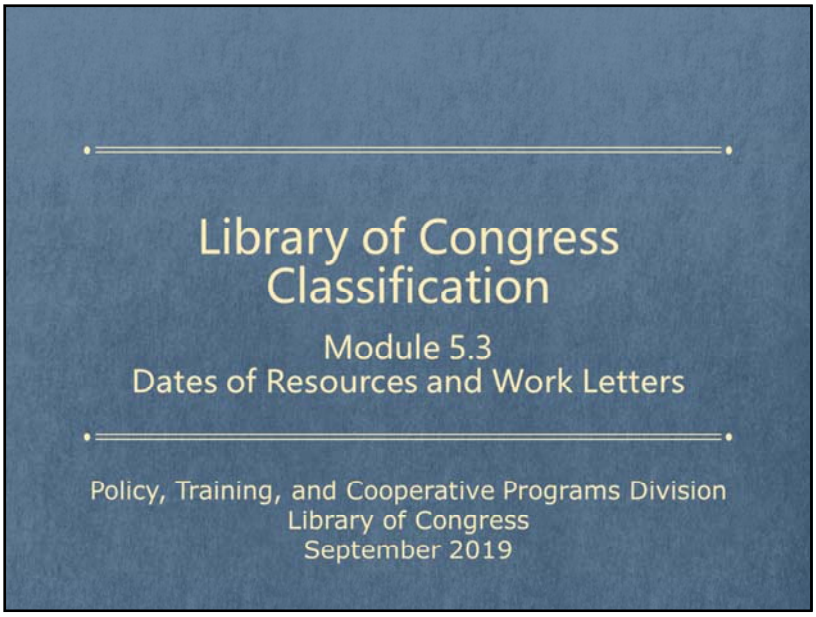
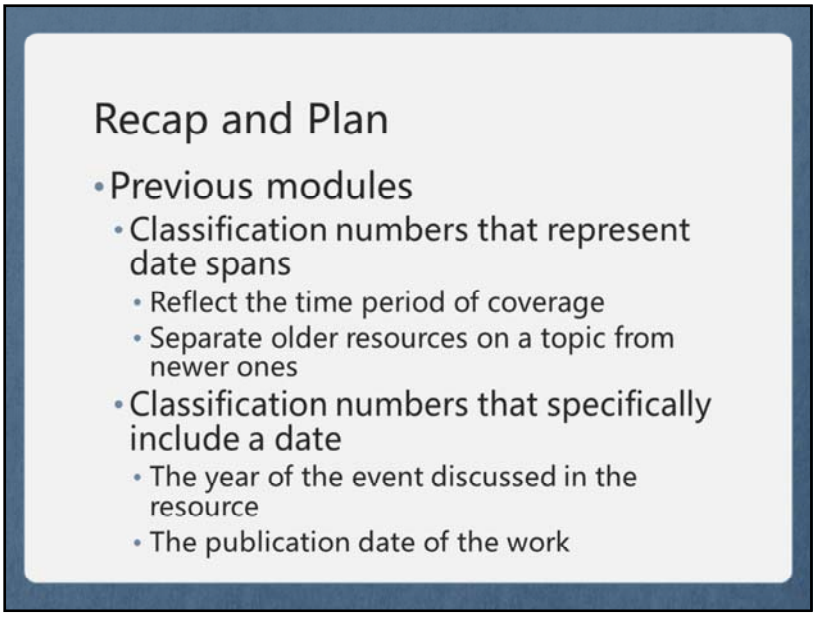
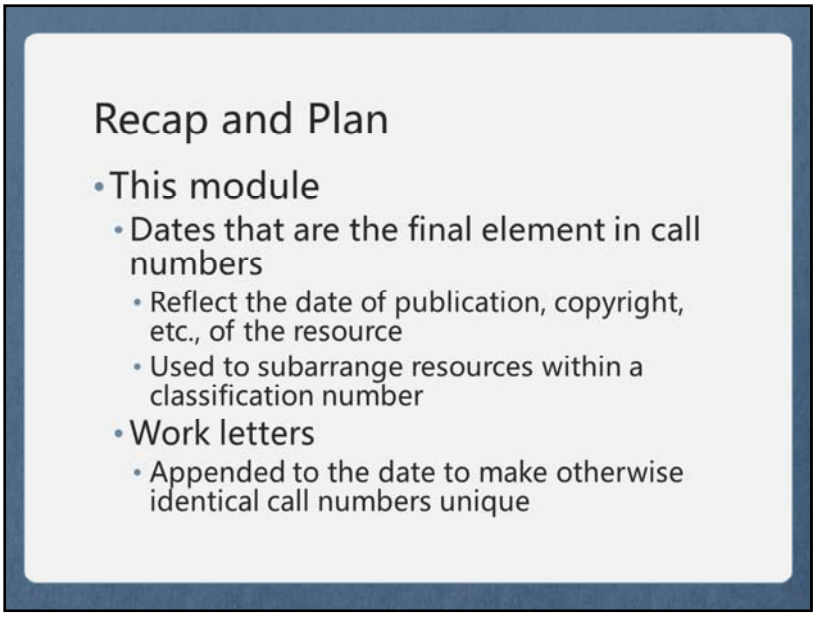

Library of Congress Classification
Module 5.3
Dates of Resources and Work Letters
Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division
Library of Congress
September 2019



In the previous modules in this unit, we discussed two situations in which the classification number itself reflects either the time period discussed in the resource or the date of promulgation or publication of the resource.

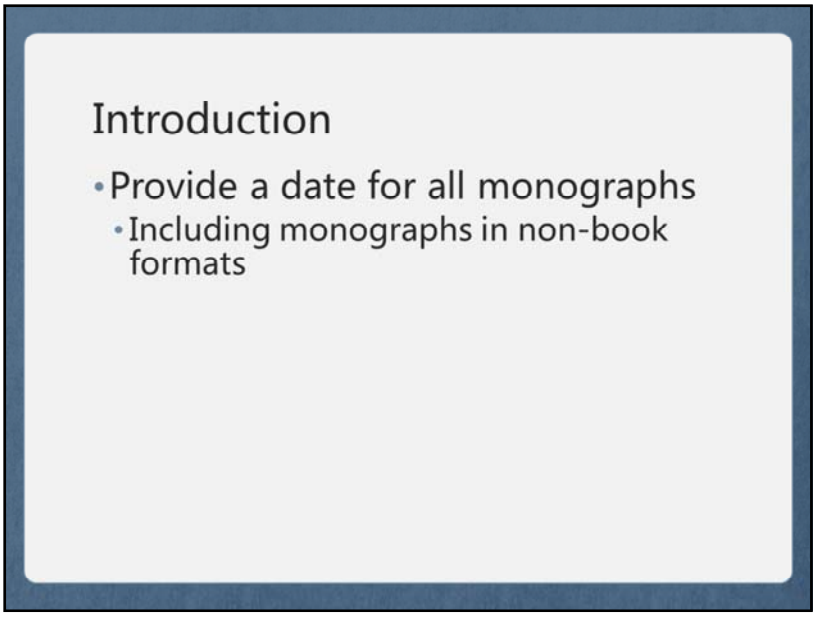


In this module, we will discuss a different kind of date altogether: dates that are appended as the final element in call numbers. Those dates reflect the date of publication of the resource and are used to subarrange resources within a classification number.

We will also discuss work letters, which are letters that appear as the final element in some call numbers, and are appended to make otherwise identical call numbers unique.

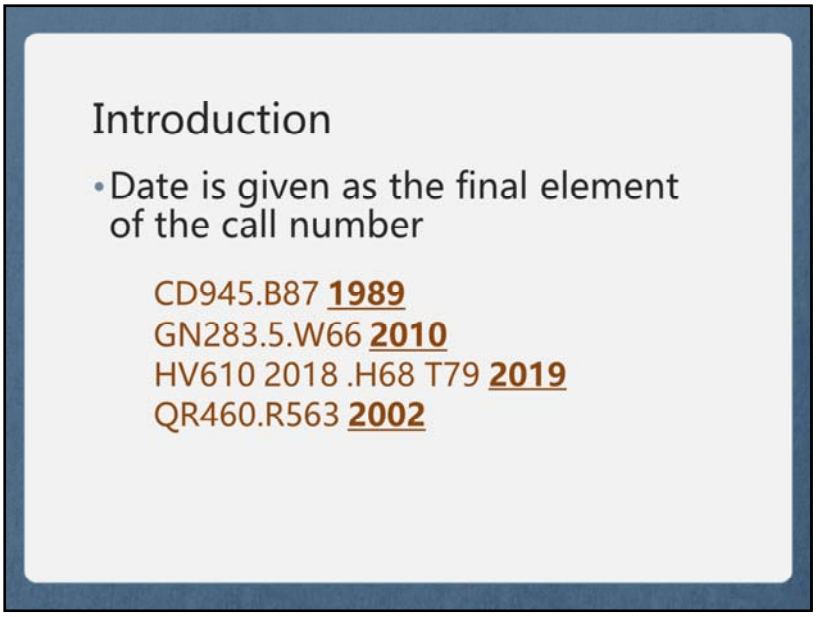
We are therefore turning our attention from the classification number assigned to a resource, to the completion of the full call number. As a reminder, the classification number is only the first part of the call number. A call number uniquely identifies a resource and generally contains the classification number, a cutter number, a date, and occasionally a work letter.

In this module, we will discuss dates and work letters that are the final elements in call numbers. They are used chiefly to subarrange multiple editions of a resource.

