

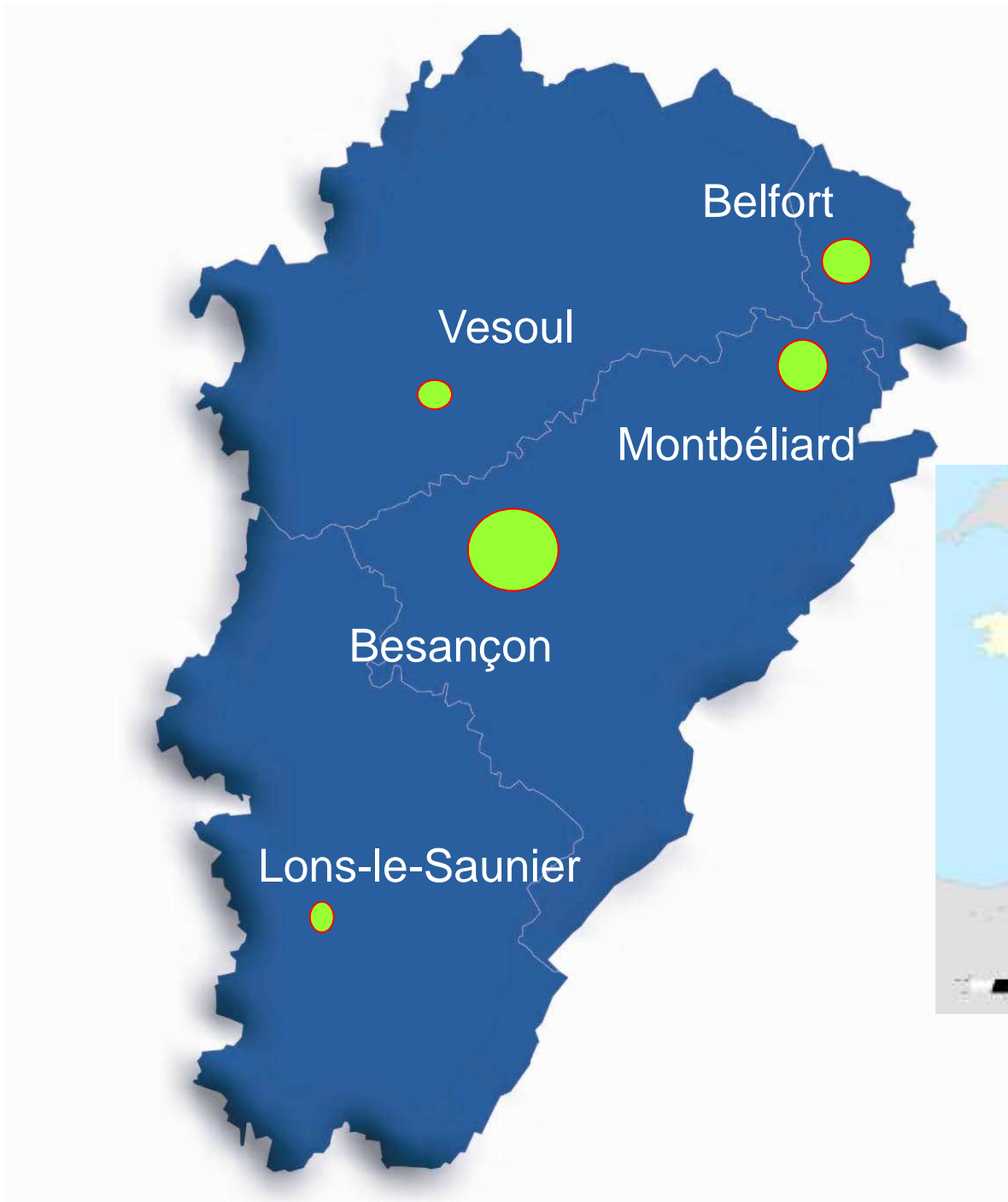
From fee to free, from limited to unlimited: the students' point of view

Liège, 31 May 2022



Structure of the talk

- I/ The Master Rare Book and Digital Humanities
- II/ Besançon libraries
- III/ Students' point of view





I/The Master Rare Book and Digital Humanities

- Created in 2017, opened in 2019
- It aims at providing high level competence in rare and early books with a view to providing the capacity to work in the book trade or in rare book conservation and digitization, along with digital humanities expertise allowing one to supervise digitization, online accessibility, and 3D animation projects etc.
- <https://rare-book-and-digital-humanities.ubfc.fr/?lang=en>

I/The Master Rare Book and Digital Humanities

- 80% of classes in English, 20% in French
- Classes in Bibliography, History of the Book, Book Culture, Digital Humanities, Tools (Latin, Greek, IT, French/English)
- 2 internships (min. 2 and 4 months)
- A 2-year research project (thesis and digital object)
- A group project (Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève) and several individual projects

I/The Master Rare Book and Digital Humanities

- A network of universities: Catholic University Milan, ITMO St-Petersburg, NYU Abu Dhabi, University of Oregon, Harvard University, National University of Colombia, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Lebanese university, University of Balamand
- Partnerships in France and outside France with libraries, museums, research centers and auction houses from Colombia to Jerusalem, from the USA to Iceland

I/The Master Rare Book and Digital Humanities

- 73% of international students
- 19 different countries
- Circa half of them with background in Library and Information Sciences or working as librarians
- Interest for collections, 2 study days in 2020 and in 2022

II/ Besançon libraries

- Service Commun de Documentation de l'université de Franche-Comté
- <https://scd.univ-fcomte.fr/>
- BU Lettres et Sciences Humaines
- Bibliothèque Hérodote
- Bibliothèque Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité

II/ Besançon libraries

- Network of municipal libraries in Besançon (5+1+1)
- Dates back to 1694
- Bibliothèque d'étude et de conservation, partner of the Master
- Incunabula and medieval manuscripts
- Part of the history of Besançon

II/ Besançon libraries

- 2025 : « Grande Bibliothèque Saint-Jacques »
- BU Lettres, BM Etude, Médiathèque Pierre Bayle
- About 30 million Euros
- Cité Internationale des Savoirs et de l'Innovation
- Project since the 1990s
- Unique project (supposedly)

II/ Besançon libraries

- 2 catalogues that can be common, 2 cards
- Several « logistical » questions
- Opening times, especially BU / BME
- Shelves or not shelves
- Spaces
- Staff

III/ Students' point of view

- 4 questions:
 - *Which Besançon library do/did you most use (BU, Bibliothèque d'étude etc.)? How often?*
 - *How open (what time schedule) you would like these librairies to be?*
 - *In 2025, the Bibliothèque Universitaire and the Bibliothèque Municipale will merge in one single building and in one single institution. Do you think it will be positive or negative?*
 - *What kind of differences have you found between librairies in France and in your home country (if applicable)? How would you like your ideal library to be?*

III/ Students' point of view

- 1°) Libraries users: BU during the week, BME and Mediathèque on Saturdays
- 2 main scopes: research and study
- *I split my time between the BU during the week in between classes and the Bibliotheque d'étude and the Bib municipale on Saturdays, although the 2 hour closure in the middle of the day was frustrating*
- *Since I worked in the Bibliothèque Hérodote, I spent a lot of time there, but for most of my researches or documents or even time that I spent there doing a homework or even for my thesis projetc, my go to was the Bibliothèque d'étude.*

III/ Students' point of view

- *La universitaire la uso para lo académico, la de étude para los libros antiguos y la médiathèque Pierre Bayle la uso para libros de relajación que no son ni académicos ni antiguos (come novelas, bd, cuentos, revistas, etc.).*
- *I suppose I use the BU the most, but only on rare occasions (maybe 6 times since I've arrived in Besançon) and primarily for the use of the public space rather than the available resources (since most of what was there is in French and not English).*

III/ Students' point of view

- 2°) Longer opening times for all libraries
- *Bibliothèque d'étude, open before 10am and not closed for 2 hours. BU, open all day Saturday during term time and beyond 7pm in the evenings as this is such an early cut off time for students (from my experience in other countries) especially with class during the week. If you are in class all day and then the library closes at 7pm and is not open Saturdays, you are left with few options.*

III/ Students' point of view

- *Los horarios deberían ser de 8h30 a 20h de lunes a sábado y el domingo abierta hasta medio día.*
- *I am of the opinion that libraries should have a wide range of hours (early morning to at least mid-evening) to accommodate varying schedules. These are meant to be public spaces and safe havens for those interested in pursuing their work in their off-hours.*
- *Later hours after 18h (at least during exam periods)*
- *I consider 19h30 it's a good time during spring, summer and the first half of fall, perhaps for winter, closing at 18h it's fair.*

III/ Students' point of view

- 3°) Various points of view
- *If there is enough space for everyone I think it will be positive although I think the stress of students will make for a less wholesome environment. I think most people who visit the municipal library are not students and are looking for books for leisure, not a place to sit for hours to work on assignments. I think it would work better if there will be separate spaces for students and the general public so the student culture of spending hours in a very stressed mindset doesn't leak into the more relaxed side of libraries.*

It also means that if there is only one hour between classes it will not be worth the time needed to get the BU from on-site campus classrooms as right now you can go straight from class to the BU and get a good session done, but if you have to walk to Avenue 8 Mai with only one hour this won't be worth it.

I do think it might increase students' use of books if they are in closer proximity to books for leisure and it might lead to inter-generational connections if these spaces are combined

III/ Students' point of view

- *I think that the project is interesting but I do tend to consider it more negative since the Bibliothèque d'étude is a special quiet place, that focuses on individual work with ancient documents and books, the Bibliothèque Universitaire is way more visited by students doing team projects, a lot of medical students go there too because it is more quiet than their library but in general I consider there is a lot of people there and merging those two will clash the different kind of people that go to each one, that will harm the environment overall of the library.*
- *This depends. A merge could be seen as a positive in the respect that it would centralize the resources of the libraries in Besançon, making the acquisition of these resources less complicated. However, if there is not ample workspace for all interested parties and a wider range of available hours (especially for those who would need more time to travel to and from that centralized location), then this could prove just to be another inconvenience in terms of accessibility and lower the desirability for utilizing the library's facilities.*

III/ Students' point of view

- *No estoy segura que me gustaría que todo se mezclara, porque además de que son libros sobre diferentes cosas, cada biblioteca tiene su ambiente y vamos a cada lado según cómo nos queremos sentir. También creo que las bibliotecas no son solo bodegas para guardar los libros, sino que el espacio en el que están ayudan a que puedas concentrarte de diferente forma. Por ejemplo, en la biblioteca d'étude sería una pesadilla para los encargados y para los asistentes estar en una sala masiva con cientos de personas estudiando como en la biblioteca de la universidad, porque se necesita silencio y mucho más cuidado que con los libros normales.*
- *I guess the two libraries have different users and possibly different objectives during their establishment, for me I think it would be better if they operate differently but possibly housed in the same building.*

III/ Students' point of view

- 4°) Opening hours, shelves, back end / front end, private vs public
- *Libraries here have much shorter opening hours, especially on Saturdays where the 2 hour closure can be disruptive and off-putting. Here the BU has less material on the shelves and more in the magasin.*

Not all of the tables have easy access plugs here. The wifi in libraries not connected to eduroam can only host one device at a time so you have to keep switching between phone and laptop (although this can be a useful push to not spend time on useless sites).

My university in Ireland had every domain in the one building, whereas here students are separated by formation (which makes sense seeing as the campuses are more spread out).

There are not a lot of seats in the BU and often at peak times it is crowded and very tense.

III/ Students' point of view

- *Mostly I can say that the libraries are visited and very used by a lot of the students, not only one community (like the medical one), also there are several copies of the same book which also helps a lot because more students can have access to it. Also, there are far more libraries here in the city than in mine that is considerably bigger.*
- *The libraries in France are different from the USA primarily in terms of scheduling. At least in reference to the BU, libraries here are closed on the weekend. This, to me, is very inconvenient for students who may wish to study or work on the weekends and have nowhere else to go. In my home country, libraries on campus would be open on weekends, but just with shorter hours (but still extensive all things considering). And, if they were closed, there would always be another public spot that could be found for early-morning/late-night studying and access to WiFi. It's a 'campus culture' that does not really exist here in France. My dream library is an institution that is a phenomenal resource for finding all genres of texts (pleasure and academic) with interlibrary loan capabilities AND is a creative, safe workspace for the community.*

III/ Students' point of view

- *Considero que hay un buen funcionamiento en las bibliotecas, en cuanto a la consulta por catálogos y el acceso a los libros. Sin embargo, considero que la BU podría digitalizar algunos de sus archivos como las memorias y las tesis para ser consultados en línea. En comparación a las bibliotecas de Colombia el funcionamiento es muy parecido, a excepción de la biblioteca de la Universidad Javeriana que está abierta 24 horas y permite a los estudiantes pasar toda la noche en sus salas. Esta idea es buena en algunos momentos del semestre, sobre todo cuando hay que preparar los exámenes. También en algunas bibliotecas hay una Oficina de préstamo y devolución de libros que funciona durante toda la jornada sin necesidad de ingresar a la biblioteca.*
- *Libraries in France resemble libraries belonging to private higher educational institutions in Lebanon, noting that some norms and policies may differ but they both lead to the same outcome when it comes to collections and user services (A comparison cannot be done between public libraries in Lebanon and France ; corruption governs Lebanese libraries belonging to the public sector including educational institutions, national library, municipal libraries etc... We can say that they are almost non existent, since they are present but not fully functional due to lack of funding and resources unfortunately Libraries are not one of the government's priorities")*

Conclusion

- Different opinions based on different cultural and educational backgrounds
- Free and unlimited?
- Work in progress
- Need to hear other points of views (librarians, faculty members etc).
- 2025 or maybe later...