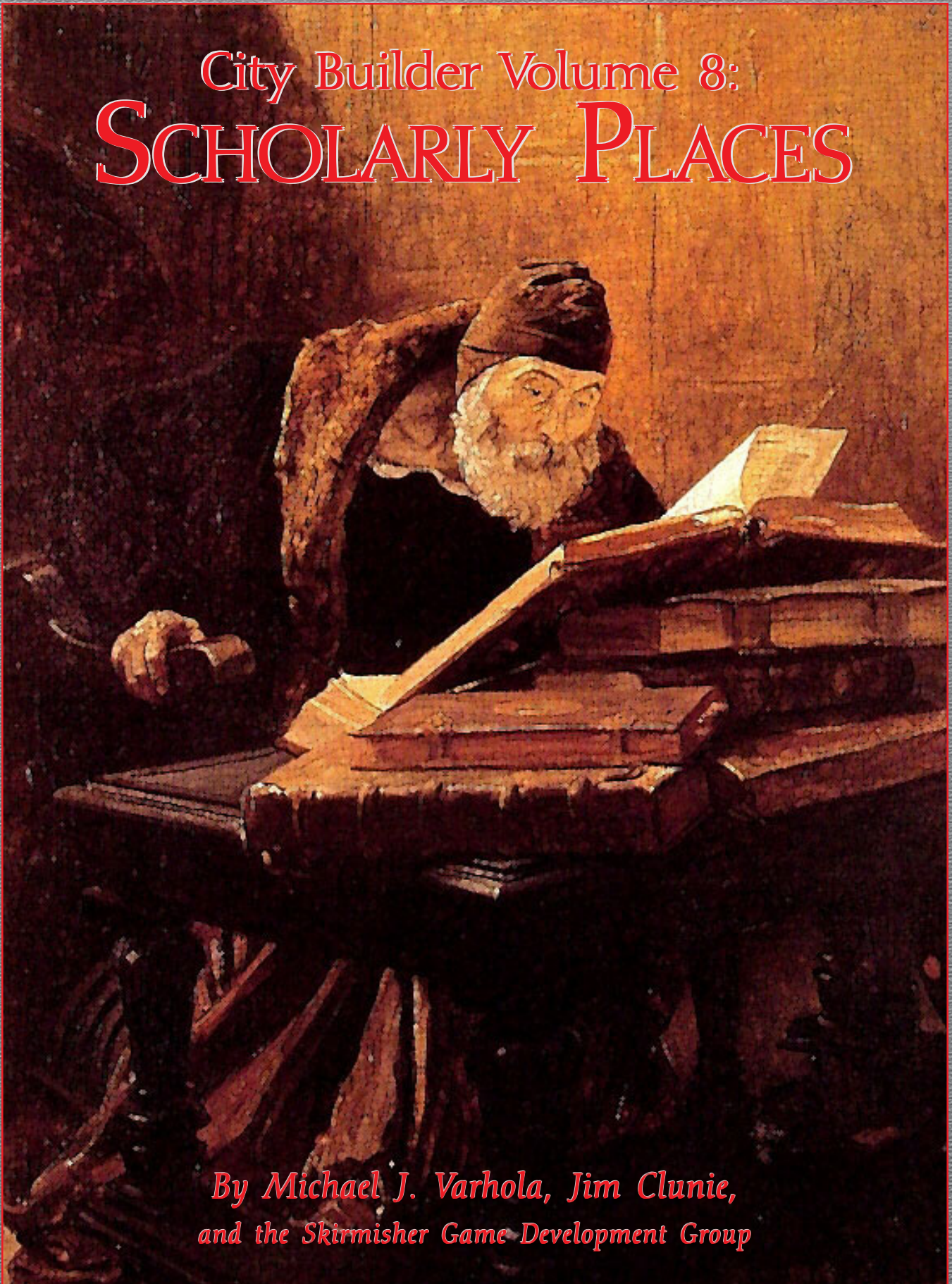


City Builder Volume 8:  
**SCHOLARLY PLACES**



*By Michael J. Varhola, Jim Clunie,  
and the Skirmisher Game Development Group*

City Builder Volume 8:  
**SCHOLARLY PLACES**



*By Michael J. Varhola, Jim Clunie,  
and the Skirmisher Game Development Group*

# City Builder Volume 8: SCHOLARLY PLACES

Skirmisher Publishing LLC  
P.O. Box 150006  
Alexandria, VA 22315

**Website:** <http://www.skirmisher.com>  
**Game Store:** <http://skirmisher.cerizmo.com>  
**Email:** [d20@skirmisher.com](mailto:d20@skirmisher.com)

**Authors:** Michael J. Varhola, Jim Clunie, and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

**Publishers:** Robert “Mac” McLaughlin, Michael J. Varhola, and Geoff Weber

**Editor-in-Chief/Layout and Design:** Michael J. Varhola

Images in this book are variously from Skirmisher Publishing LLC’s Vintage Clipart series (pages 10, 22, 23), the Dover Pictorial Archive Series (pages 1, 2, 7, 13, 16, 17, 26) and used by permission of Dover Publications Inc., the property of Skirmisher Publishing LLC (pages 24, 25), from ClickArt 1,200,000 and used by permission of Broderbund (page 19), or in the public domain.

All contents of this book, regardless of other designation, are Copyright 2008 Skirmisher Publishing. All rights reserved. Reproduction of material contained in this work by any means without written permission from the publisher is expressly forbidden except for purposes of review.

This book is protected under international treaties and the copyright laws of the United States of America. Mention or reference to any company, product, or other copyrighted or trademarked material in no way constitutes a challenge to the respective copyright or trademark concerned. This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance of its contents to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental.

**First publication:** September 2008; SKP E 0823.

**Cover Images:** Front, *The Old Scientist*, or *The Alchemist*, by Jean-Paul Laurens (1889). Back, *The Magic Circle*, by John William Waterhouse (1886).

## Viewing This Book

This book has been designed to be as user-friendly as possible from both the perspectives of printing out for use in hard copy and viewing on a computer screen. It has been laid out like a traditional print book with the idea that each even-numbered page complements the odd-numbered page that it should face (e.g., the illustration of the teacher and students on page 7 is intended to face and illustrate the Academy entry on page 6).



With the above in mind, the optimal way to view and enjoy this book would be to print it out and organize it in a binder so that the pages are arranged as described above. This is by no means necessary, however, for using and fully benefiting from *City Builder Volume 8: Scholarly Places* and its contents.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
About This Series.....	4
Using This Book.....	5
<b>Academy</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Alchemist's Workshop</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Fortune Teller</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Library</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Scriptorium</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Scrollshop</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Wizard's Tower</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Skirmisher Product List</b>	<b>24</b>
Skirmisher Electronic Products.....	24
Skirmisher Analog Products.....	25



*Library, Michelozzo Di Bartolomeo (1396-1472)*

# Introduction

Characters can often improve their chances of survival and success by obtaining in advance information about the characteristics and dangers of the little-frequented places where they are about to venture. Similarly, during and after their quests adventurers may need help in determining the characteristics of arcane documents, strange artifacts, or other esoteric items. For these purposes, characters often avail themselves of the services of scholarly places, which variously record, store, distribute, improve, and seek to diminish errors in all branches of knowledge (including the specialized knowledge of crafts and trade sources, which are of interest to guilds and mercantile cartels).

Scholarly places require a wide variety of specialized artisans, tradesmen, and merchants to provide them with the goods and services they need to support their operations (e.g., papermakers, ink makers, printers, vendors of exotic materials for spell components, laboratory equipment and chemicals for experiments). Player characters who follow scholarly careers themselves — particularly wizards — need to deal with scholarly suppliers for their own research, writings, and esoteric components.

Scholarly places that fulfill these needs in various ways include academies and colleges, libraries, alchemists' workshops, booksellers, scrollshops, scriptoriums, and the establishments of professional wizards and fortune-tellers, all of which are described in this chapter. Other scholarly places that could appear in a campaign include universities, elementary or secondary schools, the schools of tutors of various disciplines, astronomers' observatories, and curiosity shops.

