National Art Library

How to search the Library Catalogue and request material

This guide covers how to search for items and place requests at the National Art Library (NAL) catalogue. Click heading in Table of Contents to jump to a section. If you have any special requirements around searching or accessing the catalogue, then please contact us.

View Frequently Asked Questions here

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Last updated February 2022
1. Search the Library Catalogue

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

1.2 Search Tips
1.2.1 Use an asterisk (*) as truncation when searching for a keyword with variable endings. For example: paint* broadens a search to include paints, painted, painting and painter.

1.2.2 For variant spellings, use a question mark (?) in place of a character. For example: search Colo?r to include both color and colour in your search results.

1.2.3 Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, for example “sustainable architecture”

1.2.4 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.

1.2.5 Use Search Tools (in the left side bar) to refine your search results by Format, Author, Publication Year, Subject Terms, Language and Source Database.
1.2.6 After clicking on a title to view a record, use **Browse the Shelf** at the bottom of the screen to explore our diverse general collection or to browse within a special collection.
1.3 Advanced Search
The Advanced search option can improve the relevancy of your search results and is linked from the top menu bar and also under the main search button on the catalogue homepage at https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery

You will then be presented with the Advanced Search indexes

Advanced Search

You can combine up to five indexes or apply limits (peer-reviewed articles, format, publication year) to retrieve a more precise set of search results.

On the search results page, use the Search Tools (in the left side bar) to refine your results by Format, Author, Content Type, Publication Year, Subject Terms, Source Database and Language.
The Advanced Search table describes some of the key Search Indexes available and how to use them. Each Search Index has a keyword option and a phrase search option.

**Advanced Search table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Type</th>
<th>Search Index</th>
<th>How to use this Search Index option</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auctioneer or Auction House (Keyword or Phrase search)</td>
<td>Auctioneer &amp; Auction House; Author</td>
<td>Search for auction houses or auctioneers</td>
<td>Sotheby*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auctioneer &amp; Auction House; Author phrase</td>
<td>Use the *wildcard to search across e.g. Sotheby’s Belgravia, Sotheby’s Olympia London, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You can also use this option to search for exhibition catalogues published by a gallery or Museum</td>
<td>National Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author (Keyword search)</td>
<td>Auctioneer &amp; Auction House; Author</td>
<td>Search for an author using keywords</td>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author (Phrase search)</td>
<td>Auctioneer &amp; Auction House; Author phrase</td>
<td>Search for author in the format surname, first name</td>
<td>Bryant, Julius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Sale</td>
<td>Date of Sale</td>
<td>To browse by year: YYYY To browse by month: MMYYYY To search for a specific date, use the syntax: YYYYMMDD</td>
<td>ds:2008 ds:052013 ds:20170509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference or international exhibition name</td>
<td>Corporate/Conference Name</td>
<td>Search for a conference or international exhibition using keywords and date</td>
<td>British Empire 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You can also search by the city in which a conference took place</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject or artist</td>
<td>Identifier; Subject Phrase</td>
<td>Search for books on a subject, or an individual in the format surname, first name.</td>
<td>Surrealism Kahlo, Frida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISBN / ISSN</td>
<td>ISBN / ISSN</td>
<td>Search for unique identifier</td>
<td>9780241339862 0262 - 2130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Search for a publisher</td>
<td>Whitechapel Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale Code</td>
<td>Sale Code</td>
<td>Search using a known sale code</td>
<td>24769 JASPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Title Phrase</td>
<td>Search for the exact title of the publication or manuscript.</td>
<td>Art Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 Expert Search

Expert search labels allow you to refine and enhance the relevance of your search results. Combine your keywords with a search label in the main search box on the library catalogue homepage. Some useful examples are listed in the table below.

