

*Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook*

# ATHENÆUM ARCANÆ

# ESOTERIC LIBRARIES



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# A+HENAÆUM ARCANE: ES⊕+ERIC LIBRARIES

## IN+R⊕DUCTION

Libraries are wondrous places. In fact, most can remember the first time they walked into a library, often as a child, and the odd silence that fills them. Libraries are places that invoke in us a calm sense of wonder that reaches into our hearts and minds, stirring our desire to explore their textual landscapes.

What would a library of the fanciful be like and how would the differences in materials, locations, and design affect the awe-inspiring atmosphere held within?

Detailed herein are 12 entries, which include not only libraries of various designs, but also books of lore, tomes of knowledge, and magical items that would be useful in any library. From the arcane to the mundane, the collections, items, and texts offered here can fit into any campaign, in pieces or wholly, so as to add depth or a needed encounter, or flavor to an existing location or world.

“**Athenaeum Arcane...**” is Ronin Arts’ latest series of magic and mundane items, spells and spellbooks, and DM aids designed for the D20 System.

## LIBRARIES

Often sought in seeking knowledge and lore, libraries are the dungeons of the mind, with information as their treasure, and systems to master as their foes.

The following five repositories may fit into any campaign, as the DM wishes, be it a world deep below the Earth or an urban cityscape.

### THE AVIARY ⊕F LORE

Within the high canopy of this temperate rainforest, suspended upon timber held aloft by sturdy hemp, lies the Aviary of Lore (**Knowledge Arcana DC 25**). A grand forum is the central point of the library. Created around, as well as within, a great redwood, it is from this point that all access to the collection is coordinated. Upon other great trees, ranging from birch to willow, the collected works are shelved and stored, tended often by animal and humanoid hands.

Within, as well as without, the Aviary is a most unusual storehouse of legend and lore maintained by a sect of illuminating druids. These druids, known as the Aviaria (**Knowledge Arcana** or **Nature DC 20**), are master illuminators who are assisted by their avian companions in dissemination, protection, and storing of the collected works held in the canopied library.

Admission to the library is an honor bestowed on few, as it takes careful negotiation (**Diplomacy DC 18**) with the druids, who are very watchful for intruders (**Hide DC 20** and **Move Silently DC 24**).

Upon review of the master index (**Search DC 15**), a druid-librarian will send his avian companion to retrieve the tome for the requestor, which must be reviewed within the library. No works are to be taken from the Aviary, under any circumstances; canine companions trained to track a special scent placed on all works within the library may be used.

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## DEEPENST⊕RE

Down a series of twists and turns, contained by an expansive cavern deep below the surface world, is the Deepenstore, library of the subterranean realm (**Knowledge Dungeoneering DC 30**). Dark earthen pathways and granite shelves litter the cave floor, acre upon acre of stonework shelves contain hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of books, texts, and tomes.

However, within the dark and silent library dwells more than just tomes, as various subterranean creatures and humanoids can be found within the cavern. Many are simply searching for texts, but as is common to this harsh realm, others seek what may be an easy meal, or may be competing for access to a rare tome.

Echoes of violence occasionally break the silence (**Listen DC 12**), which lends an eerie edge to the normally tranquil silence and overbearing darkness. It is not unusual for a searcher to turn a corner, while questing for a rare volume, to find themselves faced with a life of death situation (**Random Encounters with DM discretion**). A heavy feeling presses down upon those unaccustomed to the subterranean world (**Will DC 18**), those of weak drive are often driven from the library by ominous sounds or the claustrophobic ambiance.

## CL⊕CKW⊕RK ANNALS

Amidst the whirring and muted click-clacking of gears, an acrid smell of grease and refined oil fills the air of the library around you. Mechanical ambiance holds the normal, stark silence of a literary repository, the movement of gears akin to a

wooded lakeshore, save for the metallic boughs and lubricant dew.

Straining aloft some sixty feet in the air, each of the twelve great shelves form a loose dodecagon, with the form held together from the rails within. Each shelf is forty feet wide with depths ranging from six feet at ground level to a foot and a half at its apex. Handcrafted from a deep, blackened oak and framed with heavy brass, the shelves are spaced so that each one has a walkway of five feet between them.

Ladders and spiral staircases aplenty rise and fall within the floors of the library, its levers and pulls aiding in their guidance and accuracy in plumbing the heights of this great room. Intimidating at first, the controls require only a cursory review before their methods are understood by a rider (**Search DC 12**).

