



# Libraries through the lens

## Bibliothèque de l'Hôtel de Ville, Paris

**“PARIS’ first municipal library had a rocky start. Established in 1763, it was neglected during the Revolution and ended up confiscated by the new government. Another library was founded to replace it, but it burned down, together with the old City Hall, during the Paris Commune in 1871,” says photographer and librarian Thomas Guignard about this month’s Libraries through the lens.**

Two separate institutions were then founded on the remains of that ill-fated

library: the Historical Library of Paris, which still exists today, and an administrative library, aimed at serving the municipal government. This administrative library was to be housed in the new City Hall built by architects Pierre Joseph Édouard Deperthes and Théodore Ballu. Designed by Deperthes, the Bibliothèque de l’Hôtel de Ville opened on the fifth floor of the new City Hall on 15 June 1890 and is still in use.

Thomas says: “A lovely surprise was waiting for me when I visited this library in the summer of 2019. As the documentation

centre for the Paris municipal government, the library has collected local regulations and artefacts from many cities around the world, presumably to act as a reference or inspiration for Paris city staffers. Knowing I was visiting from Toronto, the head curator had pulled from the archives a copy of the City of Toronto by-laws from 1876. Getting to see and photograph beautiful spaces is always a reward during my travels, but connecting with the people that care and manage the libraries I visit is an extra treat!”