

[Taken from e-mail correspondence]

Subject: Item number history, etc.

Depositories became "selective" as a result of language first put in the Legislative Branch Appropriations for 1923 (July 22, 1922). At that time, libraries began receiving the Classified List of United States Government Publications Available for selection by Depository Libraries, from which their selections were to be made. The first list was simply alphabetical "by Executive departments (or independent establishments), and by bureaus and series thereunder..." Sometime later, entries in the Classified List were numbered sequentially and this "item number" began to be used to identify classes of documents. In 1947 there were 1129 items, and most items corresponded to a single class with a single SuDocs stem (exceptions occurred in Congress, where items were numbered but lacked SuDocs stems). Following the 1950 revision of the Classified List, in 1951, the depository shipping list was introduced, and (we are assuming) with it a new, expanded item number scheme, which (eventually if not immediately) allowed multiple classes and SuDocs stems to be assigned to a single item number.

As a side issue, SuDocs classification began appearing as a part of the Monthly Catalog entry in July, 1924, and item numbers in November, 1942 (as a substitute for the discontinued Depository Invoice).

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We don't recommend that you try to assign modern-day item numbers to any of the documents in the retrospective cataloging project. As I mentioned to you on the phone, item numbers in cataloging are intended to represent what actually happened, the reality of distribution.

We also thought that you should be careful with assigning SuDocs classification numbers to these older works. The only official classification number source for these is the 1909 Checklist, as the MoCat did not carry SuDocs class numbers until 1924. If you assign

SuDocs numbers yourselves, please make sure that you use the MARC tagging for locally assigned class numbers.

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