National Art Library
How to Search the Library Catalogue and Request Material

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This guide covers how to search for items and place requests in the National Art Library (NAL) catalogue. Click heading to jump to section.

Search the Catalogue

Join the Library

Request Material

1. Search the Library Catalogue

1.1 Keyword Search

Carry out a simple search by entering keywords into the main search box on the library catalogue homepage at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery.

Search Tips

Truncation can help when searching for a keyword with variable endings, use an asterisk (*). *For example: use paint* to include paints, painted, painting and painter.*

If there are variant spellings, use a **question mark** (?). *For example: search Colo?r to include both color and colour in your search results.*

Use **quotation marks** to search for an exact phrase, *for example "sustainable architecture"*

Narrow or broaden your results by combining **Boolean operators** AND, OR and NOT with your keywords, for example:

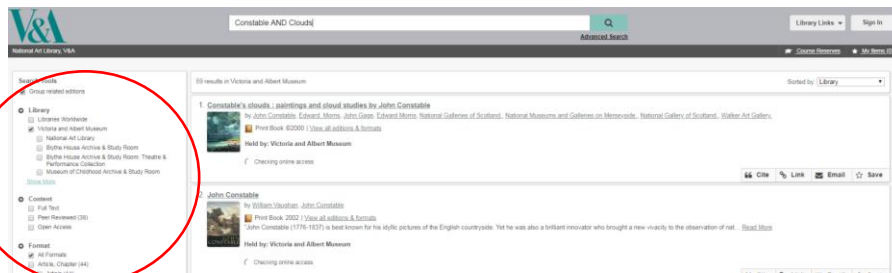|	
Constable AND Clouds	All search results will include both keywords.
Romantic era OR *Romanticism*	Broadens search results, particularly helpful when searching for synonyms.
Illustration NOT Fashion	Search results will exclude titles on fashion illustration.

Use **Search Tools** to refine your search results by Format, Author, Year, Database, Language and Topic.

Expand **Browse the Shelf** within a catalogue record to explore our diverse general collection or use to browse within a special collection.
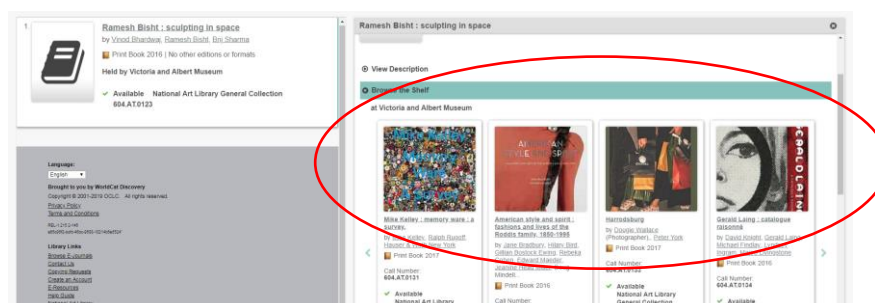
1.2 Advanced Search

Use advanced search to improve the relevancy of your search results. Access advanced search from the main library catalogue at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery.

The table below describes some of the key indexes you can use in Advanced Search:

Option	How to use this search option	Example
Auctioneer & Auction House; Author / Author Phrase	Search for author in the format *surname, first name*. You can also use this option to search for exhibition catalogues published by a gallery or Museum. You can use the *wildcard to search by auction house, so for example you can search across Sotheby's Belgravia, Sotheby's Olympia London... using Sotheby*	*Bryant Julius* *National Gallery* *Sotheby**
Date of Sale	To browse by year: YYYY To search for a specific date, use the syntax YYYYMMDD.	*ds:2008* *ds:20170509*
Corporate / Conference Name	This will usually be the city in which the conference or sale took place.	*Toronto*
Identifier; Subject	Search for books on a subject or an individual in the format *surname, first name*.	*Surrealism* or *Kahlo, Frida*
ISBN / ISSN	Search for unique identifier	*9780241339862* *0262 - 2130*
Publisher	Search for a publisher	*Whitechapel Gallery*
Sale Code	Search using a known sale code.	*24769* *JASPER*
Title Phrase	Search for the exact title of the publication / manuscript.	*Art Journal*

You can combine up to five indexes or apply limits to retrieve a more precise set of search results.

