Barcode Your Collection

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General Information

ⓘ this page has been moved to https://support.goalexandria.com/getting-started/barcode-your-collection/

Each copy and patron in your library is assigned a unique barcode that Alexandria uses for identification. A barcode can be scanned or typed into the **Circulation** command line.

A typical barcode label consists of three pieces of information:

- The name of the library, school, company, or institution
- The scannable barcode image
- The barcode number/sequence

You will need to put barcode labels on all of the items in your library. You may also want to barcode objects such as audio-visual equipment, computers, desks, and tables, so you can use Alexandria to inventory these items.

You can also keep temporary records of items such as magazines and newspapers. Temporary items (i.e. periodicals) can be assigned a barcode and then circulated like permanent items. A barcode is assigned to a temporary item only while it's checked out.

ⓘ **Symbology**

COMPanion uses the barcode symbology Code 39, also known as Code 3 of 9, which is the industry standard for industrial and commercial applications, including libraries. It provides a high level of data security with error rates between 1 in 3 million and 1 in 70 million characters scanned. Code 39 does not require a check character in normal commercial and industrial applications. It is also bi-directional, which means it can be scanned from left to right or from right to left.

Barcode Guidelines

Last Updated: $action.dateFormatter.formatDateTime($content.getLastModificationDate())

Each copy is assigned a unique barcode up to 15 characters long, based on the value set in **Preferences > Items**. The copy barcode is stored in field 852_p of the MARC record and can be changed in the copy record. Patron barcodes can be changed in each patron record.

We recommend using the simplest numbering scheme that still meets your needs. For patron barcodes, you may want to consider using an employee ID or student number, as long as they don't coincide with item barcodes. If you have more than one library in your system, use a unique barcode numbering scheme for each library's collection. Then if items are moved between collections, the barcodes will still be unique and won't interfere with existing item barcodes.

Here are some specific things to remember while barcoding your collection with Alexandria:

1. Alexandria reserves barcodes 1-50 for System Patrons.

2. Numeric characters (0-9) are recommended, but uppercase alphabetic characters (A-Z) are also allowed.

3. Barcode lengths should be consistent throughout your collection.

Barcodes can be 3-15 characters in length, but we recommend using 8-14 characters to allow for growth. Also, because item and patron barcodes cannot overlap, we recommend using a different but consistent length for each, like 8 characters for patrons and 10 for items.

4. Sequential barcodes must end in a digit.

These are set in the following places:

- Items Management > Copies > Actions > Duplicate Title > Beginning barcode
- Preferences > Patrons > Patron Defaults > Next Barcode
- Preferences > Textbooks > Item Defaults > Next Textbook Barcode
- Preferences > Items > Item Defaults > Next Barcode
- Preferences > Items > Item Defaults > Beginning Temporary Barcode Number
- Preferences > Items > Item Defaults > Ending Temporary Barcode Numbers
- Imports > Patrons > Starting Patron Barcode
- Imports > Items > Starting Item Barcode
- Imports > Textbooks > Starting Textbook Barcode

5. You can end barcodes with alphas.

While it is possible to do this, keep these things in mind:

- Imports allow barcodes ending with alphas.
- You can manually add a barcode that ends in an alpha.
- Ending alphas will not be stripped when searching for barcodes, but leading alphas will.
- Preferences and Import fields relating to starting barcodes never allow barcodes with ending alphas.
- Existing barcodes will not be changed by Alexandria.

6. Barcodes are sorted alphabetically, not numerically.

Like call numbers, barcodes are treated as words, which means they are sorted alphabetically, not numerically.

✅ Alphabetical	❌ Numerical
123456	200
1377	1377
200	45658
45658	62930
62930	89702
89702	123456

7. Preference settings matter.

We support leading alpha characters. However, if **Preferences > Barcode > Ignore Patron/Item Barcode Leader of** is filled in, leading alpha characters will be stripped upon scanning. Learn more in **Barcode Preferences**.

Also know that if you have old Follett Barcodes that start with P or T, you *should not* set any new barcodes to start with, say, TSD, because the T will be stripped off.

