

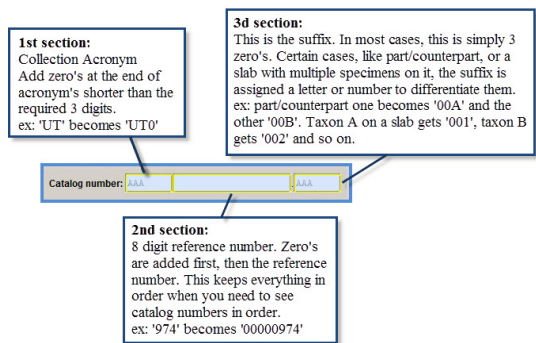
Catalog Numbers at NPL

Basic Format

Catalog numbers at NPL are unique. Specify will not let you save 2 Collection Object records with the same catalog number. The format is pretty simple, and the catalog number field on the data entry form won't let you save an incorrectly formatted number.

[NPL Home](#)
[Collection Object Form](#)
[Specify Database Home](#)

Simply put, the catalog format is 3 alphanumeric digits, 8 numeric digits, then 3 alphanumeric digits again.



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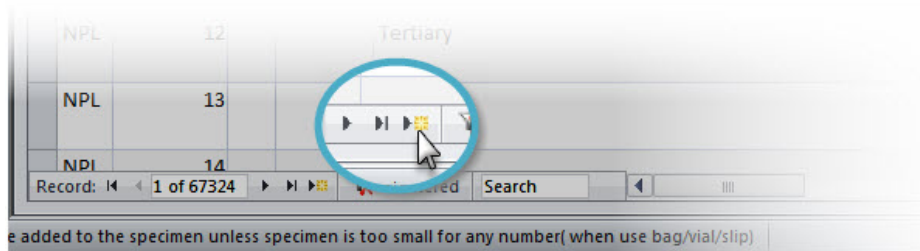
Assigning New Numbers

In the main room of PRC 122, you'll find a list of printed NPL numbers. Most of the time, all you'll need to do is cut off a number from that list and put it in the tray with the specimen.

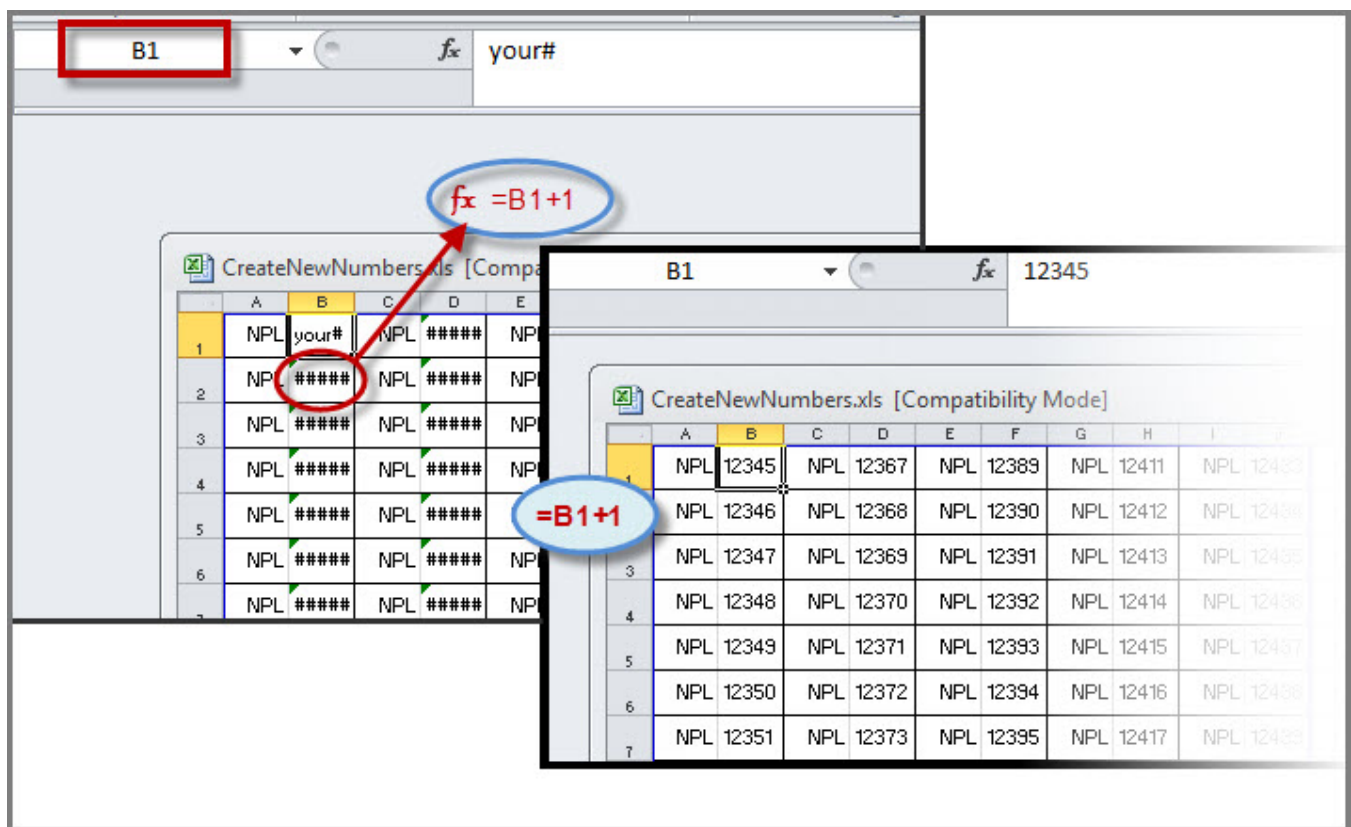
If you are working with an incoming collection, it is best to head to the Number Allocation Database and update the information there. In this access database, all fields must be filled out. Putting a question mark, or a zero, is common for indicating such info was unknown at the time of the number entry.

