



# Libraries through the lens

## Åbo Akademi Arken Library in Turku, Finland

**THIS month's libraries through the lens takes inspiration from a new academic year, as students gear up for a return to study.**

Photographer and librarian Thomas Guignard says: "To mark the beginning of a new semester in universities everywhere, I choose this photo of the library of the Åbo Akademi faculty of Arts in Turku, Finland. The presence of a Swedish-language university in Finland may be surprising until one remembers that the country was ruled by Sweden until early in the 19th century.

And it was during the Swedish rule that the Royal Academy of Åbo was founded, the first university in Finland. The Royal Academy later moved to Helsinki after a devastating fire to become the University of Helsinki. To replace the loss of their local university, private donations helped establish the Swedish-language Åbo Akademi in 1918 and its Finnish sibling, the University of Turku in 1920."

The library is on a site that was once home to a factory run by Fiskars, the company famous for ergonomic

orange-handled scissors. Thomas says: "The former factory compound was later acquired by the Åbo Akademi and transformed to host its Arts faculty. Opened in 2003, the faculty's library sits in a pair of single-story manufacturing halls facing the Aura river. Characteristic to 19th century industrial buildings, the gracious and lovingly preserved iron supports crown the contemporary bookshelves and reading rooms. The name of the Arken Library honours the twin arches formed by the iron supports throughout the building."