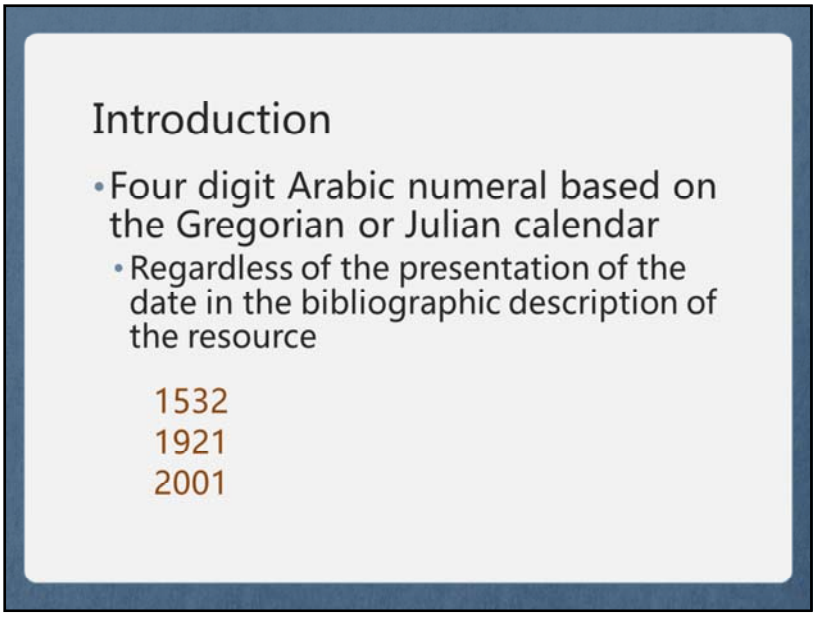


Since 1982, it has been Library of Congress policy to add the publication date to the call number of all monographs.

The policies for adding dates to call numbers are provided in CSM instruction sheet G 140, Dates. This module is based on that instruction sheet.



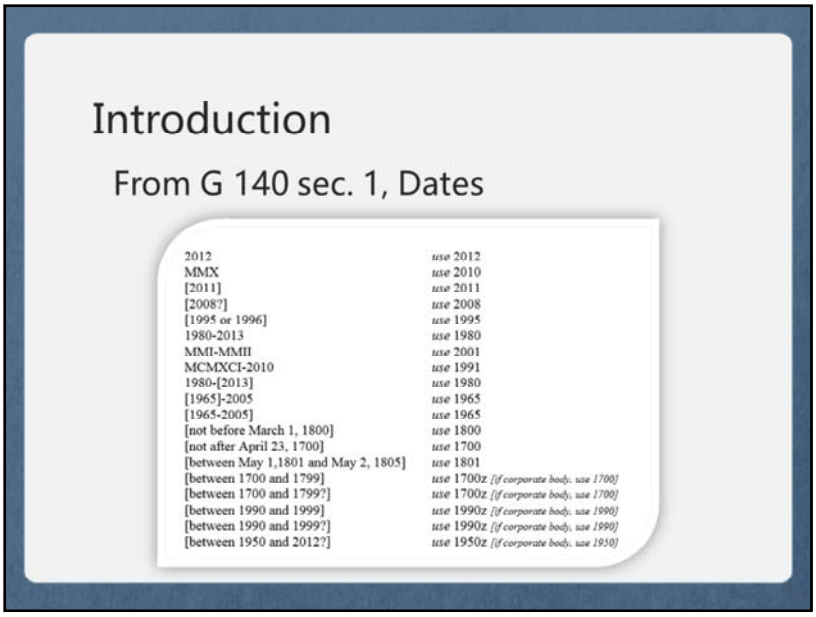
Dates that are used for subarrangement are given as the final element of the call number, as you can see in the examples on your screen.



The date in the call number is based on the date or dates presented in the bibliographic description for the resource, but the way it appears in the call number may look different from the way that it appears in the description.

The publication date for most resources currently published in the United States is presented in Arabic numerals, but older materials and even some newer ones may use Roman numerals. Regardless, all dates in call numbers are given in Arabic numerals.

In addition, the publication date of some resources is given in terms of a calendar other than the Gregorian or Julian calendar. If the date on a resource is given in terms of the Hebrew calendar, for example, the date is converted.



Section 1 of instruction sheet G 140 provides a useful table of the various ways that dates can be presented in bibliographic descriptions, along with the way that the date should be presented in the call number. The dates can sometimes be straightforward and consist of a single Arabic numeral, such as 2012 in the first line of the table. They can also be Roman numerals, bracketed dates, bracketed dates with question marks, and so on. They may also appear as spans of dates.

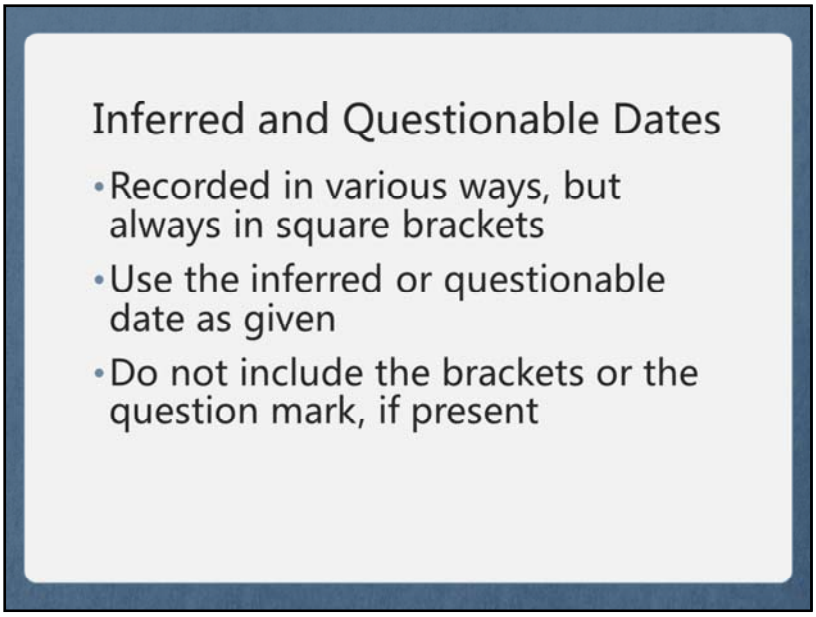
We will discuss some of the possibilities over the next several slides, and also provide an opportunity for you to practice. Before continuing the video, please open G 140 so that you can refer to it.

Please click the screen when you are ready to continue.

If there is a single known publication year, you should use that year as given. If the date includes a specific month and/or day, just use the year.

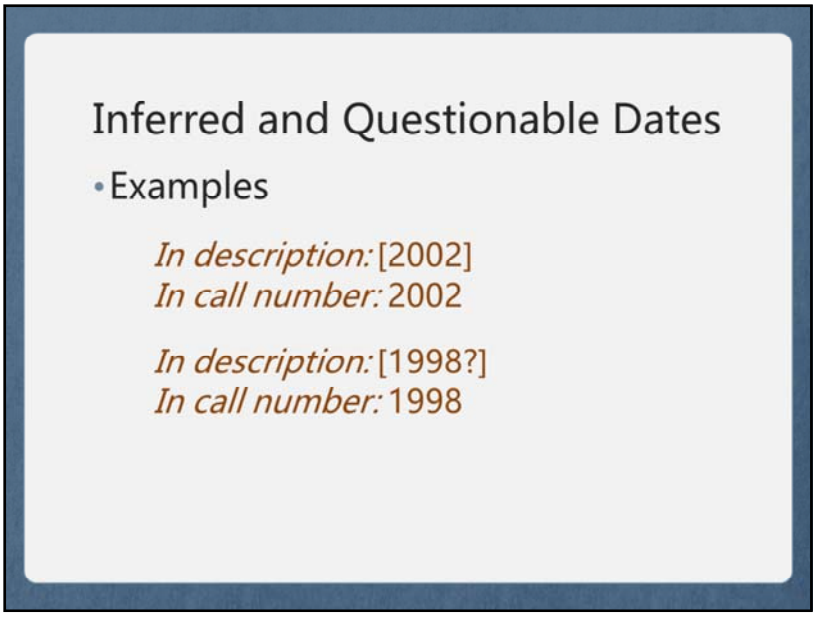
For example, if the description says 2017, use 2017. Also use 2017 if it says January 22, 2017.

Dates that appear as Roman numerals in the description are converted to Arabic numerals in the call number.



Sometimes the date of the resource is questionable or inferred. Those dates always appear in square brackets, and most of the table in G 140 addresses those situations.

The general rules are to use the inferred or questionable date as it is, but do not include the brackets or question mark in the call number.

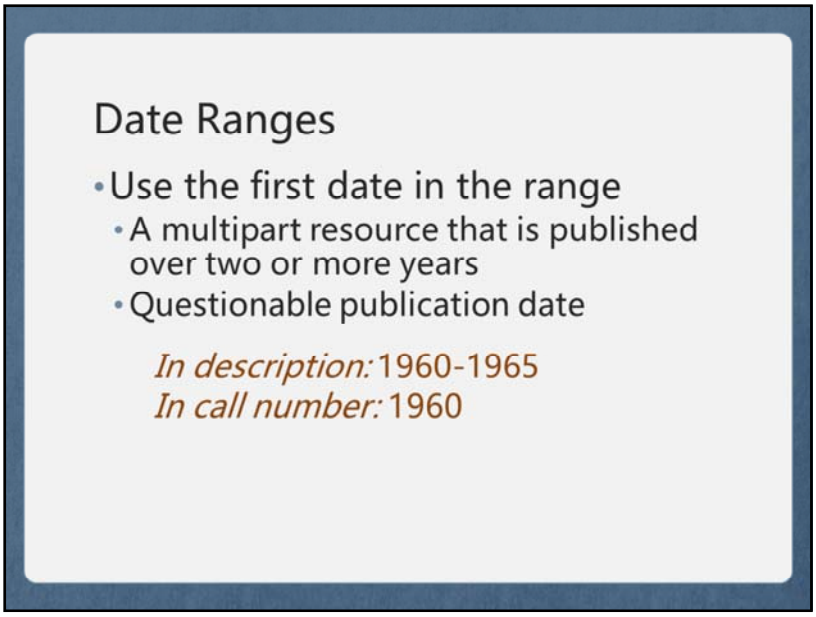


If there is a single date in brackets, then use that date in the call number, without the brackets.