Fields of knowledge that scholarly places deal with cover every aspect of life, from religious and cosmological beliefs concerning the basic structure and development of the world, through lore about distant countries and exotic plants and animals, to everyday processes of crafts and trade. Some areas of knowledge enable greater advancement in scholarship itself, such as the study of foreign and archaic languages. People who use such knowledge likewise include almost every vocation and social group, from ordinary guildsmen seeking out practical records in support of their vocations, to nobles debating affairs of state, to philosophers and wizards pondering the most esoteric questions of the nature of the world. Students and apprentices who are likewise associated with scholarly places often play a significant role in the culture and even the political life of communities where they are present (e.g., university towns).

Institutions of knowledge are important elements of a society's heritage — and frequently regarded as investments in the honor and future prosperity of a state

— and as such are often housed at the expense of a national or municipal government, or by institutions like major temples. Such places are often established in purpose-built structures of permanent and monumental character, constructed of stone and decorated with friezes, statuary, and murals depicting famous intellectuals associated with the place, vistas of distant and long-lost countries that the institution studies, and other inspiring subjects.

Other scholarly places of private nature tend to be much more modest buildings typical of the sorts described under “Buildings” in *City Builder Volume 1: Communities*. Many such places, however, are built tall and with an emphasis on high windows, in an effort to capture natural light if the activities performed in them require reading texts and analyzing fine details.

To many scholarly institutions, the destruction of records is a greater concern than the perhaps unlikely event that someone would want to steal them and their security precautions thus generally focus on protection against fire, flood, vermin, and other disasters. However, some societies hold certain branches of knowledge as secrets that are intrinsically very powerful, and places that deal with such knowledge might be guarded just as strongly as other places of equivalent value, such as government storehouses or even branches of banks. And, because knowledge is the stock-in-trade of wizards and other spellcasters and many scholarly places are run by such characters or dedicated to their needs, magical safeguards are often employed if they are available and warranted.

## About This Series

This is the eighth volume in a series of 11 books designed not just to provide Game Masters with concrete information about how to create places essential to their own fantasy role-playing campaigns, but also to inspire them to develop ones that are believable, colorful, and exciting for their players' characters to visit.

# City Builder Volume 8

*City Builder Volume 8: Scholarly Places* looks at places where characters go to consult with their knowledgeable inhabitants or purchase goods and services from them. Places of this sort described here include Academies, Alchemists' Workshops, Fortune Tellers, Libraries, Scriptoriums, Scrollshops, and Wizards' Towers.

While it is a generic resource not keyed to a particular system of rules, *City Builder Volume 8: Scholarly Places* has also been written so as to be fully compatible with the various Skirmisher Publishing LLC d20 publications, including *Experts v.3.5*, *Tests of Skill*, and *Warriors*. One page in this book, the sidebar on page 11 titled "An Ideal Alchemist's Laboratory," originally appeared in *Experts v.3.5*.

## Using This Book

Each section in this book contains a description of the place to which it is devoted. It includes such things as the kinds of communities in which the place might be found, the kinds of proprietors and staff associated with it, and the sorts of goods, services, or other things that characters might visit the place to obtain.

Following the description are one or more adventure hooks that are designed to describe interactions beyond the normal operations of the place that might concern player characters and turn any particular one into a venue for adventure.



# Academy

**A**cademies, colleges, and other institutions of higher education are places where philosophers, sages, and experts in various disciplines instruct students in specific fields of knowledge or bodies of doctrine. Academies can teach almost any area of skill, fact, or belief that a society considers important and complex enough for citizens to give up hours, months, or years of their working lives to perfect knowledge of.

Specific kinds of academies include schools of philosophy (of which the school founded by Plato, near classical Athens, provided the origin of the term), schools of medicine, schools of magic, bardic colleges, seminaries that teach theology and the skills necessary for priestly responsibilities, and military colleges that train officers and strategists. Such places might sometimes be part of larger, more diverse educational institutions, like universities. Most academies will be set up for dealing with students of a particular age (e.g., adolescents, adults).

Players may want their characters to attend an academy — or to record the fact that they have done so in the past — in order to learn the advanced skills and techniques taught there, to consult with experts among the teaching faculty or senior students, to arrange employment as staff for one of the academy's field trips, or to hand over to the institution artifacts and first-hand accounts from unknown places that the adventurers have visited (e.g., for the love of learning, cash, or favors).

Academies are established by individuals like noted scholars, experts, rulers, religious figures, or great merchants and most often located in the large cities or metropolises where their founders have their seats of power or have made their careers. Some founders, however, given adequate resources and prestige, choose to place their campuses in small, isolated communities instead, whether because their intended regime of learning will benefit from isolation, because large open fields or private access to the sea are useful for practical instruction (e.g., for a military college, agricultural institute, or naval academy), or to take advantage of cheap land prices.

Any of the civilized races — except, perhaps, bucolic and unambitious Halflings — might organize academies of one sort or another. The more savage humanoid races typically lack the organization or respect for learning to support such places, apart from occasional war colleges operated by priests of the deities of rulership and battle-craft among some peoples (e.g., Hobgoblins).

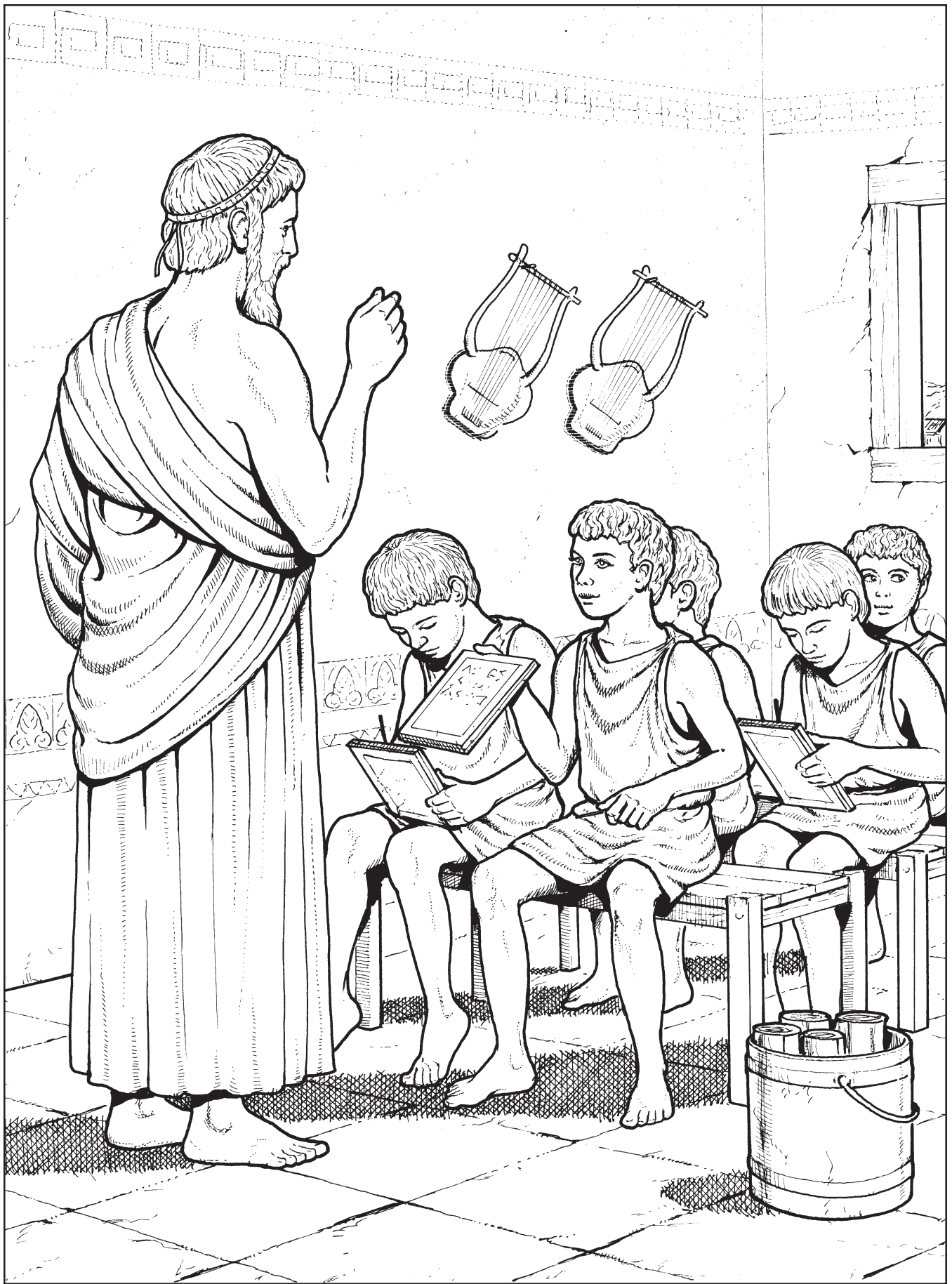
Academies can range in size from a set of classrooms located in a good-sized townhouse or within a structure used for other purposes, to a campus of buildings, courts, open grounds, and landscaping that rivals a medium-sized town in extent and population. The largest academies might include numerous halls, lecture theatres, libraries (q.v.), scriptoriums (q.v.), laboratories, workshops, on-site dormitories, refectories, and sporting facilities.

