



Hi - I'm **Frances Willis**, based at the **National Art Library within the V&A Museum** in London. I'm an **Assistant Librarian**, primarily responsible for our group visits provision within the library. I also look after part of our interlibrary loans service and contribute to our public service offerings. I've curated several displays within the Museum, the most recent one on Prince Albert and his donations to the Library. I've also contributed to publications on the V&A collections.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

The best part of my job is getting to work so closely with our amazingly vibrant and varied collections. My role involves research and close contact with the special collections of the Library. The holdings are as diverse as letters from 19th century artists (sometimes illustrated), pieces of contemporary book art, fine bindings and even manuscripts by Dickens.

What motivates you in your work?

I'm motivated by the desire to help all different audiences get the most out of the NAL's collections. Over the past few years, I've been involved in a Cognitive Stimulation Therapy initiative in collaboration with our Learning Department and Resonate Arts. This has been a pioneering project providing engaging sessions within a Museum setting for groups of people living with the early stages of dementia. I love working in a library that is part of a museum as the research and initiatives that happen within the library are part of the bigger picture of exploration and engagement created within the museum.

How has/can the M25 Consortium support you in your career?

The M25 scheme offers a great range of visits to other institutions, which encourage dialogue between fellow professionals. I've been involved in the NAL's contribution for many years and always gain valuable insights into the working practices of libraries working not so far away from us!

What would it surprise people to know about you?

I think lockdown brought out interests in all of us that we've let lie, or perhaps never knew we had! My family and I produced a map of our local area and systematically covered each road and alley in our daily walks, colour-coding all the circuits.

Complete the sentence:

If I wasn't working in a library, I would be... trying to make a living creating cards and prints **because...** I enjoy producing linocuts in my spare time. I'm looking forward to pursuing the craft fayre dream in my retirement!

Frances Willis, National Art Library (V&A) February 2021