



Laurie R. King [Fantasy Library Contest](#) Finalists
National Library Week, April 2010
www.LaurieRKing.com

Amanda R.

I was nine years old when I made a solemn vow: one day I, too, would find my way to Narnia. By the time I was ten, alas, I had not yet found Narnia (and I still haven't had any luck), but I'd decided that the local library would pretty much do. It didn't have Aslan, true, and I never did get to meet Reepicheep, and lamp posts, I found, were in woefully short supply. But it was still a perfect, wonderful place, my library was; it was still a breeding ground for magic. Not just because it was filled with books I could take home and read and then bring back to exchange for different books (joy!), but because it was filled with people who also read those books (rapture!), and when I was among them I felt part of a secret cabal of readers who, all unbeknownst to the world at large, had reefed the sails of the Hispaniola together and ridden with the Doones and watched Dion Starfire become king. So I like public libraries.

I am a fan. A devotee. Yet were I offered the chance to design a library, and given the funds to stock its shelves, I fear I would selfishly design one for me and me alone. For there are a lot of public libraries in the world, and how I could ever build one I love more than the Bibliothek of Amsterdam escapes me. (It has its own escalator!) There are not a lot of Amanda Libraries in the world, however, and an Amanda Library I could build, and build well, along three very simple guidelines. An Amanda Library would need to be quiet, for it's where I would do my work. It would need to be comfy, for it's where I'd nap and read and ponder. And it would need, above all, to be in an attic, for I have had a long love affair with attics ever since I was a child, and I can think of no better place to fill up with books.

It couldn't just be in any attic, of course—I am very particular about my attics, you see. To begin with, it would need a proper door. No good ever came of beginning anything without a proper door. Ideally, this door would be heavy and scarred and wooden and old, with a brass knob worn smooth and dark from use, and there should be a key to it, also brass, also dark, that sits waiting in the keyhole to be turned. And when I open the door . . . well. The stair behind it would be narrow, and the lofty attic it let me up into would need many things. Anchor lanterns, for one, hanging from the beams here and there on slender chains—I quite like electricity, but as far as lighting goes, old ships' lanterns will ever have my heart: their light is warm and their light is merry, and in their shadows there are stories lurking.

My attic would need a good many windows, too, of old leaded glass, at least one of them stained, and all of them of the kind that rattle softly in a rising wind. I'd want them thrown open in the summer to let in the light and the air, and curtained with something dark and green in the winter to keep out the night and the chill, and overhead I'd want two skylights, wide and bright, for the watching of rain or sunbeams or snowfall, as the case may be.

The floor would need to be wooden and wide-planked, and the ceiling high-peaked with exposed broad beams and four different eaves that slanted down to the floor, and the place would need to smell of dust and wood and warmth and age, with the pleasant bite of good ink beneath. These are the things my attic would need, and on these things there could be no compromise.

Beneath the north eave would be a worktable (a huge, scarred affair stained with rings from my tea mugs, I note, and lined with tiny glass bottles of labeled ink), and in long low bookcases beside it would be the books I need for my research and books I need for my teaching, and there too would be my laptop and plenty of yellow legal pads and an empty container of illy coffee to hold my pencils and fountain pen (as soon as I could afford to buy one, which is, alas, not yet). Nearby, beneath the north windows, would sit a small table with a hot pot and a tin of loose jasmine green tea, near an overstuffed sofa with a blanket folded across its back—because sometimes, when faced with yet another paper to write on Hellenistic poetry, or another set of Greek exams to grade, the only sensible thing to do is to have a cup of tea and take a nap instead.

This north eave I can see very clearly, for the books that belonged there would be easy to organize. If I need it for work, it belongs in that eave, and so there would be one bookcase for Greek books and one bookcase for Latin books, and if I were feeling particularly ambitious I would organize these books by author on their shelves.

The rest of the attic and the rest of the books, however . . . oh, they present a Problem. For library, I feel, should be more formal than room with all my bookcases. It should have a wooden catalog with manila cards, and labels with numbers on worn cracked spines; it should have a sense of order and comfort derived from everything being in its proper place.

But it is this very idea of ‘proper place’ that befuddles me, for how does one decide where to put things, when they cannot be in two equally proper places at once? One of my favorite books about the Indian spice route is both a travelogue and a cookbook; should it be shelved with the travelogues or with the cookbooks? Or perhaps in its very own category of travelogues-which-are-also-cookbooks, where it would be condemned to languish alone on its shelf for all of its days?