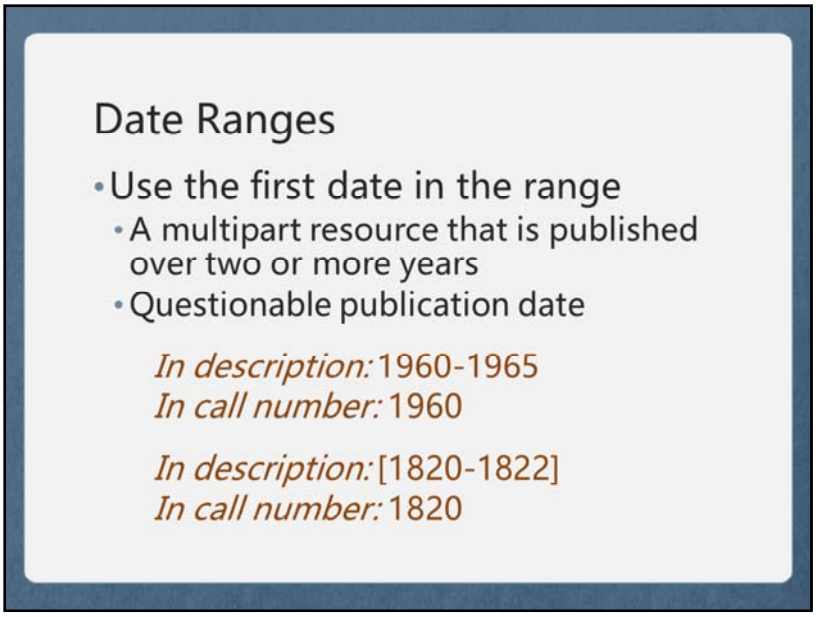
If there is a single date in brackets with a question mark, then use *that* date in the call number, without the brackets or question mark.

A date range is given in the bibliographic description when a multipart resource is published over two or more years, or when the specific publication date is unknown but a general time period can be determined.

In both of those cases, use the first date in the range given in the bibliographic description.



For example, if the date range is 1960-1965, use 1960 in the call number.



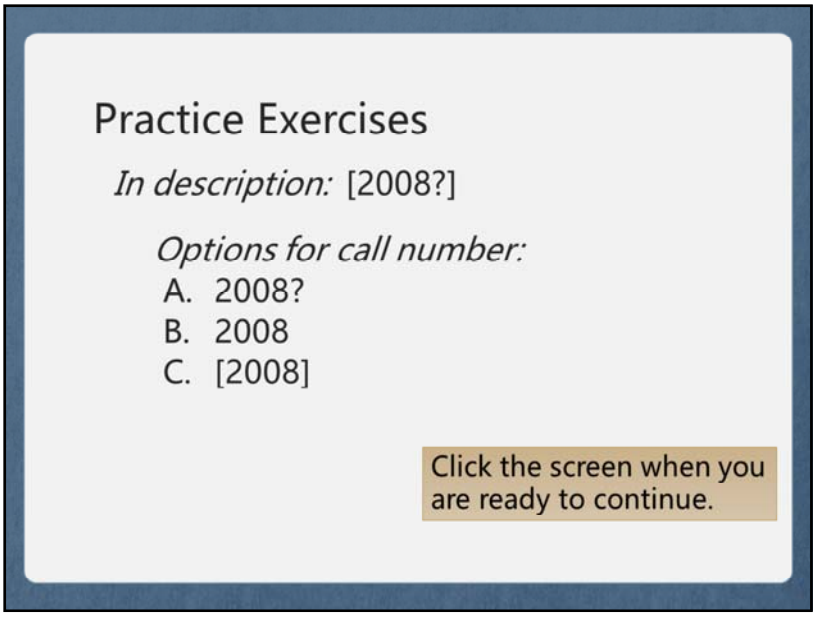
If the date is bracketed and determined to be between 1820 and 1822, use 1820.

For most resources, determining the correct date to use in the call number is as simple as finding the applicable line in the table.

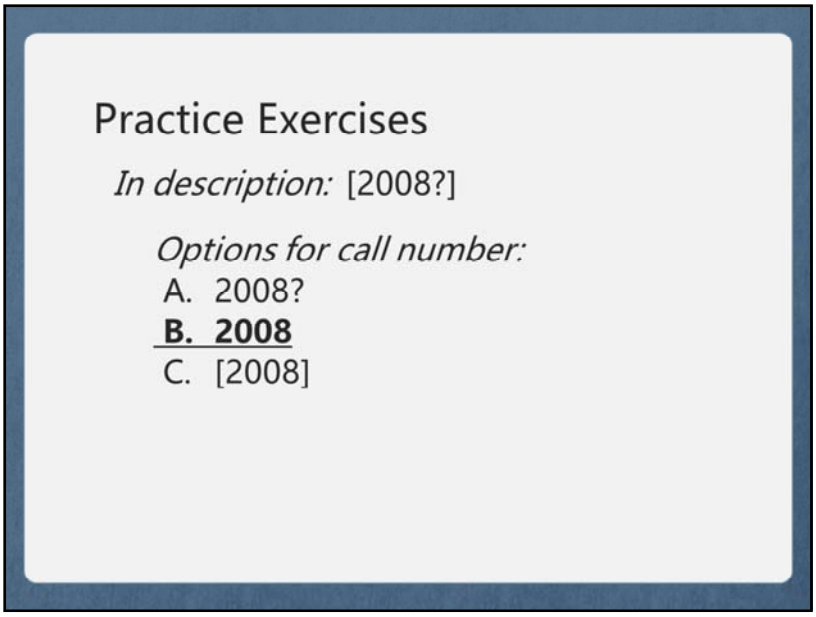
For the next few slides, we will give you a date or span of dates as it appears in the description, and three options for the way the date should appear in the call number.

Please consult the table in instruction sheet G 140 to figure out which of those options is the correct one.

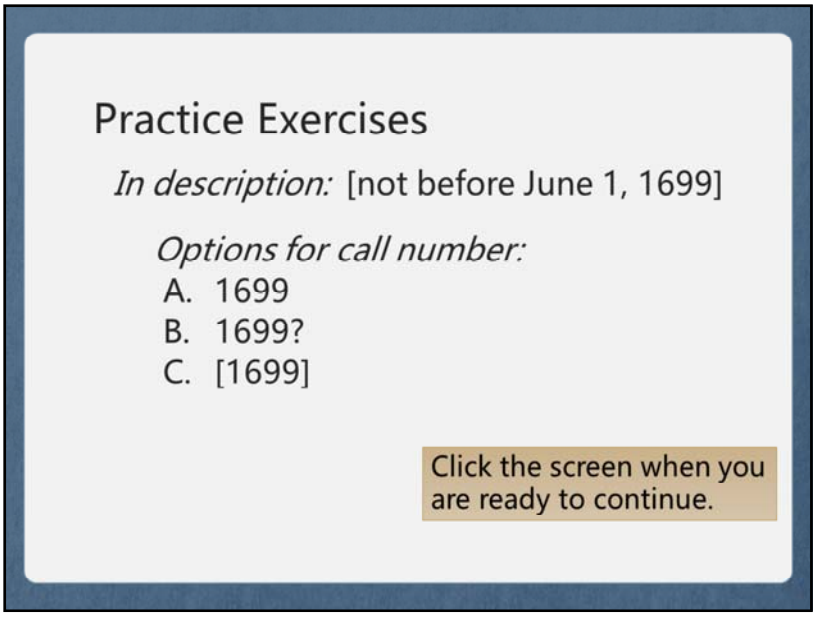
When you think you know the answer, please click the screen to advance to the next slide in order to check it.



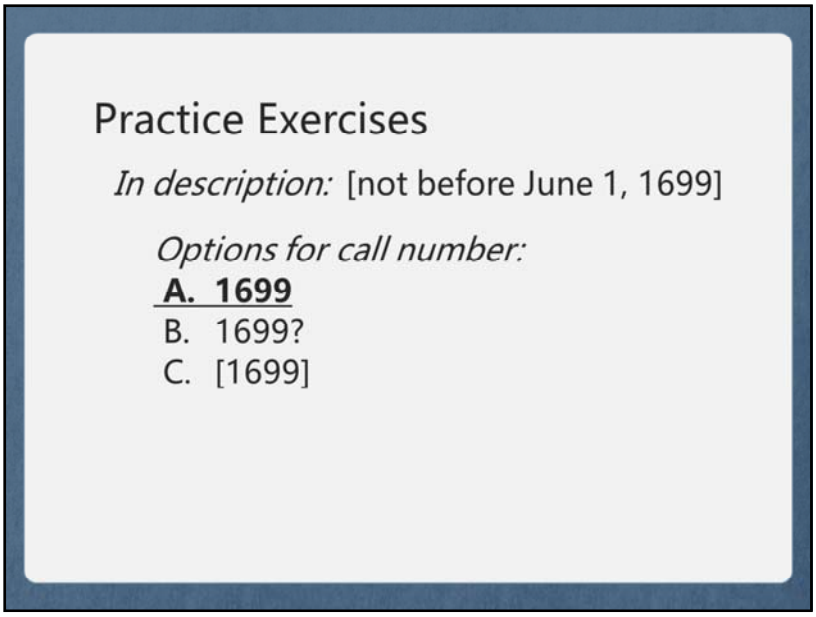
In the first practice exercise, the date is 2008 with a question mark and it is enclosed in brackets.



