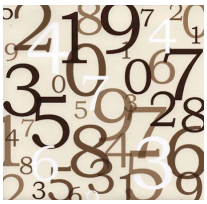
4 comes before 2 but after 8



Libraries can be an interesting place to find things. It's sometimes said that librarians think differently than other people. That of course isn't really true; our goal is to make things as easy to find as possible for as many people as possible. The end result however can be confusing. Why? Because librarians think differently than other people. The use of numbers in movie titles is a good example. Let's look at the movie "2012," (Two Thousand Twelve)

You might have noticed that in the above example I spelled out the title in parentheses. There is a reason for this. Libraries, unlike your home computer, place titles with numbers on the shelf as if they were spelled out. Why do we do this? We do it so that you only have to look one place for a title instead of two. Let's think it through for a moment. Let's say you or I had never heard of the film 2012 and your best friend tells you about this great movie he saw called "2012". Now you come to the library to see if we have it on shelf. Where do you look? If you were alphabetizing like your computer does, 2012 would be found before the letter "A", but "Two Thousand and Twelve" would be found in the T section. What the library has done is taken the guess work out of the equation. We shelve all numbers as if they were spelled out. This means that you know exactly where to look for the title with numbers because we spell out all numbers when we shelve them.

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Posted by Keith C. on Jul 3, 2012

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