



# Libraries through the lens

Institut Canadien de Québec

**A SIGNIFICANT anniversary is the reason for this month's Libraries through the lens.**

Librarian and photographer Thomas Guignard says: "I hope the *Information Professional's* readers will allow me one more library from Québec for this month's photo. It is a timely one, however, as the institution pictured is celebrating its 175 years of existence this autumn.

"Founded in 1848, the Institut Canadien de Québec (ICQ) is the oldest francophone cultural organisation in North America. It was created to promote the French language

and culture in what was then still a British colony. Since then, the ICQ has played a major role in shaping the province's cultural landscape, notably by establishing the Québec public library, which it still operates today under the city's mandate."

The institute moved home almost 80 years ago and a 2015 refurbishment has resulted in the library being brought out of the basement to become a central feature. Thomas explains: "In 1944, the ICQ moved into the former Wesley Methodist church that had been sitting empty since the 1920s. Its library was installed in the

basement while the nave was converted to a theatre and concert venue. In 2015, the building was thoroughly transformed by Chevalier Morales architects to become the Maison de la Littérature, the ICQ's new flagship venue. Swapping places, the theatre moved to the lower floor while a library entirely dedicated to Québec authors took over the church's main space. Besides being one of the most visually striking libraries I've ever visited, the Maison de la Littérature also hosts writer residences and several events throughout the year."