The official head of an academy, often called a Chancellor, is usually either an eminent scholar or a former public figure and leaves the day-to-day running of the academy's functions to a Vice-Chancellor with stronger skills in management, business, and maintaining discipline among students and staff. Many of the officials and teaching members of the academy might have the right to reside on campus, which often proves highly convenient for unmarried members or for those whose duties require them to be available at all hours (e.g., to deal with or counsel resident students).

Due to their size and sometimes because of a concern to protect an ethos of academic freedom against state interference (assuming they are not actually run by the government), academies often maintain their own security forces. Patrols by such forces are generally intended to restrict disturbances during the day and burglary and other mischief by night. Other security measures for individual buildings are commensurate with the value of their contents, as described for libraries and similar facilities. For unattended lecture halls and the like, these typically comprise simple locks mostly intended to discourage unauthorized use of the rooms, pranks, and vandalism.

## Adventure Hook

\* Adventurers are often experts in diverse fields of knowledge, both practical and esoteric, and characters who are thusly inclined might potentially make ideal instructors. Having an academic patron can provide all sorts of benefits for certain sorts of adventurers, such as underwriting for their quests. Such patronage might also come with a price, however, such as an inability to adventure when classes are in session, the obligation to undertake onerous or uninteresting expeditions, or the requirement to deal or travel with incompetent, annoying, or overly-ambitious students.





# Alchemist's Workshop

**A**lchemists' workshops are facilities devoted to the activities of experts in alchemy, a quasi-scientific discipline devoted to extracting, refining, transforming, and compounding the basic elements present in all manner of common substances. Alchemists base their skills on complex metaphysical theories, setting forth a long-term experimental program with the ultimate goal of deriving the fundamental essence of all things — called the Philosopher's Stone in Western history or the Golden Elixir in Taoist practice — at the conclusion of a lifelong investigation known to them as the Great Work.

Such rarefied pursuits are far from inexpensive, and alchemists who are not independently wealthy or blessed with rich patrons must support their work in other ways. One of the most common is through the sale — often through shops like those used for any other items — of many of the substances they learn to create as a relatively minor side effect of the complex and lofty principles associated with their vocation.

Substances that alchemists of varying inclinations, specializations, and levels of ability might prepare and sell in their shops could include everything from items with mundane but nonetheless amazing and potent properties — such as pyrotechnics of various sorts, strong corrosives, and purified or highly concentrated materials — to those that, in many game settings, might be classified as minor magic items. Items of this latter sort could include various sorts of potions, oils, dusts, unguents, and the like (as well as the alchemical elixirs described in Skirmisher Publishing LLC's *Experts v.3.5*), especially those intended to cure an array of diseases and ailments, restore or preserve youth, transmute one element to another, or create artificial forms of life. In addition to selling the products of their craft, alchemists might also trade in equipment, materials, and supplies associated with the practice of alchemy, or practice their skills on others' behalf for hire.

Typical customers include adventurers of all kinds, who tend to be especially interested in substances like strong acids, super-sticky pastes, alchemical lights, magic potions, and ever-popular liquid fire; specific types of craftsmen, such as jewelers, dyers and glassblowers; wizards, who require exotic components for spells and magic items; and other alchemists of different specialties or lesser skill. Nobles or government bodies more often employ alchemists as full-time employees than buy their products on a retail basis, as

rulers can typically afford to support alchemists' transmutation projects and elixir-brewing, generally in the hope of long-term benefit to themselves, or to apply the industrial-grade destructiveness of the alchemist's corrosives and incendiaries to major public works projects or sieges.

Location of an alchemist's workshop must strike a balance between accessibility to specialist traders and craftsmen to provide equipment and rare raw materials, and separation from neighbors, who tend to complain of the smoke and the strong fumes given off by alchemical processes (not to mention occasional explosions, toxic outflows, or escapes of malformed experimental creatures). Thus, many alchemists establish their operations near the fringes of towns or cities rather than within them, or in urban quarters where noxious industries such as smithies and tanneries predominate. An alchemist with a patron or employer might also operate a workshop inside a noble's manor compound or as one component of a large-scale arsenal.

A master alchemist must be a dedicated scholar with many years of learning and experience. Operation of an alchemist's workshop might also require many assistants, ranging from skilled journeymen and apprentices in the alchemical arts to simple laborers needed to stoke fires, shovel stockpiles, and pump bellows. In many fantasy game settings, Gnomes have an excitable tinkerer's mentality and semi-magical nature that makes them especially suited to be alchemists. Otherwise, other industrially-minded races — such as Dwarves, Goblins, and Kobolds — might take a preeminent role in the profession, as might long-lived and scholarly Elves, each bringing a different perspective to the Great Work.

An alchemist's workshop typically extends over at least the ground floor of a moderately-large townhouse (as described under "Buildings" in *City Builder Volume 1: Communities*) or a rural manse, which ideally should be of sturdy fireproof construction, such as brick or stone. The establishment needs large and constant supplies of water (typically from its own well or cistern), appropriate fuel for its furnaces and burners, and easy access for wagons to deliver fuel and other supplies in bulk.

The central work area typically contains a number of furnaces of different designs vented to a common chimney, vats, tubs, baths, distillation columns, and



The Alchemist, Cornelius Bega (1663)

# Alchemist's Workshop

other large pieces of apparatus, as well as workbenches with smaller vessels and hand tools to mix and prepare substances for processing.

Separate chambers accessible from the main laboratory include storerooms, often organized much like an apothecary's shop, for diverse raw materials; specialized workrooms designed to provide controlled conditions for precise operations; open-air processing areas for drying and procedures that might give off particularly dangerous gases; a library and study; accommodations, kitchens, dining areas, and servants' quarters to cater to the living needs of the master alchemist and his work force; and, finally, reception and display areas to meet with customers away from the heat and fumes of the laboratory.

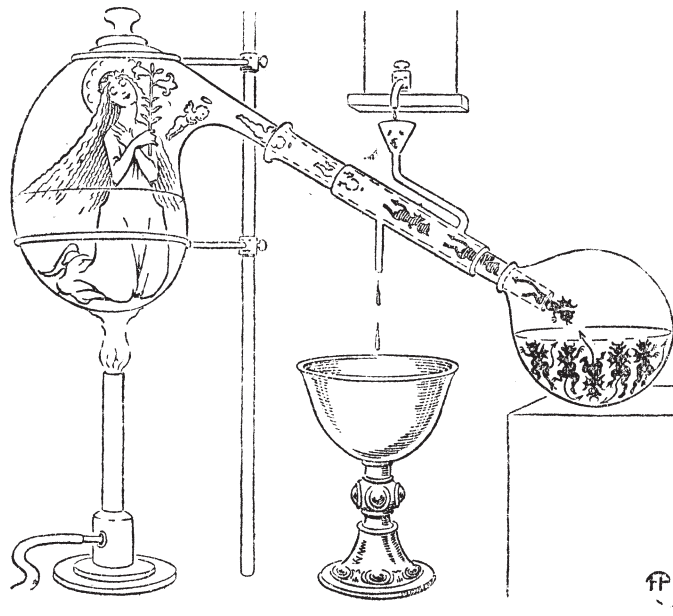
Because their products and even many of their base materials are valuable, alchemists typically protect their premises with high walls and strong locks, measures which also help prevent curiosity-seekers and children suffering various horrible injuries from the substances stored within. Facilities of alchemists who are sponsored by powerful individuals to perform transmutation experiments often have large quantities of their clients' precious metals on hand and thus generally have much higher security measures, such as round-the-clock guards of soldiery. Alchemists might also protect their cash reserves, finished magic potions, or stores of gold and silver with particularly fiendish traps that

incorporate various harmful substances. Some might even have various sorts of synthetic creatures at their disposal.

