How Do You Find Things in a Library?

There are three ways to find books and AV items (music, videos, books on tape, etc.) in a library:

1. **Ask a librarian.** This is always an option to keep in mind, particularly when you've run out of ideas. But since the aim of this lesson is to teach you to find things on your own, we won't focus on this method.

2. **Browse the shelves.** Unless you enjoy looking for needles in haystacks, browsing the shelves is not the best way to find what you're looking for. This can sometimes give you ideas if you have to write a paper, but even then, it's best to know how the books are arranged so you can browse by subject. (We'll deal with how books are arranged in the library on the next two pages.)

3. **Use the Delaware Library catalog.** If you're looking for something specific, this is quickest and most efficient way to find books and AV items in the library.

What is a Library Catalog?

If you used libraries 10 - 20 years ago, you might remember going to the *card catalog*. This was a big cabinet full of small shelves that held a bunch of 3" X 5" cards. Each card represented a different book in the library and told you where to find it. Well, today most libraries have replaced their card catalog with an electronic online version, but they still have the same purpose: To tell you what materials reside in the library and where to find them.

What are some features of online catalogs?

- Since you can access the catalog through the Internet, you don't have to be in the library to use it. You can search your local library's collection from your own home to find out if they have what you're looking for, before you make the trip there. You could even search the collection of a library halfway across the world.
- Online catalogs allow you to search through thousands of records in seconds, and you can manipulate your search in many different ways. You can combine different search terms or restrict your search to only a certain format, such as DVDs, for example.
- Online catalogs don't just tell you what the library owns, but will also tell you whether the item is available right now or checked out.
- Many online catalogs are system-wide, which means you can search the collections of dozens of libraries all at the same time.
- Many online catalogs allow you to request items, renew items, and check your account from the convenience of your computer.
- Librarians love their online catalogs so much they often give them names. Some examples of catalog names are WebCAT, WorldCat, and DelCat. These are often abbreviations or acronyms.

The Wilmington University Library belongs to a statewide library catalog system called the **Delaware Library Catalog**. All materials owned by the Wilmington University Library can be searched through this system by indicating “Wilmington University Library” in the drop down box on the search page.

The online catalog used to find materials owned by other libraries around the world is called **WorldCAT Local**. WorldCat Local is the proprietary name for Wilmington University’s Discovery system. **Discovery** contains records from the merged catalogs of thousands of libraries with records.
for every conceivable material type. Use this catalog for searching Wilmington University’s digital holdings and placing interlibrary loan requests for books and materials not available full text.

How Are Books Arranged in a Library?

Call Numbers

- Every book in the library has its own call number. This is a combination of numbers and letters that is taped to the spine of the book.
- A call number is like a book’s address. It tells you where to find a book on the shelf.
- When you find a book you want in our catalog, it will give you the call number. You need to write down this number so you can find the book on the shelf.

Wilmington University Library, like most academic libraries, uses the Library of Congress (LC) Classification System.

Because books using the LC system are classified by subject, books on the same topic will be shelved together. Once you find the call number of a book on your topic, you can browse the shelf for other books like it.

How to read an LC call number

- This system uses a combination of letters and numbers.
- Each LC call number starts out with a letter (usually two letters), followed by a number, then a combination of letters and numbers. (Example: **QH 366.2 .P54 2002**)
- Read the letters in alphabetical order. (A, B, BF, BE, D…Q, QA, QB, QH, etc.)
- Read the number as a whole number. (1, 2, 3, 45, 100, 101, 1000, 366, 2453, etc.)
- The third part is a combination of letters and numbers. Read the letter alphabetically and the number as a decimal (.P54 = .54, .P724 = .724, .P9 = .9)
- The last part is the year the book was published.

What do the letters and numbers mean?

- LC separates the world of knowledge into 20 major categories, each represented by a letter. For example:
  - J = political science
  - L = Education
  - Q = Science
- These 20 major categories are further divided by a second letter. For example:
  - QA = Math
  - QC = Physics
  - QK = Botany
- These letters are further divided by numbers. For example:
  - QA 71 - 90 = Instruments and Machines
  - QA 150 - 272 = Algebra
  - QA 440 - 699 = Geometry, Trigonometry, Topology
The first thing to keep in mind when searching a catalog is to pay attention to which field you are searching. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you want to know if we own a specific book (The Grapes of Wrath) or a specific movie (Citizen Kane)?
- Are you looking for something by a certain author (Stephen King) or musician (Paul McCartney)?
- Are you looking for information on a certain subject (diabetes)?