On the search results page, use the **Search Tools** to refine your results further by **Format, Author, Year, Database, Language** and **Topic.**

1.3 Expert Search

Expert search labels allow you to refine and enhance the relevance of your search results. To carry out an expert search, combine your keywords with a search label in the main search box on the library catalogue homepage. Some useful examples are listed below.

Type of Search	Search Label	Example
Browse Artists' Books	[keyword] ge:artists book*	*ge:artists book**
Author	au:[keyword]	*au: Bryant, Julius*
Barcode	bq:[number]	*Bq:-320663* *Bq: 38041801000696*
Children's Books	[keyword], ge:children's	*Potter ge:children's*
Date of Sale **[for auction catalogues]**	ds: [keyword]	*ds:20170509*
Dyce Collection	Search for *Dyce Collection* in main search box	
Forster Collection	Search for *Forster Collection* in main search box	
Local reference number **(such as MSL/)**	nt: [reference number]	*nt:MSL/1970/2604*
Manuscript items	[keyword] ge:manuscript	*Ornament ge:manuscript*
NAL Pressmark	nu:[exact pressmark]	*nu: 603.AT.0124*
Reference books on open **shelves in Centre Room**	[keyword] b8=REF*	*Dictionary b8=REF**
Subject / Topic	su:[keyword]	*su: furniture design*
Title / Journal Title	ti:[keyword]	*ti: Art Journal*
V&A Publications **Collection**	[keyword] b8=SC/VAP*	*Fashion b8=SC/VAP**

To search for a phrase, replace the colon (:) with the equals sign (=). A phrase search will search for every keyword from left to right in order.

- For a title phrase search, exclude the initial articles *A, an, the* and their equivalents in other languages. *For example: ti=Art Journal*
- For an author phrase search, enter the name in inverted order if using the equals sign; *For example: au=Bryant, Julius*

Further guidance on searching the catalogue can be found in this [WorldCat Discovery guide.](#)

2. Search for Auction House Sales Catalogues using Advanced search

You can use Advanced Search (link below main search box) to find specific catalogues.

Many sales catalogues are bound together with others in a volume, please also refer to section 8 for information on requesting this type of material.

Option	How to use this search option	How this will work in main search	Example
Date of Sale	To browse by year: YYYY To search for a specific date, use the syntax YYYYMMDD.	ds:YYYY ds:YYYYMMDD	*ds:2008* *ds:20170509*
Place of Sale	This will usually be the city in which the sale took place.	e9:[keyword]	*e9:Toronto*
Auctioneer & Auction House; Author / Author Phrase	You can use the *wildcard to search by auction house, so for example you can search across Sotheby's Belgravia, Sotheby's Olympia London, Sotheby's Los Angeles... using Sotheby*	Au:[keyword]	*au-Sotheby**
Lugt Number	Search 'Lugt' in the Keyword field followed by the number.	*Lugt* [Lugt number]	*Lugt 57195*
Sale Code	Search using a known sale code.	sl:	*sl:24769* *JASPER*

3. Search for Exhibition Catalogues using Advanced Search

You can use Advanced Search to find specific exhibition catalogues, or runs of catalogues.

Some catalogues are bound together with others in a volume, please also refer to section 8 for information on requesting this type of material.

