Fiction in the Non-Fiction Section of Your Library?!?!

Why is there FICTION in the NONFICTION section of your library?

The simple answer is because we consider it IMPORTANT fiction – we call it "*literature*".

As you can see from the chart on the right, the *Dewey Decimal System* classifies works about literature, humor, plays, poems, short stories, and other notable works in the 800s.

Librarians group books by what they are about – the subject matter. This is how they are placed on shelves. This is called "*classification*."

Melvil Dewey, who lived from 1851 to 1931, invented a way to do this. His *Dewey Decimal System* is still used today. Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey, the youngest of five children, was born on December 10, 1851, in a small town in northern New York.

Later he shortened his first name to Melvil, dropped his middle names and, for a short time, even spelled his last name as "*Dui*". As a child, Dewey loved to organize and sort things and also had a talent for mathematics.

Melvil Dewey's classification system looks at what each book is about. He knew that when we look for information in a library, we are interested in topics or subjects. Dewey made it possible to "browse" for books.

Dewey intended for ALL fiction books to be in the 800s. Melvil did not see a need for separate *fiction* and *nonfiction* sections. In his day, books were much more expensive. Libraries never had the large collection of books that we expect to see today.

Your RMS library has over 14,000 titles – both fiction and nonfiction. We try to maintain a balance of books – approximately half fiction and half nonfiction.

It doesn't make sense to have the 800 section be as big as all other book classifications combined, so librarians have pulled the nonfiction books OUT of the Dewey Decimal collection and

Nonfiction Books: Dewey Decimal System

Information books are organized by ideas – Dewey Numbers. Here are the ten general classifications for nonfiction books:

100-199 – Who Am I? Books about how we think and act. These are the things that make us human.

200-299 – Who Made Me? Book about God, religion and myths.

300-399 – Who Is My Neighbor? Folktales, fairytales, how people live.

400-499 How Do I Communicate With My Neighbors? Books about languages, writing, and grammar.

500-599 – What Will I Talk About? Natural sciences.

600-699 – What Will I Do With Science? Applied sciences.

700-799 – Time For a Break! Books about what we do for fun.

800-899 – Back to Work: Literature. Humor, plays, poems, short stories.

900-999 – Who, What, Where, When, Why? How did everything happen? History, geography, biographies.

000-099 – Everything Else - Room to Grow! Computer software, general works, almanacs, and uncertain knowledge like aliens and monsters.

do not classify most fiction books with *Dewey Decimal Numbers*.

Instead, we identify fiction books with the letter F and then the first-three letters of the author's last name. Fiction books in most libraries are shelved in alphabetical order by the first three letters of the author's last name. (**Note:** *RMS does not use any additional letters to organize books and does not look at the author's first name or the title of books*).

Some fiction books, however, are shelved in the 800s. Librarians call these books "*literature*."

It makes sense that books about fiction are in the 800s. It makes sense that collections of short stories and poems are there, because there probably isn't one main author (though there is always a main editor that puts these collections together).

It also makes sense that plays or other types of scripts are in the 800s. This is because these works are actually more widely known by how they are performed. While an author/authors write a script, a performance is a collaborative process among directors, actors, producers, and others.

Some Fiction in the Dewey Section of Your Library (800s)

African literature	896
Chinese literature	895
Drama collections	808.82
Drama, American	812
Drama, British	822
Essays, American	814
Essays, British	824
Fiction collections	808.83
French literature	840
Japanese literature	895.6
Jokes	808.882
Literary criticism	809
Literature, English	820
Literature, French	840.9
Native American literature	897
Poetry	808.1
Poetry collections	808.81
Poetry, American	811
Poetry, English	821
Quotations	808.88
Russian literature	891.7
Satire	817
Toasts	808.5