

Love to Read? Time to Hire a Book Curator.

“A home without books is a body without soul.” This Pinterest-ready quote is attributed – somewhat dubiously – to ancient Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero. Today, some celebrities are taking it to heart.

The rich and famous are lining up to engage the services of Thatcher Wine (yes, that’s really his name). He’s a “book curator.” That’s like an interior decorator, only for your personal library. His clients include Laura Dern, Shonda Rhimes, and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Since most of us could never afford his services, Wine has kindly published [*For the Love of Books: Designing and Curating a Home Library*](#). According to [*Town & Country* magazine](#), his book “outlines how to create the perfect library in any setting and how to completely re-think your shelves at home.”

As someone who loves books and owns a lot of them, I have mixed feelings about Wine’s work. On the one hand, I love the fact that books are being recognized as decorative objects in their own right. They should have a prominent place in any home. On the other hand, it is unnerving to hear personal libraries being described as the latest “celebrity trend.”

Wine tells *Town & Country*:

My philosophy is that the books we keep on our shelves reflect who we are. But the thing about books is that you can only really read one book at a time—yes you can be reading five books, but not literally all at once. So home libraries, especially those that contain a few dozen, hundred, or even thousands of books, are not about constant use of reading. They are a reflection of where you’ve been and where you want to go.

I couldn't agree more. My book collection tells the story of my life. It all starts with my childhood books, which are now being taken over by my own children. There's my favorite books from college and books that reflect the various phases I've gone through – business books from when I worked at a bank, French books from my never-realized dream of moving to Paris. These days, they're all mixed together with my husband's books.

What's unfathomable to me, though, is why anyone would want to delegate building their personal library to another person.

But apparently, Wine is in high demand. Of working for Paltrow, he says, "Gwyneth remodeled her L.A. home a few years ago and when she moved in she realized she needed about five or six hundred more books to complete the shelves." That might sound like a heck of a lot of books, but it's really not. I have no doubt that if I spent a few afternoons in some good second-hand book shops, I'd get there pretty quickly. If that sounds like too much work to you, just get on Amazon. Their algorithm will happily keep on recommending titles till you "complete the shelves."

Possibly the weirdest side of Wine's work is the custom book jackets he designs for his clients. He says, "My invention for the book jacket means that someone can have the complete works of Jane Austen, but in a certain Pantone chip color that matches the rest of the room or with a custom image." He can design jackets that fit together to form an elaborate collage on the shelf.

This seems to take the idea of books as ornamental objects too far. Ultimately, books are meant to be read. It's uninviting to slip a volume off the shelf if it means upsetting a carefully designed arrangement.

In the bigger picture, though, I suppose the "celebrity book curator trend" is harmless – and perhaps it will do some good.

Gwyneth Paltrow is better known for promoting things like goat-milk cleanses and charcoal body-scrub towels. If she also encourages people to beautify their homes with books, then that certainly represents an improvement.

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