

# Assessing the Research Impact of the British Library's Major Heritage Acquisitions

Reference: 2021-WH-HAG

<b>Supervisor (name &amp; role)</b>	Dr Karen Limper-Herz (Lead Curator, Incunabula and Sixteenth Century Printed Books)
<b>Department &amp; Site</b>	Western Heritage Collections, London (St Pancras)
<b>Start date/Timeframe</b>	Any time from August 2021, but to be completed by March 2022 (exact start date to be discussed with the supervisor)
<b>Duration</b>	<b>3 months</b> (or part-time equivalent) For a part-time placement, the student would be required to spend a minimum of <b>3 days/week</b> on the project.
<b>Suitability for remote working</b>	Certain tasks (e.g. searching online databases) could be undertaken remotely, but for other elements the student would need to spend some time on site. Details to be discussed with the supervisor.

## Context for placement

[Heritage acquisitions](#) are items of a unique or highly distinctive status used as primary sources for research. The Library acquires such material on a daily basis through purchase or donation. Heritage acquisitions may be large (e.g. an archive comprising hundreds of boxes) or small (e.g. a printed book, musical score or single letter).

To prioritise investment and provide guidance and support to staff involved in acquiring this material, the Heritage Acquisitions Group (HAG) develops and oversees policy and strategy relating to major heritage acquisitions. Like all other heritage acquisitions, major heritage acquisitions require due diligence, expert selection and prioritisation, and rigorous appraisal of value and life-cycle costs.

Following a PhD placement in 2019 looking at different types of impact of major heritage acquisitions, the Library would now like to focus on research impact in particular. It is predominantly interested in identifying pathways to impact and understanding how research outputs based on heritage acquisitions come about. By looking at different types of material, the student will help to draw out a nuanced understanding of potential pathways to impact to better understand important differences between types of material and their use in research.

The student will work closely with the project supervisor and with the Library's Research Development team to produce a report on the research impact of major heritage acquisitions made by the Library. The student will also collaborate with Library staff to identify ways in which to assess the research impact of major heritage acquisitions on an ongoing basis.

### Expected tasks and outcomes

The student will:

- analyse internal and external data and produce a report of around 5,000 words on the research impact of major heritage acquisitions made between 2010 and 2020;
- draw on data recorded as part of the Library's acquisitions process, on Research Development's data on grants and collaborative doctoral programmes, the UKRI Gateway to Research, a reader survey, sales figures of books resulting from research on BL heritage material, REF statements;
- make recommendations for future impact assessments in the HAG process;
- write a blog post for the Library's website (optional).

The report will include:

- an executive summary;
- an overview of the research impact of the material acquired (relating it closely to the Library's strategy *Living Knowledge*);
- a small number of case studies on specific items covering a range of types of acquisitions and time periods to better understand the different pathways to impact as they relate to different types of material;
- recommendations on how to capture and maximise the research impact of HAG acquisitions going forward, allowing for a nuanced approach to and an understanding of the links between the types of material acquired and their use in research;
- a conclusion of the findings.

### Training and development opportunities

All placement students are welcome to access the Library's offer of workshops, talks and training. For further details please refer to the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

In addition, this placement project will offer the following:

- An opportunity to work closely with Library staff to understand how new acquisitions interact with their work, including funded research projects and collaborative doctoral studentships.
- An opportunity to shadow curators to see how heritage material is acquired and processed.
- Insights into the workings of a major research library.
- An understanding of the concept and ethics of 'cultural property'.
- Knowledge of acquisition methods, due diligence and related processes connected with major heritage acquisitions.
- An understanding of the life-cycle of heritage acquisitions.
- The ability to interpret data, and produce basic data visualisations.
- Experience of researching and writing a business report.
- Experience of communicating with colleagues working in various roles across the Library.
- Experience of handling sensitive and confidential data.

### Required knowledge and skills

Please ensure that you are aware of the general expectations for all applicants, as detailed in the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

For this specific project, the following additional criteria apply:

- Good ability to analyse and contextualise data.
- Awareness of handling and communicating sensitive and confidential data.
- An interest in how library collections are built and used.

Application deadline: 5pm on Friday **18 December 2020**

Further information on eligibility, conditions and how to apply is available on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/news/2020/october/phd-placement-adverts-2020>