National Art Library

How to search the Library Catalogue and request material

This guide covers how to search for items and place requests from the National Art Library (NAL) catalogue. Click a 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: https://vam.libanswers.com/.

You can also view Frequently Asked Questions through: https://vam.libanswers.com/.

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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.*

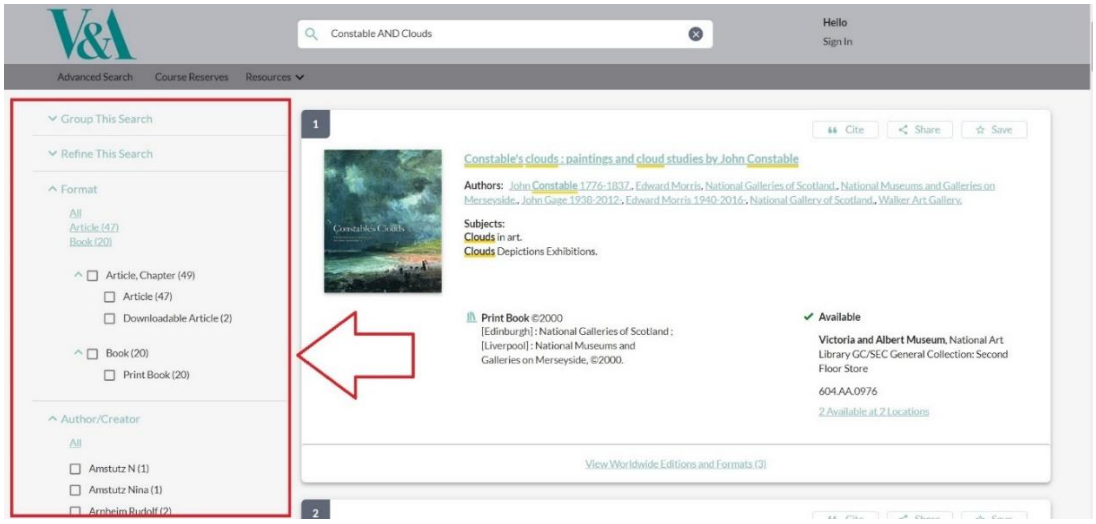
1.2.2 For **variant spellings**, use a **question mark** (?) in place of a character.
For example: search Colo?r to include both *color* and *colour* in your search results.

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

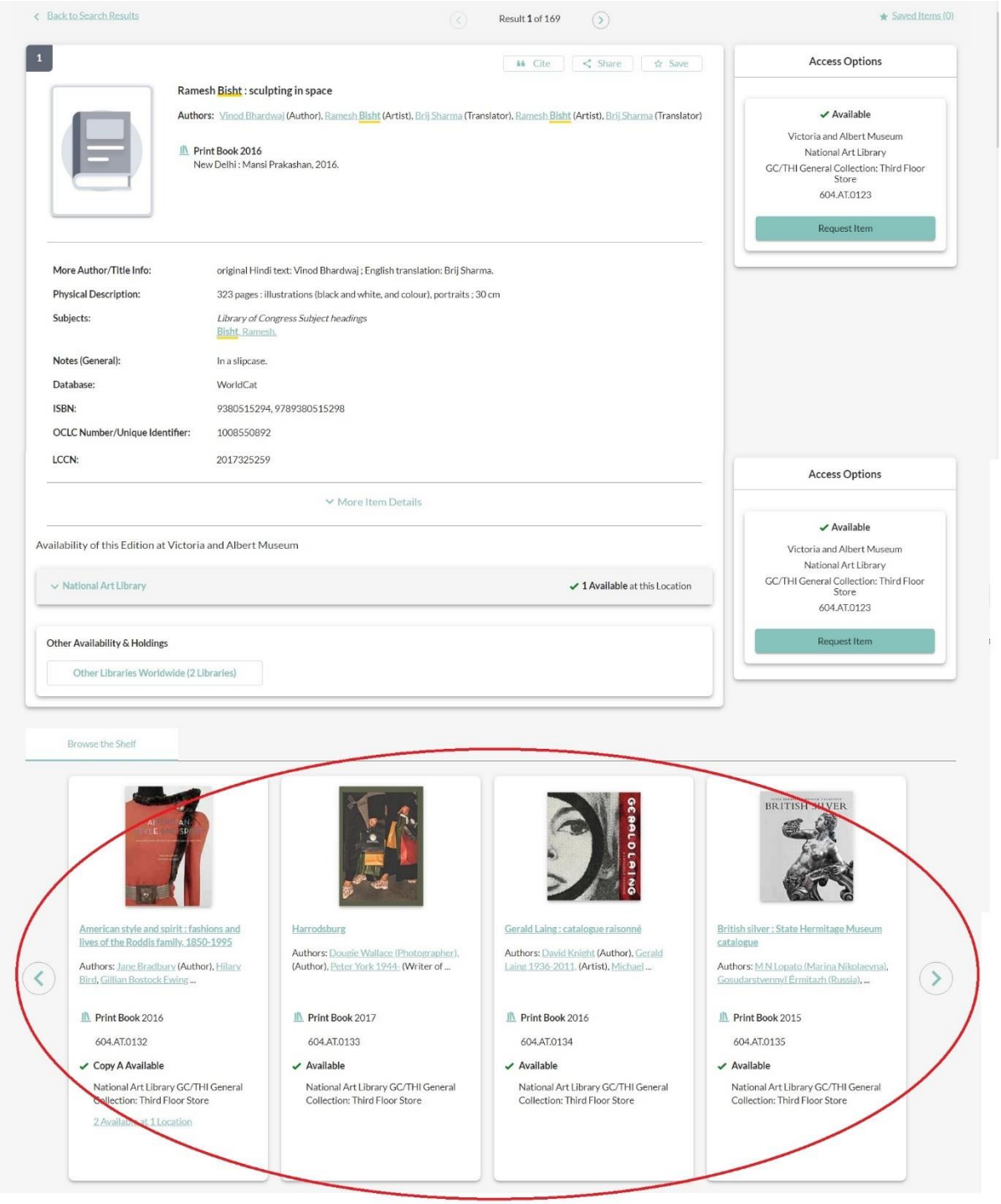
1.2.4 Narrow or broaden your results by combining **Boolean operators** AND, OR and NOT with your keywords, for example:

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, Source Database and Held by Library.