**Expert Search Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Search</th>
<th>Search Label</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artists’ Books</td>
<td>[keyword] ge= artists book*</td>
<td>food ge= artists book*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>au: [keyword]</td>
<td>au: Germaine Greer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcode</td>
<td>bq: [number]</td>
<td>Bq: 38041801000696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Books</td>
<td>[keyword], ge: children’s*</td>
<td>Potter ge: children’s*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Sale</td>
<td>Specific date ds:YYYYMMDD</td>
<td>ds:20170509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[for auction catalogues]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local reference number</td>
<td>nt: [reference number]</td>
<td>nt: MSL/1970/2604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(such as MSL/)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAL Pressmark</td>
<td>nu: [exact pressmark]</td>
<td>nu: 603.AT.0124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference books</td>
<td>[keyword] b8: Reference</td>
<td>Dictionary b8: Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject / Topic</td>
<td>su: [keyword]</td>
<td>su: furniture design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title / Journal Title</td>
<td>ti: [keyword]</td>
<td>ti: Art Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V&amp;A Publications Collection</td>
<td>[keyword] b8:SC/VAP*</td>
<td>Fashion b8:SC/VAP*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two types of expert search: Keyword and Phrase. To search by keyword, use a colon (:) after the search label. To search for a phrase, use an equals sign (=) after the search label. 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=Greer, Germaine*

Further guidance on searching the catalogue can be found in this [WorldCat Discovery guide](#).
2. Search for Auction House Sale Catalogues using Advanced search

Use Advanced Search (link below main search box) to find specific auction catalogues. Many sale catalogues are bound together with others in a volume, please also refer to section 8 for information on requesting this type of material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>How to use this search option</th>
<th>How this will work in main search</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Sale</td>
<td>To browse by year: YYYY&lt;br&gt;To browse by month: MMYYYY&lt;br&gt;To search for a specific date, use the syntax YYYYMMDD.</td>
<td>ds:YYYY&lt;br&gt;ds: MMYYYY&lt;br&gt;ds: YYYYMMDD</td>
<td>2008 052013 20170509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Sale</td>
<td>This will usually be the city in which the sale took place.</td>
<td>e9:[keyword]</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auctioneer &amp; Auction House; Author / Author Phrase</td>
<td>You can use the <em>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</em></td>
<td>Au:[keyword]</td>
<td>Sotheby*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>Search ‘Lugt’ in the Keyword field followed by the number.</td>
<td>Lugt [Lugt number]</td>
<td>57195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale Code</td>
<td>Search using a known sale code.</td>
<td>sl: [sale code]</td>
<td>24769 JASPER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Search for Exhibition Catalogues using Advanced Search

Use Advanced Search to find specific exhibition catalogues or runs of catalogues. Some exhibition catalogues are bound together with others in a volume, please also refer to section 8 for information on requesting material in bound volumes.

**Advanced Search**

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

If searching for a foreign language catalogue, enter your keyword(s) followed by Expert search label 'nt' to search notes, for example, *Franz Metzner nt:exhibition*
4. Books held within V&A Departmental Libraries

Books held in the V&A departmental libraries are selected by curatorial staff and can be found in the library catalogue. At present these books are being organised into a new collection facility and are temporarily unavailable.

5. Access Online Material

Your catalogue search results may 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.

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 Resources (top menu bar) 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 top menu bar and select E-Resources – Recommended and Freely Available (A-Z).

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](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](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 other V&A study rooms, you will first need to join the library by creating an account. On your first visit to the library, please 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](https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery)

6.2 Click on Resources (top menu bar) 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 you receive to set your password.
7. Request an Item

There are retrievals throughout the day on our days of opening, until 3.30 pm for both General and Special Collections. 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 a time. You are advised to request items you wish to consult in advance of your visit. Find our days of opening 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 using the main search or Advanced Search.

7.3 Click the title of your selected item in the search results and click ‘Request Item’ (right sidebar). 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 in the Study Rooms only.

7.4 Sign in using the ‘Visitor’ option. You must first have created an account - see section 6. Upon logging in, you will see the request options below.

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’.

If the item is ‘checked out’, please contact us to arrange access.

Tick the box ‘I need this for specific dates’ from the dropdown option to place a request for a future date when we are open. You can leave this blank if you are collecting items for the next date we are open. If the book is in a departmental library see section 4.

7.5 Click ‘Submit’ to complete your request.
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 ‘Requests’ from the dropdown. When your item is ready for collection, the status will be set as ‘Ready for pick up at National Art Library until [date]’.

