

AUTHOR RESOURCE GUIDE | FOUNDATIONS

What Is an LCCN?

A guide to the Library of Congress Control Number: eligibility, the PrePub Book Link application and timing.

What Is an LCCN?

A Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN) is a unique identification number that the Library of Congress assigns to the catalog record for a book. Librarians use it to locate the Library of Congress record for that book in national cataloging databases, which makes it easier for libraries to catalog and process your title.

For self-published authors in the United States, an LCCN is obtained before publication through the Library's free **Preassigned Control Number (PCN) Program**. You print the number on your copyright page, and after publication you send the Library a copy of the finished book.

What an LCCN Looks Like

An LCCN normally consists of a four-digit year followed by a serial number, for example 2026912345. On the copyright page it is typically printed as:

Example copyright page line

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026912345

Why Authors Get an LCCN

- **Library-friendliness.** Librarians look for an LCCN on the copyright page, and it simplifies cataloging for libraries that acquire your book.
- **Professional presentation.** An LCCN on the copyright page helps your book look like a traditionally published title.
- **It is free.** There is no charge to request an LCCN through the PCN Program.
- **Library marketing.** If you plan to pitch your book to public, school or academic libraries, an LCCN removes a small barrier to acquisition.

Set realistic expectations

An LCCN does not guarantee that your book will be added to the Library of Congress collection. Selection librarians decide which books to keep. A brief record is created for every PCN title, but the Library notes that records for books published by their authors are usually suppressed from its online catalog unless the book is selected for the collection.

LCCN, ISBN, CIP and Copyright: What's the Difference?

Item	What it does	Who issues it	Cost
ISBN	Identifies a specific edition and format for the book trade	National ISBN agency (Bowker in the U.S.)	Paid in the U.S.; free in some countries
LCCN (via PCN)	Links your book to a Library of Congress catalog record	Library of Congress	Free
CIP data	A full prepublication catalog record printed on the copyright page	Library of Congress; self-publishers are not eligible	Free, for eligible publishers only
P-CIP	A publisher-supplied catalog data block prepared by an independent cataloger	Private cataloging services	Paid
Copyright registration	Creates a public record of your copyright claim	U.S. Copyright Office	Paid

The PCN and CIP programs are mutually exclusive: a book receives one or the other. Authors who pay for or subsidize publication of their own works are not eligible for CIP, which is why self-publishers use the PCN Program.

Eligibility

To qualify for an LCCN through the PCN Program as an author or self-publisher:

- Your book must list a **U.S. place of publication** (a U.S. city) on the title page or copyright page.
- You must have a U.S. address and be reachable to answer bibliographic questions about the book.
- Your book must **not yet be published**. The number is assigned before publication.
- The book must be a print edition. **eBook-only titles are not eligible**; print books also released as eBooks are.

Commonly ineligible

- Books that are already published.

- Books that do not list a U.S. place of publication.
- Books published only in electronic formats.
- Books for which Cataloging in Publication (CIP) data has been, or will be, requested.

See the Library of Congress PCN Program scope and eligibility pages for the complete, current list of ineligible categories.

How to Apply: Step by Step

The Library of Congress manages LCCN requests through an online system called **PrePub Book Link (PPBL)**, which replaced the older PCN application system. Authors and self-publishers use the PPBL **Author Portal**.

- 1 **Gather your book details.** Final title and subtitle, author and contributor names, ISBN(s), format, estimated page count, projected publication month and year, and the U.S. city of publication.
- 2 **Create a PrePub Book Link account** using the Author Portal. Self-publishers can create an account immediately, without waiting for staff approval. Be prepared for a long password; the minimum is 16 characters. Old PCN accounts were not migrated, so returning users need a new account.
- 3 **Complete your profile** with your full contact information.
- 4 **Submit an LCCN request** for your title, entering the book information carefully. Page count and publication date may be estimates, but make them as accurate as possible.
- 5 **Watch for the Library's response** by email and in your PPBL account. Turnaround is often around a week or two, but allow extra time.
- 6 **Print the LCCN on your copyright page** exactly as assigned.
- 7 **Send a copy of the published book** to the Library of Congress promptly after publication, using the mailing address and instructions provided with your assignment. This is a condition of the program, and copies are not returned.

Timing: Apply Before You Publish

Because the program is only for unpublished books, build the LCCN request into your production schedule well before release, ideally once your title, ISBN and approximate page count are settled and while the interior is still being finalized. Requesting a number in the same month as your planned publication date may cause the system to treat the book as ineligible, so apply at least a month or two ahead.

Production stage	LCCN action
Manuscript final, ISBNs assigned	Create your PPBL account and submit your LCCN request

Production stage	LCCN action
Interior design and typesetting	Add the LCCN to the copyright page once assigned
Proof review	Confirm the LCCN is printed correctly
Publication	Mail a copy of the finished book to the Library of Congress

Sample Copyright Page Block

Example (adapt to your book)

Copyright © 2026 Jane Author. All rights reserved.

Published by Example Imprint, Austin, Texas

ISBN 978-1-234567-89-7 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-234567-90-3 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-234567-91-0 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026912345

Printed in the United States of America

Names, city and numbers are placeholders for illustration only.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Waiting until after publication to apply. Published books are ineligible.
- Omitting a U.S. city as the place of publication on the title or copyright page.
- Applying for an eBook-only title.
- Paying a third party for something you can request yourself for free. (Some author services bundle LCCN requests; that is fine if you value the convenience, but the Library does not charge.)
- Forgetting to mail the required copy of the published book.
- Printing an incorrect number, or copying another book's LCCN from a template.

LCCN Checklist

☐ My book lists a U.S. city as the place of publication.

-
- ☐ My book is a print edition and has not yet been published.
-
- ☐ My ISBN(s) are assigned and my title is final.
-
- ☐ I have created a PrePub Book Link account through the Author Portal.
-
- ☐ I have submitted my LCCN request at least a month or two before publication.
-
- ☐ The assigned LCCN is printed correctly on my copyright page.
-
- ☐ I have mailed a copy of the published book to the Library of Congress.
-

Frequently Asked Questions

Is an LCCN required to publish a book?

No. It is optional. It is most useful if you plan to market your book to libraries or want a traditionally published presentation.

Does an LCCN mean my book is in the Library of Congress?

Not necessarily. The Library assigns numbers to books it may add to its collections, but selection librarians decide what is kept after they receive the printed book.

Can I get an LCCN if I live outside the United States?

The PCN Program is for books with a U.S. place of publication and a U.S. contact. Authors publishing elsewhere should check their own national library's cataloging and legal deposit programs.

Do I need a separate LCCN for the paperback and the hardcover?

An LCCN is tied to the catalog record for the work. Include every print format's ISBN in your request if you know them, and follow the Library's guidance if it asks you to submit formats separately.

Is an LCCN the same as copyright registration?

No. Copyright registration is handled by the U.S. Copyright Office and is a separate process.

This guide is general educational information prepared in September 2026. Platform specifications, fees and program rules change periodically; always confirm current requirements directly with your printer, distributor, ISBN agency or the Library of Congress before finalizing files. This guide is not legal advice.