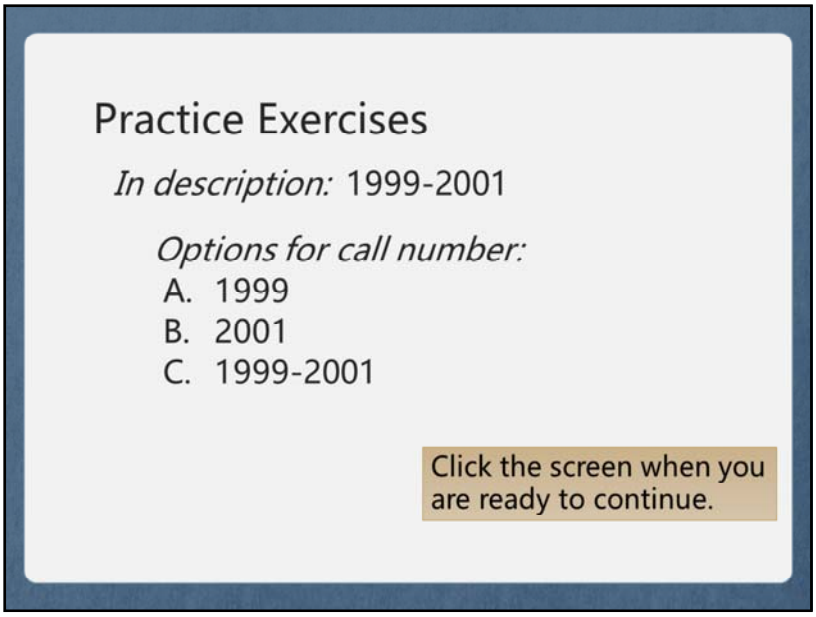
The correct answer is B, 2008, without a question mark or brackets.



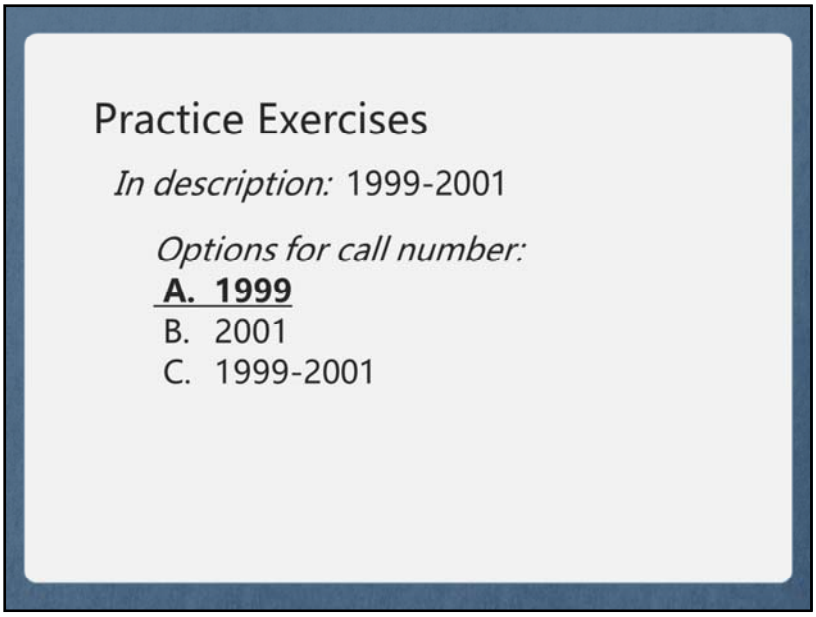
In this practice exercise, the date is presented as a phrase enclosed in brackets. The phrase says: not before June 1, 1699.



The correct answer is A, 1699. Remember that brackets and question marks are not used in call numbers.



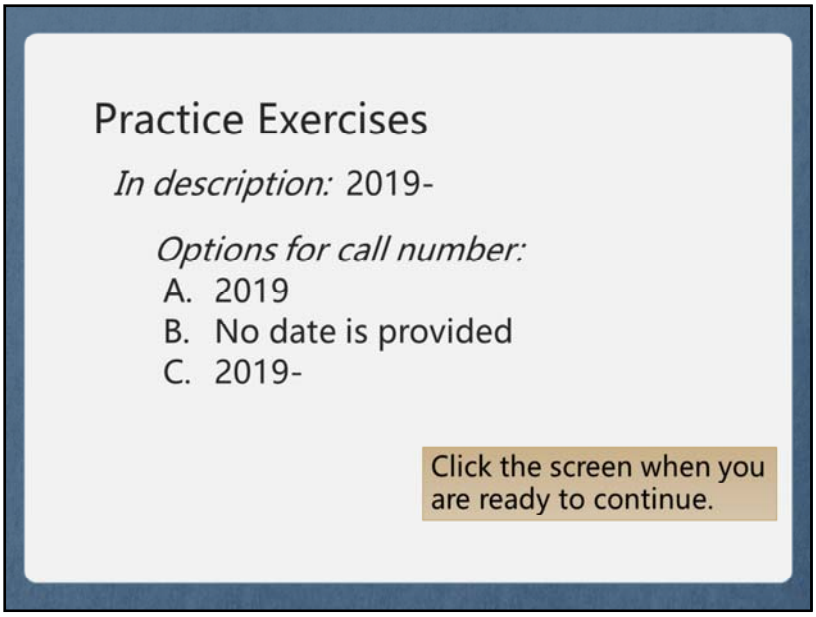
In this practice exercise, the date is presented as an unbracketed span: 1999-2001.



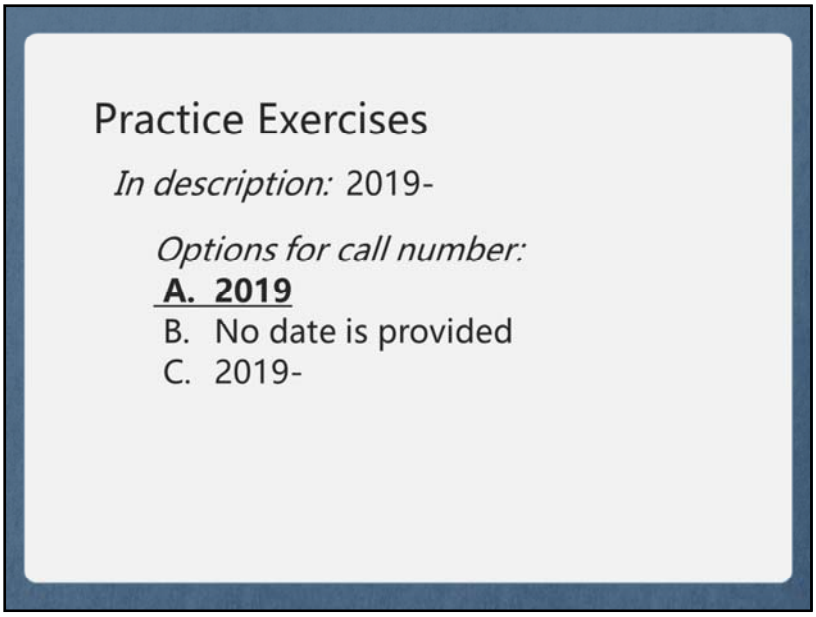
The correct answer is A, 1999.

When a range is used, the first date in the range is given in the call number.

Let’s do one more practice exercise.



The date is presented as an incomplete span: 2019 with a hyphen after it.

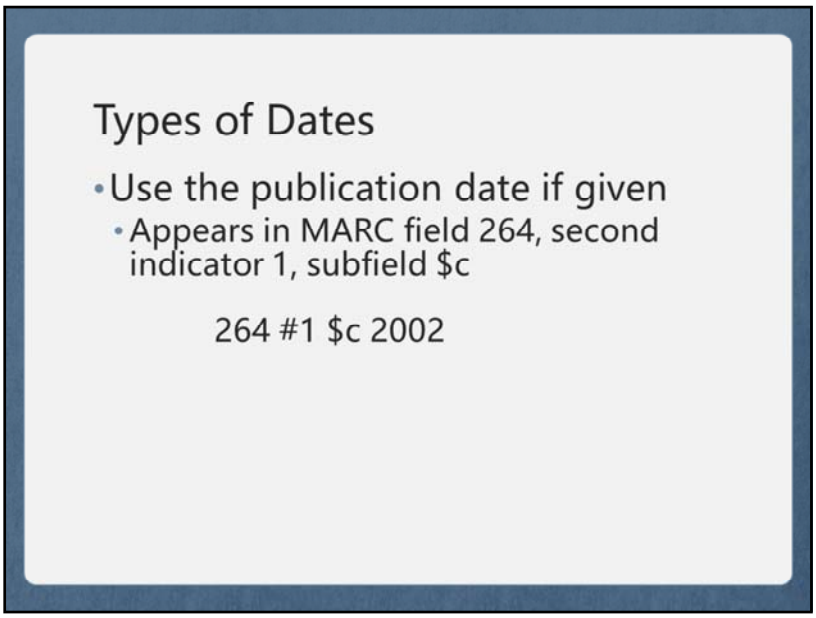


The correct answer is A, 2019.

Did we confuse you with this one?

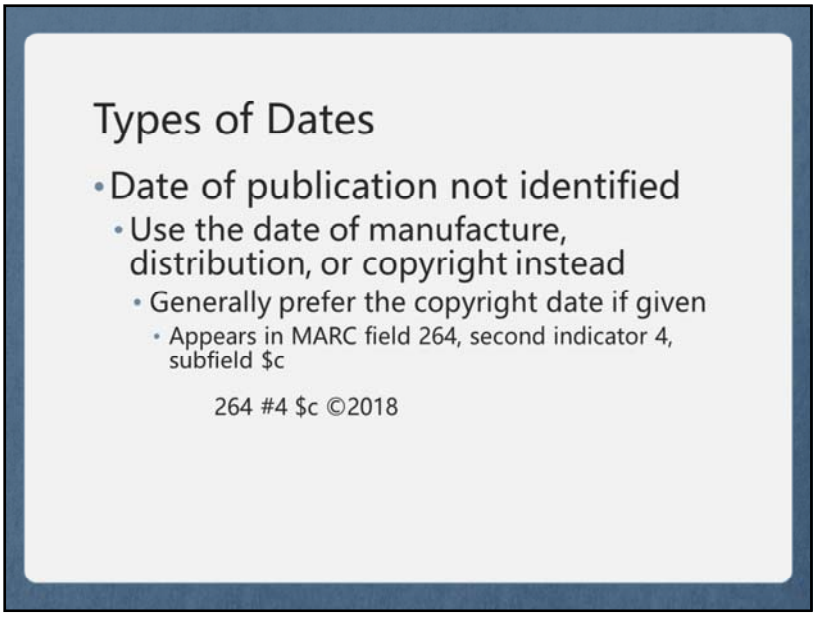
This situation is not included in the table, but the answer can be inferred from the table. Whenever there is a full date range – that is, both the beginning and ending dates are given – the date beginning the range is provided in the call number. Therefore, logic says that the first date of an incomplete range is also given in the call number.

