

"Cataloging is as old as libraries themselves, and its early history is just as vague and mythical as is the early history of libraries. ... — Dorothy May Norris

abcd
efgh
ijkl
klmno
pqrst
vwxyz

circa 2,000 BCE | Mesopotamia
Cuneiform tablets are inscribed with a list of Mesopotamian works of literature. No order is discernible to the modern eye.

700 BCE | Mesopotamia
The Royal Library is established by Assyrian King Ashurbanipal. It is estimated that it held nearly 300,000 clay tablets, organized according to shape, and separated by concrete into different rooms.

306 BCE | Egypt
Ptolemy III orders the creation of the Library of Alexandria. Callimachus, a poet, proposes a classified cataloging system of separate subject divisions.

9th century | Western Europe
Monastic libraries and scriptoria preserve the literature of the ancient world as well as that of their own time. Cataloging is understood to be an often laborious and unorganized inventory list.

822-842 | Germany
The library at Reichenau compiles several catalogs with organizational schemes such as genre, volume, books, and subjects.

831 | France
Benedictine abbot of St. Basilair creates an inventory that lists the contents of volumes and number of volumes in a work.

circa 10th century | Spain
The city of Saragosa library has over 300 rooms and detailed catalogs to help locate items.

938 or 988 | Baghdad
Abul-Fazl Muhammad bin Khalif al-Hafiz, a Muslim scholar of Persian origin and a bibliographer, writes *Kitab al-Fihrist*, which is his first work on "the history of the books of all nations ... suggesting information as to their composition and the names of their authors ... since the beginning of every nation that has been transported down to the present epoch."

circa 1246 | France
Richard de Peponnet, chancellor of Amiens Cathedral, writes subject notes in his *Recherches*. He explains "full numbers" into numbers of sheets or parchment folios, and uses different colors and letters to designate subject areas.

1290 | France
The library of the Sorbonne in Paris acquires items that are described in books, leading to the building and creating the need for a new cataloging system regarding book classification.

Late 13th century | England
Richard Brome, abbot of Ely, creates the first list of the holdings of English monastic libraries. It begins the use of folios.

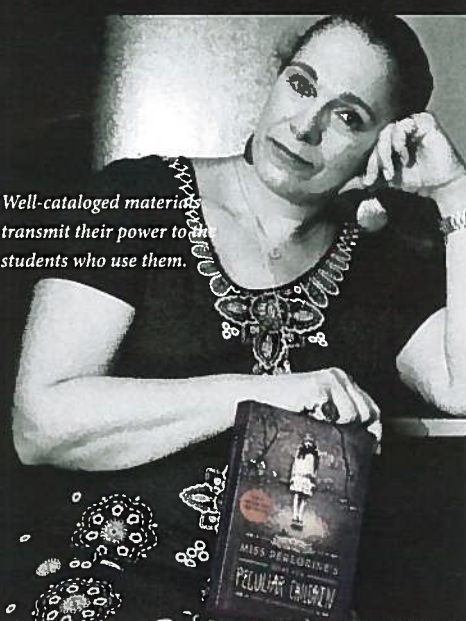
1389 | England
St. Martin's Priory in Dorset develops a catalog in three parts: (1) by call number, (2) by call number with volume and page, and (3) a listing of individual authors.

1475 | Italy
Vatican Library (bibliotheca apostolica) is formally established by Pope Sixtus IV, though the collection is much older.

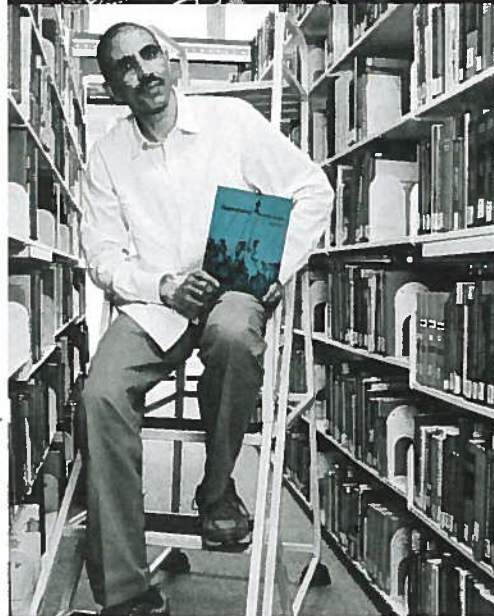
1595 | Ireland
Alexander Oppen appears on the first catalog of Trinity University Library.

Early 17th century | England
Thomas Bodley establishes the Oxford University Library, using classified arrangement, an alphabetical author index, cataloged by system, and analytical notes.

