



Libraries through the lens

Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire de Strasbourg

THOMAS Guignard's latest image has a festive slant – although it is not immediately obvious.

Thomas says: "This holiday season, some *Information Professional* readers may have enjoyed a visit to one of the numerous Christmas markets that each year turn European squares into wonderlands of small shops and fountains of mulled wine.

"Among the most popular is that of Strasbourg, France, where the end of year market fills the tortuous streets surrounding its

magnificent cathedral. But how many will look behind the magnificent Gothic facade at the austere pink sandstone building abutting the cathedral's choir?"

Those who do venture inside the Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire de Strasbourg will find a library "built between 1769 and 1775 by Paris architect François-Simon Houlié".

Thomas adds: This is the Strasbourg Seminary. Looking up from the street, passersby may wonder at a series of blind

windows along one of its facades. They were built that way to maximise storage space inside the Seminary's library, a rare surviving example of ecclesiastical libraries in France. Its rich collection contains over 3,000 manuscripts dating back to the Middle Ages, including a rare 9th century copy of Bede's *De natura rerum*. Artworks and religious objects complete the collection, such as the 18th century silver Virgin statue seen here at the back of the room."