Locating books with a Library of Congress Call Number

Call numbers are the addresses given to each book in the library. Each call number is unique and call numbers group books together by book subject or topic. Every call number has several parts, and finding a book on the shelf is just a matter of reading each part in the right order.

Call numbers are found in
the library catalog

&
on the spines of books

Read Call Numbers line by line
Read the first line in alphabetical order:
A single letter (B) comes before two letters (BX)

Read the second line as a whole number:
1, 2, 13, 76, 76.76, 76.8, 137, 202, 1999, 2000, etc.

The third line is a combination of a letter and numbers:
First look at the letter; they are in alphabetical order.
Then read the number as a decimal, looking at each digit in turn from left to right. .01, .1, .19, .25, .255, .26 (Note: this line may carry over to the next line, or there may be more than one letter-number combination line)

Finally, some books have the publication year as the very last line:
1971, 1986, 1997, 2011...

If you cannot find a book on the shelf...

1. Check and make sure you are looking in the correct location. There are several different collections (locations) in the library (circulating, reference, rare book, etc.). In the catalog, look by the call number to identify the collection.
2. Check at the front desk to see if the book is waiting to be reshelved.
3. Ask for assistance from a Reference Librarian or Library staff member. We would be more than happy to help you find your book.