

Field Formatting and Auto-Numbering

Specify Project Staff, April 10, 2009

Specify 6 offers a highly flexible formatting and auto-numbering capability. Many institutions require a specific format for particular identification fields such as Catalog Number, Loan Number and Accession Number. Users can define these fields using a specific format template, each field has the ability to automatically increment a number segment within the string. During data entry the format is used as a 'template' so all the values for the field are uniform.

For example, a Catalog Number may contain a few static characters representing the discipline, a separator, then the current year followed by an auto-incrementing value.

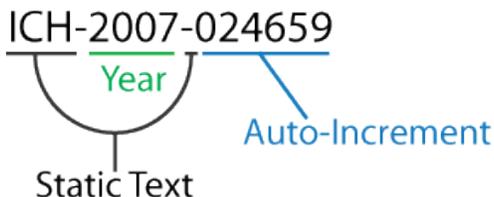


Figure 1 – Catalog Number Example

The example above would not require the user to enter any part of the number during data entry, as each of the segment definitions are automatically added. The year and number can be edited when entering legacy data. Within the definition of the format a segment can also be defined as 'alpha', 'alpha-numeric', or 'numeric', which do require the user to enter the appropriate text or number. These definitions can be combined as required.

How Does It Work?

A format is created by defining each individual segment of one of these special fields. A format can have any length as long as it is less than or equal to the length of the field it must format.

Type	Description	Incrementable?
Numeric	Only "0" through "9" numbers may be entered.	Yes
Alpha	Only alphabetic characters "A" through "Z" or "a" through "z" can be entered. (All use of alphabetic characters in any of these format types is case sensitive.)	No
Alpha-Numeric	"0" through "9" numbers plus alphabetic characters.	No
Any Character	"0" through "9" numbers and/or alphabetic characters and/or special characters	No
Year	A 4 digit numeric year value. Can be set to enter the current year.	No
Separator	One or more characters such as: !@\$%^&.,;:[]{}&*() ^ \ , typically '.' or '/' or '-'. The '#' character cannot be used).	No
Constant	Any unchanging value, alpha, numeric or special characters.	No

When specifying the various different parts of the format a sample is shown so the user has a visual cue as to the type of value that is needed.

Figure #2 below shows an examples of a format that is used within an Accession Number on an Accession form. The Accession Number must have a 4 digit number (that represents the current year) then a two alphabet-only string followed by the number portion that is unique for all Accession Numbers. When entering values into a formatted field the field will automatically enter any static text or separators.

The screenshot shows a form field with a dropdown menu set to 'Accession'. Below it, the text 'Accession Number:' is followed by a text input field containing '2009', a hyphen, a text input field containing 'AA', another hyphen, and three asterisks '###'.

Figure #2 – Form Screen Shot

In the example above the '###' portion of the Accession Number indicates that it is set to automatically increment. If it were not, the field template would appear as: '2009-AA-NNN'.