

INTERIOR MOTIVES

Make library personal space



NAOMI STONE LEVY

The library or book room becomes your very special personal space. Anyone who loves to read wants to house their collection of books in a room in which they can relax. Obviously the seating pieces must be exceptionally comfortable. Situating the seating in the center of the room instead of around the perimeter allows easier access to the books. Usable, not just decorative, side tables are essential. A bowl of fruit, candy or nutmeats should be nearby. Juxtaposition of great reading light is helpful. Accordingly -- your private library.

I cannot possibly describe the warmth and personality that emanates from shelves of books. They needn't be in costly bookcases; mere open shelves are sufficient. Gilding a lily sometimes helps, but isn't always recommended. The bindings themselves resonate their own charisma.

If you plan to build in shelves I love to see the top shelf continue across the top of doorways, around the perimeter of the entire room. This creates significant alcoves for the doors. You can embellish the book room look with all manner of moldings. Build up a strong crown molding and add "egg and dart" or "dentils" available at lumber yards by the foot and very tasteful.

You are free to select your preferred finish, from woods such as light pine, walnut, mahogany or ebony. You can also paint any suitable color. Dirty mustard yellow, barnyard red or old blue are a subtle spectrum. I like to have the painter rub a "glaze" over any of the preceding. It adds another dimension to brush "fyspecks" over all. Having said all of the above, you have created a library.

If you prefer to buy prefabricated bookcases and place them against the walls you can do these in multiples if space is available, or as a single if limits are set. I needn't tell you how to arrange the books, but if you discuss this with a librarian he or she will give you remarkable advice -- there is a better way.

Make room for periodicals. Many people own back issues of National Geographic in their traditional yellow covers. Quite an addition. These can stand

on their own. Other periodicals must lie flat.

Underplay the upholstery colors. The books themselves are sufficiently colorful. Custom-made lamp shades of bookbinders paper are charming. One word of caution: This paper isn't translucent and does cut down on the amount of light. Don't use more than two, perhaps on a pair of brass candlestick lamps. The rest of the shades should be of sheer natural linen.

Speaking of brass, use a lot of it! It is vibrant, and there are many accessories available. A singular choice is a twisted column floor lamp with a three-way 50/200/250 bulb. There are tobacco boxes, bowls, paperweights and even a brass trivet/table. I wouldn't be true to myself if I didn't tell you antiques outclass reproductions. However, new ones are better than none. Use some vinegar to remove the too-new look.

All of the foregoing are quite traditional in character. You readers who are contemporary minded need to translate whatever I have discussed in the space above into a modern mode. The colors won't be nearly so muted. Lighting is best if supplied by recessed ceiling lights (called hi-hats in the trade) and the use of table and floor lamps.

An eminent architect I know divides his bookshelves into equal size box squares, and paints them white, oftentimes edged with stained wood. The library suddenly has a very contemporary look. If there is a fireplace it must be extremely simple, the hallmark of modern. The surround should just be straight slabs of granite or marble with no ornamentation.

Accessories in this venue will be sparse. There can still be antiques mixed with 20th century creations. Undoubtedly the tables will be fashioned of glass, marble or very simple wood designs. Art work for either environment must be carefully chosen -- even the picture frames become important. Add a piece of sculpture for further impact.

Naomi Stone Levy, a Franklin resident, is an interior designer and a former secretary of the American Society of Interior Designers. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1897. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

Cemetery, tree tour set Tuesday

The Detroit Garden Center offers an Elmwood Cemetery Historical and Tree Identification Tour 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, May 21.

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