Ladders swiftly glide along lubricated rails, or stairways spin upwards with casual alacrity, if the rider is not careful, they may find themselves flung earthward (**Balance DC 15**).

## KHADE'S C⊕LLECTION

The library before you is wrought from a somber burnt cherry, it is a circular form stretching several stories high before ending at a mural ceiling depicting a storm-torn sky. Concaved bookshelves make-up the walls of the textual reliquary as the pungent smell of desiccated air assaults your nostrils. Layer upon layer of documents lay before you, ranging from rolled up scrolls to heavily bound tomes whose thickness should be measured not in inches, but feet.

There are several wheeled ladders, railed to the shelves before you, and their narrow form hints at the potentially treacherous climb into the great heights above (**Climb**

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**DC 12).** Brass handles, similar to nautical cleats, allow ease of purchase to move the ladders upon their rails.

With books mixed in with scrolls, the library seems without order, until some investigation is applied (**Search DC 15**). Upon investigating the shelves further, you notice that their ascending order is based upon a lower foundation of common works that climb higher towards the elder, more esoteric, works.

## M⊕⊕RED REPOSITORY

The gentle sounds of water lapping at the banks of the canals of the library known as the Moored Repository (**Knowledge Arcana DC 23**).

Unless visitors wish to swim (**Swim DC 10**) the broad lanes, the repository is navigable only by the small, flat-bottomed boats, or punts, that are provided by the library. However, the water is chilly and could exhaust a swimmer rather quickly (**Wilderness Survival DC 18**).

Almost without direction, the watery ravines of the repository snake back and forth, however it slowly becomes evident (**Knowledge Architecture and Engineering DC 18 or Knowledge Geography DC 15**) that the library is laid out as per the compass points, with each subject being shelved in specific regions of the canals.

At the foot of each shelf within the library is a mooring point, to secure the punt at the shore and allow the occupants to retrieve a book. Each shelf has its own pole-ladder (**Climb DC 12**) that assists in reaching the texts that lie beyond a visitor's grasp.

Within the center of the library is a large, grassy island that allows visitors to lounge within the repository and read from selected tomes. A small meal is provided for a fee of four silver pieces (**4 sp**), and normally it consists of a meat-filled pastry and pint of ale, or other drink.

## B⊕⊕KS

Unlike precious metals or coins that often populate a monster's treasure horde, books and texts of knowledge spark a foreboding sense of awe and wonder. Knowledge, like a double-edged blade, can cut both ways and it is this fact that causes such a mix of caution and excitement whenever a lost tome is found.

The following four books may be dropped into any campaign to add flavor to either the encounter or the world.

### *Abhorrence and Dread in the Subterranean World*

This eldritch tome, bound in darkwood, delves into the sunless worlds below and their inhabitants. This includes an examination of the various aberrant cultures, species, and environments underneath our feet within the world of stone.

Reading of this tome takes one week's time, and upon completion of it the reader

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gains +5 Ranks in Knowledge (Dungeoneering), permanently. The book becomes a richly illustrated text of knowledge with no further magical abilities. Currently, it has not been used.

Strong transmutation; CL 17th; Craft Wondrous Item, wish; Price 47500 gp; Weight 1 lb.

## *The Nature of Adventure: Speculative Incursions for Profit*

Written by the gnomish adventurer, Seamus Gimstel, this authoritative work can be found in the possession of many academics and armchair adventurers. Subjects such as hamlet protection schemes, the morality of goblinoid control, and common items that every adventurer needs, but often forgets, are detailed within the slim, red-leathered manual.

Personalized and autographed, with rich illuminations and heavy parchment, make this edition not only rare, for a common text, but a collector's item.

Price: 250 gp

## *Telesthetic Tomes*

Within a metalwork shell, comprised of brass plates framed in mithral, this book is actually a form of long distance communication. Bound pages of silver are held within the book that, when gazed upon, will locate a person as if a *screying* was cast by powerful arcanist.

Twice per day, the user may focus the books scrying upon a target, as per *greater scrying*, for thirteen (13) hours. If the target of the *greater scrying* possesses one of these tomes, then a -10 modified is applied to their Will save. However, they are also notified that they are being scryed upon by a chime only they can hear.

Originally, only a dozen of these tomes were crafted as rewards for a party of adventurers, but now, they are dead or retired many years past. Recently, (**Knowledge Arcana DC 28**), there has been rumor of a gathering of these books for duplication. How the craftsmen gained access to the originals is highly suspect.