Such questions would be enough to perplex me for a week, but complicating this problem is that in my head my books belong to categories that have nothing to do with either the Library of Congress or any literary genre. The Narnia books I could shelve in a Fantasy section, I suppose, but should there not be a section for Heart’s Delight?

The collection of Yeats’s early poems that I hijacked from my mother years ago belongs in Poetry, surely, but in truth it too belongs to the shelves of Heart’s Delight, as well as to those of Grief’s Comfort and Winter’s Passing and the particularly complicated category of What I Once Read Both on the Train in Northwest Scotland and On the Top Step of the Theater at Termessos Amid the Wildflowers. And while I would delight in arranging a library around such odd categories as these, even that organization would leave me still with the problem of books that could fit into all of them—and, worse yet, which could stop, too,

for tea and scones in the sections dedicated to *Brave Companions of My Childhood* and *To Read At a Summer's Dawn*.

So I do not think I could—nor, do I think, would I wish to—impose order upon this attic library of mine. I think that my shelves, all of them (and my, would there be many), would be a patchwork of poetry and history and fiction and plays, where a biography of William Herschel would be tucked up against *Le Petit Prince* and Frankel's commentary on *The Agamemnon* share shelf space with a collection of the letters of Robert Frost. It would take me time to find things, certainly.

But my books would get to know one another, and while looking for one thing I would invariably come across another I had forgotten, and rediscovering old books is, for me at least, not entirely dissimilar to running unexpectedly into old friends. Besides: time spent wandering among books is ever time well spent.

This, then, would be my library: not an attic in which I could browse beautifully organized shelves set into the walls, but a place to work and nap and read and ponder, amid enclaves of bookcases arranged at odd angles to one another in every nook and eave and cranny and across the open floor.

And they could not be matching bookcases, no. There would have to be tall skinny bookcases and short squat bookcases, barrister bookcases and Shaker bookcases, glass hutches filled with books instead of dishes and the occasional pile of books stacked pell-mell on the floor. A labyrinth of bookcases, if you will, untidy and beloved, all of them made of different woods, and all of them built to last.

Tucked among them there would be comfy chairs I could snuggle into and rocking chairs I could . . . well, rock in, wide chairs I could sit in with my leg thrown over a wooden arm and even straight-backed chairs that would hold me upright, for there are some books one cannot read without both feet firmly on the ground. And half-hidden beneath the western eave would be a battered recliner and a pile of blankets and a squat pine bookcase filled with my best beloveds: *David Copperfield* and *The Secret History*, *The Iliad* and *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, *The Eternal Golden Braid* and *The Celtic Twilight* and *Gormenghast* and *The Oresteia*. *The Absolute Sandman*, too, in its four bright black volumes, and the twenty sea-stories of Patrick O'Brian; *Duma Key* and the fragments of Minnermus's poetry, *Green Darkness* and *Galileo's Daughter* and *Treasure Island* and *Longitude* and *The Road*. And it's here, I think, I would find myself most often in the evenings, with a mug of tea at my elbow and one of the old ship's lanterns in the window burning against the gloom.

This would be my library. And if, tucked somewhere among these many bookcases, I could perhaps borrow two shelves from Lucien's in *The Dreaming*—one on which I could find all the books that I have not yet written, and another to hold all those that, alas, I never will—I would, I believe, be perfectly content.

Amber G.

Everyone is born here. It's warm and safe, a good place to be born. It's a place full of stories. The stories are from every language and dialect, recorded in every form. They are accessible to every person. No impairment keeps anyone from experiencing the stories in this place. This place is magic.

After being born, everyone leaves to go home and takes with them two things. The first is a loving caregiver. The second is the most enticing book in the world. This book is fragrant, beautiful, nice-to-touch, satisfying-in-sound and tasty. It withstands wetting, biting, hurling, kicking and all other physical stresses. Everyone, in their infancy, plays with the book.

Everyone returns to the place they were born leaving this time with more books and a patient teacher. Everyone listens to and tells stories with their teacher and caregiver. Everyone plays with language. In the books, everyone notices the connection between sounds and symbols. They are exposed to alphabet letters and vocabulary. They find print all over the world. Then with the help of their teacher, everyone learns to read.