Advanced Search

Search Index	Search Term
Auctioneer & Auction House; Au ▼	royal academy

Operator	Search Index	Search Term
AND ▼	Title ▼	summer exhibition

Operator	Search Index	Search Term
AND ▼	Keyword ▼	

⊕ Add row

Clear   Search

Option	How to use this search option	How this will work in main search	Example
Auctioneer & Auction House; Author	You can use this search option to search for exhibitions by a gallery or museum name	au:[keyword]	*au: royal academy*
Title	Use keywords from an exhibition title either on their own, or in conjunction with other indexes to narrow your results	ti:[keyword]	*ti: summer exhibition*
Identifier; Subject	Search for exhibitions about artists or on themes using keywords, and use truncation for best results	su:[keyword]	*su:Alexander Mcqueen; textile* exhibition**
Publisher	Search for a museum or gallery as publisher	pb:[keyword]	*Whitechapel Gallery*

If searching for a foreign language catalogue, enter your keyword followed by Expert search label 'nt' to search staff notes, for example, *Franz Metzner nt:exhibition*

Use the **Search Tools** to further refine your search results by **Format, Author, Year, Database, Language** and **Topic.**

4. Search for Books held within V&A Departmental Libraries

Books held in the V&A departmental libraries are selected by curatorial staff and can be found on the library catalogue. It is possible to limit your search results to the books in a specific departmental library *only*. However, this is primarily of relevance to V&A staff rather than members of the public / readers. If requested, they are delivered to and consulted in the National Art Library. We recommend requesting NAL copies where available.

4.1 Go to our library catalogue at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery

4.2 Combine your keywords with a search label in the main search box on the library catalogue homepage. For example: I want to search for books on carpets but only within the V&A Middle Eastern collection. For this I will type into the search box Carpet, *b8=GC/MES**

Search for books held within the…	Search label	Example
Ceramics collection	[keyword], b8=GC/CER*	*Vase, b8=GC/CER**
Conservation collection	[keyword], b8=GC/CON*	*Paper, b8=GC/CON**
East Asia collection	[keyword], b8=GC/EAST*	*Porcelain, b8=GC/EAST**
Furniture and Woodwork collection	[keyword], b8=GC/FWK*	*Chair, b8=GC/FWK**
Middle Eastern collection	[keyword], b8=GC/MES*	*Carpet, b8=GC/MES**
Metalwork collection	[keyword], b8=GC/MET*	*Silver, b8=GC/MET**
Sculpture collection	[keyword], b8=GC/SCP*	*Bronze, b8=GC/SCP**
South Asia collection	[keyword], b8=GC/SOU*	*Music, b8=GC/SOU**
Textiles and Fashion collection	[keyword], b8=GC/TFD*	*Shoes, b8=GC/TFD**

Please allow for **up to 2 working days for retrieval** when placing a departmental library request, this includes when ordering in advance. For example, I need an item from the Ceramics collection on Friday 14 September, I would therefore select a start date of Wednesday 12 September so that it is available on my arrival.

For a step-by-step guide to requesting material, please see section 7.

5. Access Online Material

Your catalogue search results will often include direct links to online content, including:

- E-books and e-journals
- Journal Articles (full-text and article citations)
- E-Resources

If available online, a link will show in the search results and catalogue record (circled below). The link will read **Access online**, **View eBook**, **Access journal** or **View full text**.

The source can be found under the **Availability** tab, e.g. Internet Archive.
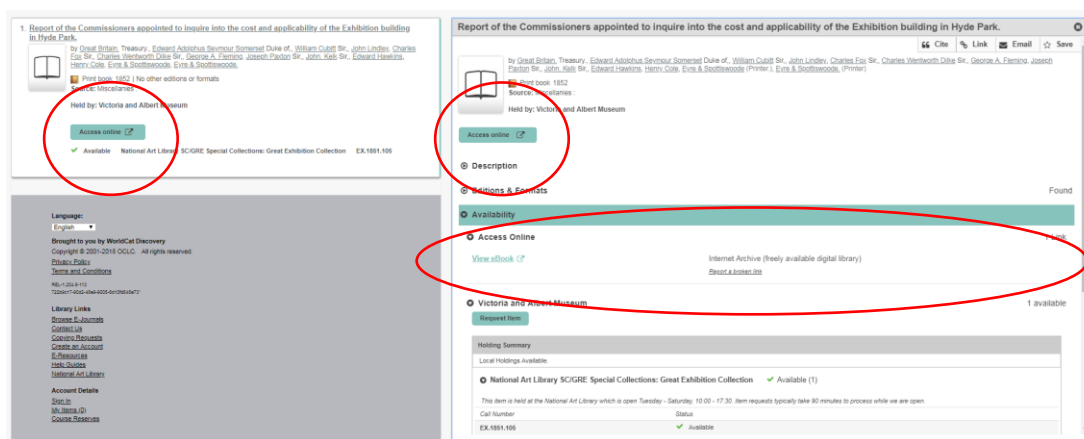
These links connect to both freely available and subscription material. Due to licensing restrictions, you can only access subscription material in the V&A Study Rooms.

