



# Libraries through the lens

Library of the University of Basel's German language department

**IN a previous instalment of *Libraries through the Lens*, we visited the University of Basel's iconic 1960s concrete domed reading room. This month, we're back in the Swiss city on the Rhine for a very different atmosphere, under the roof of the 14th century "Engelhof" (Angel's court).**

Photographer and librarian Thomas Guignard says: "Once the home of a rich city counsellor and patron of the art, it is here that the Treaty of Basel was signed in 1499, ending the Swabian War and paving the way for the independence of the Swiss Confeder-

acy from the Holy Roman Empire. During the Reformation, Basel was a safe haven for Protestant exiles and the Engelhof is where Huguenot Henri of Condé took refuge after the St. Bartolomew's Day massacre. The house remained a place of gathering for thinkers and political exiles throughout the Enlightenment."

In the 20th century, the Engelhof kept welcoming the weary in the form of a hospice for workers, then a Christian hostel providing affordable lodgings and alcohol-free food to the starving students of the University nearby. In 1984, the house was acquired by the University.

Thomas says: "Nowadays, the lovely library of the German language department occupies the upper two floors of the Engelhof, combining elegant modern furniture with preserved original wood beams. This little-known gem in the University of Basel library network offers quiet casual workspaces, as well as dedicated desks to long-term researchers. With European countries cautiously reopening their borders, tourists are again walking the streets of Basel's old town. Those seeking an unusual view of the city may want to venture inside this library and find their way to its lovely rooftop terrace!"