The next time they visit this place, everyone takes home with them the book in which they find themselves. They are the protagonist. As the pages go by, they face challenges, gain insights and embrace new ideas. The ideas become part of who they are. Everyone is connected to others who read the book and share the ideas. Because of this connection, everyone enjoys reading.

Outside this place, everyone is safer and happier because they read. They teach and care for others. They make the world better. Yet in this place, literacy is inconsequential. This place houses, not only books, but stories. Stories are in the air here. Everyone lives in the stories, and even after they're dead, everyone is alive in them. Everyone is alive in this place. This place is magic.

E. William W.



Jaym G. - "Heart of the City"

The high-rises of the sprawling city give way to a great wall. Perfectly circular, it is collaged and painted with thousands of pieces of micro art, a colorful, concrete quilt. Right now, a teenage girl holds a piece of ragged cardboard in her hand, splotches of cheap thrift-store paint showing evidence of mixing and use. She is using a leaf and grass to paint the picture of a little girl in a closet.

In the painting, the girl's skin is lime green. Her eyes are yellow. She is reading a bright pink book. Everything around the closet is black and gray, bars, chains, angry shapes, all splashed with red.

Passing her, the ragged scar on the painter's cheek speaks volumes. The girl in the painting has that same wound, but it is red and ugly. But she is painting again, and patches that nasty scar with words, the titles of the books that must have changed her life, saved her from those black bars. The strap-marks on the painting's bare back are already patched with more colorful words.

The gates in the wall are open. An elderly gentleman sits in a lawn chair beside them. Inside, the lawns are small but lush, bordered by trees and flowerbeds. Benches dot the gravel paths. Young mothers sit on the grass, their fat children playing around them. A white-haired woman in a stained muu-muu is planting white petunias next to the red and purple ones. Three young men, tattooed and posturing their toughness, are debating the merits of Jay-Z, Eminem, 50 Cent, a bunch of other artists.

And there, in the center, is what this is all about. The city library.

It isn't particularly pretty, either, at the base of its parts. Cinder-block, like the wall. And, like the wall, painted. There are no windows. Just the windows into the souls of the city's unknown people, shining through in the hundreds of paintings that envelop the building.

The door opens at a touch, and the world of paper and ink opens its arms.

There is no organization here. Stacks of books totter on the tables. Shelves, full and bulging, aren't ordered by author, genre or title. Gene Wolfe's *On Blue's Waters* sits between an autobiography of Churchill and a tattered Nora Roberts book.

"You don't keep these organized?"

A boy looks up. No older than ten, perhaps, inner-city adult peering out from the brown eyes. "Why? We just want to read."

"We don't have favorite authors or stories," says his mother, coming up to you. "It's about what you need on that day."

"The words make homes in our heads!"

She smiles, and lays her hand on the boy's shoulder. "C'mon, I'll read to you about Mars."

Jennifer M.

Attempting to explain, now: we've made it as comprehensive as possible. The Museum of Libraries was something [my friend] Cara wanted to do for a long time so we incorporated that into our building, a history of libraries through the ages. The Gallery of All Nations is a kind of revolving exhibit, mainly created to prove that Cara and I also learned all the countries of the world by heart, although we thought we could have "themed" country days for the children, allowing them to learn about the history of a country through themed food in the cafe (made by Cara), special film screenings, readings, guest speakers and language lessons. We really enjoy geography.

There are plenty of space for art exhibits, film screenings and lectures as our library has pretensions to many things: a cultural hub, school, museum, playground, social centre, venue and, well, a library.

Some of the additions may seem ridiculous but it does say "fantasy" after all. And since Cara and I are the Senior Overlord Librarians we have our own special additions in the basement. Cara, being the healthy one, requested a gym and a shower; I, being the unhealthy one, needed a smoking lounge, which will also include a bed for naps. We both requested the Room of Miniatures: a room of tiny towns and worlds, whole landscapes and mountain ranges, with model train set and remote control helicopters, where we can be as Titans and recreate our favourite stories in minute form. Otherwise the basement is my own seedy lair of science and magic...

On the last page is a list of things we thought we would like to have in the grounds (which we thought could be educational; obviously the boat is there for lectures on seafaring and readings of nautical fiction, and not just so I can prance around on it dressed in a variety of sailor outfits shrieking "Ahoy!" at visitors, firing my cannon and generally acting like Admiral Boom from *Mary Poppins* as played by Katharine Hepburn).