To view a complete list of our subscription e-resources, click **Library Links** (top right) then select **E-Resources.**

We have also created a list of freely available art and design web resources. To access, click **Course Reserves** in the library catalogue (top right) and select **E-Resources – Recommended and Freely Available.**

For further guidance on accessing our e-resources, please see the following V&A blog posts:

Subscription e-resources: https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/museum-life/national-art-library-art-and-design-e-resources-subscription

Freely Available e-resources: https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/museum-life/national-art-library-freely-available-art-and-design-e-resources

6. Create an Account

To request items to view in the library and our other study rooms, you will first need to join the library by creating an account. On your first visit to the library you will need to show current ID (e,g, passport, bank card, National ID card, etc) and proof of address (e.g. bank statement, utility bill, driving licence, etc), in order to complete the process and be issued with a Library Card.

How to Create an account

6.1 Go to our library catalogue at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery

6.2 Click on **Library Links** (top right) and select **Create an Account.**
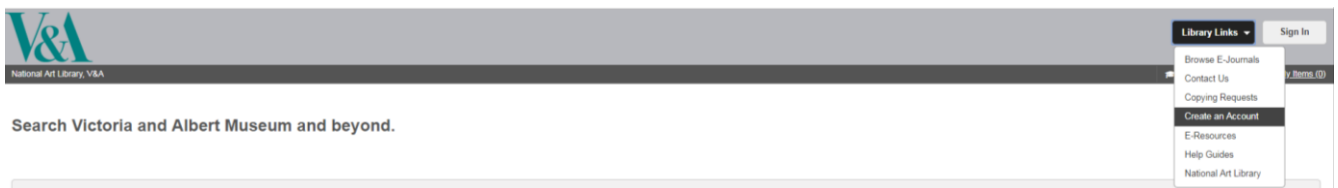
6.3 Complete the form.
Please use an active email account as you will be sent a link to set your own password on completing the form.

6.4 Click on the link in the email to set your password.

7. Request an Item

There are retrievals throughout the day and we are typically able to retrieve items within 90 minutes of receiving your request while we are open. You can request up to 8 items at any one time. We keep requested items on reserve for you for 3 working days. Find our opening hours and planned closures at https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library

