

Anomalies & Classification Details in Dewey Decimal Labeling by Weihao Qiu (2016):

1. The Seattle Library has about 28 branches. Some of this is encoded in the “collcode” metadata. When items are returned they could be mapped to several records in “inraw” because when the item is returned to any of the library buildings that are different from the initial building where the book was checked-out from, the book will register several check-ins as the item travels from one building to another.
2. The raw tables are just snapshots of the library database. Therefore, the mapping relationships will change over time. For example, the same copy of a book might have different “itemNumber”, even different “bibNumber” in raw tables for different years. This might surprise students for the inaccuracy of the data, but it is exactly where interesting data mining ideas might occur.

Some clarifications from librarians of SPL:

The “bibNumber” (Bibliographic Number - I believe assigned through the Library of Congress) is a much more accurate way to track item circulation, as it is a unique number. An example is tracking the singer “Adele”.

The singer Adele’s “21” cd is classified in the Call Number column as CD 782.42166 Ad32T and also classified as MUS 782.42166 Ad32T. Both items also have multiple bibnumbers:

bibnumbersforcd782... 3145843 and 2698605
bibnumbersforMUS782...3194137 and 2745342

Additionally, Adele’s “21” and “25” have the same CD 782.42166 Ad32T classification.

Clarification:

In this instance, both items are classified using the Dewey system (782.42166), but because one item is not a CD, but is a sheet music book of the album, it contains a different prefix to the call number.

The construction is:

MUS (format – printed sheet music)

782.42166 (Dewey class number based on the artist, genre, and subject)

Ad32T (Cutter number to identify the item, constructed using the Cutter tables – it starts with the artist’s name’s first two initials (Ad), and ends with the first letter of the title: “T” for Twenty- one)

More info about the “Cutter Classification”: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cutter_Expansive_Classification

CD (format – CD)

782.42166 (Dewey class number based on the artist, genre, and subject)

Ad32T (Cutter number to identify the item, constructed using the Cutter tables – it starts with the artist’s name’s first two initials (Ad), and ends with the first letter of the title: “T” for Twenty-one)

Because both items are the same content, but not format, the only call # change is the prefix. In the catalog, patrons can limit their search to format and find only CDs, or only sheet/printed music, if they’d like. There are many other indicators in an item’s record to show the difference between two formats of the same title, but those are not necessarily seen in the call #.

Because two of Adele’s CDs (21 and 25) have the same content classification for Dewey/call # classification, the library uses the same call # construction for both titles, and because the two titles of these items start with the same letter (“T” for “Twenty”), they have the same Cutter number.

The 4 bib numbers you see are for the CDs of 21 and 25 (3145843, 2698605), and the sheet music books of 21 and 25 (3194137, 2745342).

The library has different bib numbers so that patrons can find the two different titles and differentiate between them. The call #'s primary use for patrons is to know where to find an item, and so both of Adele's CDs will be in the same place and the patron (or staff member) can see both and differentiate between them by the title.

You can look at Adele's other album, 19, to see an example of the different Cutter number based on the title – it is:

CD (format)

782.42166 (Dewey classification #, same as other Adele albums)

Ad32N (Cutter #, the same as above except for the last space, which is an "N" for "Nineteen", the album title)

.....

And as for the new itypes, they are to track different types of items or loan periods – pkbknh stands for “Peak Picks book, no holds”, which is used for our new program of “lucky day” items, where patrons can find some popular new titles on the shelf at the branch instead of waiting in the holds queue. These items circulate for only 2 weeks and cannot be placed on hold. The “aceq” itype stands for equipment, which is why it is used for the Kill-A-Wad meters and hotspots.

These lets us look at circulation by type as well as item.

.....

We do have many bib records with the same or similar call #s, due to the way call #s are constructed. For example, for feature film DVDs, we use the prefix DVD, and then the first few words of the title (what will fit on the spine label), and then the year it is released. That means if there are two feature films with the same first few words in the title, they will have the same or similar call #s. In the catalog, when patrons or staff search for these items, there are other ways to differentiate, such as actors or the cover art for the movie. On the library shelves, the same is true because we can look at the actual item and identify it that way.

In cataloging, consistency is the key – if we altered our regular practice for each similar call # in order to make it unique, it would make it more confusing in the long-run, because we could not rely on knowing what our practice is when looking at a record. The other important part of this is that the call # is just a small part of each bib record – the bib record has item records for each copy of that title we have, and in the item record we have: unique barcode, itype, collection code, location, and more. These things together give us the context needed to know what the item is, and where it can be found. The call # is like the “X” on a treasure map, in that it marks the right spot once you get there, but the rest of the item record & bib record information is the rest of the treasure map, the context you need to find the right “X.”

(That isn't to say we never make mistakes in cataloging! We absolutely do! But we have a system in place to catch and correct those.)

For “Across the Universe”, it looks like we had purchased that film originally when it came out, and had a bib # of 2470737. We have since lost all the copies attached to that bib #, and when we purchased it again, it was given a new bib # because it was a new record (records with no copies attached eventually are deleted, and there was a gap between that point and our re-order of the title). That happens with DVDs especially often, as re-releases of a film can happen a long

time after the first release. The bib # is for the each unique format of a unique title, but the number itself can and does change over time within our ILS as records are created and deleted.

For DVD circulation in general, we have noticed a slight downward trend in the past few years. It's hard to tell exactly why, and there are probably many factors, but certainly streaming services are becoming more and more popular and are playing a part. However, we do keep circulation statistics in our system, and if you look at all DVD circulation together (and not by title) from 2007 to 2016, we see a large increase in 2008 and 2009, and a slow decline since then that has only now in 2016 brought us back down to 2007 levels.