We really want the maze: all large country houses, regardless of function, should have a maze. I believe they should also have vast lawns with statues that come to life exactly like in E. Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle*. The rest of the gardens are a mixture of traditional stately home and most major theme parks, without the rides. Much like a historical reenactment village, if the historical period in question was Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland*, or *Oz*. I imagine gardens of giant toadstools and flowers, caves and dragons, gingerbread houses and treehouses... Realistically we're going to need a large tract of Central Scotland to fit it all in.

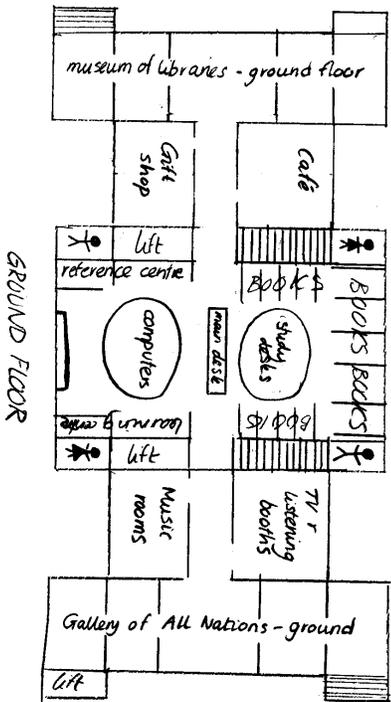
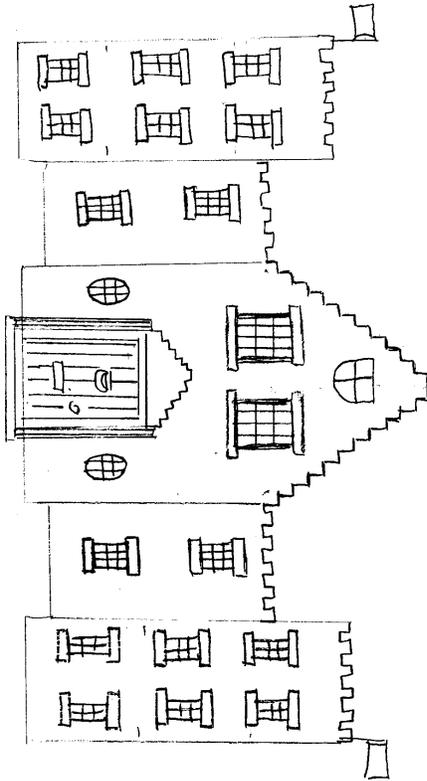
There is also a list of animals we would like to have, the "Felix" mentioned is not some rare breed but my actual dog Felix, who is a Chinese Crested. The animals will all be well trained and will have free run of the library, with their own specially constructed Animal House for their pleasure.

It may seem like the whole 'library' aspect is rather lost within all the fantasy elements, but we tried to incorporate as many traditional elements with newer ideas such as the cinema and recording studio and galleries. We also endeavoured to make a realistic split of both child-friendly and adult-oriented spaces within the building; the grounds are the place where our imaginations got away from us, where all our favourite books are writ large,

where you can get inside the pages and live whenever and wherever you like. An opportunity to experience fantasy fiction as reality; a library at the heart with a literature-theme-park protecting it, keeping the kids occupied while their parents take in the Korean War photo exhibit and have an iced tea on the roof deck.

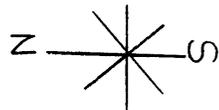
[Blueprints follow.]

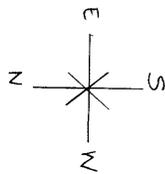
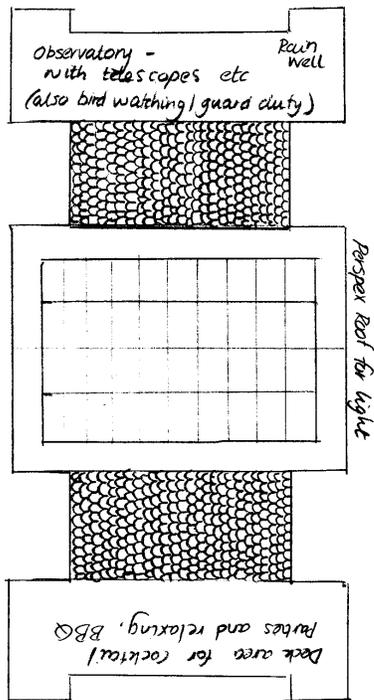
- East Tower: Museum of Libraries
- East Wing: Coffee Shop, Gift Shop, Study Rooms
- West Wing: Cinema/Theatre, TV Rooms, Games Room, Music Room
- West Tower: Gallery of all Nations
- Main Hall: Computers, Learning Stations, BOOKS
- Upstairs Gallery: More BOOKS, Maps and archives
- Roof Space: Arts & Crafts Rooms



