100+ Years: Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN)

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Contents

- What is it for?
- LCCN History and Transformations
- Assignment
- How is it used?
- Fundamentals of longevity
What is it for?

- The bibliographic metadata record
  - which describes a resource

- Often printed on resource
  - therefore associated also with the actual resource

- Over 20 million LCCNs
LCCN History and transformations
1898 – 1901: Library of Congress Card Number

- Experiments with numbering
  - Month + day + year + serial number
    - 12 – 1900 – 245
  - Year + country of publication + serial number
    - 1 – F – 172
  - Year + form of item + serial number
    - 1 – Map – 50
  - Year + LCC class + serial number
    - 1 – Z – 245
1902 – 1969: Library of Congress Card Number

- Stable pattern established
  - Alpha prefix + 2 digit year + up to 6 digit serial number

- Prefix for cataloging partners
  - Agr 33 – 1030 [Department of Agriculture, 1902-1940]
  - S 14 – 268 [Smithsonian Institution, 1913-1950]

- Prefix for form of material
  - MIC 52 – 4459 [Microfilm, cataloged by LC 1949-1965]
  - R 59 – 3789 [Phonograph records cataloged by LC 1953-1972]

- Prefix for projects/programs
  - TB 63 – 9950 [Talking book Program]

- Catalog cards became machine-readable catalog records
- Length of number fixed at 12 positions
  - Up to 3 character alpha prefix + 2 digit year + 6 digit serial number + 1 character supplement number = 12 characters
    - n##79005195# (# = blank)
    - ###85153773#
- Slowly dropped alphabetic prefixes
- Supplement position always blank
2001 – today: LCCN

- 100 years since 2002!
- 2 digit year no longer works
  - 02 = 1902 or 2002?
- New configuration
  - Up to 2 character alpha prefix + 4 digit year + 6 digit serial number) = 12 characters
    - ##2001627090
    - nb2006005293
- Used one character from alpha prefix and the supplement number to make 4 digit year
- Few alpha prefixes still used
Assignment

- Generally assignment was centralized – at the Library of Congress
- Alpha prefixes used for uniqueness when distributed assignment
- Occasional use of blocks for distributed assignment
  - Cataloging in Publication Program
  - Complementary numbers
How is it used?

- Originally, for obtaining catalog cards
- For finding metadata records
- For searching for resources

In the web world, in URLs

- To access a bibliographic record in the Library of Congress Linked Data Service
  - [http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/nr97026911](http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/nr97026911)
- To access a bibliographic record in the Library of Congress catalogs via a Permalink
  - [http://lccn.loc.gov/99209023](http://lccn.loc.gov/99209023)
Fundamentals of longevity for LCCN

- Simplicity
- Used year to start new numbering
- Used serial numbers with no intelligence
- Used intelligent alphabetic prefixes sparingly to enable distributed assignment
- Identifier for stable metadata
- Stability of assigning agency, Library of Congress
- 110 years in 2012
Thanks