

60 seconds with...

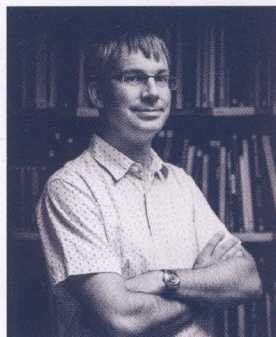


Photo © Valérie Baeriswyl

Thomas Guignard is Director of Services at the Ontario Colleges Library Service in Toronto, Canada.

Twitter: @timtomch Instagram: @concretelibraries

Thomas says: I am responsible for coordinating various services that we provide to the libraries of the publicly funded colleges in the province of Ontario. These include negotiating contracts and electronic resource licences on behalf of our member colleges, operating a shared virtual reference service, managing software such as a digital repository, an integrated library system, a remote authentication proxy service, etc. What I like best about my role is that I get to do a great variety of things, working with people in different institutions of varying size and spread across a very large area.

Before moving to Canada, I was head of collection development at the EPFL library in Lausanne, Switzerland. There I also actively participated in the migration of all campus libraries to the Rolex Learning Centre. I'm just now realising that this project was almost 10 years ago now, yet it still feels very fresh in my memory! Working on this project sparked my interest in the architecture and design of libraries, a passion that I am still pursuing today in my spare time, by traveling the world to photograph libraries. You can find some examples of my work in the pages of this magazine, or on Instagram at @concretelibraries.

What was your earliest ambition?

I wasn't always destined to be a librarian. I started by studying engineering and it was during my PhD research that I became fascinated by ways of organising data and information.

Who has inspired you in your career?

The name that first comes to mind is David Aymonin, who was the library director that hired me for my first library job and mentored me during the formative years of my career. But really, I'm inspired every day by all the library workers who are dedicated to enhancing the experience of their users. Some do this by tackling important causes and fighting for social justice, others by obsessing over the perfect spine label; they are all heroes in their own way.

Career advice – what's your top tip

Don't be afraid to try doing things differently and question established processes. Many are there

for a good reason, but some can benefit from a fresh look!

Best professional achievement/moment?

I share this achievement with a whole team that put this feat together, but nothing beats the satisfaction of merging 10 campus libraries and moving them to a new building in the middle of a busy semester with only a single day of service interruption.

Worst professional moment (if you dare!)

Having to let a staff member go after months of trying to resolve deep interpersonal conflicts. It was very difficult for everyone, but in retrospect I probably made it worse by wanting to believe a solution could be found for too long and not making that hard decision earlier.

What CILIP member networks do you belong to?

Being a member of CILIP allows me to keep in touch with the UK

library community, with which I have a connection to since completing my MLS at the University of Aberystwyth. I am active in several local library organizations here in Ontario.

What drives you on?

Making life easier for others.

A book you've enjoyed recently?

I just finished reading *Circe* by Madeline Miller. I absolutely love how she adds modern freshness and brings back depth and complexity to mythological figures.

Have you got any hidden talents?

I like to sing, although I haven't joined a choir in a good while now.

Do you cook, if so, what's your signature dish?

I love cooking. I also bake my own bread, and a fresh loaf is what I'm asked to bring to dinner parties. Does this make it my signature dish?