



Left: A corner aspect of the Classical Ebony Library. Crafted by GN OLSSON, Brisbane in 2004 and designed by Leslie Walford, Sydney, featuring solid ebony columns & elegant floral carvings.

The splendour and refuge of libraries is increasingly sought as lives become more hectic



Early Australian cedar library chair

The Library

Victorian gentlemen's libraries, by and large, were rooms 'dark with wood and leather'. Ceilings were usually high, with richly mounted cornices. Bookcases, usually free standing, lined the walls. These would be filled with handsomely bound books whose authors and subject matter differed little from one library to another. Reference books of the time included *The Annual Register*, *The Racing Calendar*, and *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Bound copies of *Punch* and *The Illustrated London News* were also found regularly in such bookcases. Frequently, there would also be a contrived door, lined with sham volumes, whose titles followed a traditional but amusing pattern. For instance, the poet Thomas Hood (1799–1845) invented sham titles including *Annual Parliaments: A Plan for Short Commons*

An indispensable adjunct of a house, a good library was a collection of books to which a gentleman owed his culture and learning. As a room, the library would be used to carry out estate duties and business, or simply used for reading and meditation. The Victorian library mostly contained very masculine furniture—for example, diamond buttoned or stamped leather upholstered chairs, with padded arms often of Gothic or Elizabethan style or tall, straight-backed, or carved chairs. Some would have a small reading desk attached on one side, or a pull-out to rest the book on.

The most important items of furniture were



Reproduction 19th century walnut breakfront dwarf bookcase featuring astragal door, height 1300 mm, width 1800 mm



Early Australian cedar revolving bookcase featuring 22 ct gold tooled English leather insert and pullout reading tray



Victorian mahogany library showing fully adjustable and reversible shelf system

usually a large round mahogany or rosewood 'loo' table on a pedestal base, and an equally large knee-holed writing desk, (or a roll-top or fall front desk). For the lady of the house, a small *bonheur du jour* or Davenport was common. Small display cabinets often contained collections of coins, seals, fossils, semi-precious stones, butterflies, or stamps.

There has been a resurgence in the inclusion of libraries in modern homes. Despite, or indeed because of technology, people are starting to commission or revamp libraries. The splendour and refuge of libraries is increasingly sought as lives become more hectic. Tracing education and interests, both formal and informal, through a collection of books is both enjoyable and interesting. As you peruse your books, they evoke memories and recollections to enjoy all over again.

Those who enjoy collecting books and rarities find there never are enough shelves or cabinets. 'Books are your friends, so treat them well,' my father used to say. I always say, 'There is no such thing as too many books.'

The photographs shown here display some of the finest libraries and bookcases we have made. The awe-inspiring Victorian library made from rare and precious ebony, (featuring classically turned columns with papyrus-like carvings), was installed in an inner-city office. A library in an original inner-city residence is the new home for our exquisite George III gothic style mahogany bookcase that features hand-bevelled glass in astragal door frames, flame mahogany panels and finely reeded columns with carved acanthus corbels. The early Australian cedar bookcase features a triple breakfront and dental mouldings and is of the same style as the architecture of the private residence it is installed in.

For smaller homes, we develop storage solutions such as the dwarf walnut bookcase and revolving bookcases as sensible alternatives to large bookcases.

All of our libraries are built from solid timber using traditional cabinet making methods. This means they are strong and long lasting. It also means removing or restoring them in the future is both possible and a worthwhile investment. They are antiques of the future, increasing in value over time.

Some are fitted with glass doors to minimise dust and climatic change (important for valuable books). We usually fit fully adjustable and reversible bookshelves with feature timber jointed to strong, traditional A Grade hoop pine. Our strong designs ensure shelves do not sag. The fittings are mostly solid English brass.

You will discover we provide infinite choices in style, dimensions, timbers, feature carvings, turnings, mouldings, veneers, and glazing. We work with architects, builders, and interior decorators, or we can liaise directly with you to collaboratively create the library of your dreams.



If required, we can design to accommodate electricals, electronics, false front safe hides, or any other feature you need. To the best of our knowledge, we are the only firm in Australia to make and fit scalloped leather shelf edgings tooled in 22 ct gold. You and your books deserve a fine library, so why not invest and indulge? ■

Top: George III gothic style mahogany bookcase featuring hand bevelled glass in astragal door frames, flame mahogany panels, and finely reeded columns with carved acanthus corbels

Above: Early Australian cedar bookcase featuring a triple breakfront and dental mouldings

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