



The Future of Research Libraries in a Digital World

Colloquium on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of
the Nordic Library at Athens

5 December 2025
Danish Institute at Athens

PROGRAMME

- 09:30 Registration and introduction
- 10:00 Karin Grönvall (National Librarian, National Library of Sweden)
- 10:20 Kimmo Tuominen (National Librarian, National Library of Finland)
Toward a Shared Future: Research Libraries as Engines of Collaboration, Openness, and Impact
- 10:40 Maria-Carme Torras-Calvo (Deputy Director General, University of Bergen)
Academic libraries as partners in research and education: Current issues and future directions
- 11:00 Discussion
- 11:30 Coffee break
- 12:00 Jennie Jones Gunnarsen (Librarian, The David Collection)
The Future Is Hybrid: Why Print Still Matters in Research Libraries
- 12:20 Astrid Capoferro (Head Librarian, Swedish Institute in Rome)
From Catalogues to Digital Portals: Preserving and Sharing Classical Heritage at the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome
- 12:40 Evi Charitoudi (Librarian, British School at Athens)
Foreign School Libraries in Athens: Navigating Tradition and Transformation in a Unique Research Ecosystem
- 13.00 Discussion and summarising comments

ABSTRACTS

Kimmo Tuominen (National Librarian, National Library of Finland)

Toward a Shared Future: Research Libraries as Engines of Collaboration, Openness, and Impact

The future of research libraries will be built through collaboration: by networking closely at both national and international levels, pooling negotiating power with respect to publishers and lawmakers, and developing shared solutions for research infrastructures, data, and open science. This talk outlines how libraries can narrow global gaps in expertise, funding, and access; strengthen advocacy at the intersections of copyright, freedom of expression, and data protection; and leverage technology (including AI and research data services) to save researchers' time in the spirit of Ranganathan. The focus is on practical alliances, co-funding, and development cooperation models that ensure openness is genuinely attainable—not merely a privilege of the wealthy—and that position libraries as bridge-builders toward more evenly distributed, competitive, and responsible science.

Maria-Carme Torras-Calvo (Deputy Director General, University of Bergen)

Academic libraries as partners in research and education: Current issues and future directions

This presentation focuses on the academic library's contribution to achieving the university's strategic goals. Based on the University of Bergen's current strategy, examples will be given of how the University Library's services add value to its main user groups (researchers, students and lecturers) as well as society at large. This presentation will also outline how our services need to evolve to meet current challenges and leverage emerging opportunities in an ever-changing academic landscape.

Jennie Jones Gunnarsen (Librarian, The David Collection)

The Future Is Hybrid: Why Print Still Matters in Research Libraries

As research libraries adapt to an increasingly digital environment, the landscape is shaped by consolidation, shifting user expectations, and expanding roles for librarians — from citation support to data stewardship and archival integration. Yet, the trajectory is not uniform. Drawing on experiences from two Danish museum libraries — Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek and The David Collection — this presentation explores how smaller, specialized research libraries approach digitization in distinct and context-sensitive ways.

Astrid Capoferro (Head Librarian, Swedish Institute in Rome)

From Catalogues to Digital Portals: Preserving and Sharing Classical Heritage at the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome

The Research Library of the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome has evolved by combining its strong bibliographic tradition with new digital initiatives that enhance access to its holdings. Alongside the library's online catalogue (OPAC), which provides detailed access to its bibliographic resources, the Digital Collections Portal and a growing number of digital exhibitions highlight and promote the library's rare books, special collections, and archival materials. Together, these tools significantly expand the visibility and scholarly use of the library's unique heritage, bridging traditional research methods and digital scholarship.

This local resource is part of a broader collaborative framework through URBiS, the union catalogue that for ten years has connected Rome's major research libraries, continuing a long tradition of cooperation among them. URBiS has become an indispensable tool for the international community of scholars working in Rome, offering unified access to an exceptional concentration of resources in the humanities, and further strengthening the collaborative network among institutions.

Evi Charitoudi (Librarian, British School at Athens)

Foreign School Libraries in Athens: Navigating Tradition and Transformation in a Unique Research Ecosystem

The foreign schools in Athens form a distinctive ecosystem that fosters a vibrant research community. The oldest among these institutions are themselves part of the intellectual history of modern Greece. At the heart of this ecosystem are their libraries—specialised collections that have evolved into recognised destinations attracting scholars and students from across the globe.

These libraries occupy a special position within Athens' broader library landscape, offering resources and perspectives that cannot be found elsewhere. Their specialised collections consolidate materials that might be scattered across multiple academic library branches in other locations but are accessible in one place in Athens. Importantly, they serve independent scholars and researchers not currently affiliated with universities, providing crucial access to resources and community. Each library reflects the scholarly traditions of its home country, resulting in distinct strengths in their collections. This diversity has fostered collaborative relationships that serve the research community effectively while maintaining individual identities and specialisations.

This presentation examines the landscape of foreign school libraries in Athens, providing an overview of their collaborative initiatives and continuing role as networking hubs. It identifies specific challenges these institutions face—from maintaining physical collections in an increasingly digital world to ensuring discoverability of specialized resources—while highlighting distinctive opportunities including digital humanities projects, international collaboration enabled by digital platforms, and new ways to serve as centres of expertise and community. Notably, while these libraries engage actively with digital technologies, they remain fundamentally centres for books and traditional resources, a characteristic that scholars particularly value. The presentation aims to foster discussion about the future of these vital institutions within Athens' research ecosystem.