

CITYREALTY

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Check it Out: Curated libraries as an amenity in NYC's newest luxury buildings

It was not long ago that the life of the hard copy book was declared dead. E-books gained popularity, social media took over the world, and page-bound books were deemed an archaic relic of the past only fit for fireplace fuel. Well, as it goes, many old-school trends experience a resurgence if they are patient enough. Now, not only is the physical book back and stronger than ever, the New York Times just declared the resurgence of hard copy books the “comeback of the century” and the perfect decor for luxury spaces.

This hot trend has not escaped New York City developers' attention. In the real estate world, high-end developers are allocating precious square footage from common areas and dedicating them to elegant, activated libraries. Beyond that, they are seeking outside experts to curate the libraries creating literary gems sprinkled throughout the city.

Before Nancy Ruddy, Founding Principal of CetraRuddy Architecture and designer of NoMad's blossoming Rose Hill, conceived of the residential building's library space, she first looked up the definition of “library” in Webster and architectural dictionaries. “What I learned about libraries is that yes, libraries are repositories of important documents but they are curated collections of books, art, and artifacts. So we started to think of our library not as just a book-lined room, but as a space where knowledge is imparted and where there can be wonder about the world.”



Library lounge via Rockefeller Group

Ruddy explains that because the Rockefeller Group is developed the building, “We had an amazing provenance of this incredible family who, in addition to the world of business and politics, made such a major imprint in our country, and in particular, in New York as huge patrons of libraries, museums, and

the arts.” Ruddy designed the library as a tip of the hat to that special history and created a space that felt old world (think decor inspired by stately university clubs and blue lacquered walls referencing antique, cloth-covered books of the past), at the same time, remained forward thinking.

CetraRuddy ultimately designed a space that will transform the lobby from a walk-through to an activated space that invites residents to stop, congregate, chat, have cocktails, and enjoy things that may not be in their individual apartments. To that end, CetraRuddy engaged the Strand bookstore to curate the library with great literature of New York writers, many of which are out of print. In addition to the famous writers of New York’s past, like Edith Wharton and Dorothy Parker, there will also be old articles about the city as well as political cartoons from Tammany Hall. Ruddy comments, “It will be a library that has character and will have an attitude about it.” How very fitting for New York.