## Adventure Hooks

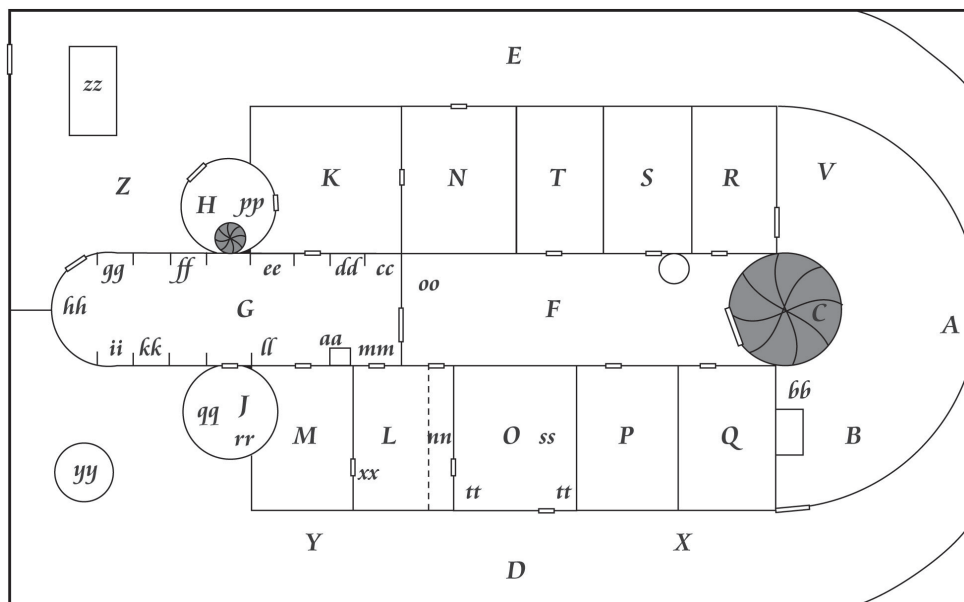
\* An alchemist might commission player characters to provide him with rare ingredients that he needs in his work, but which can only be obtained in a distant land or dangerous wilderness. For example, rare minerals might be available from certain foreign mines or jungle-choked prospecting areas, chips of worked stone or remnants of long-disintegrated burials may only be obtainable from a particular ancient ruin (perhaps one rumored to harbor equally old undead spirits), or unusual liquids could lie exposed in natural pools free for the taking, but deep within a distant and hazardous desert or mountain range.

\* For some reason during the course of their adventures, a player character party must visit the workshop of a prominent alchemist. When they arrive at his establishment, however, they are refused a meeting with him or otherwise unable to satisfactorily complete their business. Investigation will ultimately reveal that the alchemist has been slain and his position usurped by a relatively sophisticated synthetic being that he created to serve him as both an apprentice and a consort.



## An Ideal Alchemist's Workshop

The alchemist Andreas Libavius published this idealized design for an alchemical institute in his 1606 treatise *Alchymia*. Set within a walled yard, the complex includes a main laboratory with furnaces for water-baths, ash-baths, and steam-baths, distillation apparatus for upward and downward distillation with and without cooling, sublimation apparatus, fireplace, a reverberatory furnace, and large bellows; an analytical laboratory with assay furnaces and analytical balances, some in cases; and a private laboratory with a philosopher's furnace. There are also in the institute a preparation room with press, a pharmacy, and a crystallisation room. Other features include running water and outdoor facilities for the creation of alum, vitriol, and saltpeter. A plan of the ground floor is shown below. Upper levels are devoted primarily to living quarters.



- |   |                                       |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. South-east front.  | (coagulatatorium).                    | ii Reverberatory furnace.                                  |
| 2. North-east front (with the main laboratory's chimney-stack). | P. Wood store.                        | kk Distillation apparatus.                                 |
| A. East entrance with small door.                               | Q. South store room.                  | ll Distillation apparatus with spiral condenser.           |
| B. Main room with galleries.                                    | R. Fruit store.                       | mm Dung bath.  |
| C. Spiral staircase.  | S. Bathroom.                          | nn Bellows, which can also be brought into the laboratory. |
| D. Garden.  | T. Aphodeuterium (closet).            | oo Coal store.   |
| E. Drive.   | V. Vegetable cellar.                  | pp Philosopher's furnace in the private laboratory.        |
| F. Vestibule of the laboratory.                                 | X. Wine cellar.                       | qq Assay furnaces.   |
| G. Chemical laboratory.   | Y. Laboratory cellar.                 | rr Analytical balances in cases.                           |
| H. Private laboratory with spiral stairs to the study.          | Z. Water supply.                      | ss Tubs and vats.  |
| J. Small analytical laboratory.                                 | aa Doors to the laboratory cellar.    | tt Distillation "per lacinias" (table with vessels).       |
| K. Chemical pharmacy.   | bb Entrance to the wine cellar.       | xx Equipment and benches for preparations.                 |
| L. Preparation room.  | cc Steam-bath.                        | zz Water tanks.  |
| M. Bedroom for laboratory assistant.                            | dd Ash-bath furnace.                  |  |
| N. Store room.  | ee Water-bath.                        |  |
| O. Crystallisation room   | ff Apparatus for upward distillation. |  |
|   | gg Sublimation apparatus.             |  |
|   | hh Ordinary fireplace.                |  |

# Fortune Teller

**F**ortune tellers of various sorts are characters who draw upon mystical or psychic powers to obtain knowledge of the past, present, and future. Many perform their divinations with physical devices and methods like cards, dice, palm-reading, astrological or numerological calculations, or crystals, while others can make predictions without any material adjuncts. Such characters are known by a variety of names, including diviners, mystics, oracles, spiritualists, and seers.

Specialist diviners include dowsers, who specialize in finding lost or hidden things or discovering supernatural influences upon objects or places, and mediums, who contact and sometimes play host to the spirits of the dead and other entities.

Some fortune tellers can also provide other types of magical aid — especially in response to situations they have discovered by divination — such as healing, warding off evil influences, or cursing those who have secretly wronged their customers, thus providing services similar to those of a priest or hired mage. Other fortune-tellers provide customers with instructions they can carry out themselves to receive an answer or solution to their problems.

Adventurers might visit a fortune teller to discover pertinent facts, learn their best course of action, or decide the best day and time to begin a journey or venture, especially if they have learned by reputation, experience, or some supernatural means that a particular fortune-teller has the magical gifts best suited to answering their questions. A diviner can also often provide an idea of the nature, benefits, and dangers of possibly-magical objects that the party has acquired in cases where none of the characters have such abilities.

Different fortune tellers, with varying methods, serve the needs of country, town, and city dwellers and of both the poorest and richest citizens. In some societies, fortune-tellers are even routinely employed to advise heads of state and other government officials as to the courses of action they should take.

A game master might also decide that a particular fortune-teller is secretly a powerful spellcaster with access to potent divinations or with a touch of divine providence. He could then use such a character to provide oracular directions and assistance consistently useful enough that such predictions can be used to steer the party where he wishes them to go.

A fortune teller's establishment is often a private house of modest size, similar to those used by craftsmen or tradesmen and described under "Buildings" in *City Builder Volume 1: Communities*. An assistant typically shows customers into a waiting area while, separated by a curtain, the fortune-teller prepares for the reading. The divining area itself is usually dim, with no outside windows and the only light focused on a table, often with the walls hidden by drapes, all intended to create a sensation of removal from the outside world. Such an area is typically furnished with seats for the fortune-teller and as many clients as he or she normally assists at once — from one person up to a large banquet-style table for séances and the like — and may have devices such as a crystal ball or inlaid magical diagram permanently set up.

It is also common for fortune tellers to work from market or fairground booths, to visit clients at their homes, or to live permanently in the homes of wealthy clients who are anxious enough about the future to need regular magical readings.