7.1 Go to our library catalogue at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery

7.2 Search for an item with the main search or Advanced Search.

7.3 Click the title of your selected item in the search results and click 'Request Item'. If the request button is not available, the item may be in a bound volume (see section 8). **Please note:** If available online, you will see an 'Access Online' or 'View eBook' link (see section 5). Due to licencing restrictions, access to some online content is restricted to the Study Rooms only.
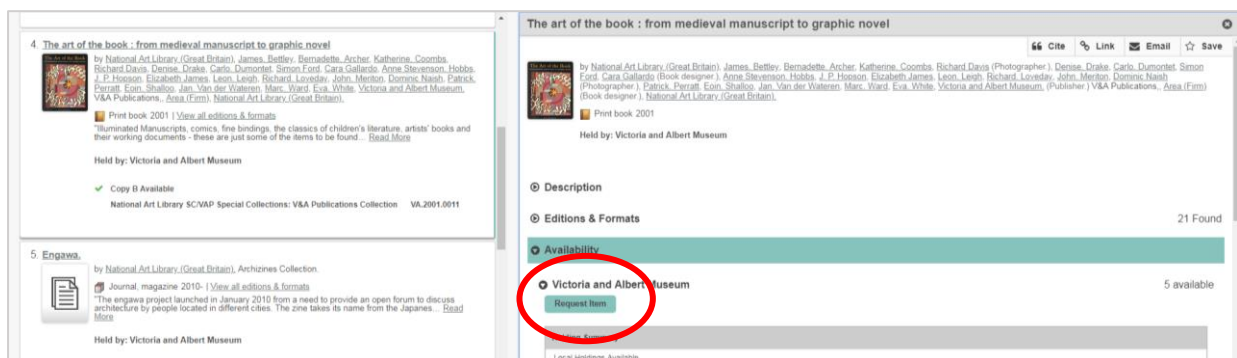
7.4 Sign in using the 'Visitor' option. Upon logging in, you will see the request options below. *Find out how to join in* section 6.

Tick the box next to your selected copy/copies. We recommend requesting a **General Collection** copy where possible.

Please note that it is only possible to request copies with the status 'available'.

The 'Dates I need it' allows you to place a request for a future date. Your items will be held for 3 working days beyond the selected start date. Please leave blank if you are collecting within 3 working days of placing your request. If the book is in a departmental library see section 4.

7.5 Click 'Submit' to complete your request.
Please note: that although you request items using the UK date format DD/MM/YYYY, the request confirmation screen uses the US date format of MM/DD/YYYY

8. Request an Item in a Bound Volume

Some items in the National Art Library's collection are grouped together, such as multiple items bound together in a single volume. This is indicated by the presence of a 'Source' field in the record. This is often the case for sales catalogues, exhibition catalogues and manuscripts. You are unable to request these items individually and the record will appear as pictured below.
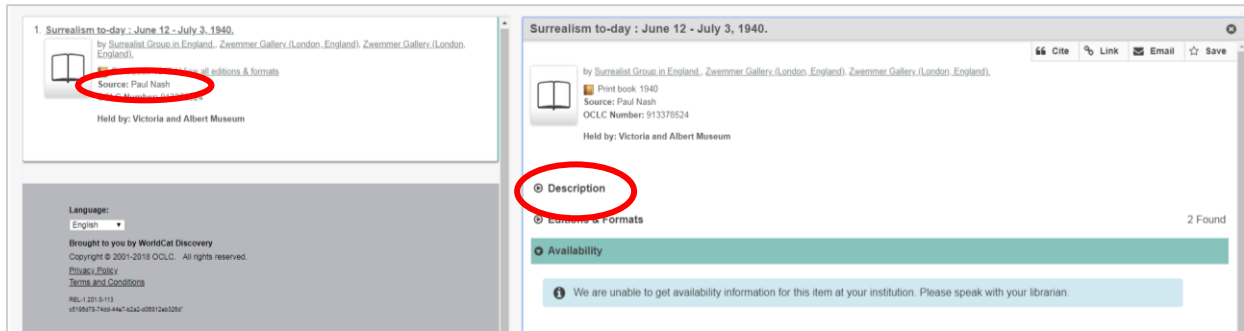
8.1 To place a request on the bound volume containing your selected item, expand the 'View Description' field and click on the link next to 'More Information'.

8.2 The catalogue record for the bound volume will open in a new tab. Click 'Request Item'.

You will receive an email when your request is ready to collect at the National Art Library. Emails are sent hourly, so your item may be ready before you receive the email. To check the status of each request, login and go to 'My Account' (top right) and select the 'Holds' tab. When your item is ready for collection, the status will be set as 'Ready to be picked up at NAL'.