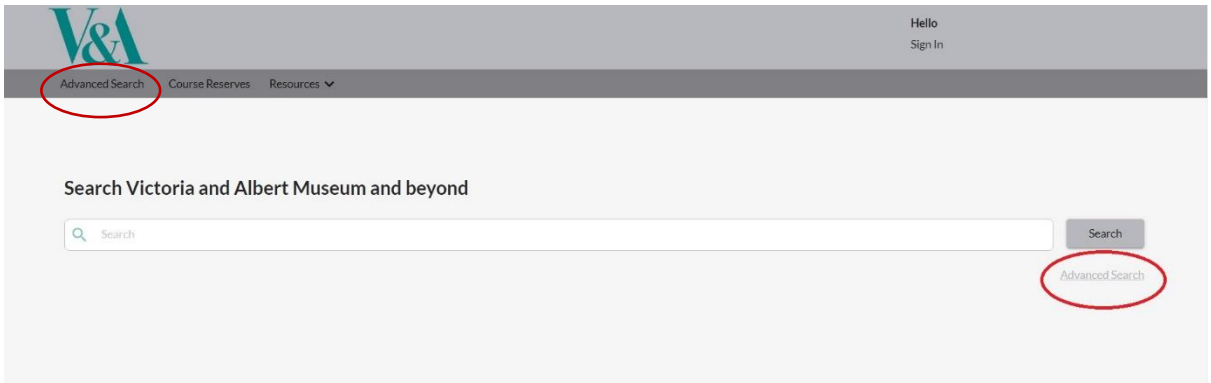


1.2.6 After clicking on a title to view a record, use **Browse the Shelf** at the bottom of the screen to explore our diverse general collection or to browse within a special collection.

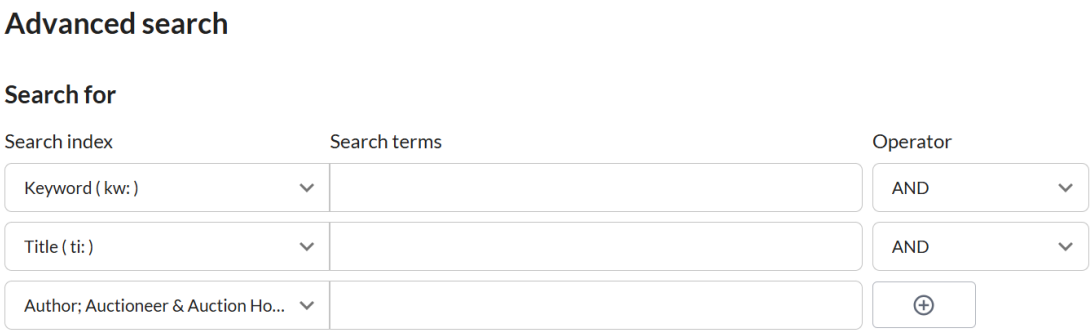


1.3 Advanced Search

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



Select **Advanced Search** and you will be presented with the Advanced Search indexes



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

You can also choose the sort order (best match, date – oldest or newest first, etc.) and restrict to one or more of our sites (e.g. South Kensington: National Art Library).

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:

Search Type	Search Index	How to use this Search Index option	Example
Auctioneer or Auction House (Keyword or Phrase search)	Author; Auctioneer & Auction House (au:) Author; Auctioneer & Auction House Phrase (au=)	Search for auction houses or auctioneers using keywords Use the *wildcard to search across e.g. Sotheby's Belgravia, Sotheby's Olympia London, etc.	*Sotheby**
Author (Keyword search)	Author; Auctioneer & Auction House (au:)	Search for an author using keywords You can also use this option to search for exhibition catalogues published by a gallery or museum	*Charles Dickens* *National Gallery*
Author (Phrase search)	Author; Auctioneer & Auction House Phrase (au=)	Search for author in the format *surname, first name*	*Bryant, Julius*
Date of Sale	Date of Sale (ds:)	To browse by year: YYYY To browse by month: MMYYYY To search for a specific date, use the syntax: YYYYMMDD	*2008* *052013* *20170509*
Conference or international exhibition name	Corporate/Conference Name (co:)	Search for a conference or international exhibition using keywords and date You can also search by the city in which a conference took place	*British Empire 1925* *Toronto*
Subject or artist	Subject; Identifier phrase (su=)	Search for books on a subject, or an individual in the format *surname, first name.*	*Surrealism* *Kahlo, Frida*
ISBN / ISSN	ISBN (bn:)/ ISSN (n2:)	Search for unique identifier	*9780241339862* *0262 - 2130*
Publisher	Publisher (pb:)	Search for a publisher	*Whitechapel Gallery*
Sale Code	Sale Code (sl:)	Search using a known sale code	*24769* *JASPER*
Title	Title Phrase (ti=)	Search for the exact title of the publication or manuscript.	*Art Journal*

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:

Type of Search	Search Label	Example
Author	au: [keyword]	*au: Germaine Greer*
Barcode	bq: [number]	*Bq: 38041801000696*
Date of Sale [for auction catalogues]	ds:YYYYMMDD	*ds:20170509*
Genre	[keyword] ge= [genre keywords]*	*Potter ge= children's** *food ge= artists book**
Local reference number (such as MSL/)	nt: [reference number]	*nt: MSL/1970/2604*
NAL Pressmark	nu: [exact pressmark]	*nu: 603.AT.0124*
Reference books	[keyword] b8: Reference	*Dictionary b8: Reference*
Subject / Topic	su: [keyword]	*su: furniture design*
Title / Journal Title	ti: [keyword]	*ti: Art Journal*
NAL Special Collections	[keyword] b8: SC/[Collection Code]* *Most collection codes can be found within* Subject Guide - Closed collections at the National Art Library	*Fashion b8:SC/VAP** *Example = V&A Publications Collection*

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.