GROUND FLOOR

- Main building: two floors (gallery) and attic workshops
- Pentaper roof
- Wings: two floors
- Towers: three floors and battlements
- Basement:
 - Penin
 - Storage
 - Kitchen's
 - Study room's
 - Curator's secret Room
 - Secret lab and artefacts





- Tarnis Court
- Maze
- Lake & pond & connecting stream
- Crazy Golf & karts
- Fairy land
- Boat (attractions)
- Bridge
- Stables
- Our houses
- Stables
- Treehouse
- Tye Swing (into lake?)

- 2 Bengal cats
- 1 Papillon -
- 1 Felix
- 1 Pig
- 1 Quilachung
- 1 French bulldog
- 1 Rossie bound

Keith B.

Seeing as I lived in Seattle when the idea came to me, the library is smack dab in the middle of Puget Sound. Not the city itself, but on top of the water and floating around. It is in the shape of a castle on the outside and seems perfectly foreboding. If you enter into it however, there is a completely different view. Inside is just one large library. The shelves go up about a story and the ceiling another 2. If you walk around it, in the section for cookbooks is a full sized kitchen. The books surround this kitchen, and everything you need can be found. So a nice meal can be made, and then you go to the non-fiction section on sleep patterns, a part of this section folds down to show a nice bed. There are a few more hidden away for guests, but I am not telling where. There is a section for clothes, and a section for videos. The sofa and entertainment center are surrounded by thick curtains, allowing the other visitors to miss all the sights and sounds inside, and let the quiet library stay still.

The very center of the library is a beautiful pool. It has a glass bottom, so a person can swim with the various fishes, and the giant octopus down below.

The second story is the children's section. It has slides and a ball pit so that the children can reach the books they want, and slide down to read them.

The adventure section would be near the walls. A person could look out and see whatever there is out in Puget sound.

The inside of the castle seems almost Greek in the way it is designed. In fact, the castle walls lead into a garden, which then lead into the library. The castle walls have walkways and halls inside, and this is where the adventure sections are found.

It may seem like I have given this too much thought, and I admit to it being a dream of mine. While in Seattle, we made a room by placing bookshelves to make a wall. So I thought it would be nice to have a grander idea of that.

pkelsay

My library is an alabaster tower overlooking the sea, set along a forested coast - the blue ocean horizon in one direction, and a fir tree breeze in the other. The top of the tower is ringed with gothic-arched lead-paned windows that open out from the center. They stay open to catch the salted breeze, except when the thunderstorms come. Strange, perhaps, that there is no road to the tower cutting through the trees.

The small kitchen fills the stone-finished basement, and the tower is kept warm by the constant fire in the massive fireplace. The chimneys wrap the tower and all vent at the pinnacle, so there is always a smoky pennant flying here.

The stairs from the basement come up into the entry way, where iron-banded wooden doors open onto an open terrace that wraps the base of the tower. Opposite the exterior

doors is a pair of French glass doors through which the brilliant spread of book spines can be seen. A balcony and a dark rail rings each set of shelves, and angled rails create an upward spiral cage to connect the levels. Several individual platforms are perched along the spiral, waiting for their passengers to direct them "upward and inward" to find the perfect book. The smell of paper and the fresh air drifting down from the windows meet leathery spines and pale stone in their way around the shelves.

Sandra E.

Oasis

Shelves and shelves, rows and rows-
Filled with hows and whys and ohs!
Spacious seating, quiet nooks-
All surrounded by the books.
Windows large with sunset streams-
Books held up with strong oak beams.
Dolls and bears in children's space-
Ships inside the display case.
Pages turning, eyes aglow-
As the knowledge starts to grow;
Near the river this place stands
And harbors folks from every land.
Walk through its doors and you will find
A place that goes beyond the mind.
This oasis strong and sure,
The library forevermore.

Sapphire T.

