

THE SPACE

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Beyond the hidden door, a study in secrecy

It's a little tricky, but there are no drawbacks to this magical retreat concealed behind the bookshelves.

SMOKING stinks, especially if you light up inside. The nanny state police certainly want to stop us puffing anywhere, any time. In short, we're supposed to butt out — period.

Sonia and Steve live south of the city in a 10-year-old art deco-inspired house. Sonia hates the smell of smoke in the house so Steve is never allowed to light up a cigar inside — with one exception: in his specially designed smoking room.

In our politically correct world, the couple actually built a room in which to sit and smoke.

Steve collects good cigars, so when the couple got together with architect Robert Schulberg to design their house, they incorporated a room for smoking and storing cigars in a wall of cupboards and shelves.

The room is hidden behind a hinged bookshelf in the front study,

so until you see the giveaway split in the skirting board, you would never spot the door.

The facade of the house curves, creating a rounded space off the study. There is an exhaust fan in the ceiling, added insulation to keep the temperature constant and a sliding frosted-glass window behind the facade.

"We love it," Sonia says. "It makes the study special and it's a big hit with children who visit. We make them guess where it is."

In fact, the room is rarely used for smoking as Steve still goes outside for his special-occasion cigars.

Magic is one of his passions and he does tricks for fun so the idea of a hidden room appealed. It's also a great place to keep his magic gear and collection of James Bond miniature cars, all of which have hidden spy gadgets.

Sonia and Steve's children are grown, but



Sonia Goldberg has a storage room hidden behind bookshelves.

PICTURES: GARY MEDLICOTT

when they were small the study, with its open fireplace, comfy chairs and floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, was a retreat from the buzz of family life.

"The main challenge with the smoking room was to get the door to swing easily," says Mr Schulberg. "It's heavy because of the bookshelves so we used a roller mechanism on a

plate in the floor, which works well."

Mr Schulberg is full of off-the-wall ideas. Another house he designed had a revolving bookcase between the study and billiard room, with a fireman's pole down to the garage. Sadly, it was never built.

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Design tips

- A quirky space is justified if it's also functional.
- Tuck one into a corner and allow for it in the budget.
- A rolling mechanism on the floor can substitute for a door handle and latch.