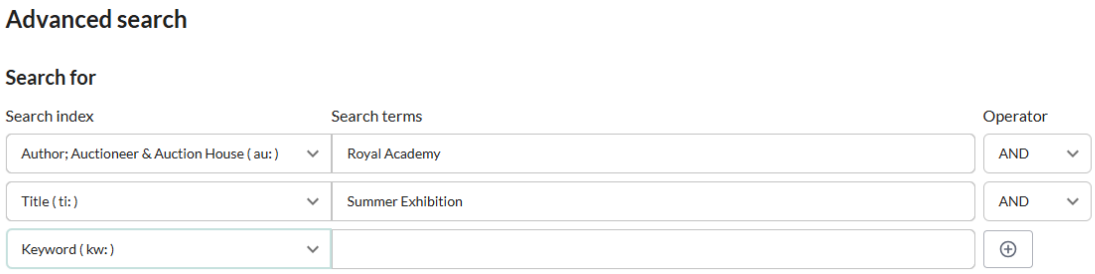
Many sale catalogues are bound together with others in a volume, please also refer to section 7 for information on requesting this type of material.

Option	How to use this search option	How this will work in main search	Example
Date of Sale	To browse by year: YYYY To browse by month: MMYYYY To search for a specific date, use the syntax YYYYMMDD.	ds:YYYY ds: MMYYYY ds:YYYYMMDD	*2008* *052013* *20170509*
Place of Sale	This will usually be the city in which the sale took place.	e9:[keyword]	*Toronto*
Author; Auctioneer & Auction House 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]	*Sotheby**
Keyword	Search 'Lugt' in the Keyword field followed by the number.	*Lugt* [Lugt number]	*57195*
Sale Code	Search using a known sale code.	sl: [sale code]	*24769* *JASPER*

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 7 for information on requesting material in bound volumes.



Option	How to use this search option	How this will work in main search	Example
Author; Auctioneer & Auction House	You can use this search option to search for exhibitions by a gallery or museum name	au:[keyword]	*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]	*summer exhibition*
Identifier; Subject	Search for exhibitions about artists or on themes using keywords, and use truncation for best results	su:[keyword]	*Alexander Mcqueen* *textile* exhibition**
Publisher	Search for a museum or gallery as publisher	pb:[keyword]	*Whitechapel Gallery*

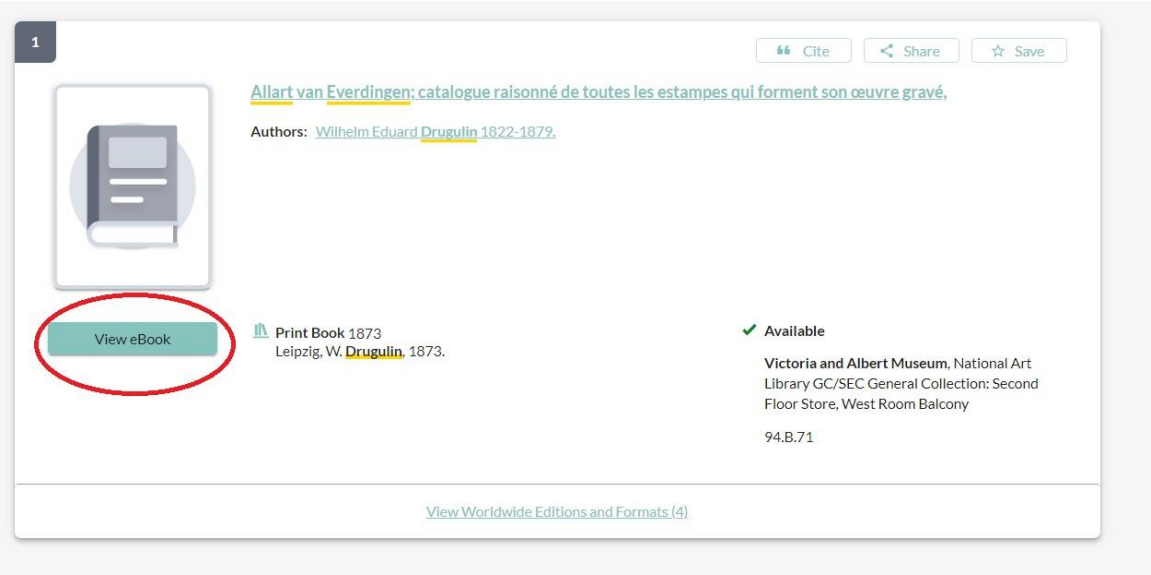
If searching for a foreign language catalogue, enter your keyword(s) followed by Expert search label **nt** to search notes, for example, *Franz Metzner nt:exhibition*