I would have a floating Library, and ocean liner of books. I'd separate deck into genres. There would be a modern and classical literature deck, dressed in oak paneled

walls and 17th century portraiture, the sort of aesthetic opulence Oscar Wilde would be proud of. Then we have the science fiction and fantasy deck, a steampunk heaven of brass fixtures and clockwork oddities. Next comes mystery and thriller, a deck full of dark booths, spy holes, and two way mirrors. I would give romance a deck of its own, changing its decor from one end to the other, shifting from the pastel whimsy of new love to the burning red of crazed passion. I'd modernize the biographies and non-fiction deck by using lots of iron, gallery white walls, and gritty photography. Lastly, a deck just for children, a wonderland of colors and illustrations, bean bags and mushroom stools. Of course, I'd be sure to scatter a goodly amount of cafes throughout; a hot drink and a good book go together like jam and scones.

My crew and I would sail from port to port, docking for a few months each time. We'd go to places that don't have libraries because not everyone is lucky enough to have a Library of Congress, a Biblioteca Angelica, the Dutch Royal Archives, or a George Peabody. Some people only have public libraries, and some have no libraries at all. This new digital world of e-books is wonderful in its accessibility but there's nothing like a cavernous room full of books; the scent of old paper and leather bindings, the vertigos sensation of staring up at a tower of words, the way the stories crowd around to make you feel so small. So my crew and I would travel to these bookless towns and show them what magic is.

Vicki H.

I am not a high-tech reader. The best audio book is the one my husband reads aloud to me. And frankly, the very best e-book is the one that isn't. I prefer holding a book in my hands and feel the hard bookcover, not a plastic computer case.

Beyond that, I like first editions. There is something magical about the first time an author's words are released to the public. It's a bit like a child's first day of school - it's a special moment that can never be repeated. There are other firsts like the first day of high school or college, but they are not the first time the parent lets go of the child's hand and releases him into the charge of other people. The same with authors. There will be the first paperback, the first foreign language, the first movie rights. But there will never be another first publication for that book. Ever.

To hold that in your hands is contagious. You almost share the joy the author must have felt when they, too, held that book in their hands. It mingles with the excitement of a new world waiting to be discovered. All I have to do is turn the page and I'm there. Right where the author wants me.

Whether or not they deliver on the promises of their first page is a subject for a different time. Suffice to say, my favorite authors deliver. They love language and are not afraid to use it when they write. The authors of the late 1800s and early 1900s were very much in love with words. Not in the way James Michener loves them - he loved them in great quantity, rather than great quality.

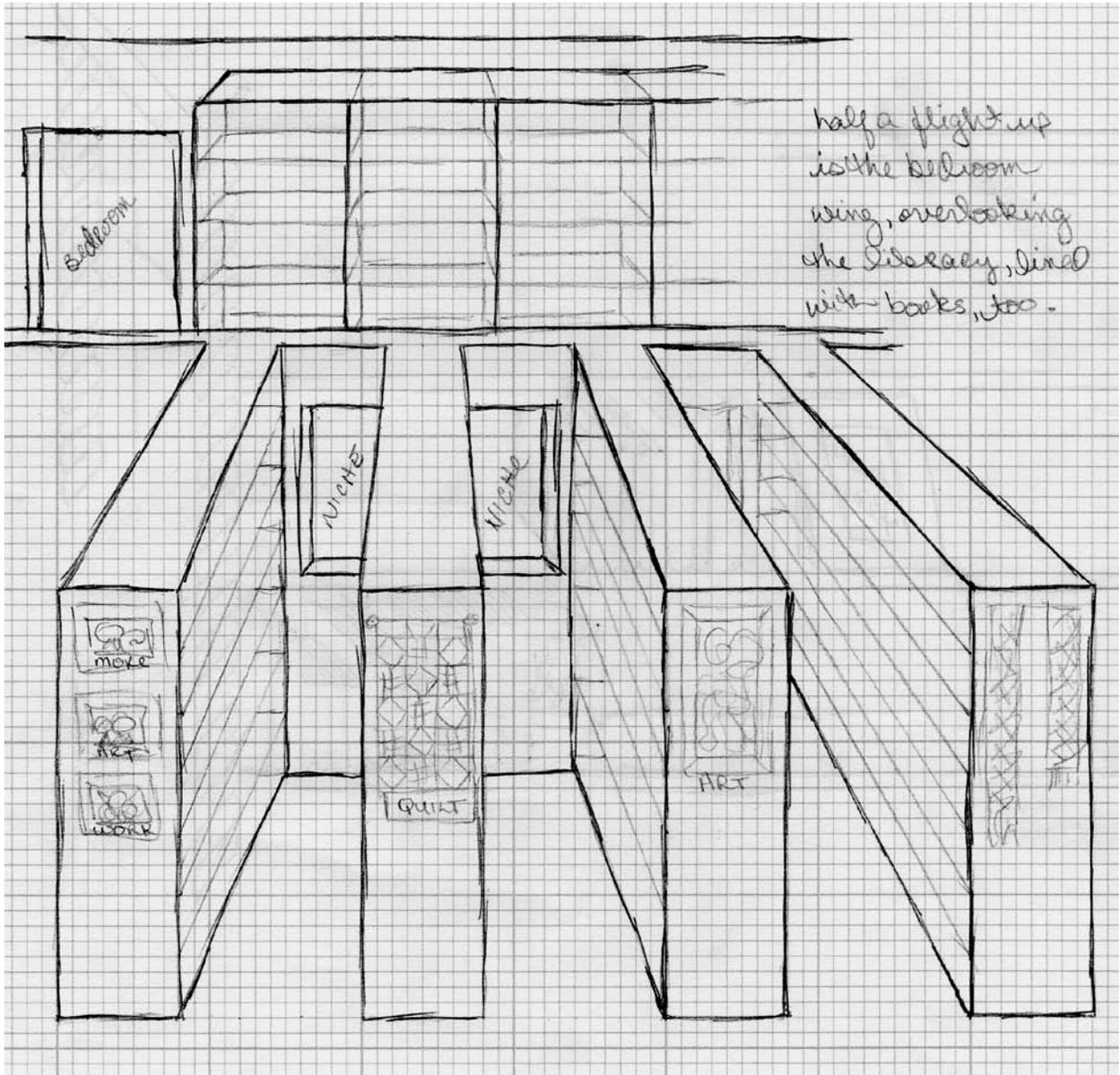
Rafael Sabatini is a grand example of an intelligent man using words as a paintbrush to create breathtaking landscapes of energy, passion and page-turning suspense.