The answer to this question will determine which search field you choose. (Title, Author, or Subject, for example.)

The screenshot below shows a Default search in the Delaware Library Catalog:
To search the Delaware Library Catalog, please review the following steps:

1. To begin searching, type a search term in the search field box.
2. To narrow your search, select one of the following options before clicking the **Search** button.
   - Author
   - Title
   - Subject
3. Our link to the Delaware Library catalog will default to the Wilmington University Library, but you can also select to search **All Libraries** by choosing **Everything** in the drop down fields menu.

**What do the search fields mean?**

- **All Fields or Keyword search**: This will look for your search terms anywhere in all the fields. This can bring up a lot of irrelevant things, so it's best to use it as a last resort if you haven't had success with any of the other types of searches.
- **Title**: This will take you to an alphabetical list of all of the titles in the catalog, starting with the search terms you entered. Use this to find specific titles that you're looking for.
- **Author**: This will take you to an alphabetical list of all the authors (or performers if it's music) in the catalog, starting with the name you entered.
- **Subject**: By using the Subject field, this will take you to an alphabetical list of the **controlled vocabulary** for the catalog. This list of subject headings in a record will not only tell you what official terms are being used, but will also provide related references and subheadings.

**Advanced Search**

If a Delaware Library Catalog default Search is not giving you the right results, you can conduct an advanced search by clicking on the **Advanced Search** link located to the right of **Search**. By clicking the **Advanced Search link**, you will be directed to an advanced search screen.

In the **Advanced Search** mode, you can:

- Conduct **keyword** searches
- Combine different terms or search by an exact phrase
- Limit your results to a specific library
- Limit your results to a certain type of material format (such as books, or DVDs, or CDs, for example)

See the below screen capture for an example of the Advanced Search option.
Combining Search Elements

You combine search elements in Advanced Searching using Boolean operators (and, or, not). You can combine words or phrases, author, title, or subject searches.

- Type a **Word or Phrase** for a typical search.
- Type an **Author** to search for the name. You can search for an author by the first name, last name, or initials. However, searching by an author's last name produces a more complete list of search results.
- Type a **Title** to search for an item by title. The search ignores articles as well as other stopwords.
- Type a **Subject** to search the subject index.

Limiting the Search

Use Advanced Search to limit your search based on criteria configured by your library.

- If available, select a **Library** to limit your search to a specific library branch or collection, or select **Any Library** to search in all libraries.
- If your library has holdings in a variety of languages, select a **Language**.
- If your library has holdings in a variety of formats (such as printed music, maps, and equipment), select a **Format**.

The Search Results Page.

After you have selected a topic from the subject list (or if you did a keyword search), you will get a list of all the items that matched your search.

Please see the screen capture below for an example of your search results page.
For each item on this page, you will see the **Title**, **Author**, **Publication Year**, and **Format** (Material Type). By clicking on the **title of the item**, you will see specific information about the resource, including the ISBN#, contents or summary, Call # and location of the material.

Below is a screenshot of the detailed record.
E-Books

In addition to print books and AV materials, the library subscribes to several thousand electronic books or "eBooks". eBooks can be accessed through the Library’s Discovery system. eBooks can also be accessed through the Library's individual eBook databases. The Discovery system contains all of Wilmington University's subscribed eBooks enabling users to search across all eBook databases at once. You can search for eBooks in the Discovery system by entering keywords or search terms in the Discovery search box on the Library homepage. You can limit the format of the results to "eBooks" only by checking off the eBook box. Click on the "View eBook" icon to view the eBook. You may be prompted to enter your myWilmU email and password to access the eBook.

Review

Pay attention to the assignment below, as it will give you practice with The Delaware Library Catalog and many of the search concepts discussed in this lesson, and may help you to answer some of the review questions.

- What are three methods to finding things in a library?
- What library catalog and what can do? What is the name of the catalog Wilmington University belongs to?
- What is a call number? What system of assigning call numbers is used by the Wilmington University Library? What does an LC call number look like?
- What is a search field? Why is it important which one I choose?
- What is the difference between a keyword search and a subject search? Which one will give you a larger number of results?
- What information do you need from the catalog to find a book on the shelf?