

INTRODUCTION

This is the Library's 'three-figure' classification scheme which is used to determine the subject stem of the classmarks of the great majority of monographs on the open shelves. (It is also used in a simplified form in combination with various prefixes for special types of material: R, the reference collection in the Reading Room; S, 'select' books on closed access; P,L,T,Q, primary, secondary, select and dead periodicals, respectively; Z, mutilated books. Some other open access collections, such as music and reference collections in specialised reading rooms, have their own schemes.)

This edition represents current practice and interpretation; inspection of the shelves will reveal classes superseded by more detailed subdivision or abandoned entirely, while policy on some of the less specific categories or on new areas of study will be found to have evolved over time. In recent years it has rarely been possible to reclassify in accordance with such changes and developments.

It is the Library's general aim to make available on open shelves most works of academic importance that are physically suitable. Books that are particularly costly, rare or fragile, paperbacks that it is not considered necessary or practical to bind, and other works thought to require protection are kept on closed access and fetched to the room indicated on the Finding List for their particular classmarks. Many books will be found to have a classmark beginning with four figures (9000-9999). These are mostly books of secondary academic importance or paperbacks which have not received full case binding; once fetched they can be used anywhere in the Library, or borrowed. It is important to remember, therefore, that while the open shelf classification enables browsing by subject, systematic and comprehensive subject searches require the use of the Subject Catalogue or, for older books, printed bibliographies. Staff will be pleased to advise.

UNDERSTANDING THE CLASSMARK

The classmark of a book on the Library's open shelves is usually composed of four elements:

1. The stem, a number of up to 3 digits, with up to 3 decimal points, which indicates the subject of the book. **N.B.** For technical reasons, the decimal point is often represented (on the online catalogue display, for example) as a colon. This must be interpreted as a decimal point to understand the arrangement of the classification scheme and the order of the books on the shelves: *e.g.* 384:13 precedes 384:2.

2. The size letter, which indicates the size of the book. Books are grouped by size for shelving purposes in order to maximise storage capacity:

- e Up to 16cm (No books of this size are on open shelves)
- d 17-21cm
- c 22-25cm
- b 26-31cm
- a 32-41cm and shorter books between 10" and 12" wide
- bb 42-61cm and books between 12" and 16 1/2" wide
(No books of this size are on open shelves)

3. The date-element, which indicates the decade or half-century in which the book was printed. With some exceptions, a decade number (*e.g.* 96 for 1960-1969) is used for non-decimalised classes, a half-century number (*e.g.* 95 for 1950-1999) for decimalised classes. In classes designated for series, this element is replaced by a serial number distinguishing one series from another. In some special classes, such as those for the Second World War, this date-element is replaced by a number indicating a further refinement of subject classification.

4. The running number, which distinguishes the book from others of its class, size and period. Consecutive numbers will normally be given to works in more than one volume. When the item being catalogued is one of several independent works bound together in one volume its position in that volume will be shown by a further digit following the running number, either as a superior number or in round brackets. In some special classes, such as those for the First World War, the running number includes an element of subject classification, sequences of numbers being reserved for particular topics.

Examples:

Non-decimalised stem number: **440.d.97.4**

- 440 indicates a work on agriculture
- d indicates size (17-21cm)
- 97 indicates date of publication (1970-79)
- 4 indicates the fourth volume in 440.d.97

Decimalised stem number: **664:4.b.95.25**

- 664:4 indicates a work on United States foreign relations
- b indicates size (26-31cm)
- 95 indicates date of publication (1950-99)
- 25 indicates the twenty-fifth volume in 664:4.b.95

Series class: **220:01.c.12.2(2)**

- 220:01 indicates a series on economics
- c indicates size (22-25cm)
- 12 indicates the twelfth series in 220:01.c
- 2 indicates the second physical volume in the series
- (2) indicates the second separate item bound in that volume