4. Online Material

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

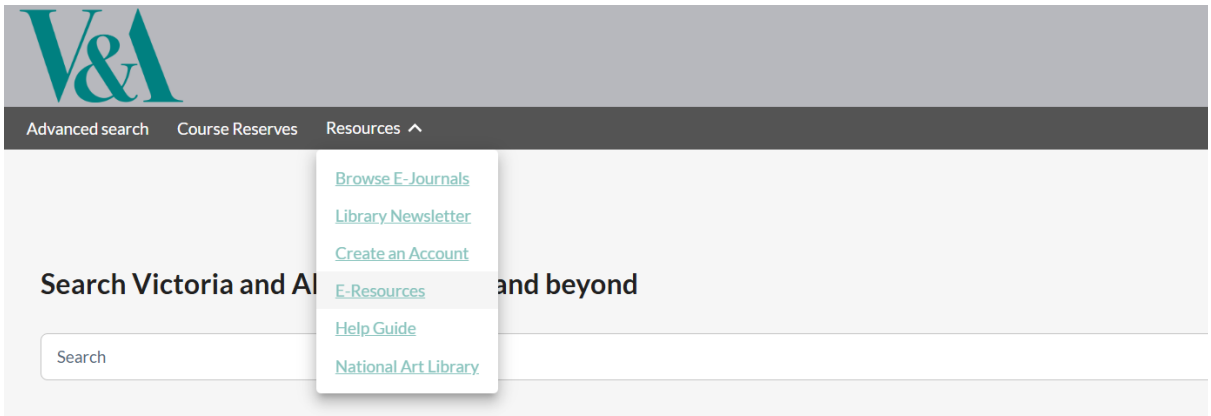
- E-books and e-journals
- Journal Articles (full-text and occasionally article citations)
- E-Resources

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 resources. Once you have signed in to your library account, many of our eBooks are now available to view offsite. However, due to licensing restrictions, you can only access most other subscription E-Resources in the National Art Library, South Kensington 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: National Art Library: Art and Design E-Resources (Subscription) • V&A Blog

ebooks: Balancing the (e)books • V&A Blog

Freely Available e-resources: National Art Library: Freely Available Art and Design E-Resources • V&A Blog

5. Create an Account

To request library items you will first need to create an account.

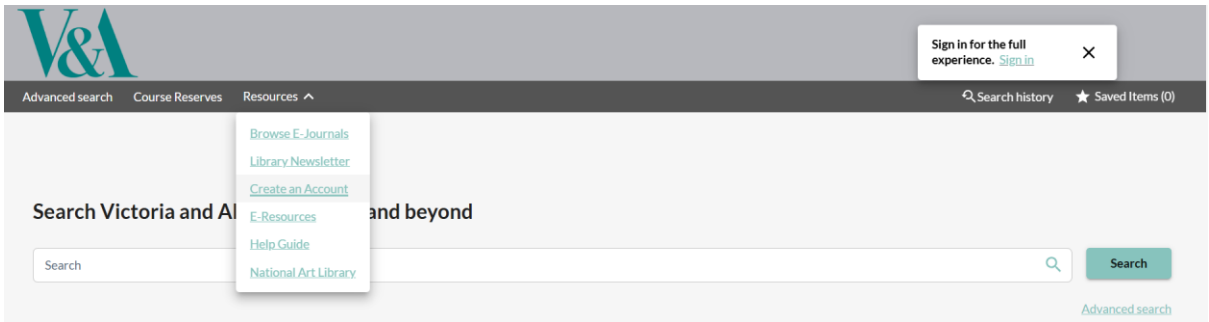
If your items are held at South Kensington, on your first visit to the library, please show current ID (e.g. passport, bank card, National ID card, digital student identification etc) to complete the process and be issued with a Library Card. Please note we do not accept photographs of identification.

Access to library items at V&A East Storehouse is by appointment only, but you will still need to create an account to enable staff to place requests for items on your behalf. Please see section 12.1 for further details.

How to Create an account

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

5.2 Click on **Resources** (top menu bar) and select **Create an Account.**



5.3 Complete the form.

Please use an active email account as you will be sent a code and link to set your own password on completing the form.

5.4 To login to the library catalogue to place requests, select 'Sign in' at the top right of the screen. Use the email address you provided when registering. The four digit number you gave when completing the form followed by the code sent to you by email, form your password. Alternatively, click on the link in the email you receive to reset your password.

6. Request an Item (South Kensington)

At our South Kensington site, there are retrievals throughout the day until 15.15 on our days of opening for both General and Special Collections. *See **6.7** to find out how to check on the status of an item request.*

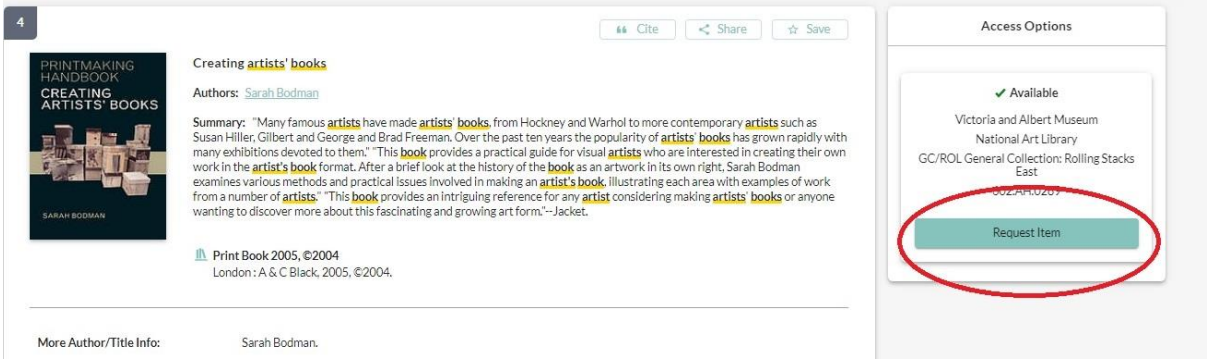
You can request up to 8 items at a time. You are advised to request items you wish to consult in advance of your visit. Find our opening hours at: https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library

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

6.2 Search for an item using the main search or Advanced Search.

6.3 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 7).*

Please note: If available online, you will see an 'Access Online' or 'View eBook' link (see section 4). Due to licencing restrictions, access to some online content is restricted to the National Art Library, South Kensington study room only.



