



# *Antiques in Style*

INTO THE LIBRARY

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Design trends come and go, but some are so firmly rooted in our lives that they become traditions that never phase out of style. The recent re-emergence of the English Country look and an inspired wave of everlasting British literary influence, beckons the return of the European library to the modern home. As scenes from Downton Abbey episodes exude the relaxed elegance and tradition of the English library, we yearn to recreate that comfortable grace of centuries-old European tradition. Today we look to our homes as a source of warmth and comfort. The rich patina of antique oak or walnut bookcases filled with velvety leather bindings of old books creates the perfect setting for an escape - into the library.

Since the invention of the printing press during the early years of the Renaissance, the sacred rooms for storage of precious volumes followed suit. Antique bookcases (or as the French call them, bibliothèques) and libraries are a rarity today, since only a small segment of the European population was formally educated and/or had the affluence that gave access to books, which remain to this day a relatively expensive commodity. As we find these bookcases, I can only imagine the wonderful collections that they held, all beautifully bound and illustrated with engravings elaborately etched. The tantalizing mixture of leather chairs and sofas, the glow of antique chandeliers – all serve to create the perfect masculine domain equally cherished by both sexes. In the coming winter months on those cold and rainy days, few things are more inviting than a cup of steaming Earl Gray tea and a special book to read, while I curl up in my favorite leather chair, wrapped in my cashmere throw, surrounded in my library by cherished literary volumes from the past.

The bookcase and the library are also perfect places to showcase your favorite collection of antiques, memorabilia or family heirlooms. My husband, John, for instance, collects antique inkwells, and his collection is proudly displayed primarily in a rosewood bibliothèque, found on our trip to Paris so many years ago. To John, the antique books and the collection of inkwells are a reminder of his college years at Louisiana State University in the School of Journalism, plus the sentiment carries on the tradition of literary appreciation fostered by generations of ancestral history.

Around our stores and in our clients' homes, I love to recreate these settings of old-world libraries and to fashion a sanctum for fond memories that are so close to their hearts. An example of this is one my clients who was a doctor; he collected antique surgical and medical instruments that truly showed the evolution of science in the field of medicine over the past 150 years.

Another client traveled the world for exhilarating expeditions hunting exotic animals, and he kept memorabilia and trophies of his exploits that he enjoyed along with his family, preserving them for generations to come.

One client was a long-term Congressman who had many memorabilia from his days in Washington, DC that chronicled his life and his career in serving his constituents and achieving goals that are written in the annals of history.

The architectural nuances of the library have always appealed to me. Thanks to my mother, who is both a writer and a poet, literature and books were part of my early life, and many days were passed in the hallowed halls of libraries. Even today, as I spend time in my office-library, I am inspired by the sense of history. It's as if we can almost travel back in time when the written word was the most important form of communication, and when attaining knowledge was the daily entertainment.