## Adventure Hooks

\* Introducing an adventure by a prediction uttered by a fortune teller — whether a person that the character decides to visit on a whim or one who accosts the character in a public place, overcome with an urgent spiritual message to impart — is a device almost as classic in general literature as the "meeting in a tavern" for fantasy gaming. GMs should not hesitate to continue this tradition as convenient in their own game sessions.

\* All of the fortune tellers in the city, no matter what trappings they use, are swamped with predictions of horror, loss, and woe. Is the city truly under threat of all-encompassing doom, or are the diviners suffering the special attention of a malevolent or mischievous god — or some more down-to-earth enemy?

\* A small band of rich, clever, and idle students at a local academy have decided to use their special talents to accomplish a major robbery, which the player characters — whether by being employed to provide security to the target or by chance — are in a position to forestall because of information provided to them by a fortune teller.



# Library

**L**ibraries are collections of books, scrolls, or information in other forms and are typically intended to provide a broad selection of the best available sources of knowledge on one or more related subjects. Some libraries are more along the lines of prestigious luxuries and contain books selected for their fame and rarity rather than any information they might contain, or from a standard list of popular works. Related sorts of places are archives, which hold the records of a particular organization; booksellers of various kinds; and scriptoriums for copying books (the latter are fully described in the entry for Scriptoriums).

In settings based on traditional ancient, medieval, or Renaissance cultures, most libraries will be relatively small and owned by wealthy individuals or affluent organizations that grant access to outsiders or members of the general public as a privilege, if at all. In pre-modern societies, books are generally very valuable and often irreplaceable and are thus almost never lent out.

Because such collections are generally organized with unique, unrelated systems — or not at all — the assistance of a librarian knowledgeable about a particular collection is of paramount importance for locating desired information quickly and reliably.

A library might either be an independent institution or exist to support the aims of an organization or patron of at least moderate wealth whose interests require a collection of information on one subject or another. Most often, the groups in any society that maintain libraries are also those who are in some way dependent on written materials (e.g., mages, sages, clergy). It is also possible, however, that a rich but essentially illiterate aristocrat might keep a library — along with several scholars or an entire institute of studies — to provide him with advice, as a token of his support of learning and culture, or to ensure that scholarly debates in his dominion proceed along lines that favor his political interests. Bookstores, by contrast, are found overwhelmingly in the commercial areas of towns and cities (often in streets dominated by the same trade), much like other sorts of stores.

Head librarians and the proprietors of bookstores may be knowledgeable sages in their own rights, but their prime qualifications are as bookmen with expert knowledge of publishing sources, the authenticity of texts and editions, and the ability to assess the state of intactness of books and handle them with proper care. Understanding of literary forms and qualities, the his-

tory of recent centuries, and knowledge of different languages are also typical skill sets possessed by such characters. A library may also employ several assistants who are learning the same skills (and, at minimum, need to be literate and moderately careful and painstaking in temperament).

A library may fit within a single room of varying size, extend into multiple chambers and floors, or even require an entire building or complex of its own. The basic requirements of the place are typically a dry, high-ceilinged area away from direct sunlight to store books, scrolls, large folios or other sorts of information, typically on shelves or racks for ease of access or in drawers or book-presses to keep them in good condition; a quiet and well-lit area to read the texts, equipped with comfortable seating and sometimes desks or bookstands; and a direct — but sometimes controlled — means of access between the two.

A library's owner might keep refreshments, such as drinks, and writing materials for taking notes at hand in the reading area, provided that he trusts the library's users not to damage the books in the process. Because of its seclusion and comfort, a library is sometimes also a useful place for impromptu meetings.

Staff members employed at a library might need counters, desks, or similar stations to deal with visitors; small trolleys to carry books; movable steps to reach high shelves; an office and workroom to keep records of the movement of books and to make minor repairs to any that are damaged; and perhaps even their own areas for taking breaks, eating in private, and passing in and out of the facility.

Libraries typically emphasize the use of available light sources that avoid the use of open flames (which are likely to damage the books), such as high windows or clerestories that can direct any available sunlight, lanterns of advanced design, or magical devices that do not rely on combustion.

Because handmade books are difficult to replace and may be very valuable, libraries generally employ a number of precautions against theft. These are often attached to the books themselves — such as locking covers, chains fastening books to their shelves or lecterns, magical traps that sound an alarm when items are taken from a specific area, or those that harm thieves without damaging texts — as well as locks on doors and windows and periodic checks after hours by any guards who normally patrol the area. While a library is open,

# City Builder Volume 8

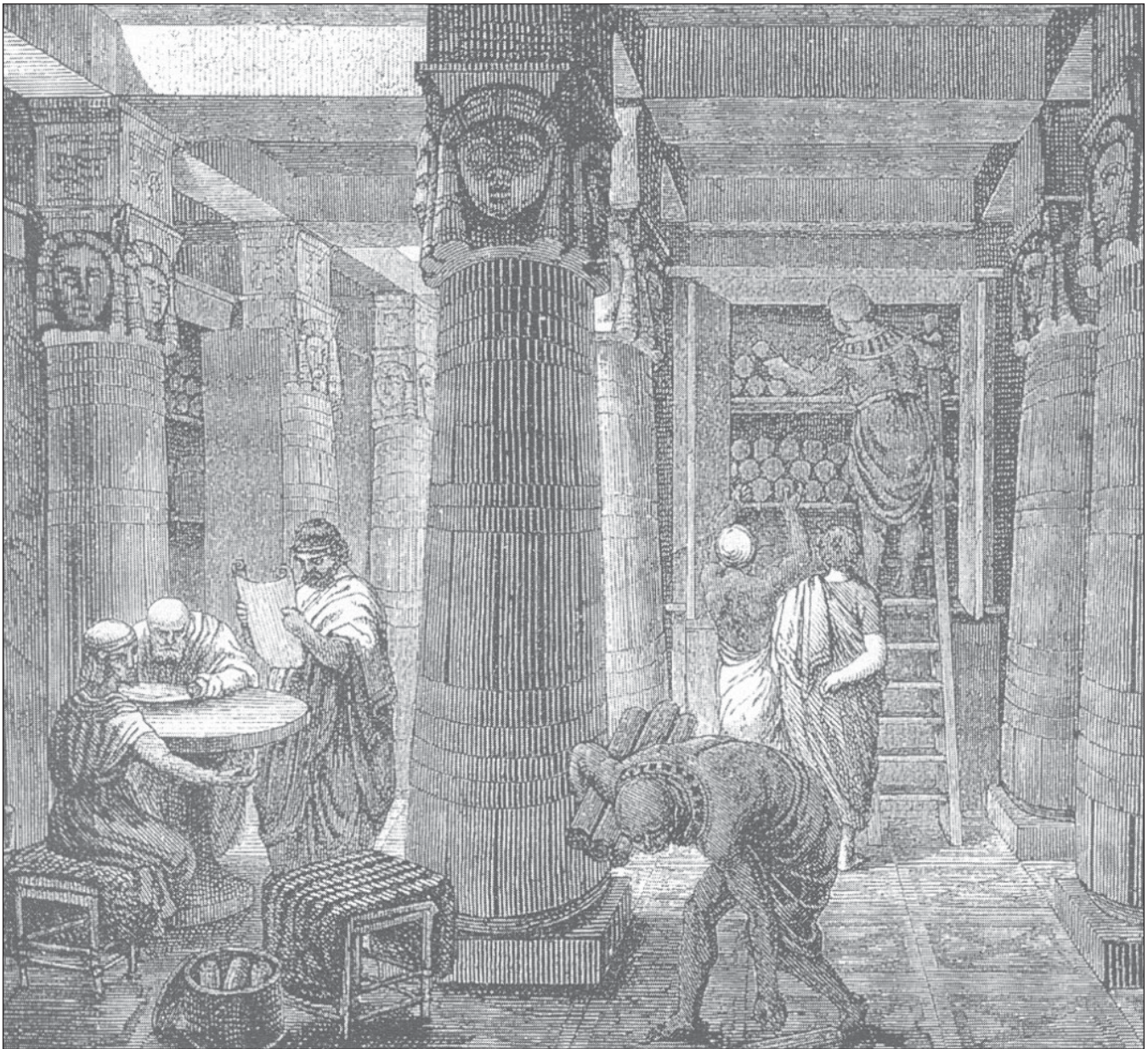
a guard may be stationed near the entrance to assist librarians in preventing such things as attempts to enter without authorization or to leave with books (if the library personnel have reason to expect such disturbances).

