The Home Library Journal

Catalog, Loans & the Shelf Census - a paper catalog for the books you own: an eleven-field catalogue entry for every copy, a shelf code for every shelf, drawn shelf maps, a loans ledger with due-back dates, a ranked wishlist, a weeding and release record, and an annual shelf census

Free sample - three real pages from the journal: The Home Library Method (p.3 - the whole system on one page), The Shelf Code System (p.5 - the three-part Room-Shelf-Level address, LIV-02-B) and Catalogue Page 1: The Starting Shelf (p.11 - four complete eleven-field records, R001-R004). Method + codes + first records: a usable starter - catalogue four real books tonight in the sample itself. The full journal holds 44 pages and 64 catalogue records, and its catalogue pages reprint freely as the collection grows. Print at 100% on US Letter or A4.

The Home Library Method (How This Journal Works)

1. Code every shelf before you catalogue a single book. Page 5 gives every shelf in the house a short address - room, shelf, level: LIV-02-B. A catalogue entry without a location is a rumour; the code is what makes a record findable in a house, not just in this book.

2. Catalogue every copy once, completely. The eleven fields on page 6 - title, author, edition, format, condition, provenance, shelf code, category, read status, lending flag, and one line of your own - are filled in once per physical copy, on pages 11-26. Two copies of the same book are two entries. The catalogue records copies, not titles, because it is copies that get lost, lent and damaged.

3. Map the shelves you actually have. Pages 27-30 are drawn maps, shelf by shelf and box by box, matching the codes from page 5 - so a book stored in Box 4 in the attic is as findable as a book on the living-room shelves.

4. Write every loan down the day it leaves, and every borrowed book down the day it arrives. Loans out go on pages 31-32 with a due-back date agreed out loud. Books borrowed from other people go on page 33 - they are guests in the house, and the census (p.41) must never count them as yours.

5. Wish, weed and release on paper too. New wants are checked against the catalogue and ranked on page 35 before they are bought; books leaving the collection pass the Weeding Pass (p.38) and are recorded on pages 39-40 with their destination - so a released book is a decision, not a disappearance.

6. Count the whole collection once a year. The Annual Shelf Census (p.41) counts every shelf, compares the count with the catalogue, and produces the year's movement: acquired, released, lost, still out on loan. A library that is counted is a library that is known.

My cataloguing rule, in my own words (one line - e.g. "no book enters a shelf until it has an entry, and no book leaves my hands without a line in the ledger"): _____

The day of the year I will hold my census (write it here and on p.41 - a date near this volume's birthday serves well): _____

The Shelf Code System

A shelf code has three parts, separated by dashes: **ROOM - SHELF - LEVEL.** The room is three letters you choose once and never change: LIV (living room), BED (main bedroom), STU (study), KID (children's room), HAL (hallway), KIT (kitchen), ATT (attic/storage). The shelf is a two-digit number, counting bookcases and shelf units in that room from the door, clockwise: 01, 02, 03. The level is a letter, counting shelves from the top of that unit: A is the top shelf, B the next down. So **LIV-02-B** is one exact place in the world: living room, second bookcase from the door, second shelf down. Boxes take the same system with an X: **ATT-X04** is attic box 4, and page 30 maps what is in it. Write the code on a small label or bookmark at the end of each shelf if you wish - the code on the shelf and the code in the catalogue must always agree. When you rearrange a room, the books keep their titles but change their addresses: re-code the moved shelves on pages 27-30, update the affected catalogue entries' shelf-code field in pencil, and note the rearrangement date below. A code is never reused for a different place in the same volume; a dismantled shelf's code is retired, and its line in the table below is marked retired, so an old entry can still be traced.

Shelf code	Where it is (room + which unit, in plain words)	What mainly lives there	Status: [ ] In use [ ] Retired (date: _____)

My counting convention, fixed now: shelves counted from the door, [ ] clockwise [ ] anticlockwise - Levels counted from the [ ] top [ ] bottom (top is this journal's convention - if you choose bottom, choose it forever)

The room I am most likely to forget to code, written down so I do not: _____

Catalogue Page 1 - Focus: The Starting Shelf ((reprint))

Catalogue the shelf from your First-Shelf Sprint (p.10) here, in standing order. These are records R001-R004, and they set the standard every later page is kept to: full edition details, honest condition, real provenance. If a field is genuinely unknown, write "unknown" - an admitted unknown is a record; a skipped field is a hole.

Record R001 - Record no. _____ - Title & author: _____ - Edition (publisher / year / ISBN): _____ - Format & size: _____ - Condition (grade + faults): _____ - Provenance (from whom / how): _____ - Acquired (date) & price: _____ - Shelf code: _____ - Category: _____ - Read status: _____ - Lending flag: [ ] Lend freely [ ] Ask first [ ] Never lends - One line of my own: _____

Record R002 - Record no. _____ - Title & author: _____ - Edition: _____ - Format & size: _____ - Condition: _____ - Provenance: _____ - Acquired & price: _____ - Shelf code: _____ - Category: _____ - Read status: _____ - Lending flag: [ ] Freely [ ] Ask first [ ] Never - One line: _____

Record R003 - Record no. _____ - Title & author: _____ - Edition: _____ - Format & size: _____ - Condition: _____ - Provenance: _____ - Acquired & price: _____ - Shelf code: _____ - Category: _____ - Read status: _____ - Lending flag: [ ] Freely [ ] Ask first [ ] Never - One line: _____

Record R004 - Record no. _____ - Title & author: _____ - Edition: _____ - Format & size: _____ - Condition: _____ - Provenance: _____ - Acquired & price: _____ - Shelf code: _____ - Category: _____ - Read status: _____ - Lending flag: [ ] Freely [ ] Ask first [ ] Never - One line: _____

Page totals: records on this page _____ - Shelf codes covered: _____ - Any record left with an admitted "unknown" (and the plan to resolve it, or the decision to let it stand): _____