

How do I find a book on the library shelves?

A Building Blocks video brought to you by the University of Houston Libraries.

While searching for sources for a class project, you find a book on the library website that fits your research topic perfectly.

The website says the book is available for checkout. But with several floors of book shelves, how can you find it?

You will need to know two pieces of information: which library on campus has the book, and the call number for the book.

In the location section of the search result for the book, you can find the name of the library in the UH system where the book is located.

You will also see a string of letters and numbers known as a call number. The call number can be used to find the book's precise location within the library, the same way that a street address can tell you the exact location of a house.

In order to use the call number to locate the book, you will need to look at a directory, called a call number guide, that shows how the call numbers correspond to physical locations within the library.

These call number guides can be found in framed displays throughout the library, at the information desk of the library, and on the UH Libraries website.

Books in the library are organized by their call numbers in alphabetical and numerical order.

This means that call numbers starting with A will come before those starting with B, and call numbers beginning with A123 will come before those starting with A124.

The rest of the call number comes after a period, and those numbers are treated like decimals, even though the decimal part starts with a letter. So, a book with the call number A123.A1 will come before one with the call number A123.A12.

Let's look at an example. If you wanted to find the book, *Houston Rap Tapes: an Oral History of Bayou City Hip-Hop*, you could find it using this process.

First, look at the library name to see that one copy is available at the UH MD Anderson Library. Note that it is available in the General Collection, which means that it's on the main shelves of the library.

There are a few other collection names that might appear here, such as Special Collections. If you want to access a book from one of these other collections, contact library staff to do so.

After the collection information, you see the call number for this book: ML3531.W36 2018. The first letter of the call number is M.

Using the call number guide, we can see that all the call numbers beginning with LD-NX are on the same floor, which includes our call number that starts with ML. That means this book can be found on the fourth floor in the Brown area.

When you arrive on the fourth floor, you will use the labels on the sides of the shelves that identify the range of call numbers on those shelves to find which subdivision of the floor your book will be in. Then, you will look at the labels on the individual books on the shelves. They will be organized by their call numbers in alphabetical and numerical order. Follow these numbers and letters in order to find the book you are looking for.

If you have questions about finding books in the library or need assistance accessing them, we are happy to help! Ask staff at the information desk or contact us at libteach@uh.edu.