

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

The Best of
ELLE DECOR

BY MARGARET RUSSELL

AND THE EDITORS OF

ELLE DECOR

LIBRARIES & HOME OFFICES

Though featherweight laptops and personal communications devices have made the world one big office, no house can do without a dedicated spot for dashing off a quick letter or monitoring one's online interests, from banking to auctions to breaking news. Which explains why libraries and home offices remain essential components of many people's daily lives. Some of these rooms are large enough to combine the best attributes of both spaces into one restful, finely appointed chamber, with floor-to-ceiling shelves for storing well-thumbed volumes and back issues of favorite magazines, plump sofas and beckoning chairs, and a desk or table at the ready for lengthy periods of work. Most, however, are much smaller in size yet can be just as thoughtfully designed, smartly tucked into a corner of a bedroom or occupying a reappropriated closet garnished with cubbyholes, shelves, and file drawers. Novelist and tastemaker Edith Wharton noted in her groundbreaking 1897 book *The Decoration of Houses* that work spaces, grand or modest, should be planned with practical considerations firmly in mind, meaning knickknacks and photographs ought to be few and surfaces "large, substantial, and clear of everything but lamps, books, and papers." Sensibly written and duly noted. But regardless of scale, libraries and home offices can be models of efficiency and still pack a glamorous punch. Organize your work space by placing papers in linen-covered file boxes. Brighten bookcases by enlivening the backs of their shelves with a graphic fabric, fantastical wallpaper, or a vibrant paint color or crowning them with an impressive assortment of blue-and-white ceramic vases and ginger jars. Rolling ladders of traditional wood or modern enameled metal allow easy access to out-of-reach shelves while lending an atmosphere of scholarship. While it is true that books do furnish a room, as the adage goes, it takes a lot more to make a home office do its job and be inspiring too. ■



TOP LEFT

At the London apartment of Jimmy Choo founder Tamara Mellon, decorator Martyn Lawrence-Bullard mixed a vintage Jansen desk, a 1960s Eames chair upholstered in hot-pink leather, and a Warhol print of Grace Kelly.

CENTER LEFT

Antiques dealer Aline Chastel of Galerie Chastel-Maréchal in Paris works at home at a curvaceous vintage writing table; the lamp is by André Arbus.

ABOVE

One wall of fashion designer Ralph Rucci's dining room has towering bronze-and-leather étagères stacked with books; 19th-century scholar's chairs are pulled up to a bronze tree table, and the Chinese stone torso dates from the 6th century.

LEFT

The focal point of architect Gil Schafer's attic studio in Dutchess County, New York, is a neoclassical window; the floor lamp is a retooled surveyor's tripod.

OPPOSITE

The late-18th-century home of Kate and Jim Lehrer in West Virginia, restored by architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen, features a striking Hepplewhite-style desk designed by Jacobsen.

BEDROOMS & BOUDOIRS

No space in a home serves as a refuge more than a bedroom. Shut its door and the irritations of the nine-to-five life should recede and the clamor of the outside world become muffled and distant. Privacy is key, comfort is paramount, and orderliness is crucial, whether it is an elegant multiroom master suite tailored to your needs or a spare room designed with the care and cossetting of overnight guests in mind. In *Billy Baldwin Decorates*, the designer observes, "The bedroom ought to be the most personal room in the house. Everything should contribute to an atmosphere of peace. For some, this means extreme neatness—just the necessities, with plenty of space between. Others make their bedrooms part sitting room and invite friends there for tea or drinks." Certain prerequisites always apply, whatever square footage is under consideration: a top-quality mattress, a bedside table or two—preferably large enough to hold books, a lamp, a pretty vase of flowers, and a clock—plus storage for clothing. But designing a bedroom to be a retreat where you can relax and recharge doesn't mean settling for subdued and unsexy, so stamp it with your singular taste—or the combined tastes of you and your loved one. Employ its walls as a gallery for your collections, from soothing landscapes to jazzy abstract works of art, and for those with a vanity or dressing table, keep your accessories arranged with panache. If your style is formal, grace the room with a canopy that rises to the ceiling with aristocratic pomp; if your preferences are more restrained, a Zenlike sleeping platform hugging the floor might please. Choose a palette as colorless as a spring cloud, or lavish the walls with a pattern so dramatic—like an overscale ikat—that the room requires few if any ornaments. And if you are lucky enough to have a walk-in closet or dressing room, you have not only the means to keep your clothing tidy and easily accessible, you have a private place to express your personal flair with utter self-indulgence. ■