The number allocation database is found here:
Z:\Databases\Number allocation.mdb

- If you just need to block out a series of numbers, follow these instructions:
- In the DocLib directory, navigate to the folder named "Protocols and procedures".
- Open the Excel spreadsheet titled 'CreateNewNumbers.xls'. This spreadsheet is set up to auto populate 6 pages worth of NPL numbers.
- Move to the Databases directory, and open the Access database called Number Allocation. Open the table 'New NPL numbers'.
- Move to the end of the table by selecting the starred arrow in the navigation pane at the bottom of the database window.



- Looking at the last number, add 1. This will be the catalog number you put into the B1 cell of the Create New Numbers spreadsheet.
- When you tab out of that cell, the numbers will trigger the formula that adds 1 to the previous cell. This fills 5 pages with incremental NPL numbers.



Print numbers on heavy card-stock using the ink jet printer, set to 'photograph'. This setting lets the ink dry a bit before running another sheet through the printer.

Go back to the Number Allocation database. Fill out all fields in the new row. Under 'Other Information' enter the number range shown in the New Numbers spreadsheet.

Highlight that row, and copy it into a new line. You can copy as many rows as needed, but be aware that you can't delete records from this database, so don't create more records than numbers!

Exit both programs. Don't save the spreadsheet.

If you are working with an incoming collection, it is best to head to the Number Allocation Database and update the information there.

When adding info in this database, the Other Information column, as well as Taxon (Class, Order, Family levels if all are the same), Common Name (Oysters, insects) and Object (fossil, mineral, bulk samples) are good candidates for updating. Keep in general- this database is mostly for ensuring numbers are not duplicated, not to be a mini-Specify database. Other columns, such as number of specimens, and storage location are not always filled out. Most of the time, the person creating the numbers may not know this information.