6.4 Sign in using the **Visitor** option. *You must first have created an account – see section 5.*

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

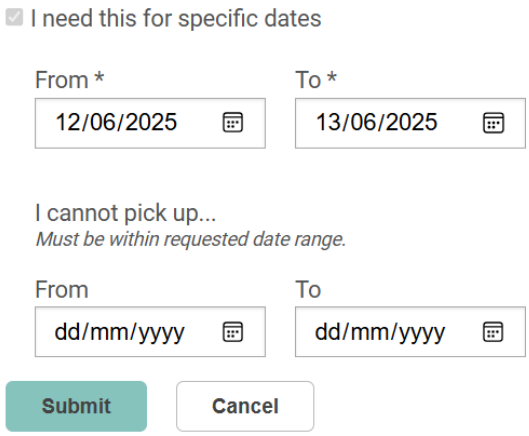
Please note that it is only possible to request copies with the status 'Available'.

If the item is 'Checked Out', contact us: https://vam.libanswers.com/.

6.6 In the date boxes please enter the following:

'From' date: Please select the date of your visit, this can be today's date. Find our days of opening at https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library#visit.

‘To’ date: Enter any date up to a week after your ‘**From’** date for general collections, or the Thursday of that week for special collections.

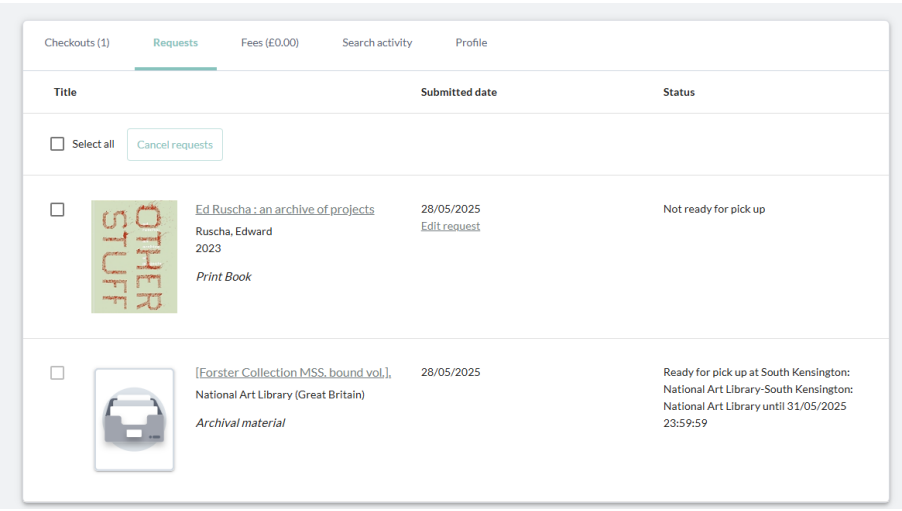


Please note: General collection items will be kept on reserve for **1 week** and **special collection items until 16.30** on the last day of opening of the week of your request. If the book is in a departmental library see section 10.

6.7 Click **Submit** to complete your request.

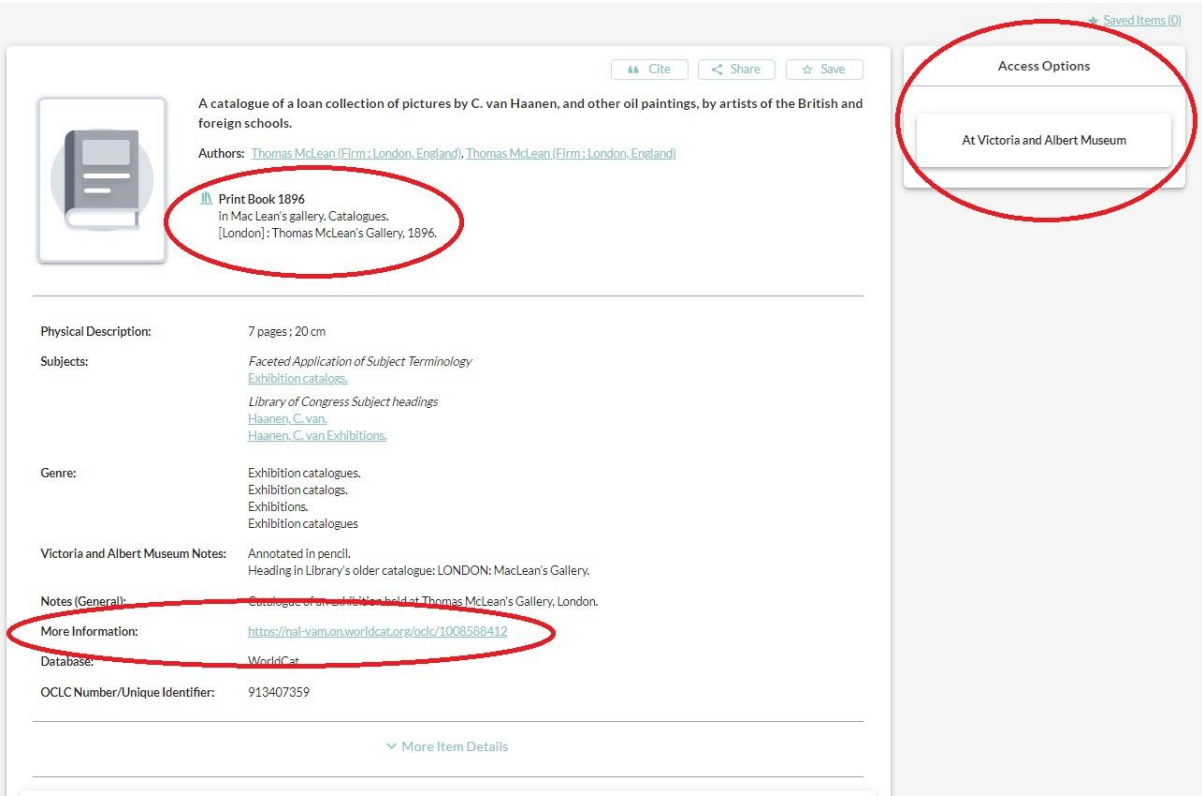
You will receive an email when your request is ready to collect at the National Art Library, South Kensington. Emails are sent hourly, so your item may be ready before you receive the email. To check the status of each request, login and go to **My Account** (top right) and select **Requests** from the dropdown. When your item is ready for collection, the status will change to: ‘Ready for pick up at South Kensington: National Art Library...’.