## Adventure Hooks

\* In a milieu where books are relatively rare they are also very valuable, and tomes of various sorts that characters find in the courses of their adventures might literally be worth their weight in gold. Such books might warrant almost any efforts associated with safeguarding and transporting them to appropriate libraries or

booksellers for sale. Appropriate texts might even help guide characters in the performance of difficult tasks or to advance in their vocations (a section in the Skirmisher Publishing d20 adventure and sourcebook *Tests of Skill* is devoted to this very subject).

\* A particular library might be targeted for destruction by enemies of the institution with which it is affiliated or simply by a depraved, evil, or fanatical group of people who despise knowledge or its products. A party of player characters might be the only thing standing in the way of such a travesty — or leading the way to make it happen.





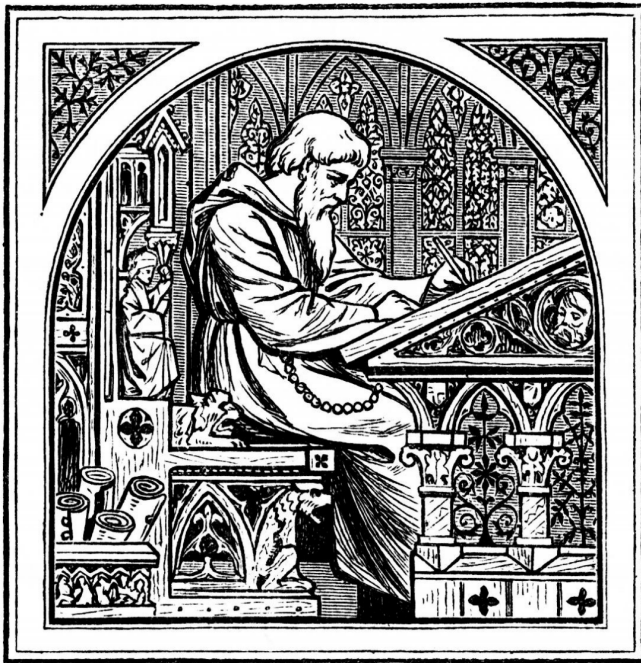
# Scriptorium

**S**criptoriums, or scriptoria, are facilities devoted to the hand-copying and illustration of books. Places of this sort are often affiliated with other institutions, such as temples, monasteries, scrollshops (q.v.), and mages' lodges.

Pages prepared in scriptoriums are fashioned into complete books by bookbinders, who may contract out to other craftsmen the additional work required to make fancy covers of different materials and to provide tomes with secure bindings and clasps, including locks if desired. Associated vocations include those of scribes, who compose documents neatly and grammatically; calligraphers; translators; cartographers; and professional authors, including poets and playwrights.

Adventurers might make use of scriptoriums to purchase copies of books that are made there or to have books copied.

In societies where literacy is uncommon or little-valued, such as those of most savage humanoids, scriptoriums will likely exist only inside premises occupied by the scholars of other peoples. In societies favoring forms of writing that use something other than paper — such as Dwarves, who etch most of their records on stone or metal — the equivalents of scriptoriums might resemble the workshops of a different trade, such as those of masons, potters, jewelers, or smiths.



The ideal design for a scriptorium consists of a well-lit chamber — typically within or forming an attached wing of a larger scholarly institution — accommodating sloped writing-desks or a long table for the number of scribes who will labor there, perched on high chairs to work at the optimum angle for large and awkward manuscript pages. Related workshops, such as those of papermakers and bookbinders, might be attached to a scriptorium, as might the living quarters of such institutions' often-resident scribes.

Supervisors of scriptoriums might be of many different sorts, as they are often simply the more practically-inclined senior members of whatever scholarly institution the place serves.

Security for a scriptorium is likely to be equivalent to whatever is provided for any larger institution the place might be affiliated with (e.g., a monastery, a university). In any event, such places often contain particularly valuable books loaned out from other sources for purposes of having them copied, and measures like sturdy doors and locks, or even magical wards or guards for when a scriptorium is not in use, are likely to be employed.

## Adventure Hooks

\* A party might be hired to investigate the theft of a shipment of books from a wagon traveling between a monastery that possesses a scriptorium and a noble with a good-sized library. The bandits most likely were tipped off by someone with direct knowledge of the wagon's time of departure, route, and the contents of the consignment. This might be a corrupt individual on one side of the business arrangement between the monks and the nobleman who wished to renege on the deal and pocket the profits, or by some third party who wanted to seize the books and make use of the information contained in them.

\* Adventurers who acquire rare books or fragmentary writings in the course of defeating villains of the more learned sorts might provide them to a scriptorium for a fee to make multiple copies, so that their ancient knowledge becomes more widely available to the scholarly community — or members of the party might take the time to make one or more copies of the books themselves, in order at the same time to sell their takings for a profit and retain access to the knowledge within them.



# Scrollshop

Scrollshops are stores that sell copies of scrolls, supplies for writing scrolls and other texts, or both, as well as peripheral items like scroll cases, inkwells, and pen knives. Specialists within this trade include vendors of art and drafting supplies, sellers of sheet music or religious tracts, and illicit suppliers to forgers who are experts in matching papers, inks, and sealing-waxes. Associated vocations include those of quillmakers, who make pens; papermakers; specialist jewelers who make signets and the like; and scribes, who are often employed at scriptoriums (q.v.).

Adventurers might make use of scrollshops to purchase scrolls, to have scrolls inscribed to order, or to buy supplies for accomplishing such tasks themselves.

Scrollshops are often suppliers solely to specialists in knowledge, such as academics or spellcasters, providing items that many inhabitants of a fantasy setting regard as luxuries or cannot use at all (e.g., if they are illiterate). Therefore, such places are most often found within or in the immediate vicinity of large institutions of study, such as universities, academies, monasteries, and mages' lodges, or gathered together within cities in those streets or precincts where many booksellers and similar trades congregate.

Because manufacture of different kinds of books and texts adheres to different standard sizes, colors, qualities, and preferences, many such vendors specialize in catering to a specific set of customers or do most of their business with members of a particular academy or scholarly guild.

In smaller settlements, the services of a scrollshop might be part of the stock-in-trade of an apothecary or general store (described in *City Builder Volume 5: Tradesman Places* and *Volume 6: Mercantile Places* respectively) — although the range and quality of supplies available at such outlets will likely be much reduced — or characters might visit a local wizard's tower (q.v.) to buy scrolls or obtain from him writing supplies suitable for inscribing arcane magical texts.

A scrollshop resembles the establishments of other small urban traders like apothecaries, typically being somewhat smaller than a bookseller as its stock can be sold efficiently from stacks and bins rather than displayed individually, and often occupies one of the smaller examples of the tradesman's establishments described under "Buildings" in *City Builder Volume 1: Communities*. Keeping such places dry and free of paper-eating vermin are primary concerns.

Scrollshops normally contain numerous broad but close-set shelves to hold stacks of full-sized, rough-edged sheets of handmade paper, parchment, and card in different grades; cutting-tables equipped with long metal straight-edges; racks for ink-pots and, if the establishment also compounds inks, containers of more varied nature for ink components, and tools such as mortars and pestles; pens set out in rows; materials such as quills or strong reeds for hand-cut writing implements kept in stacks or tubs; several sharp little penknives and paper-slicers; needles, thread, glue, and preservatives for bookbinding; gold leaf for illustrations and page-tips; boards and rods of lightweight, clean-grained timbers, such as birch, for use as covers or scroll-battens; complete book covers in various materials; and tilted display shelves for partly or fully-finished scrolls or books. Scrollshops also might sell or broker orders for specialized lamps and pieces of furniture suitable for scriptoriums and drawing-offices (although most have limited space and thus seldom have more than one or two such items on display).

In the case of wizards' spellbooks, the unearthly potency of greater magic spells is more than ordinary writing can express and in some traditions requires a certain proportion of the magical effect actually to be bound into the pages of the book. This can be accomplished by using writing materials that have an innate magical correspondence to the forces that the spell seeks to harness, such as pages made from the skins of diverse creatures, inks that incorporate crushed gems or the blood or ichor of rare beings, and writing instruments marked with runes or made from the quills or bones of magical beasts.