So far we have discussed the general rule for providing the date in the call number. However, we have not discussed *which* date we are to use. Let's do that now, and also discuss special rules for specific cataloging situations.



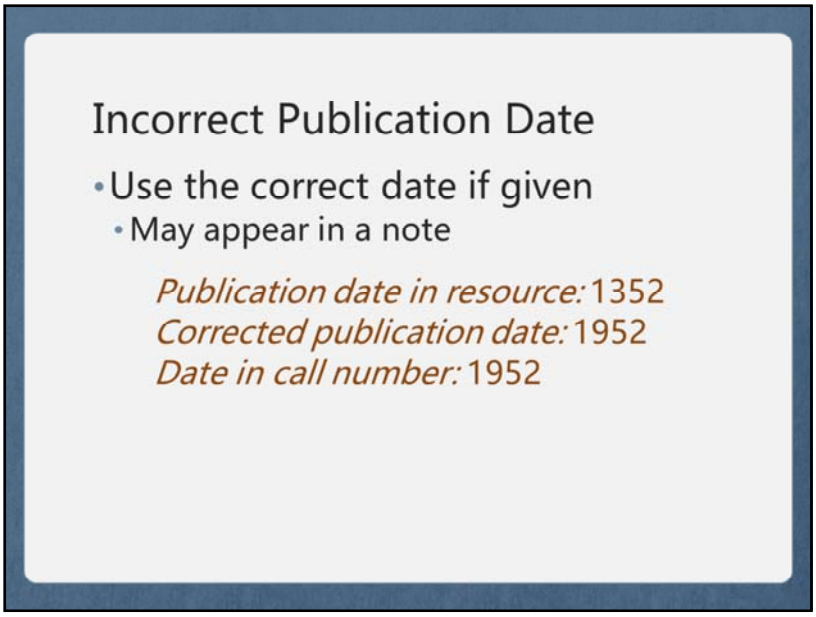
Always use the publication date when it is available. If you are using MARC format, the publication date appears in field 264, second indicator 1, subfield $c.

Sometimes a publication date and a copyright date or date of printing or manufacture are both given. Any time you have a publication date you should use it.



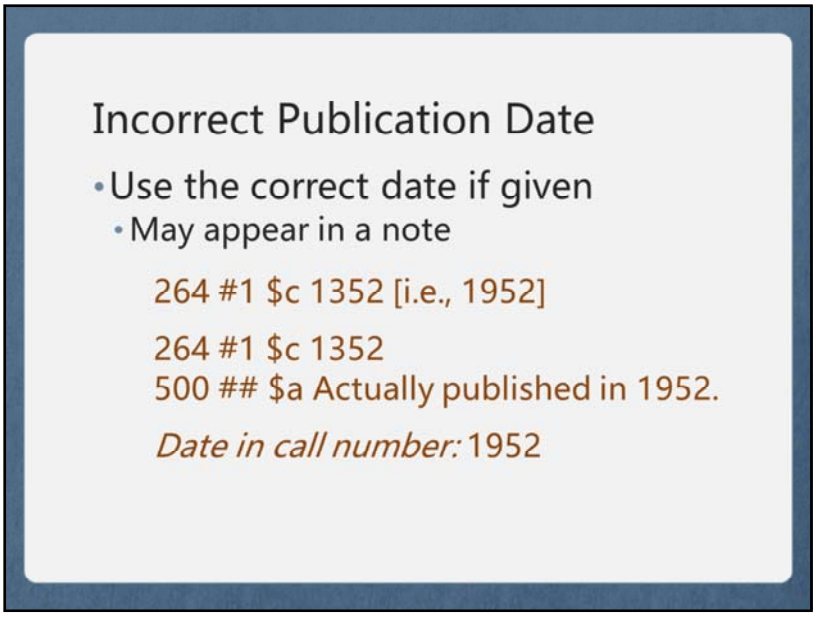
If the date of publication is not given in the bibliographic description, use the date of manufacture, distribution, or copyright instead. Generally speaking, if the copyright date and some other date are provided in the description, use the copyright date. Use the manufacture, distribution, printing, or other type of date only as a last resort.

So, if there is a publication date, use it. If there is not a publication date but there is a copyright date, use the copyright date. If there is not a publication date *or* a copyright date, then use whatever other type of date is available to you.



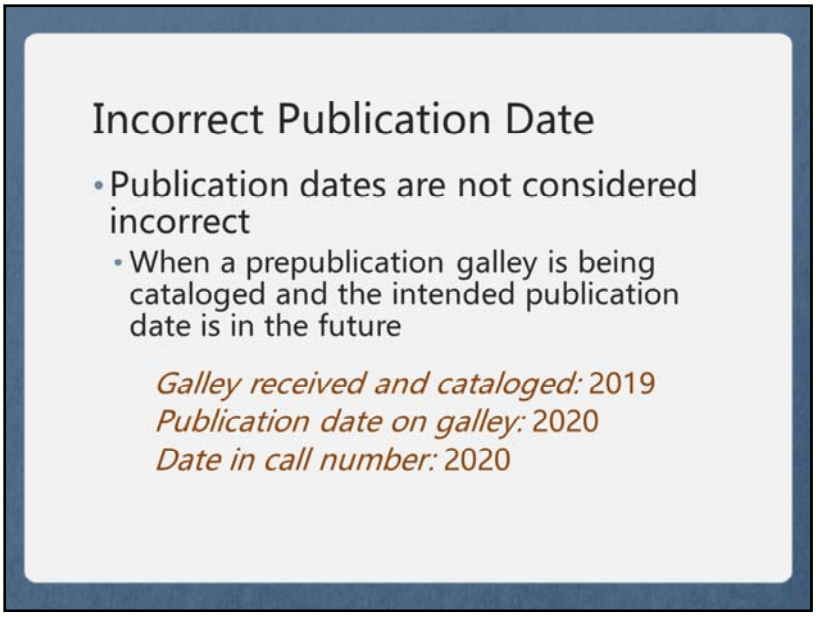
Occasionally, the publication date on the resource is clearly incorrect. If the date is corrected in the bibliographic description, use the corrected date.

For example, if the publication date given is 1352, but the resource is known to have been published in 1952, use 1952 in the call number.

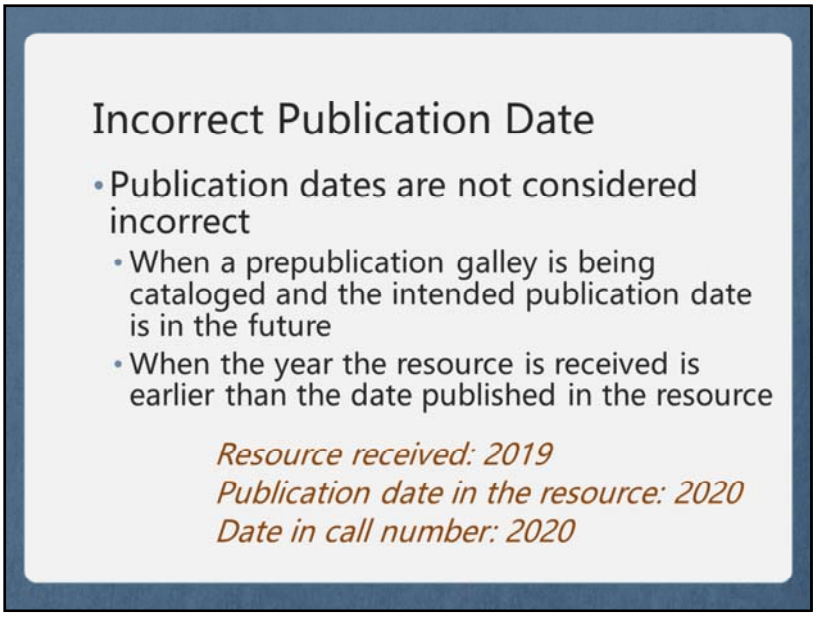


The correction may appear alongside the incorrect date, or may appear in a note.

Either way, use the corrected date.



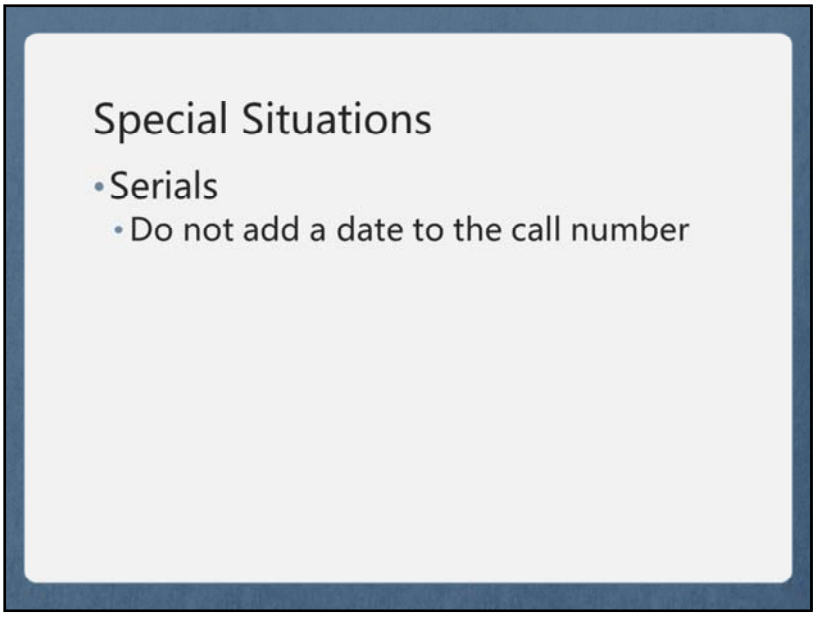
Some dates that appear to be incorrect are not. An unambiguous example is when a prepublication galley is being cataloged, and the date given is in the future. Accept the date as provided.



