the shelfmark. The majority of library materials are shelved together but there are several separate sequences that are kept in different areas, but which are all indicated on LibrarySearch. Look out for sequences such as Oversize, Local Collection, Short Loan, Music Scores, Paul Oliver Vernacular Architecture Library.

Journals

Journals are also shelved in a separate section. The same DDC numbers are used, but LibrarySearch shows these items with a shelfmark that is preceded by a “J”, and which only has one letter after the numbers. For example, the journal “Nursing Standard” has the shelfmark J 610.73 N.

And finally ... Art and Architecture materials

When looking for items in this area you may be confused to find two alphabetic sequences at the same number. For example, general items about French painting can be found at the shelfmark 759.4 and have **three** letters after the numbers. At the end of these come works about specific French artists, at the same number 759.4, but these have **four** letters after the numbers. For example:

759.	759.	759.	759.	759.	759.
4	4	4	4	4	4
BOI	FRI	ROS	DEL	LAT	LAT
			/J	/C	/O

This happens in some other areas in the 700s, so when checking LibrarySearch remember to make a note of the full shelfmark – numbers and letters.

If you have any questions or would like more help, please ask a member of library staff.

Quick guide to Dewey numbers used in this library

This is only a brief guide to subjects. For more information, especially when looking for specific items, please remember to check LibrarySearch.

000	Computer science, knowledge and systems	500	Science
010	Bibliographies	510	Mathematics
020	Library and information sciences	520	Astronomy and allied sciences
030	Encyclopaedias and books of facts	530	Physics
040	<i>Not used</i>	540	Chemistry and allied sciences
050	Magazines, journals and serials	550	Earth sciences
060	Associations, organizations and museums	560	Palaeontology
070	News media, journalism and publishing	570	Biology
080	General knowledge	580	Plants (Botany)
090	Manuscripts and rare books	590	Animals (Zoology)
100	Philosophy and Psychology	600	Technology
110	Metaphysics	610	Medicine and health
120	Epistemology, causation and humankind	620	Engineering and allied operations
130	Parapsychology and occultism	630	Agriculture and related technologies
140	Specific philosophical schools	640	Home economics, catering
150	Psychology	650	Management
160	Philosophical logic	660	Chemical engineering, food technology
170	Ethics	670	Manufacturing
180	Ancient, medieval, and eastern philosophy	680	Manufacture for specific uses
190	Modern western philosophy	690	Construction of buildings
200	Religion	700	Arts and recreation
210	Philosophy and theory of religion	710	Planning and landscape architecture
220	Bible	720	Architecture
230	Christianity	730	Sculpture and related arts
240	Christian moral and devotional theology	740	Graphic arts and decorative arts
250	Christian orders and local church	750	Painting and paintings
260	Social and ecclesiastical theology	760	Printmaking and prints
270	History, geography, biography of Christianity	770	Photography, computer art, film, video
280	Christian denominations and sects	780	Music
290	Other religions	790	Recreational and performing arts, sport
300	Social sciences	800	Literature
310	Collections of general statistics	810	American literature
320	Political science	820	English and Old English literatures
330	Economics	830	German and related literatures
340	Law	840	French and related literatures
350	Public administration & military science	850	Italian, Romanian and related literatures
360	Social problems and services	860	Spanish, Portuguese, Galician literatures
370	Education	870	Latin and Italic literatures
380	Commerce, communications, transportation	880	Classical Greek and related Literatures
390	Customs, etiquette, folklore	890	Literature of other languages
400	Language	900	History and geography
410	Linguistics	910	Geography and travel
420	English and Old English language	920	Biography
430	German and related languages	930	History of the ancient world
440	French and related languages	940	History of Europe
450	Italian, Romanian and related languages	950	History of Asia
460	Spanish, Portuguese, Galician	960	History of Africa
470	Latin and related Italic language	970	History of North America
480	Classical Greek and related languages	980	History of South America
490	Other languages	990	History of other areas