



Libraries through the lens

Botanical Garden Library, Geneva

LIBRARIAN and photographer Thomas Guignard introduces this issue's Library through the lens, with a look inside Geneva's Botanical Garden Library.

He says: "The Geneva Botanical Garden was founded in 1817 by Swiss botanist Augustin Pyramus de Candolle and is now regarded as one of the five most important in the world. Beside an impressive living collection of over 11,000 taxa, it is also home to an herbarium of over six million preserved specimens, a seed bank of nearly 800 taxa and a research library of over 220,000 volumes. Since the early 1900s, it is located on 28 hectares of lakeside property adjacent to the United Nations park."

The library and its associated research and storage areas were created by a prominent local architect, drawing inspiration from Louis Kahn's work.

Thomas says: "The conservatory, as the research and storage facilities are known, was built in phases between 1969 and 1974 by Jean-Marc Lamunière. One of Western Switzerland's most important architects of the postwar modern period, Lamunière spent some time teaching in Philadelphia in 1967. There he met Louis Kahn, who exerted a powerful influence on the Swiss architect. In particular, Kahn's principles of separating ancillary spaces from the rooms they serve can be perceived in the spatial organisation of the botanical garden conservatory.

"The project is formed of steel framed elements arranged on a strict orthogonal raster that acts both as a structural and conceptual framework. Floor plates and vertical supports are all doubled and enclosed with narrow panes of translucent materials that hide all technical conduits."