8. Alexandria and duplicate barcodes

The best library management standards highly recommend **not** having duplicate barcodes in a centralized management setup. Sometimes, however, sites can merge, or become a central union, or otherwise run into a situation where copies across sites share barcodes.

The best thing you can do for the integrity of your catalog is to re-barcode these duplicates as soon as possible.

If you are coming from a different system and want to start using Alexandria before you have a chance to re-barcode, we can help you out. Talk to our Sales representatives at 1.800.347.6439 to discuss your duplicate barcode situation.

You will be able to convert to Alexandria and import all of your items. To help assist in helping you standardize your barcodes, Alexandria then has a handy **Duplicate Copy Barcodes** report that you can run to identify all duplicates, and create a plan to weed or re-barcode these items over time.

Alexandria is designed to help you achieve your goals of Barcode Standardization and won't allow you to add duplicates manually, and never allows duplicate copies within the same site.

In cases where duplicate barcodes exist, there are certain things that you won't be able to do in Alexandria. Please review the following restrictions with your Sales representative before agreeing to move forward.

Imports

Duplicate barcodes can be **added** using only the following combinations of import settings + barcode handling:

- Add or Update Titles & Copies + Never Reassign Barcodes
- Add Titles & Copies + Never Reassign Barcodes
- Add or Update Titles + Always add at least one Copy (import file contains copy barcode) + Never Reassign Barcodes
- Add or Update Copies for Matching Titles + Never Reassign Barcodes

When **updating** existing copies via import using *Title Update Matching: Copy Barcode,* **the site code MUST be included in the import file** (or else records will fail to update even on matching barcode).

Note for the "New Copy Status: In Processing" setting (in both Preferences > Items > Item Defaults and in Imports > Items > Options > Copy): when importing copies specifically, copies imported to other sites will always be Available.

Circulation

You can only circulate copies that belong to the site you are logged in to. Interlibrary loans and the In Transit patron are not supported.

- If you enter a copy barcode that exists at another site AND your site, it will always use the record that belongs to your site.
- Holds and reservations can only be placed on items if there is a copy that belongs to the current site.
- The Item Lookup window will not always work as you'd expect it to when attempting to find titles with copies at other sites.

Items Management

- You can only edit a duplicate barcode copy record while logged in to the site the copy belongs to.

Utilities

For all copy and circulation utilities, you can only manipulate copies that belong to the site you are logged in to. The Site selection dropdown will be set only to the logged-in site and can not be changed for utilities in the Circulation and Copies category.

Textbook Tracker

Textbook Tracker currently does not support duplicate barcodes.

Researcher

Patrons can still search for titles across sites and even place holds and reservations on copies from other sites. However, the hold/reservation cannot be fulfilled at the patron's site, only at the copy's site.

In order to have the best library experience with Alexandria, **we recommend you create a plan to eliminate duplicate barcodes in your collection as soon as possible.**

For questions or assistance, contact Customer Support at 1.800.347.4942.

Example Barcode Scheme

Example Barcode Scheme

This example uses a 9-digit barcode scheme for items and patrons: the first three characters identify the library site, the fourth character identifies the item or patron group, and the last five characters identify the specific item or patron record. Each library in the district will have a unique barcode range so item and patron barcodes will not overlap.

⚠️ Your barcode scheme will vary from this example. Use this example to build your own system.

Identify the library site

For example, 100 is Eastside Library, 200 is Westside Library, and so forth. Use three digits to more narrowly group your libraries:

- *110 — Eastside Elementary School*
- *130 — Eastside Middle School*
- *150 — Eastside High School*
- *210 — Westside Elementary School*
- *230 — Westside Middle School*

Identify the patron or item group

The next digit should identify the patron or item group:

- 0 – 2 for patrons: students, staff, vendors, etc.
- 3 – 9 for items: books, mediums, equipment, supplies, etc.

Identify the specific item or patron

The last five characters identify the specific item or patron record. If you have a smaller number of patrons than items, you can use fewer characters for patrons.

🛇 Avoid starting barcodes with zeros. Barcodes can contain only letters and numbers; spaces and punctuation are *not* allowed.