What is a call number?
Call numbers are a series of predetermined numbers and letters allocated to items held by the library so that items dealing with the same subjects are located near each other.

Monash University Library uses the Dewey Decimal Classification system for its call numbers except:

- The Law Library uses a variation on the Moys legal classification system.
- Clayton campus libraries use Dewey variations for Literature, Philosophy and Mathematics (Mos).

What do the parts of a call number mean?
Call numbers are basically divided into two parts:

- **subject** classification: series of numbers that represent the subject area
- **author** classification: series of letters and/or numbers that represent the author or title of the information

Some call numbers have a third part for the year of publication or extra author information.

Here is the call number for *Spacetime Physics* by Edwin F. Taylor, and John Archibald Wheeler, and what the parts describe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Hargrave-Andrew Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>530.11 T239S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject: 530 = Physics .11 = Relativity Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: T239 = Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S = Spacetime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Caulfield Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>530.11 TAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject: 530 = Physics .11 = Relativity Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: TAY = Taylor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do I use a call number to find an item?
It is important that you note down all of the call number, and which part of the Monash collection the item is held in. Then you need to find each part of the number in turn.

For example to find the book: *Understanding Enzymes*, by T. Palmer (call number 547.758 P176U4):

1. Locate the first three digits.
2. Locate any digits following the decimal point. Remember that it is a decimal system, so 547.8 comes after 547.75.
3. When you have located the number in full, look for the letter, then the next set of numbers.
4. Check that the last letter and number are correct to make sure you have the right book and edition.
Some common problems in looking for items

If you can't find an item:

- check that the item is not already on loan to someone else
- make sure you have written down the whole number
- make sure that you have located the entire number, including all the digits after the decimal point
- check that you are looking in the correct site or collection
- look for prefix letters before the number (eg. F = folio (large books) etc)
- note that some collections (eg. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Microfiche) have their own numbering system

Why aren't the call numbers consistent?

Sometimes call numbers seem very inconsistent, both inside and outside Monash. The reasons for this are:

- Over the years the call numbers allocated to some subjects have been inadequate or knowledge has changed, eg. advances in computing have caused many changes.
- The rules of the Dewey system are open to interpretation. It is possible to classify the same book in different ways. For instance a book called *Discrete Maths for Computing* could be classified as a maths book, or as a computing book.
- Monash Library is made up of a number of previously separate libraries. These libraries all had their own cataloguing procedures. The Library has now standardised these procedures.
- Some Monash collections have been catalogued differently to reflect specialist needs, eg law and maths (Mos collection).

Summary

Key points to remember when deciphering call numbers:

- items on the same topic are shelved next to each other
- every part of the number is important for finding an item
- work through the number systematically to find the item it describes
- call numbers may vary between libraries - make sure you have the right one