Cataloging Is Beautiful
CATALOGING IS BEAUTIFUL
Cataloging Is Beautiful



Well-cataloged materials transmit their power to the students who use them.

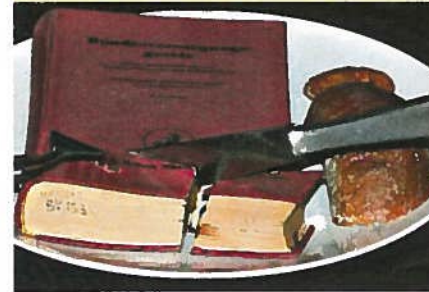


Making sense of a call number
Here is a sample Library of Congress call number:

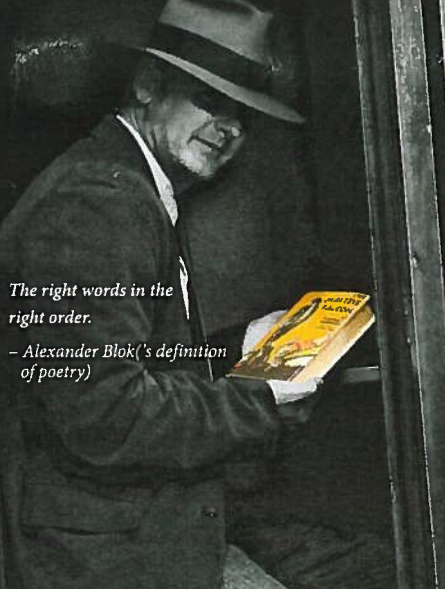
PN — *The Unicorn*, by Nicholas Rayle
49
R75
2003
P — Language and Literature
PN1-4790 — Literature (General)
PN45-57 — Theory, Philosophy, Aesthetics
PN46-57 — Relation to and treatment of special elements, problems and subjects
PN49 — Philosophy, ethics, religion, etc.
11
The Unicorn, by Nicholas Rayle.



Each call number begins with one to three letters and is followed by a series of numbers. LC call numbers are organized alphabetically, starting with the first letter on the left. They are subsequently organized numerically according to the numbers that follow.



The right words in the right order.
— Alexander Blok's definition of poetry



1992-1995 | International
The International Federation of Library Associations develops *International Standards for Bibliographic Access (ISAB)*, an ISO-standards-based system as a practical view of the information that should be included in any cataloging code or implementation.

1967 | United States
Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR) is first published.

1960 | United States
Harold Green, of the Library of Congress, develops *Machine-readable Cataloging (MARC)* formats, which are standards for the representation and communication of bibliographic and related information in machine-readable form.

1876 | United States
Charles Amos Cutter, Director of the Boston Athenaeum, makes the first explicit statement regarding the objectives of a bibliographic system in *The Rules for a Practical Dictionary Catalog*.

1876 | United States
Walter Davis, Director of Amherst College, publishes *Classification and Subject Index for Cataloging and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library*. This is the beginning of Dewey Decimal Classification, which is still in use today, mostly in public libraries.

The catalogue began in the ancient world as a systematic classed one, then the early centuries of the Christian era saw the catalogue as a mere list of books arranged, generally, in some subject order. With the closing of the monasteries, and the transference of book collections to colleges and private hands, a new attitude arose; a catalogue was seen to be something more than an inventory of books; it was a key to the library; the art required for its compilation was acknowledged, and also the fact that it could be formed according to different plans, which again must be governed by certain fixed rules...

Dorothy May Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods 1100-1850: With an Introductory Survey of Ancient Times*, London: Griffin & Co., 1939, p. 1, 228

1850 | United States
Charles Cutler Jewett, Director and earliest secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, writes a cataloging code for the Smithsonian Library.

1837 | England
Anthony Panzer, Keeper of the Printed Books in the British Museum, proposes his "Theory and Cataloguing Rules."

1815 | United States
Thomas Jefferson calls his personal library in the United States government to establish the Library of Congress. Jefferson had organized his library by adopting Francis Bacon's organization of knowledge, specifically using Henry Meuser's and Brunslet's codes into three areas, which were then broken down into two four-letter subdivisions. This is the system of classification used by most modern libraries today, including the libraries at UC Berkeley.

1791 | France
The revolutionary government of France issues a cataloging code to inventory resources confiscated from monastic libraries. Plans were made to use an alphabetic system. Then, due to the fact that it was a slightly different manner, and the fact that it was much better, it is a slightly different manner than the British library used, making this its basis.

1696 | France
In Paris, Benedictine theologian proposes one method for organizing a library catalog, arranged by subject and subdivided chronologically and by sex, with an alphabetical index of subjects and author names.

Catalogers look at books with a prospectorial mind.
— Anonymous