Swashbuckling swaggerers and anti-political plotters - those were his weapons of choice and he wielded those weapons with a flourish. Rudyard Kipling was the first audio book I ever discovered. I call them that in the truest sense of the phrase -- if you try to read his work silently, you'll end up in a morass of unintelligible gobbledy-gookiness. Yet try that same passage aloud and the words suddenly make sense and leap from the page, dancing with joy at having been understood.

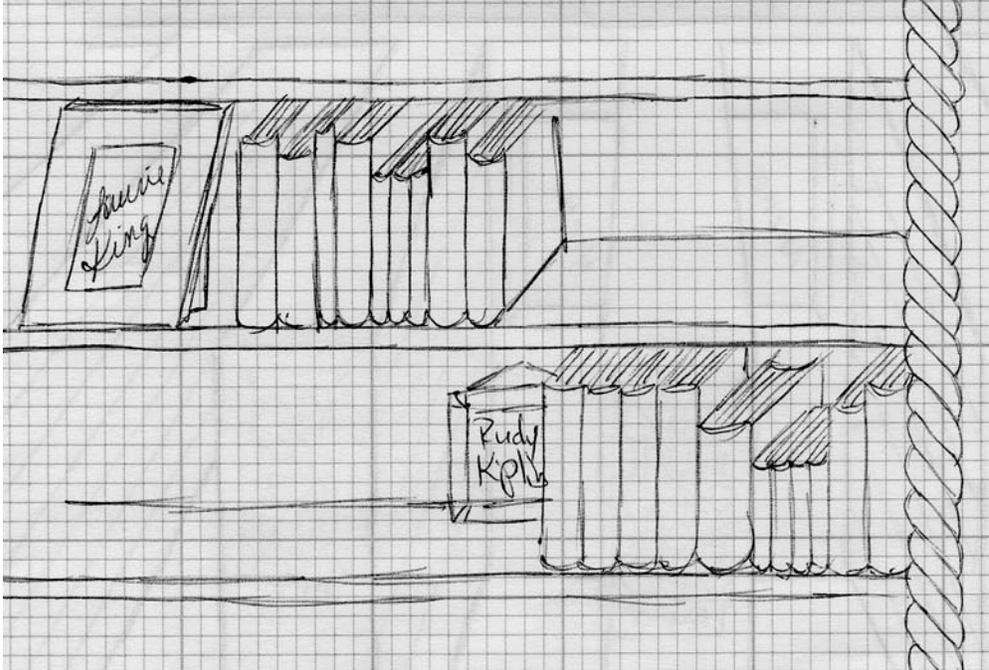
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote dryly and discovered his perfect foil for that style in Sherlock Holmes. James Fennimore Cooper loved wild America and left us with a legacy of that love in trappers, hunters and Mohicans. Not all authors are from that time, though. There are plenty of modern authors who share their love with us. Ellis Peters, bless her soul, created the perfect character for her style in Brother Cadfael - quiet, observant and close to the earth. Patricia McKillip found the perfect balance between complex stories and simple fantasies by making the words pirouette on the pages.