If you have placed a request in advance, or if you have selected a specific date (see section 10), you may only receive a confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, once it is ready to collect.
8. Request an Item in a Bound Volume (e.g. sale or exhibition catalogue, manuscript)

Some items in the National Art Library’s collection are grouped together, such as multiple items bound together in a single volume. This is often the case for sales catalogues, exhibition catalogues and some manuscripts and is indicated by the presence of ‘in [title]’ below the format icon and the lack of a request item button (right sidebar). 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, 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 ‘Requests’ from the dropdown. When your item is ready for collection, the status will be set as ‘Ready for pick up at National Art Library until [date]’.

If you have placed a request in advance, or if you have selected a specific date (see section 10), you may 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

Use of our online subscription content is highly encouraged and for preservation purposes we do 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 filters in the left sidebar.

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

If available online, click on the ‘Access Online’ button.

A list of e-journals can also be found by clicking on ‘Browse E-Journals under the Resources drop-down menu from the top menu bar.

9.3 Click on the Journal title to view further bibliographic details and for a list of the National Art Library’s print holdings.

9.4 To request print holdings, click on ‘Request Item’ (right sidebar)

Find out how to create an account in Section 6
9.5 Under ‘I want these specific copies or volumes’ tick the box next to the closest date
match (circled) and fill in the exact volume(s) you wish to consult in the box on the
right (circled), 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’.

If you need to place a request for a future date, see section 10. Find our opening
hours and planned closures at https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library

9.6 Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click ‘Submit’ to complete your request.

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 ‘Requests’ from the
dropdown. When your item is ready for collection, the status will be set as ‘Ready for pick up at
National Art Library until [date]’.

If you have placed a request in advance, or if you have selected a specific date (see section 10),
you may 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 an item 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 using the main search or Advanced Search.

10.3 Click the title of your selected item in the search results and click ‘Request Item’ in the right sidebar. 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 an item from the Copy or Volume list.  
Find out how to create an account in Section 6

The ‘I need this for specific dates’ dropdown option allows you to place a request for a future date. You may leave this blank if you are collecting your books at the library’s next available date of opening.

![Image of date selection]

‘From’ date: Please select the date of your visit. Find our days of opening at https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library

Please request copies held by the National Art Library where available.

‘To’ date: Leave blank; requested items will only be kept for one week.

10.5 Click ‘Submit’ to complete your request.

Please note: You may 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 a ‘Request Item’ button. Instead, you will see a message advising you that you need to make an appointment.

Please contact us and fill in an enquiry form where you can specify your exact request. Please make sure you include all the required information including the date you would like to see the item. It may take several working days to receive a reply.
12. Update or Cancel a Request

12.1 Login and go to ‘My Account’ (top right). Select ‘Requests’. The options to Edit or Cancel are shown for each request:

![Request Details]

**Edit your request**

12.2 Click **Edit Request** to change the details of the request. You can then:

- Change ‘Dates I need it’
- Change Item Description / Notes

![Request Details]

12.3 Click **Cancel** to delete your request. Then click ‘**Cancel request**’ in the pop up box to confirm.

![Cancel Request]

**Please note:** you are unable to cancel 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 ‘More Item Details’.

**Prints & Drawings Study Room**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelving Location</th>
<th>Call Number</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GC/PDP General Collections: Prints &amp; Drawings Study Room</td>
<td>FDP REF/DESK</td>
<td>COPY D AVAILABLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This item is held at the Prints & Drawings Study Room.*

Please note: Material from the two collections listed below is currently unavailable due to Museum redevelopment.

**Blythe House Archive & Study Room**

*Availability of this Edition at Victoria and Albert Museum*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelving Location</th>
<th>Call Number</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC/AAD Special Collections: Archive of Art &amp; Design</td>
<td>AAD/1996/5</td>
<td>AVAILABLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This item is held at the Archive of Art and Design, based at Blythe House.*

**Museum of Childhood**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelving Location</th>
<th>Call Number</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GC/MoCR General Collection: MoC Reference Collection</td>
<td>BE.13 JOH</td>
<td>AVAILABLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This collection is unavailable during Museum redevelopment.*

Contact details and further information can be found on the Study Rooms webpage: [www.vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms](http://www.vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms)