



Libraries through the lens

“The Brain”, Freie Universität, Berlin

THIS month, with the world on lockdown, *Libraries through the lens* visits the Free University of Berlin and the library of its philological faculty.

Libraries through the lens' photographer Thomas Guignard describes it as one of the most visually striking libraries he has ever seen and says that in these troubled times he was keen to share it.

“I’m thinking that the *Information Professional* readers could use a little escapism right now, so why not visit one of the most visually striking libraries I’ve ever had the chance to see?” asks Thomas. “This is the

library of the philological faculty at the Free University of Berlin, designed by Lord Norman Foster and opened in 2005. Occupying a courtyard amidst the rust-coloured low buildings of the campus’ 1967 extension, Lord Foster’s organic aluminium and glass structure makes a dramatic contrast with the surrounding modernist and functional faculty pavilions.”

The form and function of the building “immediately earned the library a new nickname: the ‘brain’.”

Thomas says: “Inside the double-walled glass hull, the library is split in two hemispheres, further adding to the brain

analogy. The collections are concentrated around the center of the space, surrounded by terraced reading rooms that all face the exterior wall. A central atrium cuts through the library, bringing natural light down to the lower levels. Colourful carpeting, furniture and wall decor further enhance the playfulness of the space. Despite being plagued with recurring water infiltration issues, this unique library is an impressive piece of infrastructure, won several architecture prizes and still looks futuristic 15 years after it opened.”

For more “library tourism” and escapism visit Thomas’ Instagram feed @concretelibraries.