job preparation in practical fields such as acquisitions is generally left to
improvising learning on the job (Giles 2002, Gorman 2006). Skills needed
for success in acquisitions librarianship include knowledge of business, account-
ing, automation, library systems, vendor relations, customer service to serve
one’s clientele, often other languages, and usually management. Rather than
learning these areas in library school, librarians often learn them on the job
and at workshops, or bring them from prior paraprofessional experience or
previous career fields.

**Recruiting and Placement**

**Skilled Acquisitions Librarians: Why and where are they going?**

Acquisitions job listings abound, as evidenced by a search in Websites of
library associations and library journals, professional listservs, and the Chronicle
of Higher Education. Advertised positions often reflect increasing emphasis
on electronic materials; positions for electronic resource and serials librarians
comprise over half of listed positions examined. While electronic resources
management is often a separate position, in lean times or in small libraries these
duties are combined with the acquisitions librarian’s overall duties. Often the
work entails managing print acquisitions plus overseeing major technology and
workflow redesigns. Acquisitions positions also reflect increasingly blurring
lines between acquisitions and collection development, thus often marrying
“the mechanics of purchasing” with the intellectual tenets of collection develop-
ment and management.

What do hiring libraries look for? Stated requirements include knowledge
of several areas or functions: business practices, software suites including
spreadsheets and database programs, and library systems, in addition to
the business of acquisitions. Preferred knowledge and experience include
management, leadership (especially in large, complex, and/or multi-site
organizations), accounting, vendor relations, negotiating license agreements,
knowledge of scholarly publishing methods and trends, proficiency in other
languages, understanding of international and specialized material sources,
supervisory and organizational skills, complex problem-solving and deci-
dion-making skills, and a track record of professional development and service.

Many positions suffer from small candidate pools and reopen searches.
Newly minted librarians interested in acquisitions rarely have the desired
continued on page 69