If you have placed a request in advance, you will only receive a confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, alerting you it is ready to collect.



7. Request an Item in a Bound Volume (e.g. sale or exhibition catalogue, manuscript)

Some items in the National Art Library's collections 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.



7.1 To place a request for the bound volume containing your selected item, click on the link next to 'More Information'.

7.2 The catalogue record for the bound volume will open in a new tab. If this is an item from our National Art Library, South Kensington collections a **Request Item** button will appear, to allow you to place your request (see from section 6.4).

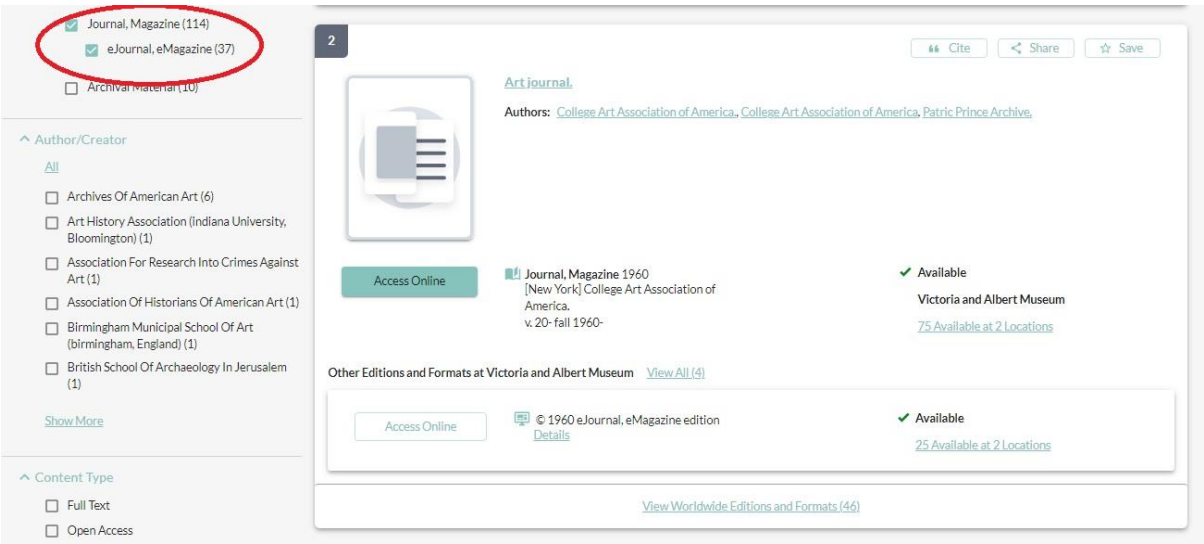
8. Request Periodicals and Journals

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.

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

8.2 Search for the journal title.

8.3 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. *Please see section 4. Due to licencing restrictions, access to some online content is restricted to the National Art Library, South Kensington study room only.*

*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.*

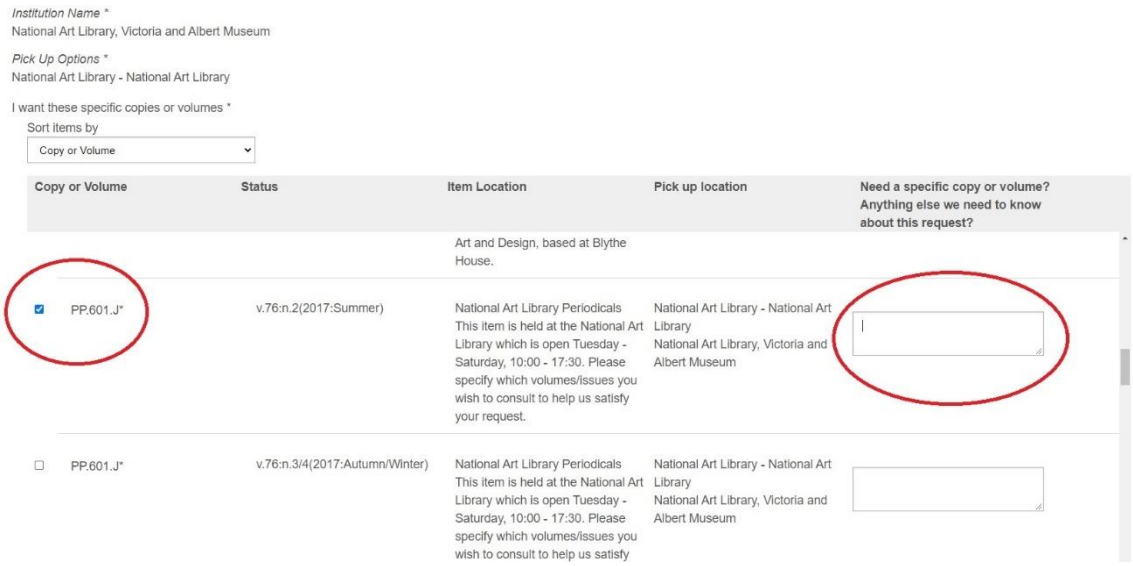
8.4 Click on the Journal title to view further bibliographic details and for a list of the National Art Library's print holdings.