Ac	Specime	Suffix	Other	Other information	Numberer	Date new	Collection	Taxon	Common na	Object	Number	Building
NPL	74010	.		72927-73730 general numbers	C. Geigerman	10/23/2015	NPL	various	various	fossil	0	
NPL	74011	.		72927-73730 general numbers	C. Geigerman	10/23/2015	NPL	various	various	fossil	0	
NPL	74012	.		72927-73730 general numbers	C. Geigerman	10/23/2015	NPL	various	various	fossil	0	
NPL	74013	.		72927-73730 general numbers	C. Geigerman	10/23/2015	NPL	various	various	fossil	0	
NPL	74014	.	NPL	78442 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	
NPL	74015	.	NPL	78443 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	
			NPL	78444 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	
			NPL	78445 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	
				78446 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	
				78447 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	
			NPL	78448 . 78167-79344 Buried Basement Rock vials Case D	C. Geigerman	2/22/2016	NPL	various	various	Mineral	0	

General-use
number entry

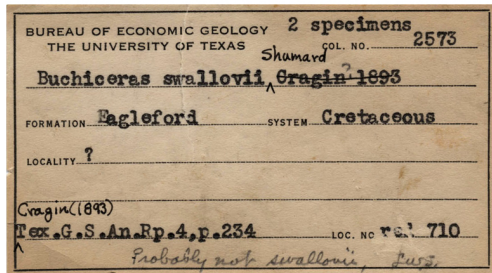
Specific use
number entry

Historic Catalog Numbers

Over the decades, NPL has acquired a variety of collections. Many of these have their own catalogs, and for the most part, we have been able to keep those original numbers. This is why you see so many collection acronyms. WSA, P, UT, TX, BEG, OMB are just a few examples.

Rarely, historic numbers must be reassigned to make them work with the Specify number format. This seems to happen mostly with TX numbers, which used a format of 4 numbers, TX, then a suffix. Sometimes the suffix would exceed 3 digits, especially in cases where a letter was added to show different specimens on the same slab. Cases like this are the ONLY example where we are reassigning catalog numbers. In the past, many Plummer type specimens were reassigned BEG numbers and this is still causing issues 60 years later.

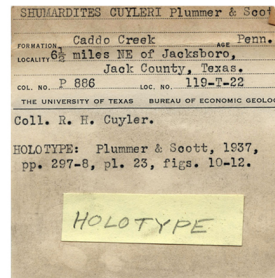
Historic labels commonly found in the collections



BEG, or Bureau of Economic Geology.

Number range 1-36500

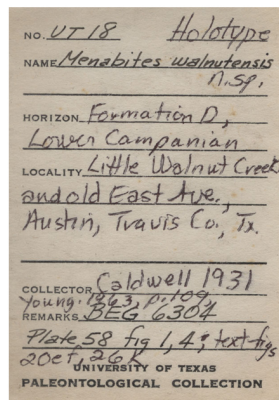
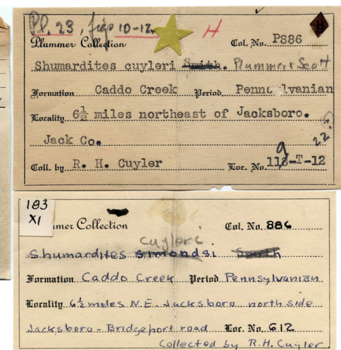
Normally with this label, the collection abbreviation is BEG. Look at other labels, and on the specimen, because they can have other collection abbreviations!



P, or Plummer Collection

Number range: 1-14165

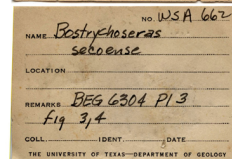
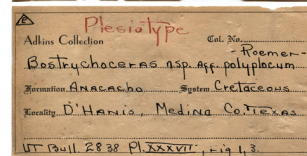
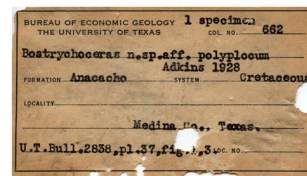
Also a good example of many labels with a single specimen! Notice the label on the left—it's a BEG label, but the collection abbreviation is 'P', and all of the other labels say Plummer collection. Also note the stars, diamonds and other notations.



UT Collection, for the University of Texas Pale Collections

Number range: 1 -52960

There will be some additions to this, as collectors in Big Bend Nat'l Park are still adding this collection.