Scrollshops that cater to wizards must provide at least the basics required of their endeavors, such as papers and parchments of exceptional quality, giant squid ink purchased from whalers by the cask, fresh quills from hippogriffs or the like, and an array of ink components that correspond to the various schools of magical study represented in the game milieu. Spellcasters demand a high degree of probity in the provenance of such materials as well, as a sorcerer relying on components that he assumes to be of real quality might meet with disaster if they are actually counterfeit.

Proprietors of scrollshops more often possess the expertise of scribes or bookbinders rather than broad arcane or literary knowledge. They thus often tend to be more worldly and businesslike in manner than

# City Builder Volume 8

sometimes abstrusely enthusiastic booksellers, alchemists, or spellcasters. Their assistants might be either simple clerks or skilled journeymen learning their trade from the shopkeeper.

Although much of a scrollshop's stock is very valuable and expensive, their uses are also very specialized and a thief might have considerable trouble effectively fencing them. It is thus usually uneconomical for owners of such places to employ complex security precautions beyond shuttered windows and locked doors, along with inducing the city watch to keep an eye on the place during their nightly patrols. However, if a scrollshop holds highly valuable items, such as finished magic scrolls or gemstones, the place may have protections equivalent to those of a jeweler or pawnbroker — including keeping only a few sample items on display in sealed cases and fetching goods from a more secure back area upon request — and the proprietor might take the expensive items home at night if he lives elsewhere, accompanied by guards of whatever number and competence are required to assure his safety.

## Adventure Hooks

\* Scrollshops involved in the production or sale of magical scrolls, spellbooks, and other written works may constantly be in need of appropriate exotic components for inks, quills, writing media, and the like (e.g., kraken sepia as the basis for any special ink, cockatrice feathers for penning spells related to petrification, flayed demon hide for parchment of scrolls inscribed with protections against such monsters). Obtaining such materials might form the basis of complete adventures or periodically serve as a source of additional income for characters.

\* Where player characters' investigation into a crime hinges — as sometimes it does — on finding the source of a mysterious note or letter, the party might seek out the expert knowledge of papers and inks possessed by the owner of a scrollshop — who might hesitate to reveal details that might incriminate him in unlawful events, if the materials in fact came from his store.



# Wizard's Tower

**W**izards' professional establishments are often constructed in the form of towers, buildings that are generally well-suited for the requirements of their sorcerous occupants. Adventurers might visit the towers of consulting wizards for any number of reasons, including access to various useful magical effects that party members may not have the magical skill or particular spell knowledge to cast (e.g., removal of magical curses or conditions, scrying, summoning of extra-dimensional servants, temporary strengthening of characters and their equipment); identification of the nature and abilities of magic items they have obtained; in-depth advice on different forms of magic that can complement the characters' own experiences and specialties; a chance to trade in spells or even become a part-time apprentice to a more knowledgeable mage, for player characters interested in developing their spellcasting abilities; and the opportunity to commission the creation of magical items. Wizards also often provide related services, such as reading and translating obscure languages relevant to magical practice, that player characters may periodically want to avail themselves of.

If player characters wish to trade in magic items, a wizard might have on hand a small number of minor or non-permanent items that he or his apprentices have made, and might agree to trade such items and spells that he or his followers can use as payment — in whole or in part — for his services. In some spellcasting traditions, many of the spells that hired wizards cast create magical amulets or talismans for the client to carry, providing specific magical enhancements or protection. (Buying magical items from a comprehensive stock and selling items for cash, however, are more the province of magic item shops, which go under different names and specialties in different settings, including alchemist's shops, scrollshops, and curiosity shops. The proprietors of such places, although knowledgeable about their own wares, might not be wizards or spellcasters of any sort and might lack the formal qualifications expected of a member of the local mages' guild.)

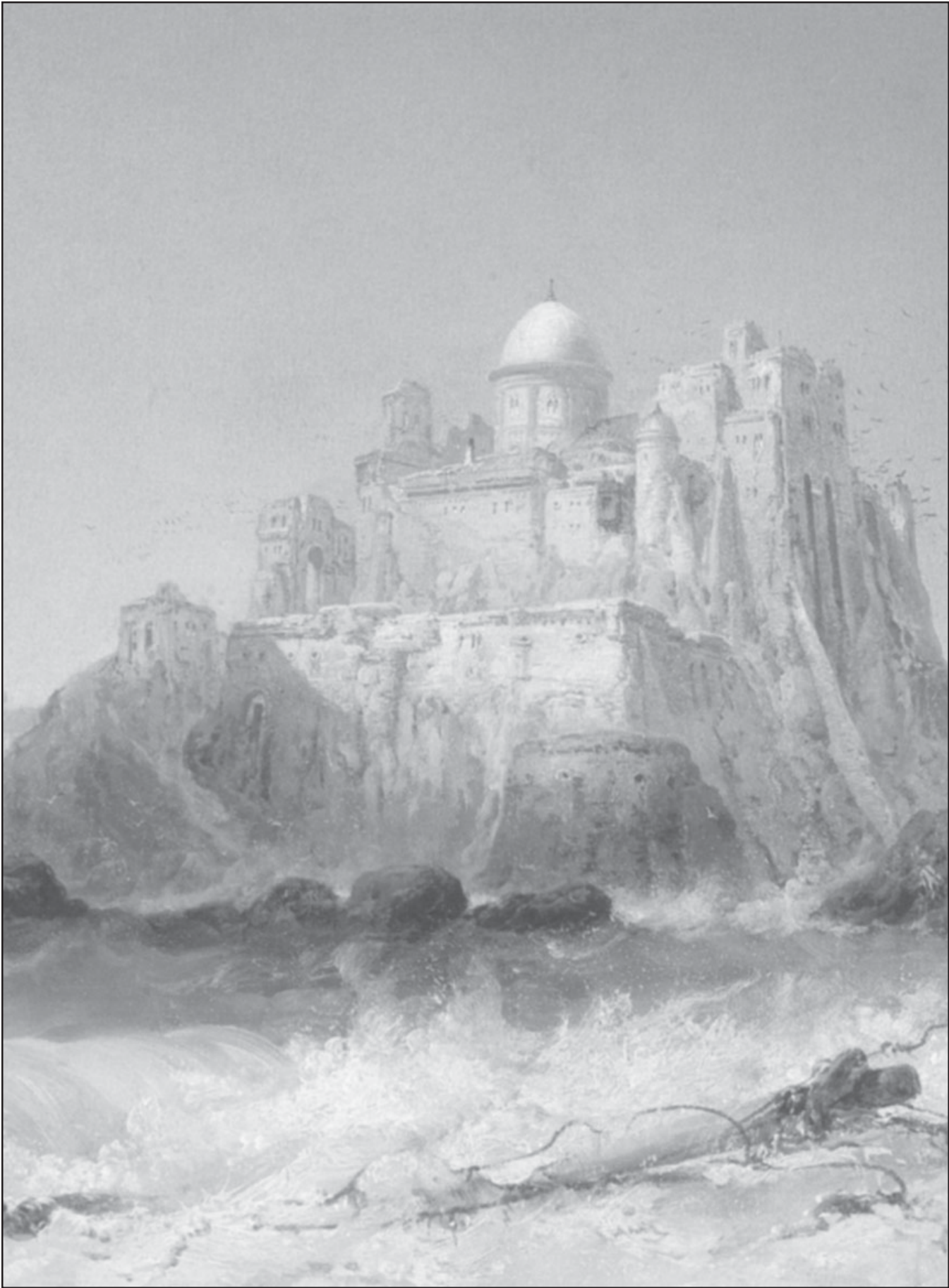
Whether wizard non-player characters are willing to trade knowledge of spells varies by the general nature of wizardly practice in the setting. If individual spells are standard and widely known, such characters might be willing to trade the knowledge of a spell simply for another new spell plus the accepted fair market value for the costs of scribing it for another wiz-

ard's use. On the other hand, if spells are held to be secret and restricted to a select group, an NPC wizard might only willingly impart such knowledge to characters formally signed on as his apprentices. Likewise, the requirements for apprenticeship might be nominal or might involve significant pacts, magical bonds, and requirements to give up the character's time, personal resources, or to carry out significant tasks in service to the teacher.

