

Parisian Library Has A French Twist

By Stephanie Levin-Gervasi

American Way - Sojourns

Ooh la la, the French have done it again. They've taken a rundown wine-broker's warehouse in Paris and turned it into the European literary monument of the twenty-first century - the Bibliotheque nationale de France, a \$2 billion public library on the Left Bank.

The 210-foot-high chiseled-glass facility; which opened a year and a half ago, would have pleased Sartre and Sophocles, even though the high-tech edifice resembles a futurist literary salon. Patrons use airport-style moving walkways to navigate individual floors quickly, and five miles of computerized conveyor belts deliver books to 150 receiving points. And forget card catalogues; instead, a computerized system helps you find 180,000 books, 2,500 magazines and periodicals, and 2,100 audiovisual titles. Adjust your pince-nez.

Do you like quiet when you read? Just retreat to one of several red-carpeted, soundproof reading rooms, which also have electronic window shutters programmed to automatically let in just the right amount of light.

Besides nurturing the mind, this modern temple of knowledge also teems with aesthetic appeal. For example, exotic Amazonian ipecac wood changes color as it ages, creating intricate mosaics on the library's walls.

Quai François Mauriac, 13 arrondissement at Pont de Tolbiac; 011-33-1-53-79-53-79