

A Brief Reminder about Roman Numerals

Earl Morse Wilbur used Roman numerals to enumerate the chapters in his book, "Out Unitarian Heritage."

Just in case you need a refresher, here are the basics:

- One is an uppercase *i*: I
- Two is written with two uppercase *i*'s: II
- Three: III
- Four: IV
- Five: V

Notice that a *I* (one) left of the *V* (five) means a *subtraction* of one. A *I* (one) to the right of the *V* (five) means an *addition* of one— 5 plus 1.

- Six: VI
- Seven: VII
- Eight: VIII
- Nine: IX
- Ten: X

A *I* (one) left of *X* (10) means subtract one from 10.

Also, the maximum number of integers you can put together is three. So:

- 20: XX
- 23: XXIII
- 24: XXIV
- 25: XXV
- 30: XXX
- 38: XXXVIII
- 39: XXXIX
- 40: XL
- 50: L
- 100: C
- 500: D
- 1000: M

An *X* (10) left of *L* (50) means subtract 10 from 50.

But you would never say LLL for 150. 150 is written *CL*, as this means 100 plus 50.

So, MDCCCXXXVIII means 1,000 plus 500, plus 300, plus 30, plus 8; or, 1838. This is perhaps the largest expression for a year you can write in the second millennium that ended in December 2000.

- 1900 is written MCM, or 1,000 plus {1,000 minus 100}.

- 1990 is written MCMXC, or 1,000 plus {1,000 minus 100: 900}, plus {100 minus 10: 90}.
- 1998 is written MCMXCVIII, 1990 plus 8.
- 1999: MCMXCIX
- 2000: MM.

In the new third millennium (which began in January 2001 and will end in December 3000), our years are easy to write:

- 2001: MMI
- 2002: MMII
- 2003: MMIII
- 2004: MMIV
- etc.
- 2998: MMCMXCVIII
- 2999: MMCMXCIX
- 3000: MMM