If you have selected a specific date, you will only receive a confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, once it is ready to collect.
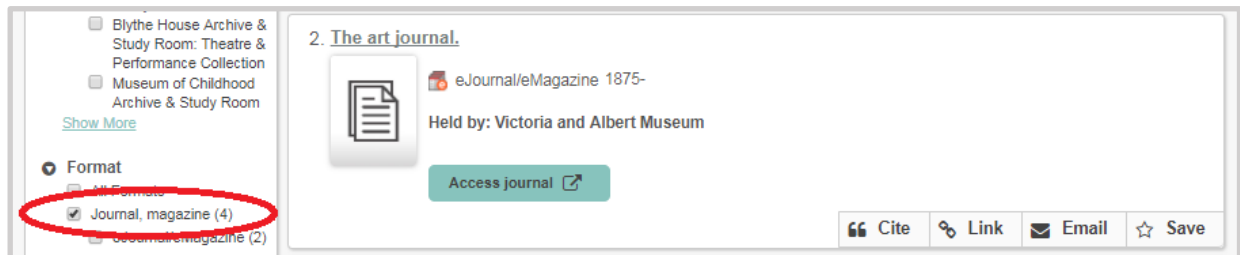
9. Request Periodicals and Journals

Please be advised that use of our online subscription content is highly encouraged and for preservation purposes we will not retrieve print journals that are available online in our reading rooms.

9.1 Go to our library catalogue homepage at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery

9.2 Search for the journal title.
In the search results page, limit results to '**Journal, magazine**' using the Search Tools.

You can also use Title Phrase search in the main search box to find a specific title, e.g. ti=art journal.
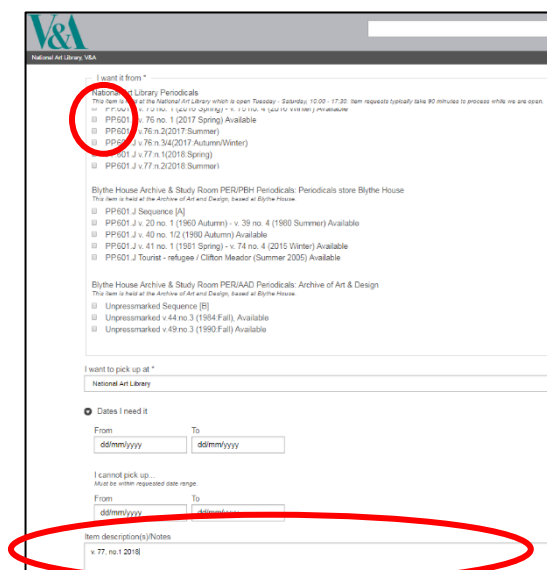

If available online, click on 'Access Journal'. *A list of e-journals can also be found by clicking on 'Browse E-Journals' in the 'Library Links' menu at the top of the page.*

9.3 Click on the Journal title to view details of the National Art Library's print holdings. Expand the 'View Description' to see further bibliographic information.

9.4 Click 'Request Item' and sign in as visitor.
Find out how to create an account in Section 6

9.5 Select the location you 'want it from' (circled) then in the 'Item description(s)/notes'

(circled) record the exact volume/s you wish to consult, for example **v. 77, no.1, 2018**. You can place a request for a run of issues; however separate requests must be placed if there are any breaks in the sequence.

Please note that it is only possible to request copies with the status 'available'.

The 'Dates I need it' allows you to place a request for a future date (see section 10). Your items will be held for 3 working days beyond the selected start date. Please leave blank if you are collecting within 3 working days of placing your request. You will only receive a

confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, once it is ready to collect.

9.6 Click 'Submit' to complete your request.
Please note: that although you request items using the UK date format DD/MM/YYYY, the request confirmation screen uses the US date format of MM/DD/YYYY

You will receive an email when your request is ready to collect at the National Art Library. Emails are sent hourly, so your item may be ready before you receive the email. To check the status of each request, login and go to 'My Account' (top right) and select the 'Holds' tab.

