

## INTERIORS



# GET THE READING NOOK LOOK

No space? No problem. Here's how to create a comfortable library in London, by **Laura Ivill**

At the last count UK book sales totalled a whopping £5.7bn according to The Publishers Association. Clearly, our digital lifestyles have yet to dent our love of the printed word. And now the "reading nook" has usurped the elegant libraries and curated bookshelves in ever-cramped London homes to provide a stylish corner for us to curl up in this winter and get lost in a good book.

With space at a premium, having open-plan living and dining spaces makes sense, but we also need time away from the hubbub of the kitchen table without shutting ourselves away in a bedroom. A reading nook need only be a comfortable chair and footstool, natural sunlight or a task lamp, a pile of your favourite magazines or books-on-the-go and a side table for a glass of wine or hot toddy. How much more seductive this looks than paper piling up at the bedside. "It's all about creating a warm and comfortable ambience," says Laura Marino, founder of interiors practice Studio L, London, "to clear the mind and create a calm and relaxing area."

Freestanding bookshelves are an easy way to divide a larger room and create a reading nook. Swoon makes and sells its stock on demand. "We've just launched the Pablo and Kyan in response to this heightened demand for statement shelving," says Debbie Williamson, Swoon's co-founder.



Above: The library suite at the Connaught Hotel. Right: A Pablo divider in black steel from Swoon Editions, £399. Main: The library at The Mansion by Clivedale

"Open bookshelves are the perfect partition for creating cosy corners, as sleek clean designs maximise space and give you the chance to style favourite trinkets alongside your literary collection."

At Television Centre, Bella Freud has designed her funky West-London boho-chic penthouse with both a den and a reading nook, which is on the mini-mezzanine that she has cleverly turned into a chill space with vintage furniture from Retrouvius. Interior designer Suzy Hoodless says, "Reading nooks always feature in our residential projects. In north London, clients have just moved into a walnut-lined library with Cassina armchairs and a minimal contemporary fireplace. The focal point is the vintage chandelier, the books are the texture on the walls, and the warmth of reading lamps and the fire make this the cosiest room in the house on a winter's evening."

For developers, libraries are now as much a part of the lifestyle package as spas and screening rooms. On Marylebone Lane, the newly launched Mansion by Clivedale is a luxury collection of 23 apartments where the residents' lounge is conceived as a serene space overlooking a sunken garden, with a reading nook by the fire. "Calm, relaxing environments have always been a priority for wealthy buyers," says Kate Donnelly, director of Rhodium luxury property management. "In luxury developments the communal libraries deliberately lack audio visual gadgets and tech to encourage a quiet space where residents can unwind."

To go the whole hog, as seen in the Library Suite at the Connaught, introduce a sleek wall of bookcases across an entire open-plan room to tie it together with a more homely feel. Ensure the shelves "breathe" with space for pot plants and decorative objects, then just add a roaring fireplace, artworks and fresh flowers.

