Welcome to the Sullivan Family Library’s online tutorial on Call Numbers.
Slide 1
A call number is like a street address for a book. Each book has a unique call number that determines its location in the library.

Slide 2
The library uses a three-tiered system. The first tier is the broader collection, such as General or Hawaiian-Pacific. Within a collection, books are arranged by subjects like science and literature. Within a subject, books are arranged by unique call numbers.

Slide 3
The Sullivan Family Library, like many other academic libraries, uses the Library of Congress system. A Library of Congress call number is an alpha-numeric code made up of four pieces of information relating to the book.

Slide 4
Here’s an example of how the Library of Congress system works. The letter Q represents the broad subject of Science. There are many fields of science, so by adding a second letter, the call number represents a more specific kind of science.
Slide 5
This first line indicates the general subject of the book. The letters are arranged alphabetically on the shelf.
Slide 6
The second line is a number that represents a more specific topic within the general subject. This portion of the call number is read numerically as a whole number, and is arranged from lowest to greatest.

Slide 7
The third line of the call number, known as a cutter number, begins with a letter followed by numbers. The letter represents the first initial of the author’s last name or the first letter of the book’s title. The numbers are treated as a decimal number.

Slide 8
Sometimes the fourth line will be a second cutter number. When this is the case, the first cutter number relates to the book’s subject, and the second cutter number refers to the author or title. The cutter number is followed by the year of publication.

Slide 9
In review, books are arranged alphabetically by the first line then numerically by the second line. The third and fourth lines use alphabetical then numerical arrangement.

Slide 10
With a better understanding of the call number system, we’re ready to find a book. We’ll look for Origins by Stephen Eales. Here is the results page from our online catalog. Notice the results display the call number, title, collection, item type and date.

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Noting the call number and collection, head to the General collection to locate the book. Within the General collection, find the QB section and look within it for 981. Once in the QB 981 area find .E135.

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This concludes the Call Numbers online tutorial. Please view our Finding Books and Search Strategies tutorials for more information on searching for books. If you have any further questions, please email library@chaminade.edu or call 808.739.4660.

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