If you have selected a specific date, you will only receive a confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, once it is ready to collect.

10. Request for a Specific Date of Visit

10.1   Go to our library catalogue at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery

10.2   Search for an item with the main search or Advanced Search.

10.3 Click the title of your selected item in the search results and click 'Request Item'. If the request button is not available, the item may be in a bound volume (section 8).

10.4 Sign in using the 'Visitor' option. Select copy under 'I want it from.'
Find out how to create an account in Section 6

The 'Dates I need it' option allows you to place a request for a future date. Leave blank if you are collecting your books within 3 working days of placing your request.

'From' date: Please select the date of your visit.

We recommend that you request copies held by the National Art Library where available. Copies held by departmental libraries can take **up to 2 working days from the selected start date to retrieve**. All books in departmental libraries appear as follows:

'To' date: Leave blank, requested items will be held for 3 working days.

10.5 Click 'Submit' to complete your request.
Please note: that although you request items using the UK date format DD/MM/YYYY, the request confirmation screen uses the US date format of MM/DD/YYYY
You will only receive a confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, once it is ready to collect.

11. Request NAL 'appointment only' Material

Some items in our collection cannot be retrieved immediately due to:

- Conservation and preservation policies. The item may be stored remotely or we need to make a condition assessment due to the fragility of the item.
- High value or uniqueness of an item. Senior curatorial authorisation is needed.
- Audio/Visual material that may not be compatible with onsite equipment, so we need to first check that the item can be viewed.
- NAL material (e.g. elephant folios) held in another study room. See section 13.

For these reasons, for some items you will not see an 'Item Request' button. Instead, you will find a link to request an appointment underneath 'Libraries Worldwide':
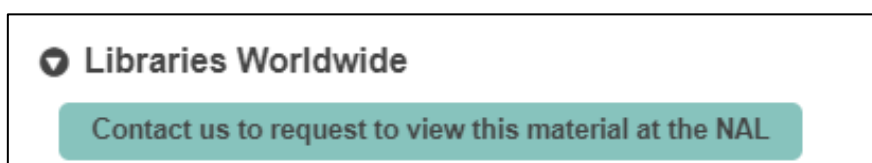
By clicking on this button, you will be taken to an enquiry form where you can then specify your exact request. Please make sure you include all the required information. Online enquiries are assessed and assigned and it may take up to 2 working days to receive a reply.

12. Update or Remove a Request

12.1 Login and go to 'My Account' (top right). Select the 'Holds' tab. The options to **Edit** or **Remove** are shown for each hold:

12.2 **Edit** your request details:

- Change 'Dates I need it'
- Change Item Description / Notes

12.3 Click **Remove** to delete your request**.** Click 'Yes, remove my hold' to confirm.

Please note: you are unable to remove a request that is ready for collection.

13. Request Material held in other V&A Study Rooms

Some material in the library catalogue is held in V&A Study Rooms other than the NAL. The location will display under the **Holdings Summary:**

Blythe House Archive & Study Room

Holding Summary	
Local Holdings Available.	
⊘ Blythe House Archive & Study Room GC/RER General Collection: Renier Reference Collection	✔ Available (1)
This item is held at the Archive of Art and Design, based at Blythe House.	
Call Number	Status

Prints & Drawings Study Room

Holding Summary	
Local Holdings Available.	
⊘ Prints & Drawings Study Room GC/PDP General Collection: Prints & Drawings Study Room	✔ Available (1)
This item is held at the Prints & Drawings Study Room.	
Call Number	Status

Museum of Childhood

Holding Summary	
Local Holdings Available.	
⊘ Museum of Childhood Study Room GC/MoCR General Collection: MoC Reference Collection	✔ Available (2)
This item is held at the Museum of Childhood. Please contact moccollections@vam.ac.uk to request access to these items.	
Call Number	Status

You will need to request an appointment to view this material. Contact details and further information can be found on the Study Rooms webpage: www.vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms