

Design Tips for Home Libraries

How to use light, color and, of course books, to create a perfect spot to read

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Navy shelving, layered with artwork and a traditional-style rug and furnishings, lend this library by Corey Damen Jenkins a classical feel.

WERNER STRAUBE

Designer's Corner



*Each week Mansion Global tackles an interior design topic with an elite group of designers from around the world who work on luxury properties. This week we look at **how to design a warm and inviting library**.*

In a world where dog-earing has given way to double clicks, a library at home has a kind of old-world charm. Whether you have the luxury of turning an entire room into a refuge for reading or simply a cozy nook, creating this kind of space can bring an instant sense of calm.

“Your library is a record of who you are,” said Jeffrey Forrest founder of STACKLAB, a multi-disciplinary design studio based in Toronto. “Design decisions should be deliberate and very personal—with equal focus on celebrating your history, but also on the joy of reading.”

“Libraries also afford great opportunities to showcase collections, hobbies, and other personal interests,” said Corey Damen Jenkins of Corey Damen Jenkins & Associates in Michigan. “The first step in determining a library’s look and feel is asking yourself a question: ‘What should this library say about me?’”

To help you hone in on the vibe, follow these tips from the design pros.

Set the space

“Libraries can entertain a number of layout configurations. It could be something as simple as four lounge chairs facing each other around a cocktail table under a chandelier. Or perhaps a desk takes center stage with bookshelves serving as the backdrop. Depending on the room’s size, the inclusion of a chaise lounge can also be an attractive and cozy feature.

"Comfortable seating conducive for generous hours of reading is important. Don't underestimate the need for good lighting in these spaces. Dimmable ceiling fixtures are key, but eye-level ambient light should also be taken into consideration.

"As a designer, I often hang artwork on the fronts of the shelves themselves. I've also layered art behind books and other objects as a backdrop. You can also lean art against the walls on top of the bookshelves and nestle other collectibles with it."

— **Corey Damen Jenkins of Corey Damen Jenkins & Associates in Michigan**

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Determine the details

“It’s always important to first get a handle on how the space will be used. Does it need to be family friendly and kid oriented? Will it serve as a more formal space for adults? This helps inspire an overall theme and mood.

"I love a dramatic, moody library, whether it's more classical and formal in nature or more outrageous and funky. In either case, I typically center the color palette around a combination of wall coverings and wood millwork and paneling.



This room, designed by Jenny Kirschner, features comfortable seating and recessed lighting to help create a warm and cosy ambience.

JDK Interiors

"For seating, my clients always love a cozy and comfortable sofa with a luxe throw blanket and a reading chair with an ottoman. I love millwork and custom built-in shelves to display books and objects, and I always add some concealed storage below for board games and puzzles. If you have the space, include a handsome game table and a fireplace (there are so many wonderful, vent-less options if there is not an existing fireplace in the space).

"Directional recessed ceiling lights are ideal to light specific areas of the room that are otherwise in the shadows. A fabulous center fixture or chandelier helps define the space. I especially love wall sconces mounted to the millwork between books for added charm. A floor lamp next to the reading chair is also a must."

—**Jenny Kirschner, principal of JDK Interiors in New York**

Set the tone

“Floor-to-ceiling open shelving can be an incredibly interesting partition, especially if you design it so the books cantilever off either side. This gives you a textural quality that can make your space.

"Use leather straps to bind your books together into side tables and footrests. Add interesting furniture, such as a robust bar cart to hold tumblers and tea mugs, a heavily padded hammock or hanging lounger, and an antique drafting table that you can open multiple books on.”



Libraries needn't just contain books: Here, designer Jeffrey Forrest of STACKLAB in Toronto created an audiofile record shelf to house a client's vinyl collection.

Sean McBride

— **Jeffrey Forrest founder of STACKLAB, a multi-disciplinary design studio based in Toronto**

Create commonality

“Maintaining a common theme throughout the room using materials that play off of each other, as well as a consistent color palette, creates a cozy and sophisticated atmosphere. Darker tones of colored glass, timber wood, marble, and bronze metal lend a warm feel and a strong sense of materiality.”



A combination of mixed metals and dark woods and hues contribute to the moody vibe of this library in Lincoln Square, London designed by Patricia Urquiola.

Lincoln Square, London

— **Milan-based designer Patricia Urquiola**