



# Libraries through the lens

## Bibliothèque Carnegie, Reims

**OUR latest Libraries through the lens image takes us to the unofficial capital of Champagne, the French city of Reims.**

As well as being home to the famous fizz, the city has held historic importance as Thomas Guignard explains.

“Due to its strategic location halfway between Paris and the German border, the city of Reims (or Rheims) formed part of the ‘iron barrier’, a system of fortifications established towards the end of the 19th century.

“This was tried by fire during the First

World War, which brought devastation to the city. Reims emerged from the conflict with more than 60 per cent of its buildings destroyed or badly damaged, including the magnificent cathedral where all but one of the French kings have been crowned. The destruction of Reims was a deep blow to the French pride and the reconstruction of the ‘martyr city’ was a top priority after the war.”

That rebuild included a new city library, Bibliothèque Carnegie, which bears the name of its main benefactor and is

the focus of this month’s photograph. Thomas says: “As with other cities in the region, the reconstruction effort was partly funded by American aid. For its new library, Reims received funds from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which also helped rebuild libraries in Louvain and Belgrade. Designed by city architect Max Sainsaulieu in the then popular Art Deco style, the new library was inaugurated in 1928. A bronze bust of benefactor Andrew Carnegie stands in front of the entrance.”