



Library Skills

Using the Catalogue

Transcript

Narrator: Believe it or not, there are many times when using a book is more relevant and rewarding than using the internet. But where can you find the books you need? Firstly, you need to use the catalogue. Here, we'll show you how to go from where to there, using the catalogue to locate books and other resources held in your library.

Every library has a catalogue. It's like a map for all the items that your library holds. But you don't need to wander among the shelves hoping you'll randomly find what you need. All the items your library owns are entered into the catalogue with a tag that tells you where in the library you can find them. Physical things like books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, posters, encyclopedias and maps are in the catalogue. Non-physical items like eBooks, eMagazines, sound recordings, video clips, databases and links to websites used by your teachers are also included in many catalogues.

You may already be familiar with library catalogues from other places, like schools or public libraries. Even though some catalogues might look different, they all operate in a similar way. The catalogue screen will have a search box, just like you've used when you search the internet. You already know something about the resources you're looking for, so those are the keywords and phrases that you should use to search for items in the catalogue. You might know the topic you're after, say coastal erosion. Or you could know the author—maybe it's J.K. Rowling. Or perhaps you know the title, like *New Scientist Magazine*.

Whatever you already know, use that word or name as your search term. A list of search results will show up. Some of these results may link you directly to electronic or online sources, like eBooks, audiobooks or video. But the records for the physical library items will display a code that tells you where to find the item. We call that code the class or classification number. The classification number may be as simple as three letters or it may be a combination of numbers and letters, or it may have a prefix that tells you what sort of resource it is. Jot down on a piece of paper or memorise the classification number of the items you want to look at. Now to get your hands on them.

Check the signs around the library. These, plus the classification numbers, will take you where you want to go. If a classification number contains only the first few letters of the author's name, head to the fiction area. Classification numbers that include numbers followed by letters are for factual books on





Library Skills

Using the Catalogue

Transcript

the non-fiction shelves. Reference books are in their own section, which, in some libraries, may be behind the librarian's desk. A librarian can help with accessing these. Some classification numbers have extra letters that tell you what kind of item it is. For example, GN or GRA for graphic novels. Or CD or DVD for music or movies. Head for the section you think you'll need.

The shelves will have smaller signs to further help you. As you approach your section, start looking for them. Fiction books are arranged alphabetically by author surname. Most school and university libraries will classify their non-fiction or factual books according to the Dewey Decimal System, made up of a series of numbers and letters. The Dewey Decimal System groups together books on similar subjects, which can help you when you're browsing the shelves. For example, all the science books will start with a number in the 500s. The Dewey classification number is made up of a three digit whole number to define the broad topic, then a decimal point, followed by a series of numbers to show a detailed subject.

Check the spines of the book for the classification numbers you wrote down or memorised. You can follow along the book spines on one shelf, then drop to the shelf below until you reach the bottom. Then move up to the top shelf of the next bay. Keep your eye on the numbers in the non-fiction section, reading each number separately. Eight-two-two point three-three. And follow the alphabet when you're looking for a fiction book. Once you locate the book, DVD or encyclopedia you're interested in, have a look at the items on either side in case they look useful too. Fiction collections hold everything by the same author together, so all the books by your favourite writer will be sitting right next to each other.

If you just want to look at the book in the library or to photocopy a couple of pages, return it to a trolley before you leave. There's no need to put it back on the shelf. If you want to take the book out of the library to use at home or in class, go to the front desk, so the librarian can issue it to you. Just don't forget to bring it back.