Strong divination; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, alarm, greater scrying; Price 125,000 gp; Weight 1/2 lb.

## *To Illume Thievery*

Finely bound in grey cat skin, this book is actually one of ten located within the shelves of Khade's Collection and is, in fact, a security measure.

Each copy of **To Illume Thievery** is set to mentally notify their owner of the attempted theft when pulled from the shelf by unapproved hands, and encases the malcontent with a fiery aura of light. When fully charged, each tomb contains 50 charges.

If the textual purloiner notices the books title (**Spot DC 15**), it could lead to them deduce the meaning of the world play, or a successful detection of the magical trap (**Search DC 26**) would also lead to avoiding this pitfall.

At DM's discretion, the faerie fire may have permanency included.

CL 3rd (9th); Craft Wondrous Item, alarm, faerie fire, (if 9th CL) permanency; Price 2000 gp (9th CL Price 20000 gp); Weight 1/2 lb.

## **I + E M S**

Not only are libraries repositories of legend and lore, but also they are houses for unique items and objects that find little use elsewhere in the world.

These three items can serve to not only add depth to a DM's world, but also a flavorful fixture to a location or a distinctive treasure that would be a noteworthy memory from an encounter.

### ***Catalog Servant***

Often within libraries of note or power, one may find an uncanny magic item known as the Catalog Servant. Similar in construction to a conductor's podium, these podiums are often crafted from a roan wood reminiscent of cherry. Embedded within the surface of the podium is a glass pane containing a golden powder, and an ebon-feathered stylus rests in a box above the window.

When the name of a book present in the collection that the Catalog Servant services is written upon the glass pane, the golden powder adheres to the underside of the pane while it spells out the requested tome's name. After a brief amount of time, depending on the size of the library, the book is brought to the podium by invisible hands and presented to the requestor.

If a new book is added to the collection, it must first be passed through a slot within the podium, which is also the slot through which a book is returned, so that the Catalog Servant may take note of the book and place it within the library's shelves.

However, if a Catalog Servant is removed from the current location that it serves, then the log of those books will be

reset to the new location and the new library must feed their books through the Catalog's slot, to note their new inventory.

CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, locate object, unseen servant; Price 7500 gp; Weight 120 lbs.

### ***Giormot's Clockwork Binder and Printing Press***

Created by the gnomish artificer Gimstel Giormot, the Clockwork Binder and Printing Press is a wondrous machination to behold.

A mechanized cacophony of bronzed plates, brass gears, iron typefaces, and silvery controls, the Clockwork Binder and Printing Press is a marvel to behold, at both rest and work. Bladders of wet ink and pouches of dried, powdery ink help feed the printing mechanism as it works with the bins of leather, paper, and wood for the binding process.

Hydraulically powered by summoned water elemental, this machine is able to print and bind one book per quarter hour, either as an original typesetting or as a copied work. If it is a typeset original, the setup of the machine can take up to four hours to arrange the letters and spaces upon the hundreds of page plates.

However, if the book is to be copied from another tome, the setup only takes a handful of minutes so as to place the viewing lens above the text to be copied, as well as placing the page turning antennae within the pages of the book.

Using this method of copying, the binder and printing press transfers the

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image of the cover of the book being copied, front and back, as well as every one of the pages onto the new pages by reflecting the old page upon the new page and then burning the image into place with a bright flash of light. The bright flash of light comes from a summoned fire elemental whose heat and light is used to burn ink powder onto the pages.

Within the areas that these elementals are summoned, there are instructions for these tasks written in their native tongues, as well as what binds them to perform these tasks before being unsummoned.

CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, summon monster III; Price 27550 gp; Weight 2,000 lbs.

## *Index Servant*

As a companion to the Catalog Servant, the Index Servant works in tandem within a library that both items service.

Whenever a new book comes into the library through the Catalog Servant, the Index Servant notes it upon cards. An image of the book is placed upon the card, as well as any pertinent information about the book's subject and magical auras.

In addition, whenever a book is removed from the library through the Catalog Servant, it is noted by whom and when, to keep track of tomes of lore and their current possessors.

If an Index Servant is removed from a library, then the inventory record it holds resets to blank records that need to be refilled, via a Catalog Servant, upon placement in a new repository.

CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, detect magic, prestidigitation, read magic, silent image, unseen servant; Price 5500 gp; Weight 206 lbs.

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