WSA Collection, or the Adkins Collection

Number range: 1-19834

This one is full of cataloging nightmares! The top label has been snacked on by silverfish, and the typed information has bled and is difficult to read. The second label has slightly different information (Roemer instead of Adkins, locality). The last label redetermines the species and cites where this redetermination has been published, but formats the publication title and volume like a catalog number!

(This is one of those cases where the best thing you can do is go

find the collection manager!)

...we also have a good collection of other catalogs and collections, each with their own label style. You may run across collection abbreviations such as IBR, JA, K, OMB, RMC and a few others. Ask the collection manager or project lead how to handle unfamiliar specimen labels. This photo is just a small selection of labels, but you can see how much variation there is!



Problem Solving Number Conflicts

Always check with the curator before changing any number! It's fine to present the boss with a solution instead of a problem, but don't implement the solution without approval!

I'm adding a specimen to the database and I get an error message saying Specify can't save the record due to a duplicate record. What do I do?

It depends on a variety of factors.

- First, verify that you typed the number correctly. If that checks out, search the database for the catalog number, and make a note of its storage location. You'll have to physically verify the number of that specimen.
 - Have the numbers been switched, or read incorrectly? NPL 88866 can easily be typed as NPL 88886. Show the curator what happened, and ask to change the database record to correct the number.
- Has someone given a P specimen a BEG collection acronym? It's really easy to do. Show the curator the specimens and ask for clarification, then ask to change the database record.
- If you've checked and both specimens are truly the same number, just in different trays in different locations, you've run across a catalog number that is also a bulk lot number. If there is no taxa determination associated with either tray, go ahead and make your entry an additional preparation of the existing record. Remember to set the status to 'Verified!' This way, we know it's a real preparation and just a mistake in the procedure of moving a specimen.
 - If one lot has a taxon determination that does not apply to the other tray, assign a suffix to the tray you are adding to the database. In inventory remarks, state what you did and why, and change the status to Verified.
- It's a genuine duplication of numbers. This does happen- in the past the spreadsheet that generates NPL numbers glitched and repeated rows of numbers. It's been fixed, but we have no way of knowing how long the bug was present. Normally giving one specimen a new NPL number is fine, but check with the curator.

I have a tray of 52 specimens, all different fossils, and all assigned the name NPL number. A researcher wants to borrow a single specimen.

Be sure to record that only 1 specimen is borrowed in the loan form. But this is not a number conflict. Yet. See the next question

Now, the specimen from the above is going to be the subject of a publication. How do we designate the published specimen from its 51 others?

Things to know:

[Editing a record in Specify](#)

[Printed 'Specimen Moved' labels](#)

[hand written labels](#)

The published specimen retains the main number, and the remaining 51 are assigned a suffix. Make a note of this in the specimen remarks field on both entries in the database. Make a note, also, on any labels in the tray. If this is a specimen that has a paper catalog associated with it, make a note in the catalog, also.

I have found a published holotype that has a duplicate number somewhere in another part of the collection. What do I do?

First, **never** change the catalog number of a published specimen. That is solely for the curator to decide on, and only regular staff members should follow through with it.

This is another case where looking at the other specimen will usually provide the answer.

- If the other specimen is a **cast** of the holotype, follow the specimen moved protocol and bring the cast to the type room and add the cast preparation to the holotype record.
- If the other specimen is a tray of unsorted material, assign a suffix to the tray you are adding to the database. In inventory remarks, state what you did and why, and change the status to Verified. Make a note on the label, as well as in the physical catalog if one exists for the collection you are working with.

I was looking at some records in Specify and noticed NPL00012345.00A, and NPL00012345.A00 are in the storage location. I checked, and there is only 'NPL 12345 A' in the drawer. What do I do?

Check with the curator and ask to delete the less complete record. We have a good number of these conflicts in the database, and by dealing with them when we come across them, we'll be able to whittle them all out eventually! **But again, DO NOT delete a record if you have not been given the green light, or if you are uncomfortable doing so! You can always ask a staff member to delete it for you.**