

# Angie's list.

## Modern home library is both a reading and living space

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*by Jackie Norris*

When blustery winds howl outside, Curt Hedman of Minneapolis curls up in an overstuffed chair with a science fiction novel in his hands and his Irish wolfhound at his feet.

"It's just a nice, warm place," he says of his favorite spot beside the bright window in his home library. The room offers a place of solitude where he can retreat when life gets hectic.

In a world where people are constantly accessible by phone calls, texts or e-mails, Laura Orfield-Skrivseth, owner and designer for highly rated [Orfield Design and Construction](#) in St. Louis Park, Minn., says more people are requesting a library when remodeling their home — spending around \$35,000 to \$45,000 to transform unused spaces.

"After a stressful day, people want a space where they can shut the doors and feel like they won't be bothered," she says.

Hedman, a retired engineering manager, his wife, Alice, and their dog, Brimstone Jasper, escape to the reading room on a daily basis. "It's a comfortable place to go, relax and do something that isn't electronic."

He adds that he and his wife even debated whether they would ever allow an electronic book reader, like the Kindle, to enter their library. "For now, it's paper only," he says.

**'Flexible spaces'**

While the Hedmans' home library is a space free of high-tech gadgets, Geoff Horen, owner of highly rated Lifestyle Group, a remodeling company in Indianapolis, says technology and the desire to multitask is rewriting the definition of how some homeowners use these rooms.

"We live in an information age," Horen says. "Books aren't the only way to stay informed, so some people are planning for televisions or computers on their library shelves."

Angie's List member Calise Mossler of Carmel, Ind., included a formal library when she built her home, but found the room became neglected in favor of the rooms with televisions. Although they're still avid readers, Mossler says her family uses the space more now that they've added a TV thin enough to place on their existing bookshelves.

"It's still primarily a reading room," Mossler says. "But now it's used for reading the paper and for watching Colts football games."

Technology isn't the only reason home libraries are being reshaped. Steve Kuhl, owner of highly rated Kuhl Design + Build in Hopkins, Minn., says the trend of space economy has caused the home library's function to change as well. "People are using the same room for a number of activities," Kuhl says. "I call them flexible spaces because they're capable of fulfilling a variety of needs."

Dick Emmerich of Edina, Minn., was in need of a versatile home library when he contacted Aulik Design Build in St. Louis Park to come up with a solution. He wanted a place to store his volumes of books, but also wanted a room that would serve as a home office and an area to entertain his clients and friends.

A dilapidated 900-square-foot historic building on his suburban property was converted to accommodate his specific needs. "I'm a big-time reader," Emmerich says. "But I also needed a retreat for business and social purposes."

The resulting stand-alone home library, which Emmerich lovingly calls his cabin, contains walls of custom-built shelves and bookcases, a large wood-burning fireplace, a small kitchenette and powder room, a conference table and a plush sofa.

"It's very functional and self-sufficient," says Emmerich, who adds that he's able to hold a meeting, lay on the couch to read or even share a bottle of wine with a friend while reminiscing by the fireplace. "I truly love this space and feel complete here."

Like Emmerich's private sanctuary, Bonnie Strate of Indianapolis wrote a new chapter in the history of her waterfront home when she hired Horen to turn a previously ignored room into her home library — another trend Orfield-Skrivseth says she's noticed. The large walk-in closet off the master bedroom was the perfect setting for the retired physician's cozy reading nook.

"I'm in there reading most nights," says Strate, who belongs to two book clubs. "Before I went to medical school, I got a master's in English literature, and I have hundreds of books."

Strate's space features custom cherry built-in shelves and cabinets to house her trove of books, ample lighting to read by, and a matching leather chair and ottoman.

### **Satisfying rooms for homeowners**

Regardless of what the room used to be or how it's used, Horen and Orfield-Skrivseth say adequate storage, proper lighting and comfortable furniture are a must.

"You really need to consider furniture that's appropriate for hours of use," Orfield-Skrivseth says. She adds it should cater to the entire family's needs, since some may use the room for reading, surfing the web or watching sports.

While there are many different functions of home libraries nowadays, Mary Jane Pappas, owner and interior designer for Pappas Design in Minneapolis, says the common denominator is that they're all rooms that speak to people's individual personalities.

"They support the lifestyle interests of the homeowner," Pappas says. "It doesn't matter if they're filled with books or not — it's just important the library brings satisfaction to the people who live there."