A wizard's tower could be located almost anywhere, from the most desolate wilderness to the heart of a great city, and in areas that are either prosperous or poor. As wizards grow in power, they value their privacy more and more, particularly if they conduct experiments that could be hazardous or otherwise cause concern to those around them. Thus, the most adept wizards are increasingly likely to build their workplaces away from large settlements, requiring characters who wish to consult such archmages to travel through countryside or even into the wilderness or other planes of existence to reach their lairs. Any race whose members have the capability of performing magic might have wizards' towers in their lands, and wizards might also dwell alongside and provide services to otherwise non-magical peoples. Wizards of all races are liable to have more in common with others of their vocation in their habits and associations than they do with non-spellcasting beings with whom they are merely related by culture or even blood.

As their title suggests, wizards' haunts often take the form of multi-story buildings like towers. This is generally because their owners find tall buildings useful both as vantage points and to ensure that as few other buildings as possible overlook their windows and block their access to light and open air or encroach upon their privacy. Additionally, wizards generally have only a small number of followers and guards, making large buildings with many ground-floor entrances impractical and difficult to defend by traditional means.

Wizards are more likely than most to understand the principles of architecture themselves and to have access to cash reserves and skilled construction workers — and sometimes even magical techniques — that make it possible to erect tall, complex structures. And while their aboveground aspects are the ones that are most obvious, such places also often have extensive networks of underground or even inter-dimensional passageways and chambers.



*In the Mediterranean, James Webb (1825-1895)*

# Wizard's Tower

The occupant of a wizard's tower is generally a spellcaster of at least middling ability. If such a character makes his living by selling magical services, what he lacks in development of raw spell-power — and perhaps in respect among his peers — could be more than made up for by the breadth and practicality of his knowledge of magic. Occasionally, several such qualified mages might share the use of a tower (in an arrangement not unlike lawyers' chambers) or a nobleman might provide his house wizard with accommodation in part of his manor house, palace, or fortress. Wizards often share their dwellings with one or more apprentices of beginning to moderate spellcasting ability; familiars, unusual steeds, summoned beings, or other

more-or-less magical creatures (any of which might serve the wizard, receive his supplication for increased power, or perhaps some of both); servants and guards performing mundane duties, who may either be members of the common races or more unusual individuals; and consorts, spouses, or children (unless the practice of magic in the society somehow discourages or prevents ordinary family relations). A wizard's tower is almost always his home as well as his place of work.

Security at a wizard's tower is likely to be stringent, dangerous, and unpredictable, in keeping with the natures of the occupants of such places and the many enemies from which they need to protect themselves. Measures might range from enhancements to traditional features like walls, doors, and windows, to wholly magical guards and wards unlikely to be encountered in any other sorts of places. Depending on their various areas of specialization, wizards might also have various magical or otherworldly creatures at their disposal. A wizard's own panoply of spells might also serve as a final and daunting line of defense against intruders.

## Adventure Hooks

\* Player characters who travel to a wizard's tower to purchase some type of magical assistance might find the front door ajar and various signs of violence and disarray inside. One of the wizard's rivals has overcome the tower's defenses, either battling and entrapping the wizard in some magical fashion, or entering to loot his goods while the wizard was kept away from his home as the result of some unexpected problem. If the adventurers take the opportunity to do some pilfering themselves, they are likely to run afoul of many untriggered traps, curses, and other magical hazards in the tower — as well as earning the enmity of the tower's owner when he returns. On the other hand, if they rescue the wizard from whatever peril he is in, the player characters can expect at least a little gratitude and perhaps some future collaboration.

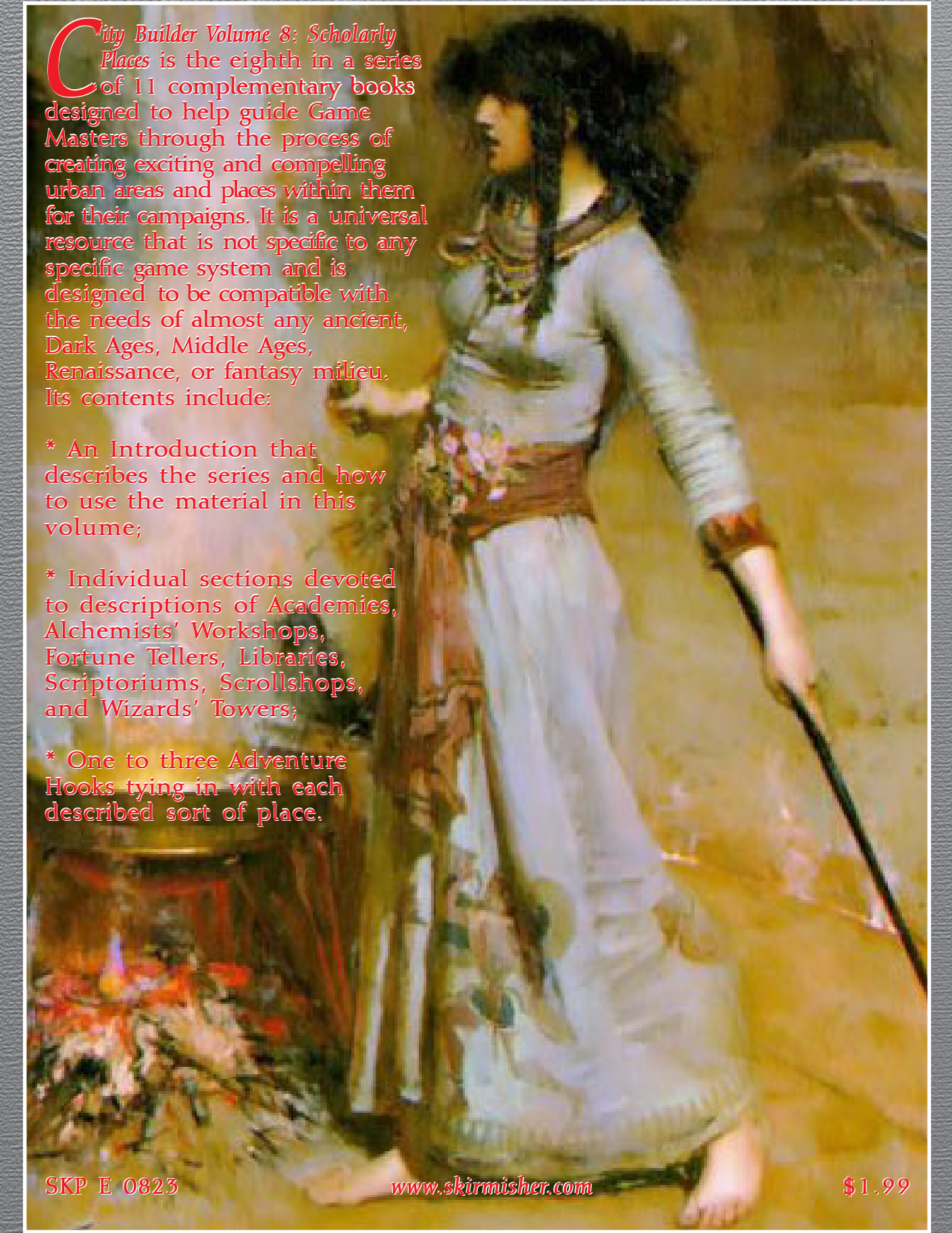
\* Hoping to test the integrity of his security measures, a wizard might decide to hire a player character party to invade his tower. The party might or might not be aware that their mission is actually on behalf of the tower's owner, and they may or may not actually be subject to life-threatening danger as the result of this expedition.











**C**ity Builder Volume 8: Scholarly Places is the eighth in a series of 11 complementary books designed to help guide Game Masters through the process of creating exciting and compelling urban areas and places within them for their campaigns. It is a universal resource that is not specific to any specific game system and is designed to be compatible with the needs of almost any ancient, Dark Ages, Middle Ages, Renaissance, or fantasy milieu. Its contents include:

- \* An Introduction that describes the series and how to use the material in this volume;

- \* Individual sections devoted to descriptions of Academies, Alchemists' Workshops, Fortune Tellers, Libraries, Scriptoriums, Scrollshops, and Wizards' Towers;

- \* One to three Adventure Hooks tying in with each described sort of place.

SKP E 0823

[www.skirmisher.com](http://www.skirmisher.com)

\$1.99