So, yes, my perfect library will be filled with these authors, as well as many, many others. Currently, my husband and I have over 3,000 titles and that's just a small dent in what will be in our future. Yes, my library is in my home. I'm virtually housebound, so it makes sense to keep my library where I can get to it easily and use it often.

In fact, in the dream house I designed a number of years ago -- it is the entryway to the home. Rather than step into a living room, you are stepping into an old-fashioned library. You are surrounded by wood and brass and warm lighting -- and shelf after shelf of books and promises.



In addition to the "grand" artwork, there are also smaller pieces of art and photographs on the bookshelves themselves. Next to some of my favorite authors' works are their autographs in a frame appropriate to the writer. So far, I have Andre Norton, Glen Cook, Barbara Hambly, Pamela Kaufman and Anne Rice (both gifts), and Anne McCaffrey. Some of the ones I want are just too expensive to buy, or I haven't met up with them yet (waiting for you to come to town, by the way, because yes, you're on my list). This is an important part of my library because that means the writer has actually touched the words he created. The parent patted the baby on the head before he sent it off to live with someone else.



That knowledge is one more level of responsibility I have as a book owner. Part of the bond I have as a buyer is to protect the written words in my care: devour them, yes, but also cherish them, guard them, and keep them from harm.

My library is built of wood -- warm dark woods that absorb the atmosphere. The shelves themselves have worked edges. The entire house is a tribute to craftsmanship, with wood, natural tiles and a natural and organic feel to all of it. As I walk into the house, I am assailed by the smell of old books, ink and wood. Overlaid with that is a bit of dust and the aroma of brewing tea, both of them tickling my nose and teasing me. If my husband is home, there's probably the smell of something in the oven, too, God bless his pea-pickin' heart!

The kitchen is a few short steps away and fully stocked with book-readable munchies. No soup while you're reading a book! Breads, cheeses, cookies, fruit to eat and any number of things to drink. Big, comfortable, overstuffed chairs aplenty and a large table for spreading out research projects. The sunlight is filtering down through skylights above me, and there's warm lighting from the lamps hanging from the ceiling. (The lamps match the table lighting, both being made of brass and green glass - yes, I'm a traditionalist.) On any of the shelf aisles I can flip a switch and get brighter lighting to actually read the titles.

The great room is just a few steps away, too. From there, the view is of the mountains and trees. I plan on scouring the country for stained-glass windows that have broken. They aren't complete, but they aren't trash, either. I've incorporating those partial windows into my own great windows, allowing the artwork to form bits and pieces of a crazy quilt, without disturbing the view.

Half a flight up from either side are the bedrooms. The half-walls overlook the library and are lined with bookshelves themselves. To the one side are "romantic novels" and other bedtime reading (next to the master bedroom). The other side, also lined with

bookshelves, has a computer station that overlooks the great room, taking advantage of the view. Yes, there's a complete computer station with printers and scanners and other manner of modern technology. I'm not technophobic, I just prefer it to not be part of the library itself.

I adore having access to the world via the internet and, since the whole house is wireless, I can take the laptop anywhere in the house and explore my world. The reference books are up that half flight, too. This is an extensive section, with encyclopedias, atlases, how-tos and many other nonfiction books that are absolutely essential to that world exploration. There's also my collection of dictionaries with any number of publication years. There's nothing better than taking a dictionary from the same era as the book in order to really understand that word that just doesn't seem quite right.

Since many of the books I own were written in prior centuries, it's important to understand the times. Thus, the huge history section of the library. But let's not limit it to the subjects already discussed. I don't think there's is really any part of the Dewey decimal system that I don't want to dip my toe into, nor any genre of fiction. While the mystery section may far outweigh the political satire, they are both represented.