Other times, your library might receive a resource in one year, but the publication or copyright date in that resource is the following year. This is not an incorrect date, either. This sort of thing happens regularly.

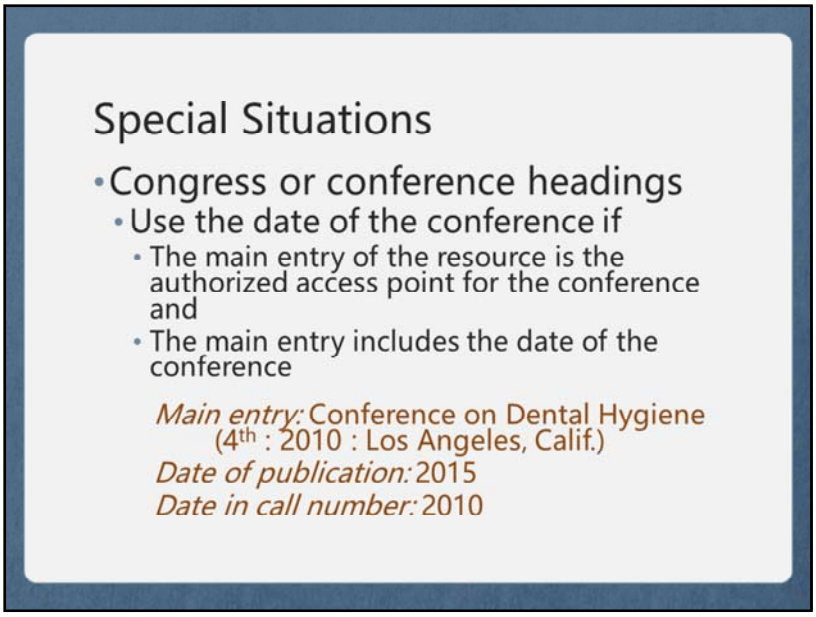
Accept the date as given in the resource, and use it in the call number. If a resource is received in 2019, but the publication date is 2020, use 2020 in the call number.

Now let’s talk about the rules for some specific types of resources.



First, dates that are intended to subarrange resources are not appended to call numbers for serials.

The call numbers for serials can include a date only when the date is used for classification purposes. We discussed those kinds of dates in the previous module.



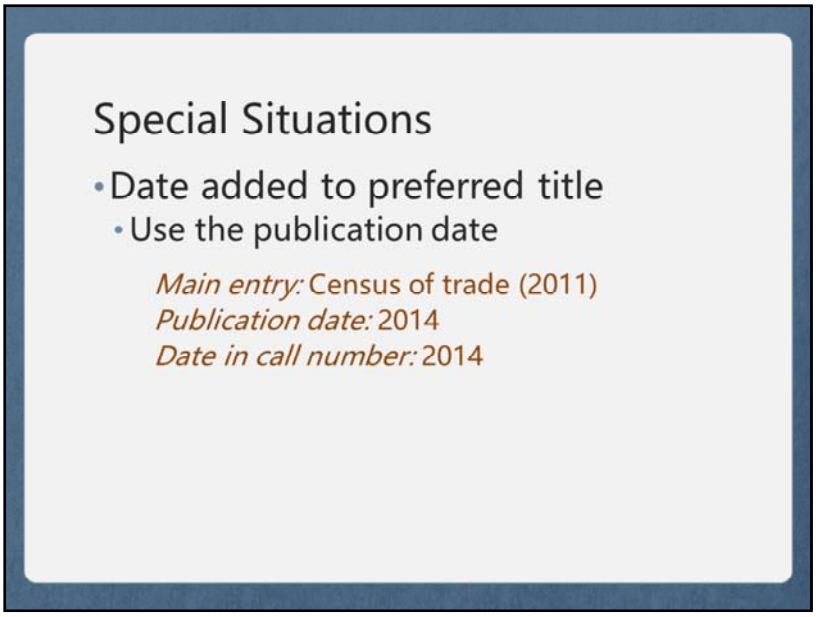
There is a special rule about conference and congress publications. If the authorized access point for the conference is the main entry *and* the access point includes the date of the conference, use that date in the call number. Do not use the publication date.

Conference proceedings and papers are often published one or more years after the conference; sometimes a decade or more may pass between the time that the papers were delivered at the conference and their publication. The important date is the date on which they were presented, so that is the date that we use in the call number.

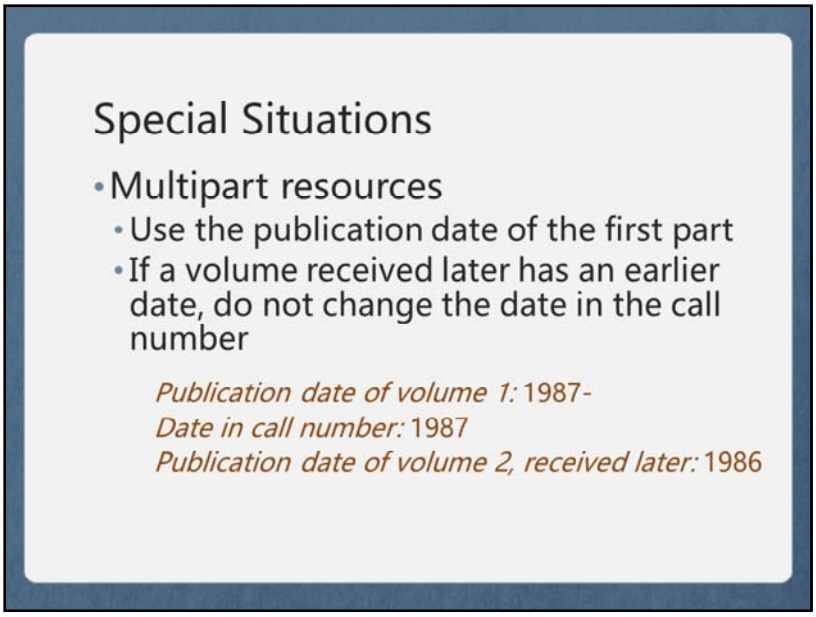
In the example on your screen, the 4th Conference on Dental Hygiene took place in 2010, but the proceedings were not published until 2015. Use 2010 in the call number.

If the main entry for the conference does not include the date, use the publication date of the resource.

Likewise, if the conference is given only an added access point, or is not represented in an access point at all, use the publication date.

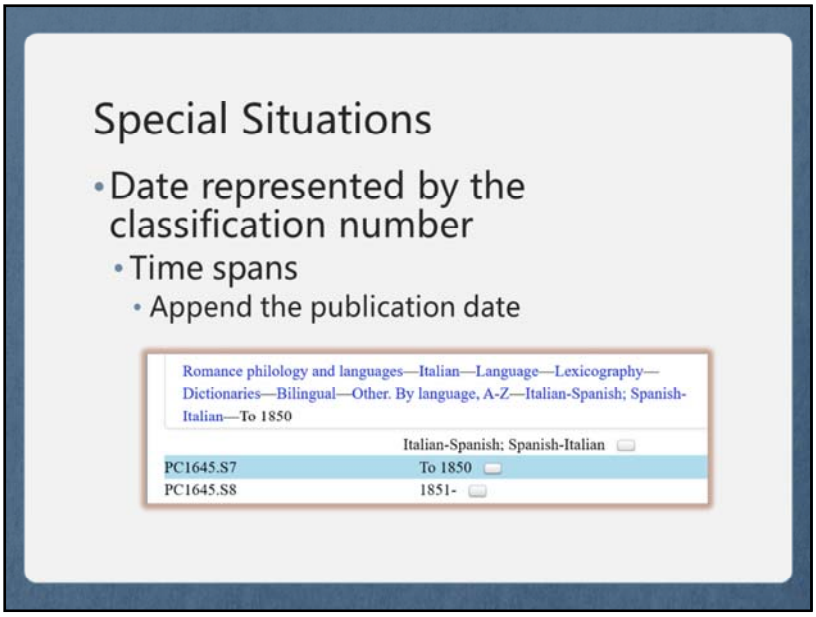


That rule does not apply to publication dates added to preferred titles used as main entries. Use the date of publication if it is present; if not, use the date of copyright, distribution, manufacture, or some other date, as we discussed earlier.



As we have already indicated, we are to use the earliest date of publication when we are cataloging a multipart monograph. But what happens when we do not know the publication date for volume 1? Or when we know the date for volume 1, but a later volume – which we receive later – has a publication date that is earlier than the date on volume 1?