8.5 To request print holdings from our National Art Library, South Kensington collections, click on **Request Item** (right sidebar). *Please see information in section 12 regarding ordering material from our V&A East Storehouse collections.*

Find out how to create an account in section 5.

8.6 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'.



8.7 Scroll down to the bottom of the screen.

In the date boxes please enter the following:

'From' date: Please select the date of your visit, this can be today's date. Find our days of opening at https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library#visit.

'To' date: Enter any date up to a week after your '**From'** date for general collections, or the Thursday of that week for special collections.

Please note: General collection items will be kept on reserve for **1 week** and **special collection items until 16.30** on the last day of opening of the week of your request. If the book is in a departmental library see section 10.

8.8 Click **Submit** to complete your request.

You will receive an email when your request is ready to collect at the National Art Library, South Kensington. 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 change to: 'Ready for pick up at South Kensington: National Art Library...'.

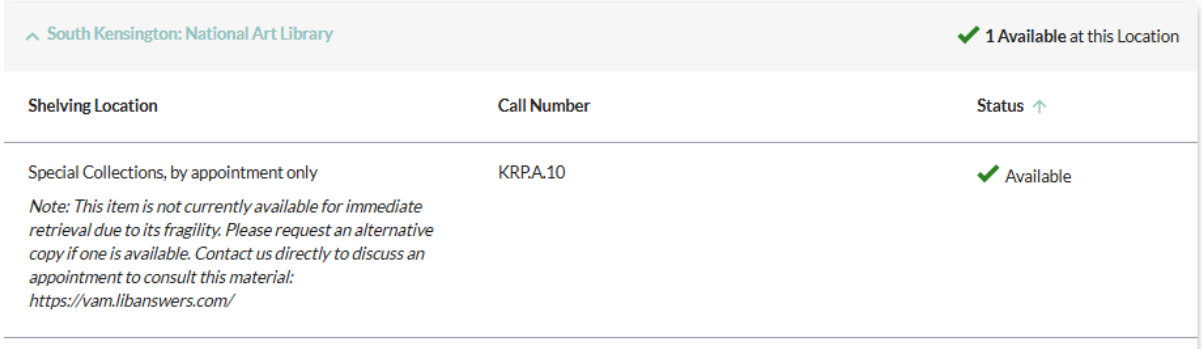
If you have placed a request in advance, you will only receive a confirmation email on the morning of the date you wish to view the item, alerting you it is ready to collect.

9. Request NAL 'appointment only' Material (South Kensington)

Some items in our collections 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 12.

For these reasons, you will see a message advising you that you need to make an appointment.



South Kensington: National Art Library — 1 Available at this Location

Shelving Location	Call Number	Status
Special Collections, by appointment only *Note: This item is not currently available for immediate retrieval due to its fragility. Please request an alternative copy if one is available. Contact us directly to discuss an appointment to consult this material: https://vam.libanswers.com/*	KRP.A.10	Available

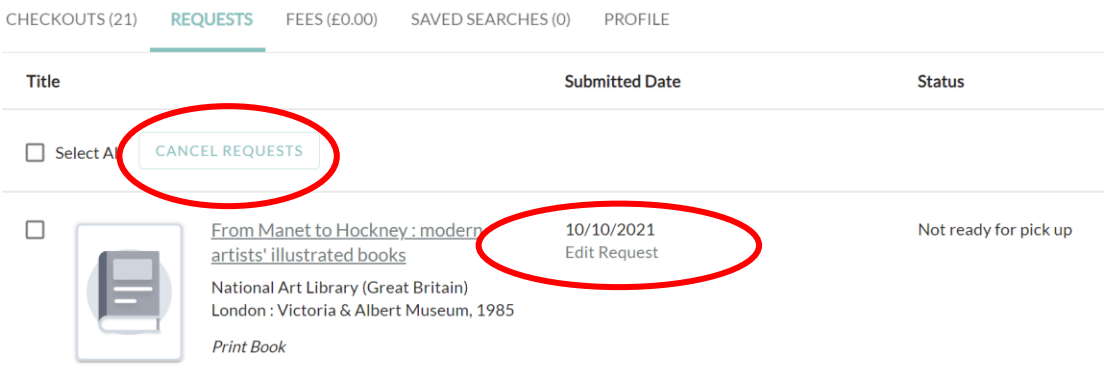
Please contact us: https://vam.libanswers.com/ to arrange an appointment. Please make sure you include all the required information including the date you would like to see the item. It may take several working days to receive a reply.

10. Request books held within V&A Departmental Libraries

Books held in the V&A departmental libraries are selected by curatorial staff as working tools and are held in locations around the South Kensington site. They can be found in the library catalogue. Most departmental library books are available to order in the usual way through the catalogue, but you will need to give 2 working days notice for them to be retrieved. **At present, some of these books are being organised into a new collection facility and are currently inaccessible. These items are marked on the catalogue as 'temporarily unavailable'.**

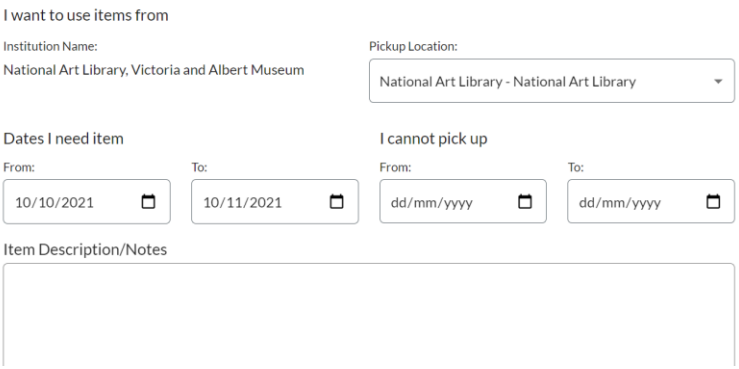
11. Update or Cancel a Request

To update or cancel a request, login and select 'My Account' (top right). Choose the 'Requests' tab. The options to **Edit** or **Cancel** are shown for each request:

