1. JOB DETAILS
Job Title: Acquisitions Assistant
Department: Information Services - Library, Museums & Galleries
Unit: Central Services – Bibliographic Services
Line manager: Acquisitions Team Supervisor

2. JOB PURPOSE
Provide an accurate, timely and efficient acquisition service for print and electronic information resources within the framework of IS/Library policies and procedures, in support of the University’s goals in teaching, learning and research.

3. MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES
Postholders within the Acquisitions Team may have responsibilities across both the Monographs and Serials sections:

- Acquire monographs through bibliographic checking and verification of incoming recommendations, and subsequent selection of appropriate vendor and fund to ensure timely receipt of items

- Receive and process serial issues and standing orders to ensure immediate availability of complete holdings, and longer-term selection/collation/handling of volumes for binding to ensure continued integrity and availability of journal collections for library users

- Record financial transactions and process invoices to ensure accurate attribution of financial commitment and spend to appropriate funds within the Library materials budget

- Monitor the full life cycle of monograph orders and serial subscriptions, intervening and troubleshooting as required (e.g. investigating non-supply and initiating claims) to ensure accurate and timely order fulfilment, referring as necessary to Monograph or Serials Supervisors

- Contribute to the maintenance of an accurate and up-to-date acquisitions/serials database (e.g. recording supplier reports of availability and price changes) to underpin operational efficiency of the Acquisitions section

- Undertake project-based work as required to accommodate wider policy and procedural changes (e.g. integration of serial subscriptions and outstanding book orders following a site library closure, or transfer to electronic-only delivery for specific titles)

4. PLANNING AND ORGANISING
The Monographs and Serials Supervisors organise, prioritise and allocate the work for the post-holder to carry out. Post-holders organise their own time on a daily basis, balancing allocated work with direct responses and enquiries from book/serial recommenders and a range of external suppliers, referring problems to the relevant Supervisor as necessary.

5. PROBLEM SOLVING
Typical problems which may arise include:

- Orders which cannot be placed due to insufficient bibliographic information being received from the recommender – the postholder must check a range of relevant bibliographic databases to verify details and, where necessary, contact the recommender to verify details to enable the purchase to proceed.

- A variety of problems may arise relating to receipt of an order (e.g. insufficient copies supplied, copies damaged in transit, or wrongly-supplied editions or titles) – the postholder
must apply judgement and use knowledge of the supplier to arrange shipment of missing or replacement copies to achieve the most effective and speedy fulfilment of the order, amending the Acquisitions database accordingly.

- Journal issues may be identified as not having been received as expected according to the predicted publication pattern — the postholder must contact the relevant publisher or supplier within the specified contractual timescale to determine the reason for non-supply, and follow through until the item is received, undertaking further claims where necessary.

6. DECISION MAKING

Decisions taken individually within general Acquisitions Department procedures and guidelines may include the following examples:

- Structuring the working day within the context of work which is allocated by the Supervisor
- Selecting appropriate monograph vendors within the framework of consortial agreements – e.g. when to use a principal supplier or other specialist supplier as circumstances dictate
- Determining best approach to reconcile inconsistencies and errors in receipt and invoicing (e.g. seeking clarification from suppliers on a range of potential issues)
- Deciding whether to seek replacement serial part with inherent delay, or bind incomplete volume (e.g. if alternate electronic access is available) thereby reducing inconvenience to users
- Deciding when a problem is more appropriately referred to a Supervisor

Referred decisions may include the following examples:

- Enquiries concerning departmental or library policy, e.g. discretion to bypass order submission via standard online recommendation form, or alerting Supervisor when a fund has reached its commitment limit
- Decisions regarding subscription funds, e.g. establishing new subscription commitments, cancellation of subscriptions, transfer of funds

7. KEY CONTACTS/RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Acquisitions and wider Bibliographic Services colleagues
- Other Main Library and site library colleagues
- Academic staff: direct queries concerning orders e.g. edition availability or cost changes
- Library users: i.e. provision of an Acquisitions enquiry service via the IS Helpdesk
- Library support staff

External

- Wide range of external vendors

Such working relationships may be on a formal or informal basis, face to face, through written communication or by phone.

8. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE NEEDED FOR THE JOB

- At least one years experience in the use of integrated library management systems, particularly Acquisitions, Serials and Cataloguing modules
- Thorough understanding of the use of bibliographic data in the acquisitions process
- Good communication, written and interpersonal skills.
- Attention to detail, high degree of accuracy and methodical working manner.
- Good team worker but also able to work with minimal supervision
- Good educational background - need to be very literate and numerate

9. DIMENSIONS

There are 8 FTE members of the Main Library Acquisitions Team at this level who handled the following throughput during 2004/05:

- Total number of book recommendations from academics: 12,550
- Total number orders placed for books: 11,800
- Total number of books received from suppliers: 17,300
- Total number journal issues received: 24,800
Total expenditure handled through the Acquisitions Module by the Team: £3,225,774.

10. JOB CONTEXT AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION
Acquisitions work is subject to fluctuations in demand throughout the academic and financial year. Time constraints are a key factor in several aspects of the job, including meeting service targets, and being accountable to suppliers who may invoke financial penalties if contractual obligations are not met. Postholders may develop areas of expertise in specific areas e.g. in trouble-shooting procedures to ensure the accuracy of the acquisitions database, or may be involved in project work to deal with a particular topic as needs arise.