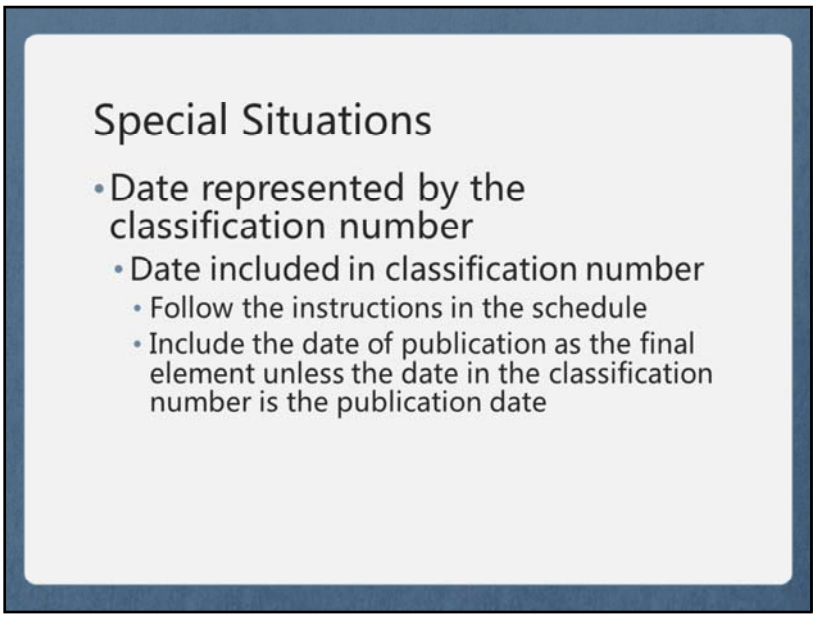
In both cases, we base the date in the call number on the best information we have at the time that we are initially cataloging the resource. We do not change the date in the call number if the earliest date changes due to information we receive later.



As we discussed in the previous modules in this unit, dates can be represented in the classification portion of the call number.

In Module 5.1, we discussed classification by time period and explained that the time period can refer to the time period being discussed or to the period of publication. Append the publication date in either case.

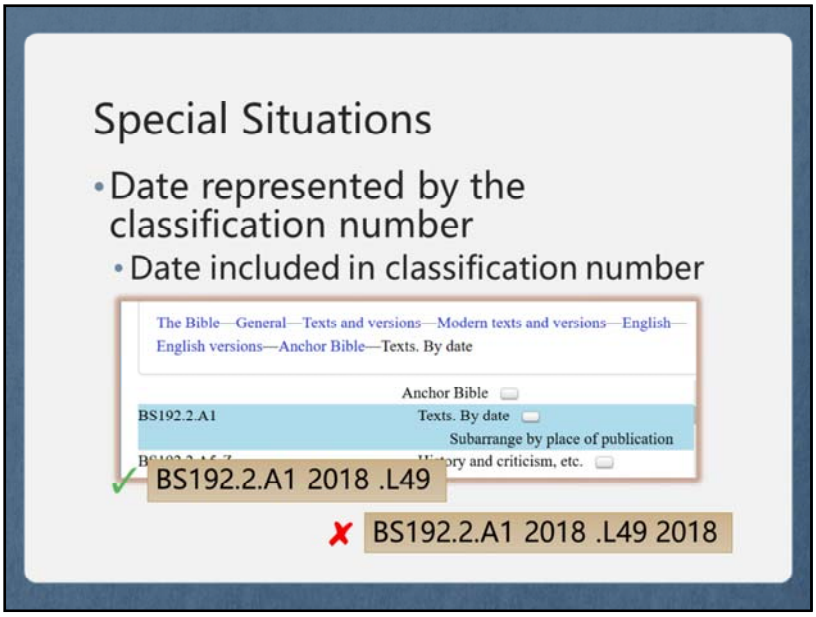
In the example on your screen, PC1645.S7 is used to classify bilingual Italian-Spanish and Spanish-Italian dictionaries that were published through 1850. Include the publication date in the call number.



In Module 5.2, we discussed situations in which a date is included in the classification number itself.

The most basic instruction we can provide is to follow the instructions in the schedule. But what if the schedule does not provide any specific guidance?

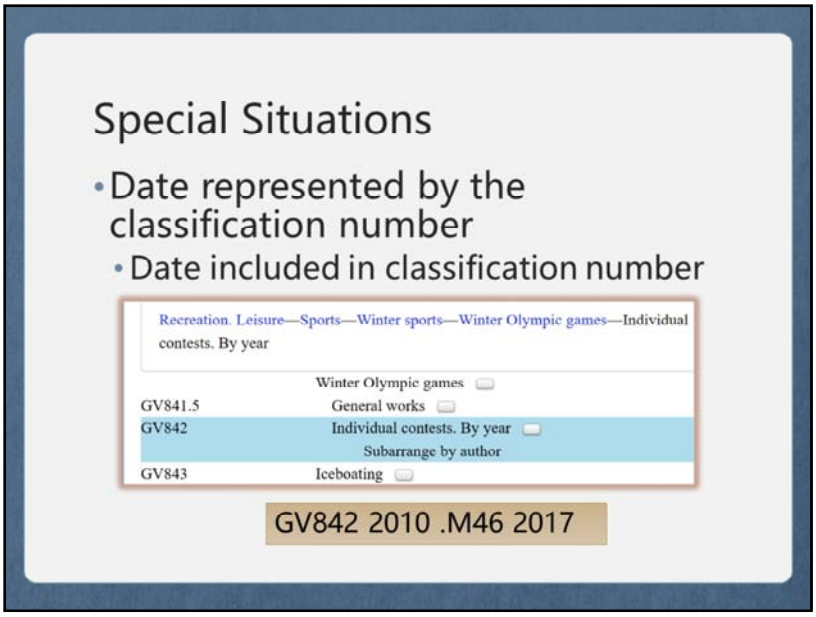
Consider the meaning of the date that appears in the classification number. If it refers to the publication date, then do not add the same publication date as the final element of the call number, because it would be redundant.



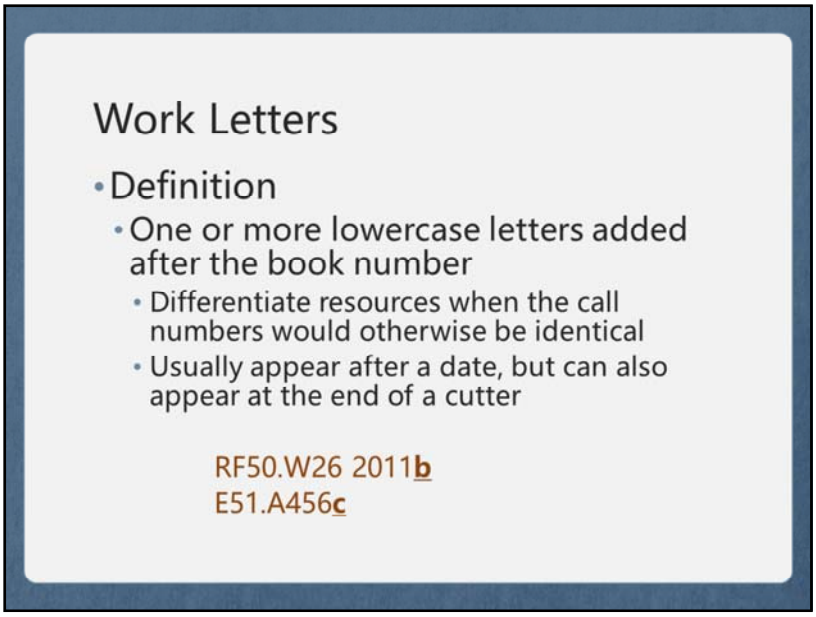
Here is an example. BS192.2.A1 is used for texts of the Anchor Bible. The instructions indicate that you are to include the date, and then subarrange by place of publication.

The class number already includes the publication date, so you do not add it again.

You may be asking yourself: why does the second cutter have a decimal point, when only the first cutter is supposed to have one? It is probably because the date is interposed between the two cutters. Regardless, it has been done that way hundreds of times in LC's catalog.



The date in GV842 refers to the date of the Olympic games, not to the date of publication of the resource. Therefore, the publication date is appended, according to the default policy to add a date of publication to the call number for all monographic resources.

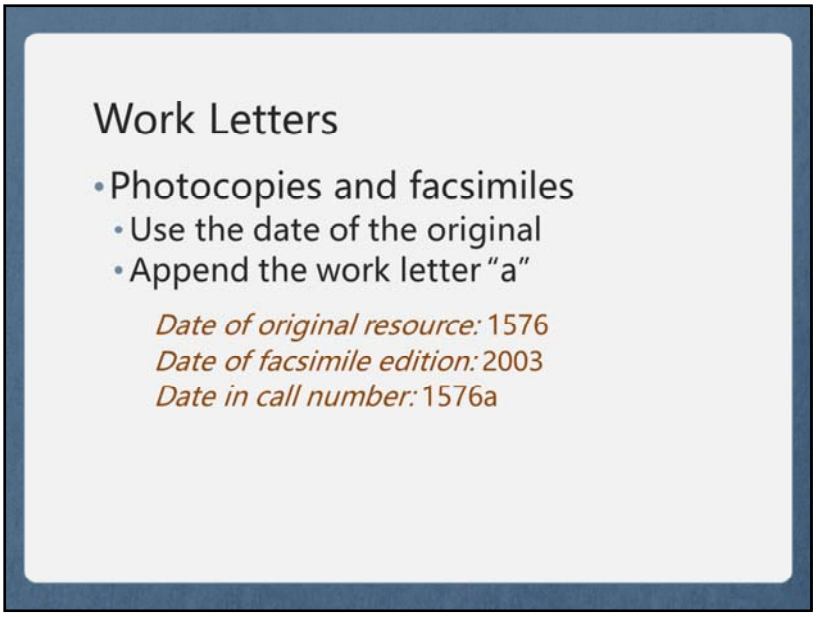


We have one last topic to cover before closing this module, and that is work letters.

Work letters are one or more lowercase letters added as the final element of a call number to make the call number unique.