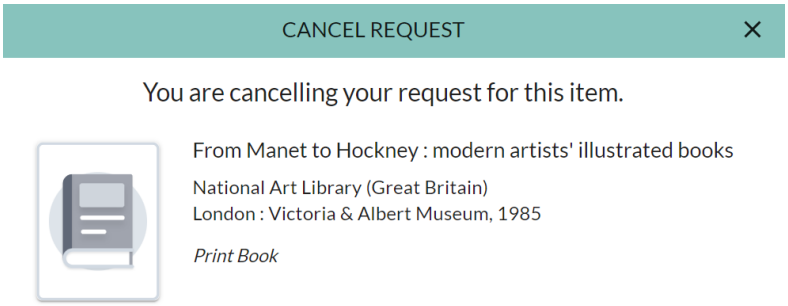


Click **Edit Request** to change the details of the request. You can then:

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



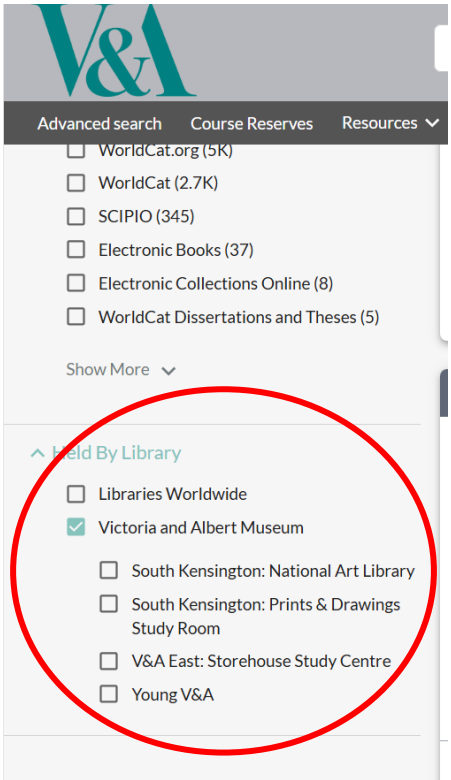
Click **Cancel** to delete your request. Then click **Cancel request** in the pop up box to confirm.



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

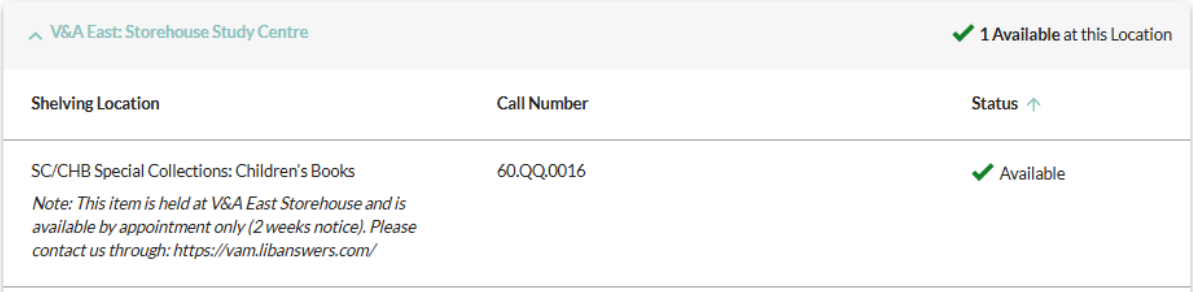
12. Request Material held in other V&A Study Rooms

Some material in the library catalogue is held in V&A Study Rooms other than the National Art Library, South Kensington. The location (and contact details where applicable) will display under **More Item Details**. If you are only interested in material held at a specific location (e.g. V&A East Storehouse) you can also restrict your search by selecting the 'branch' in the left-hand filter column.



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

12.1 V&A East Storehouse



V&A East: Storehouse Study Centre — 1 Available at this Location

Shelving Location	Call Number	Status
SC/CHB Special Collections: Children's Books *Note: This item is held at V&A East Storehouse and is available by appointment only (2 weeks notice). Please contact us through: https://vam.libanswers.com/*	60.QQ.0016	Available

All NAL material at [V&A East Storehouse] can be viewed by appointment only. Requests to view items are made through our [enquiry portal]. Once you have chosen the items you wish to see, please create a library account and contact us with your preferred date and

time of your visit. Appointments must be made a minimum of 1 week in advance. You can order up to 8 items per visit.

Collections include children's books and Theatre and Performance library collections.

12.2 Prints & Drawings Study Room

South Kensington: Prints & Drawings Study Room — 1 Available at this Location

Shelving Location	Call Number	Status
GC/PDP General Collection: Prints & Drawings Study Room *Note: This item is held at the Prints & Drawings Study Room. Please contact: aapd.enquiries@vam.ac.uk*	PDP PR.REF	Available

Results per Page: 10 1-1 of 1

NAL material stored in the Prints and Drawings Study Room can be viewed by appointment only. Requests to view items are made by contacting the Prints and Drawings Study Room enquiry service: aapd.enquiries@vam.ac.uk.

12.3 Young V&A

Young V&A — 0 Available at this Location

Shelving Location	Call Number	Status
Temporarily Unavailable *Note: This collection is unavailable during Museum redevelopment.*	GC.9 KAD	Not Available

Results per Page: 10 1-1 of 1

Book material held at Young V&A is not currently available. Young V&A Archive material is available via V&A East Storehouse. Please see Young V&A (Museum of Childhood) Archive · V&A for further information.