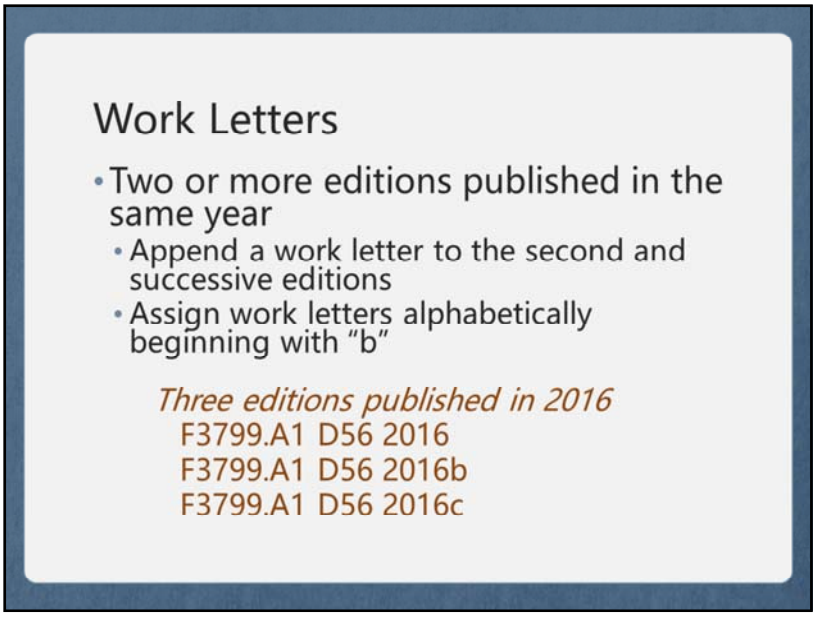
For monographs, they are appended to the date of publication. For serials, a work letter is appended to the final cutter number when necessary, since publication dates are not used in call numbers for serials.

We will provide a brief overview of the use of work letters here, and will also cover their use in the modules about editions and resources entered under a corporate body.



Facsimile and photocopy editions present a special challenge. We normally use the date of publication in the call number, but the publication date of the facsimile or photocopy is much less important than the date of the resource that was replicated. Therefore, we use the date of the original resource and append an "a" to the date to indicate that it is a facsimile.

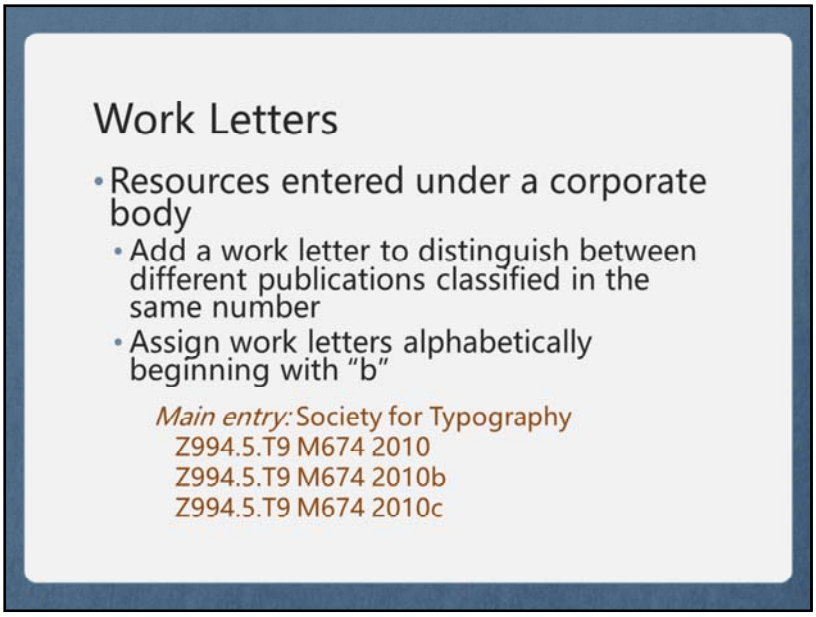
The work letter distinguishes the reproduction from the original work.



Work letters are also used when multiple editions of the same work are published in the same year. We will discuss editions more fully later, but for now just be aware that the call numbers on the three editions would be identical if we did not add a work letter.

The first edition that is received does not have a work letter, as you can see in the first call number on your screen. The second edition received is assigned the work letter "b," the third one is assigned the work letter "c," and so on.

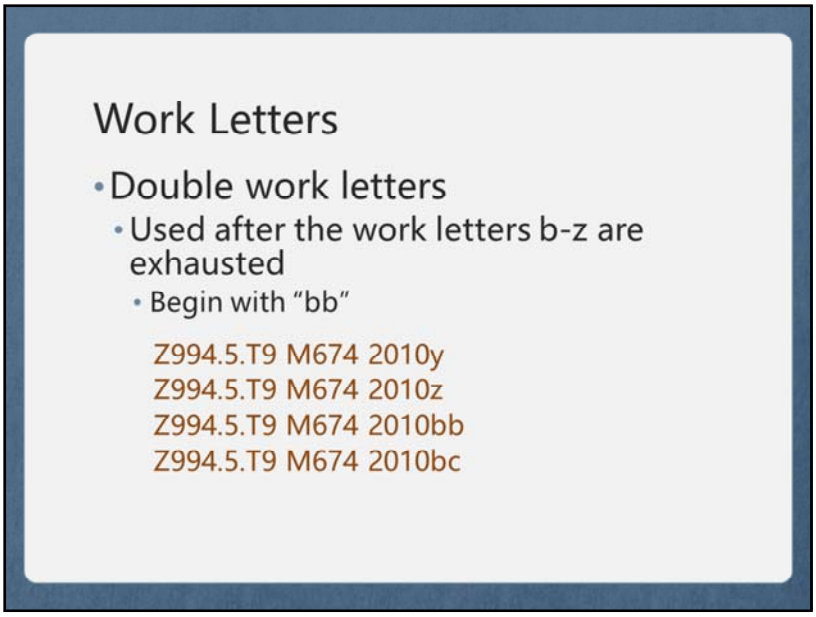
The work letter "a" is not used for this purpose because it indicates that the resource is a reproduction.



Work letters are also commonly used when multiple resources are entered under the same corporate body and classified in the same number.

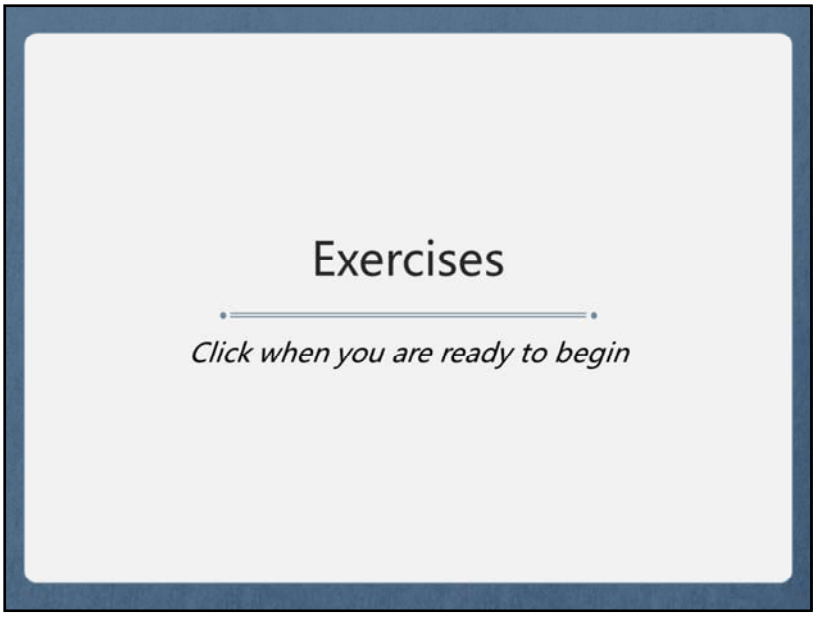
Resources entered under a corporate body are cuttered differently than resources that are entered under title or a personal name. We will explain those rules in detail in the module on corporate entry.

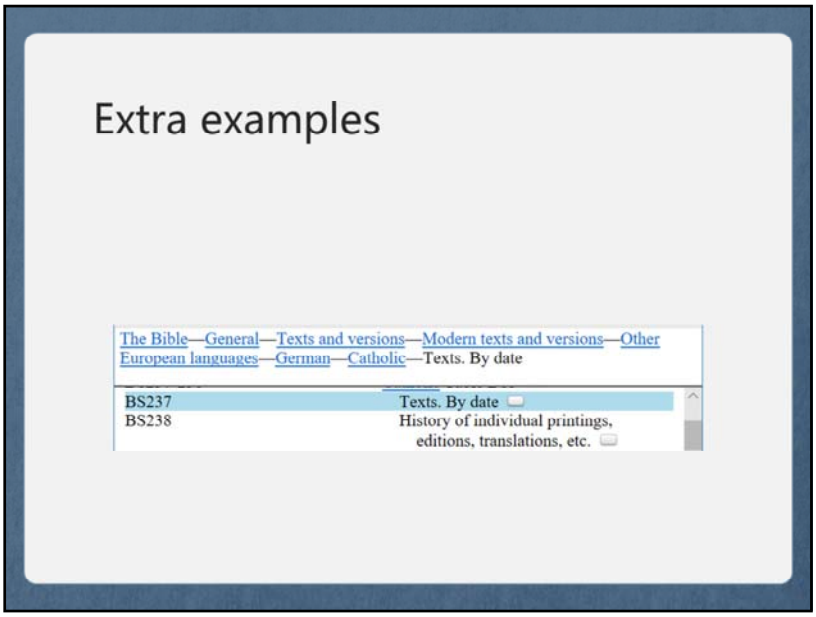
For now, suffice it to say that the rules for cuttering resources entered under corporate bodies cause a lot of conflicting call numbers. Therefore, work letters are appended to the end of the call number to distinguish between different resources.



In very rare circumstances, you may find that you have exhausted all of the work letters from “b” to “z.”

In that case, begin the alphabet over again and use two work letters. Start with “bb” (because “a,” as you remember, is reserved for facsimile and reprint editions) and continue with “bc,” “bd,” and so on.


Exercises
Click when you are ready to begin


Extra examples
The Bible—General—Texts and versions—Modern texts and versions—Other European languages—German—Catholic—Texts. By date
BS237 Texts. By date
BS238 History of individual printings, editions, translations, etc.